

# U.S. POLICY IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

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## HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 6, 2019

**Serial No. 116-2**

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available: T3<http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/>, <http://docs.house.gov/>,  
or <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

35-360PDF

WASHINGTON : 2019

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## **U.S. POLICY IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2019**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:06 a.m., in Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Eliot Engel (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ENGEL. The hearing will come to order. Let me first of all welcome all of our members to our first hearing. Let me welcome as well our witnesses and members of the public and members of the press.

We are here this morning to examine U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula. Before I get to my views and recognize our ranking member, a bit of housekeeping. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

One of my goals as chairman of this committee will be to underscore the importance of American values as part of our foreign policy. When we are at our best, we put democracy, human rights, and the rule of law at the center of our conduct all over the world. It is the right thing to do. It is a reflection of our country's character, its compassion, and its generosity; it also makes it easier to advance our interests and our security.

It is with this idea in mind that I focus our first hearing on our policy in the Arabian Peninsula. This region has posed some of the most vexing problems for our top diplomats and it is a top priority of this committee to help move our policy in the Gulf toward one that safeguards American interests while honoring American values. Our Gulf policy should not have to sacrifice one for the other.

Since the start of the current Yemen conflict in 2015, more than 10,000 people have died in airstrikes, 85,000 children have died of malnutrition, 14 million Yemenites are on the brink of famine, and more than one million suffer from cholera. The U.N. calls this the world's worst humanitarian crisis and there is no shortage of bad news. In just the last week, it was confirmed that silos holding one quarter of Yemen's wheat stocks had been destroyed, and eight more civilians were killed when a bomb struck a center for internally-displaced people.

Yemen was already in crisis before the conflict began, but the war has made things far worse. I want to be clear: Saudi Arabia and its partners have very real and urgent security challenges. The Houthis in Yemen receive support from Iran. The Houthis are launching missiles into Saudi territory, threatening Saudi civilians

as well as American personnel. In 2016, they launched cruise missiles at a U.S. Navy ship in the Red Sea.

And our country's strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, despite some bumps in the road, has been a valuable one. Saudi Arabia plays an important role as a counterbalance to Iran and the region. But neither the threats facing the Saudis nor America's partnerships with the Kingdom mean that the Saudis should have a blank check. We cannot look the other way when it comes to the recklessness with which the Saudi-led coalition has conducted its operations.

In Yemen, I am not just talking about one tragic screw-up, though that would be bad enough. Coalition's operations have been characterized by strike after strike after strike that has resulted in unnecessary civilian casualties. A school bus full of children, a wedding, a funeral, and these mistakes have been compounded by a lack of real accountability. At the same time, both the coalition and the Houthi authorities have prevented humanitarian assistance from getting to where it is needed most.

So we need to stay focused on ending the suffering in Yemen and advancing a political solution. In the long term, I am hopeful about the U.N. peace process led by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and where these negotiations can lead. The war in Yemen poses significant challenges, but we cannot view the issues in the Arabian Peninsula solely through that lens.

Our relationship with the Saudis is very different now than it was even 6 months ago. The heinous murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi shocked the world and the administration seemed content to sweep it under the rug and move on. That is not acceptable to me. In addition, new reporting suggests that the weapons the United States and the Saudis sold the Emirates are now ending up in the hands of al-Qaida terrorists, Houthi rebels, and Iranian intelligence officials as well. And of course, the ongoing imprisonment of women activists including, Loujain al-Hathloul and Hatoon al-Fassi, and other human rights abuses cannot be ignored.

So it can no longer be business as usual. We need to see a real change in Saudi behavior. We need to push for accountability. And we need to understand what has driven our own administration's policy in this part of the world.

I want to assure everyone listening today that today's hearing and markup presents the beginning of this committee's focus on these issues. We will not sweep these questions under the rug, and we will push for changes that are absolutely necessary to get the U.S.-Saudi relationship back on track.

I am interested in hearing from our witnesses on how to grapple with these challenges, but first I would like to recognize our ranking member, Mr. Mike McCaul of Texas, for any opening remarks he might have.

Mr. McCAUL. I would like to thank my good friend, Mr. Engel, for calling this important hearing. The United States has key national-security interests in the Arabian Peninsula, which is why we spent decades cultivating close partnerships with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. We have had a long history of working together to advance our shared strategic interests.

Even so, each of these partnerships has its own nuances and complexities. We have often encouraged these partners to make improvements on areas such as human rights and religious freedom, such as through our annual State Department reports. We have also had longstanding concerns about terror-financing and other support for terror emanating from the Gulf.

We are grateful for the progress that has been made in recent years, although there is still much work to be done. And like many, I was heartened to hear about the reforms on the horizon in Saudi Arabia, such as lifting the ban on women driving.

In the context of this hope for the Kingdom's future, I was both appalled and deeply saddened by the news of Jamal Khashoggi's murder. Jamal's murder was a major setback in our relationship with Saudi Arabia, a gruesome and disturbing crime that sadly showed how much further the Saudis need to go. Nothing like this crime can happen again, and everybody responsible must be held accountable.

This fall, we heard distressing reports that women's rights activists had been not only imprisoned but tortured. We need to see serious changes in the Saudis behavior with respect to dissidents and ex-patriots to regain our trust. The lesson of this terrible event needs to be that intimidation and violence by any government against peaceful dissent will be met with strong disapproval by responsible nations.

All of our witnesses have distinguished records of U.S. Government service working on Middle Eastern issues. Amid daily reports about the fragility of the United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen's ongoing peace efforts, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what the United States can do to bring a sustainable, political solution to the conflict that will help mitigate the urgent humanitarian crisis.

Unfortunately, today's discussion of the Yemen War is complicated by the markup of what I believe to be an ill-advised bill. I will say more later, but I am alarmed that we are abusing a privileged War Powers procedure to address questions where U.S. forces are not involved in combat. Not only does it fail to meaningfully address the security cooperation issues we face in the region, it also creates a dangerous precedent that could disrupt U.S. security cooperation with partners all around the world.

With that said, the number of civilian deaths during this conflict is deeply concerning. Improvements in humanitarian access are critical to preventing the crisis from worsening. Every effort must be taken to eliminate civilian casualties from air strikes. I hope this hearing will contribute to the conversation about what applicable and appropriate steps the United States can take to decrease the threat that this conflict poses to civilians rather than adding fuel to the fire of an unproductive conversation about War Powers.

I fear that many of the recent discussions regarding the Yemen conflict have obscured the incredibly damaging role that the Houthis are playing. Recent reports have documented the Houthis diversion of vital food aid from people in need and the brutal torture of detainees.

Iran is also playing an incredibly harmful role in this conflict by supplying the Houthis with ballistic missiles and other forms of

support. The U.N. itself has reported that Iran has violated U.N. Security Council resolutions through their support for the Houthis. I hope our witnesses today will discuss how the United States and our partners can effectively respond to Iran's role in this conflict.

We can also not lose sight of the fact that significant terrorist threats continue to emanate out of Yemen. Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, testified last week that al-Qaida affiliate in Yemen, AQAP, remains one of the largest and most capable terrorist groups in the world. We are grateful to our Gulf partners for their help in countering this threat.

I dealt with AQAP and their external operations for many years as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, and I hope our witnesses can speak to whether our current counterterrorism strategy in Yemen is as effective as it could be or whether any changes need to be made. And with that Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. McCaul.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our witnesses today.

Mr. David Harden, Managing Director of the Georgetown Strategy Group, Mr. Harden previously served as Assistant USAID Administrator in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance as well as numerous other roles across nearly two decades at USAID, including directing USAID's operation in Yemen until last year.

Dr. Mara Karlin, the Director of Strategic Studies of the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies, Dr. Karlin has served in national security roles for five secretaries of defense, most recently as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development.

Mr. Jake Sullivan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Mr. Sullivan was National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden and also the Director of Policy Planning and Deputy Chief of Staff at the Department of State.

Mr. Mike Singh, Managing Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, he was Senior Director for Middle East affairs at the White House from 2007 to 2008, and a director on the NSC staff from 2005 to 2007. Earlier, he served as special assistant to Secretaries of State Powell and Rice, and at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

This is a distinguished panel and we are delighted to have them with us this morning. Thank you very much. I would like to say for the record that we invited administration witnesses to be part of this discussion but we were told that the relevant State Department officials were traveling this week. So we hope to hear from them soon in the future.

Our witnesses' testimony will be included in the record of this hearing, and I would now like to recognize our witnesses for 5 minutes each and we will start with Mr. Harden.

#### **STATEMENT OF DAVID HARDEN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GEORGETOWN STRATEGY GROUP**

Mr. HARDEN. Thank you, Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and the distinguished members of this committee. Thank you for having me today. Last night I just got back from the Middle



East. I was in Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Amman, Riyadh, Dammam, and Abu Dhabi, so I hope that I have some fresh perspectives to bring.

My perspective is typically very much focused on the economics and the humanitarian angles. I will begin with Yemen, but I want to take a moment to also look at the broader issues that the Arabian Peninsula will face in the coming decade, and then I offer one big idea for this committee.

On Yemen, Chairman Engel set out the horrific statistics. The tragedy is overwhelming. The challenges, though, is that the political process, political accommodation, is not likely to succeed in the short term. We have great respect for the U.N. Envoy, but the Stockholm Agreement is fragile, reversible, and likely not to hold. There will likely be an attack on Hodeida sometime this year. There is no military solution.

And so within this context I offer a very bleak, short-term assessment of Yemen. It is hard to figure out a way forward. I offer humbly an economic set of policies which are very detailed and in my statement and I am happy to answer questions about those during the hearing. But fundamentally, the only mechanisms that we have available to us right now are to increase the purchasing power at the household level for families.

We can do this by improving access and allowing greater, more robust trade to come in from every direction. Humanitarian assistance is 5 percent of the total basic commodities that come into Yemen, 95 percent of it is private sector trade. Nothing will work unless more trade; more basic commodities come in faster and at cheaper prices.

Second, the currency needs to be stabilized. The currency collapse as a result of the splintering of the bank has been the single driving force for the humanitarian collapse. Third, more revenue, more income has to come in to individuals and to households, and that means paying salaries for teachers, sanitation workers and healthcare providers. If we can get the economics right, then there is a prospect for creating a bit of a space to push forward political process and political accommodation.

The economics alone will not work, it is not sufficient. We also need a stabilization strategy and at the moment there is not one. We have to, and when I say “we,” I mean the international community together, collectively, has to envision a strategy that will give some hope to the people, address underlying grievances, provide basic services, and jobs and economic opportunity. Then if we get it right, there could be some opportunity forward.

But the tragedy of Yemen will stay with us longer than what we can bear. What worries me though is within the context of Yemen and its exhaustive State, as well as what is happening in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, I deeply worry that the United States may turn its back on the Middle East and we do so at our own risk.

There is a rising tide of neo-isolationism. The opportunities and the broad trends that are facing the Arabian Peninsula over the next decade are both exciting and represent inflection points. So clearly we know and we see that there is a new great game in the Arabian Peninsula and in the Horn of Africa where China and Iran and Turkey and Russia are seeking influence, markets, and power.

Second, we know that there will be rapid and impressive technological changes and changes to capital structures and capital flows. The United States may be a part of this, but we also may not be the leader in this. And then last, it is important not to discount the rising aspirations of the Gulf States. There is the Saudi 2030 vision of course; the UAE is setting forth a 50-year plan in just a couple of years. These rising aspirations provide both opportunity and risks for us.

So with that how do we manage? How do we go forward? How do we get out of this Middle East purgatory? So I proposed, in my statement to you, a crisis response core that would allow us to more effectively, with 21st century technology, agility, capabilities, bring talent to the most complex crisis and achieve our overriding goals of a secure Arabian Peninsula and advancing American security, economic, and political interests.

I turn it back to you, Chairman. Thank you for the time and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harden follows:]

**STATEMENT BY R. DAVID HARDEN,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE GEORGETOWN STRATEGY GROUP, INC.  
BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 6, 2019**

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula: An Evaluation. Last night, I returned from the Middle East. During the past two weeks, I visited Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Amman, Riyadh, Dammam, and Abu Dhabi. Today, I am here to offer an on-the-ground economic analysis of the complex crises and foreign policy challenges that the United States will face in the decade ahead. My testimony begins with Yemen, then outlines three broad trends shaping the Arabian Peninsula, and concludes by proposing one big idea to this Committee.

**I. YEMEN OVERWHELMS**

Make no mistake: the human toll of the Yemen war is staggering. Of the nearly 29 million people in the country, about 22 million — nearly 76 percent of the population — need some form of humanitarian assistance. Among them, 16 million do not have reliable access to drinking water or food. Last year Yemen faced the world's largest cholera epidemic in recorded history; one million people suffered from an outbreak driven by the deterioration of the wastewater management systems primarily in Houthi-controlled territory.

The biggest challenge, widespread food insecurity, is not the result of a "drought famine." Food and basic commodities are in the markets but priced beyond reach of most of the population. When the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) splintered in late 2016, the economy de-leveraged as the formal banking system collapsed. The Yemeni rial then dropped precipitously in value and a war economy emerged further incentivizing the conflict and accelerating the humanitarian crises. In Geneva later this month, the United Nations (UN) is expected to call for another \$4 billion in emergency assistance for its Humanitarian Response Plan.

Yemen is a complicated war — or rather wars. By my count, there are five. The Houthi militias control 20 percent of the land, 70 percent of the population, and are in a civil war with the internationally recognized Yemen government, headed by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. Meanwhile, the Saudi-led coalition, consisting primarily of Saudi and Emirati forces with symbolic support from other Sunni states, is engaged in a proxy fight with Iran that supplies the Houthis with arms, cash, and strategic intelligence. In the south, Yemeni secession forces seek

to re-establish an independent state, the so-called nation of South Arabia, and are fighting both the Hadi government and, at times, any other tribal or political actors that stand in their way. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the U.S. are also engaged in a battle against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), and al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP). Concurrently, both AQAP and ISIS treat parts of south, east, and central Yemen as their base to project power against the UAE, the Saudis, the Hadi Government, the Houthis, Iran, the United States and others actors. Not surprisingly, the Yemen war is not limited to Yemen. The Houthi militias have taken and, at times, controlled some hilltops on the Saudi side of the Yemen border. More concerning, the Houthis have fired ballistic missiles, mortars, and artillery into Saudi territory, including more than 215 Iranian configured missiles into Saudi cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah, and Jizan.

### **An Economic Way Forward?**

There is no immediate military solution. Peace remains remote. December's Stockholm Agreement outlining a ceasefire for the the battle of Hodeidah seaport is fragile. The humanitarian response has only gotten more expensive. Given this bleak landscape, what realistically can be done to ease the suffering of the Yemeni people and initiate a virtuous cycle that fosters political and economic windows for stability and an eventual peace? The realistic next steps must be to improve the purchasing power at the household level by: (i) increasing supply and lowering costs of basic commodities, fuel and medicines; (ii) stabilizing the currency and increasing household income. This two-pronged strategy requires the international humanitarian community to recognize that commercial trade, a stable currency, and improved household incomes are the key drivers to mitigating the humanitarian crisis. While assistance does save lives of the most vulnerable, it does not change the economic and political calculus of the combatants. In short, the underlying incentives of the war economy must change.

### **Increase Supply and Lower Costs of Basic Commodities by Opening the Seaports and Land Crossings**

The first prong of this economic strategy requires that the Saudi-led coalition in concert with the Hadi Government open all land and air crossings as well as all seaports as expansively and efficiently as practicable. No complex crises should rest on one major access point — as is the case for Hodeidah seaport. Additionally, the UN and the Saudi-led coalition should work to keep both Hodeidah and nearby Salef seaports open, even in the event of expanded conflict. The UN should use best efforts to negotiate continued predictability and access particularly for Hodeidah through third party management, a more robust UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism, and real time coordination with the Saudi Emergency and Humanitarian Operations Cell using better technology and communication mechanisms (additionally USAID should assign

an officer to the cell). Responsibility for averting a humanitarian catastrophe ultimately rests with the Houthi militias that control Hodeidah; they must turn the seaport over to UN or third party control.

In 2018, Aden experienced an increase in imports — in part as an attempt by the Hadi government to deny the Houthis port revenue and presumably in anticipation of a battle for Hodeidah. To further mitigate the humanitarian collapse, the Yemeni government can facilitate the ease of movement and imports by breaking oligarchical and monopolistic interests in Aden seaport. Policy changes could include opening up competitive import markets, reducing licensing requirements, facilitating berthing, and expediting unloading and transit from the port to markets.

Additionally, the Hadi government should partner with the Saudi-led coalition and possibly private sector investors to expand the port of Mocha to provide access to Taiz, the north, and broaden Mukalla port. Regarding land borders crossings, the Saudis can open border crossings at al Tuwwal and al Khadra so commercial traders can access the port of Jizan in southern Saudi Arabia. Further, Wadiyah crossing could be more efficient with 24 hour access, more lanes, and improved scanning systems. While remote, land crossings via Oman should be available and can help to broaden the competitive market place. Finally, for humanitarian purposes — as opposed to sustainable commercial trade — it is possible to expand service to Sana'a airport and other smaller airports throughout Yemen. While many of these solutions require time, some do not. During a humanitarian emergency it is critical to expand options for humanitarian access and private sector trade from as many channels as possible.

#### **... and by Facilitating Private Sector Trade**

Private sector traders provide nearly all of the basic commodities in Yemen; humanitarian assistance constitutes roughly five percent of total basic commodities. To that end, the Hadi government through the CBY, Ministry of Finance and the commercial banking sector have established trade facilitation letters of credit for a broad and inclusive range of traders to import basic commodities and medicines by drawing down on the \$2 billion deposited in Riyadh. This trade facility should be expanded and deepened. Further, access to international banking would allow global suppliers to assess less risk to traders, shippers and insurers thereby lowering the costs to end use buyers.

Similarly, relatively simple systems can be established in Aden (and eventually the other ports) to initiate automated and transparent customs systems, electronic payments and audited accounts to mitigate the risk of corruption, create import efficiencies, and lower the costs of transportation. Another pragmatic idea is to consolidate Yemeni and Saudi customs on the

Saudi-side of the Wadiya crossing to create one verifiable control point and to lower corruption risk. This would allow for a faster and less costly flow of goods to Yemen. Finally, a direct way to lower costs and increase trade is for the Hadi government to eliminate all customs and duties on all basic commodities given the emergency nature of the humanitarian crises. Presumably this savings would not be passed on to people in Houthi controlled territory however.

These steps would increase the volume of basic commodities imported into Yemen and drive down market prices. Collectively, however, this is only one half of the solution to improve household purchasing power for millions of Yemeni people.

#### **Stabilize the Currency and Increase Household Income**

The second part of the economic strategy is for the Hadi government to stabilize the currency beyond recent CBY steps and reduce other non-trade barriers that inhibit the ability of families to purchase basic commodities.

#### **The Central Bank**

The CBY Governor may be the most important person on the most important issue — and must therefore continue to take bold steps to stabilize the currency. First, the CBY must closely partner with the International Monetary Fund to complete its diagnostic assessment and bring the CBY back into the international banking system. Second, the CBY should institutionalize and deepen the use of electronic payments and/or checks flowing through the banking system to lower corruption risk and to allow for financial flows through correspondent banking relationships. Third, in addition to a trade facilitation credit system, the CBY can re-establish and expand the viability of letter of credits in the private sector but will need more resources to accelerate trade. This last initiative would allow even small traders the ability to buy and sell and, promptly, stimulate local economies.

#### **The Hadi Government**

The Hadi government must establish more sophisticated budget and an accounting systems so there is clarity regarding use of oil revenue and to stem the flow of unaccounted leakages fueling the war economy. Better use of government revenue to help pay the salaries of healthcare workers and teachers on a sustained basis will go a long way to blunt the humanitarian crisis. Transparent, credible budgets and accounting systems would be a confidence boost to the UN and donors to help subsidize these salary payments through the Ministry of Finance and the CBY. A failure to perform basic budgeting and accounting may result in the UN setting up a

parallel finance system which will only serve to erode confidence in Yemeni national institutions.

#### **The United Nations**

The humanitarian community must purchase as many local goods and services from the Yemeni markets as practicable including locally milled and fortified flour, high caloric date bars for school lunches and locally-sourced services. Further, the UN can also engage in a more rigorous system to prevent unaccounted leakages by incorporating social networking technology, multi-channel communications platforms with beneficiaries and service providers, and enhanced biometric screening to ensure that assistance is getting to the most vulnerable on the basis of need. Finally, a regional World Food Programme commodities hub closer to Yemen would enhance responsiveness and lower operational costs.

#### **The Private Sector**

The private sector has a substantial role to play in mitigating the humanitarian crises. First, the key private sector players should encourage a market economy that is open to small and medium sized businesses. There must be a shift towards a responsible market system that is not simply extractive, oligarchical, and corrupt. Further, a responsible market system will attract investors and restore consumer faith. In other conflicts, senior private sector leaders have played a positive role in mitigating conflict and charting a more hopeful course for a nation at war or brink of war. Similarly, as we saw last month in Amman, the Yemeni business community is starting to recognize this opportunity and obligation.

Emergent technologies provide potential possibilities. Specifically, innovators and entrepreneurs have business opportunities with renewable energy and water technology adaptable for a Yemen market. Finally, the CBY can approve and support a mobile banking systems and leading finance technologies. An interesting and adaptive example is M-Pesa in Kenya (including in the refugee camps), Thailand and other locations, where the unbanked can access the banking system with confidence and efficiency. The cost of wiring money from the abroad to Yemen is so expensive that disrupting the wire transfer costs alone would save families and communities enormous sums and unlock diaspora remittances more effectively.

Blunting the humanitarian crises in Yemen is a security, political, economic, and moral imperative. Aside from ending the war through a negotiated political settlement, the most efficient approach is to improve household purchasing power. To do so, requires a greater market supply of basic commodities, lower commodity prices, a stable currency, and improved household income. These steps could help the Yemeni people re-engage in their economy and

ultimately create an environment where political accommodation is more likely to succeed. This economic strategic approach is not impossible, even in the midst of an ongoing war.

#### **Whither Stabilization?**

As the Secretary of State, USAID Administrator, and Secretary of Defense wrote in the 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review

Increasing stability and reducing violence in conflict-affected areas are essential to realize America's national security goals and advance a world in which nations can embrace their sovereignty and citizens can realize their full potential. The United States and our allies face an increasingly complex and uncertain world in which many of our adversaries sow instability and benefit from it. Protracted conflicts provide fertile ground for violent extremists and criminals to expand their influence and threaten U.S. interests. These conflicts cause mass displacements and divert international resources that might otherwise be spent fostering economic growth and trade.

Arresting the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is a tall order, but it is not enough. Any nascent political accommodation must be matched by effective stabilization efforts. Currently, there are pockets of stability in Yemen, most notably in Marib and Mukalla. Yet, the international community has no stabilization strategy which sets forth the plans and timeline for local and substantially improved governance coupled with electricity, water, health, education, and jobs. At the local level, the challenge is to encourage institutions to meet citizen needs and to address underlying grievances which give rise to sustained conflict. If the international community can initiate effective stabilization at the local level, then it can scale to regional and national levels when macro political and economic conditions are more promising. The U.S. should provide value-added leadership and seed funding to help the international community implement an effective stabilization strategy.

#### **The Bottom Line in Yemen**

The future of Yemen will ultimately rest with the Yemeni people. The U.S. only can help shape its future — our influence could be extraordinarily constructive, but there are no guarantees of peace. In every instance, this Committee should brace itself that the tragedy of Yemen is likely to drag on longer than any of us can bear.



## II. THREE TRENDS: THE NEW GREAT GAME, TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITAL IN THE DECADE AHEAD, AND RISING NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

The tragedy of Yemen — coupled with Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan — is exhausting. There is little appetite in U.S. domestic politics to commit further blood and treasure to a region which continues to be mired in conflict. As Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes noted in this month's *Foreign Affairs*, America rests in a "Middle East Purgatory". My worry though is that this Administration slips from purgatory to neo-isolationism where Syria is just "sand and death", Yemen is a non-descript side story of mass human suffering, and the Administration adopts policies of benign neglect based on Senator Rand Paul's quip that "Sunnis have been killing Shias since 680 AD." America cannot afford to think in this manner, to be disengaged, and resigned to ill-formed perceptions if we simultaneously wish to remain a great power and wield persuasive influence in the generation ahead.

The binary choice between endless wars and neo-isolationism is a false dichotomy. The rise of a new great game, transformational changes in finance and technology, and rising national aspirations are upon us. America can help shape the future of the Arabian Peninsula in a manner which defends our security interests, advances our central values of human rights and democracy, minimizes our military footprint, and positions the U.S. to seize the opportunities of a complex future. To begin, however, we must acknowledge three broad trends that will shape the world, and America's position in it, over the next decade.

First, the Administration is undervaluing its historical leadership role in the post World War II era. The U.S. largely built the post World War II institutions that served as the greatest force for peace and prosperity in history. These institutions, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the UN, and the multilateral finance banks served as global shaping forces for more than 70 years. We are now witnessing the rise of a new great game with China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran vying for power, position, and markets throughout the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula as well as in the Horn of Africa.

Second, the decade ahead will be defined by rapid technological changes, (particularly in artificial intelligence and big data analytics), rapid public and private capital flows (including increased financing from non-U.S. sources), the continued mass movement of people across borders and regions as we have seen in Syria, and a shifting of markets and trade routes away from the dollar economy in favor of our rising nation state challengers. It is an open question, for example, as to whether China or the U.S. will own the technology and finance futures. In fact, we may find a bipolar economic world in the Middle East, Asia and Africa in the medium term.

Third, national aspirations particularly in the Gulf states will result in unprecedented opportunity and serious inflection points for American foreign policy. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are rising regional powers with complementary and at times competing geo-political interests. Saudi Arabia has an ambitious economic vision for 2030 that will require a respect for human rights and consistent rule of law to actually implement. The United Arab Emirates seeks economic expansion and political influence as demonstrated specifically by its race to build regional seaports, boost trade partnerships, and create new markets. Rising national aspirations, coupled with rapid technological and financial trends, will likely accelerate the Israel-Sunni bloc re-alignment in way which will be exciting and unexpected in the U.S. The Palestinians, of course, will retain their drive for statehood. As long as this Administration continues to devalue Palestinian aspirations, any proposed peace plan will not have political traction and its likely failure will inhibit better regional cooperation.

American foreign policy in the Middle East is essentially backward looking, defined substantially by September 11th and the War on Terror. Interestingly, the Gulf states' domestic and foreign policies are intent on shaping their destinies — with or without America. Given this forward looking context, I believe the Administration is underprepared, underperforming, and failing to take adequate steps to meet the risks and capitalize on the opportunities ahead.

### **III. ONE BIG IDEA: THE CRISIS RESPONSE CORPS AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER**

The American private sector can compete globally. In the Middle East, our technology and finance firms are unlocking opportunities and opening markets. A snapshot today of Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Amman, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai looks remarkably different and exceedingly more vibrant than 15 years ago — and the U.S. is obviously present. Now, imagine the next two decades, when Generation Z assumes political, economic, and social leadership roles. This new generation of Americans will engage the Middle East — the only issue will be our global position. The U.S. risk though, is that, we vacate the Middle East from the sheer exhaustion of Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. When we disengage, the U.S. will lose the ability to shape the future, mitigate risks, and capitalize on unprecedented opportunities. We inadvertently but consequently will yield sizable influence to rival interests. I firmly believe that America must remain deeply committed to the Middle East albeit with a substantially lighter military footprint but with a much more intense, thoughtful, agile, and robust civilian crisis response capability.

I, therefore, propose an interagency, National Security Council-led “Crisis Response Corps” to align soft power, diplomacy and development in a manner which helps the U.S. manage the most complex global crises in the Middle East from a predominantly civilian platform.

The history of American soft power abroad is worth a review. In 1954, President Eisenhower signed into law the legislation that would eventually become known as the Food for Peace Act. This legislation established the Food for Peace program which actively brings help and hope to the far reaches of the world for 65 years. Since its inception, the US has fed more than 4 billion hungry people. Ten years later, in 1964, the Johnson Administration created the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to provide emergency non-food humanitarian assistance in response to international crises and disasters. In 1994, the Clinton Administration established the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance to take advantage of windows of opportunity to build democracy and peace. OTI seeks to lay the foundations for long-term development by promoting reconciliation, jump-starting economies, and helping stable democracies take hold. These three ideas, by Republicans and Democrats, envisioned a bold America — one that represented the best of our values. To this day, Food for Peace, OFDA and OTI shape the world, alleviate suffering, and secure our future.

As our military footprint in Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen scales down, there has not sufficient thinking to design the interagency platforms by which the U.S. can better, more effectively, and efficiently respond to complex crises. Our current structures — as innovative as they were generations ago — are not equipped to move funds, talent and technology into these complex crises to secure our military gains and national interests.

The U.S. needs a bolder vision for the next generation of challenges. The Crisis Response Corps will provide innovative skills in diplomacy and stabilization to include rapid data analytics and adaptive technologies (including in power, water, agriculture, health, finance and social networking technologies) at a level sufficient to understand, influence, and impact emergent risks and capture unforeseeable opportunities. To successfully navigate the Middle East ahead, America must sharpen its operational agility, build (not devalue) alliances, and more effectively leverage public and private capital, technology and talent to help solve the most pressing issues in the next generation.

## CONCLUSION

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to testify before this Committee today. Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are today's challenges. We must, however, be keenly observant to the macro trends that will shape the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, and the world in the decade ahead. These trends will require that the United States adapt its strategic thinking, develop agile platforms, pursue more precise goals, mitigate risks, and seize unparalleled opportunities for the next generation. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Harden.  
Dr. Karlin.

**STATEMENT OF MARA KARLIN, Ph.D., DIRECTOR OF  
STRATEGIC STUDIES AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SCHOOL  
OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES JOHNS HOPKINS  
UNIVERSITY**

Ms. KARLIN. Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. This morning I will summarize my written remarks which I submit for the record.

Having examined the Middle East as a national security policy-maker and as a scholar for nearly two decades, I can confidently say this is a critical time to assess it. Regional challenges are growing thornier and the opportunity costs of U.S. involvement are deepening. While we cannot fully extricate from this region, we must recognize it is less of a priority than it once was, particularly in contrast to Asian and Europe which must command more of our attention.

As U.S. policy currently stands, the United States exists in a kind of purgatory. We are too distracted by regional crises to pivot to other global priorities, but we are not invested enough to move the region in a better direction. This worst of both worlds approach exacts a heavy price particularly in the Arabian Peninsula. Simply put, today we should focus on how and in what ways the United States can pursue a more realistic and sustainable approach toward the region, not whether we should do so. This rethinking is long overdue.

Looking ahead, U.S. policy in the Arabian Peninsula must acknowledge and respond to three key dilemmas. First, how to ruthlessly prioritize despite terrorism's pull. Recommendations for a new U.S. approach are often binary. The maximalist version ignores the rockiness of U.S. efforts to date in places like Iraq and Libya and dismisses how challenging it would be to sustain domestic political support for the large, long-term investments that fundamentally altering this permissive environment for terrorism and chaos would require.

The minimalist version ignores the comparative advantage that America's global role has afforded it and underestimates just how dangerous the power vacuum could be should Washington withdraw from the region. It is foolhardy to believe we can or should pursue either approach without substantial costs in blood, treasure, and time.

In the Arabian Peninsula the United States should focus on three key issues: Protecting freedom of navigation in the region's major maritime passages; preventing oil producers or troublemakers from destabilizing the flow of oil; and containing actors hostile to Washington, including terrorists. While terrorism remains a very real challenge, the United States must approach it in a smarter and more sustainable way. We must set clear guidelines about when and where we will use force.

The second dilemma, how do we recognize our friends' value but also their flaws? Allies and partners are the United States' global and comparative global advantage. The U.S. military will always

fight alongside allies and partners, yet some will be more capable than others. We will perennially face an expectations mismatch between our needs and capabilities and theirs.

Transforming self-interested and shortsighted regional partners into reliable long-term allies is wishful thinking, at least not without incurring enormous costs and long-term commitments. Therefore we must rethink how we work with regional partners. We should not just focus on the promise and ignore the peril of outsourcing U.S. military campaigns especially in the Arabian Peninsula where our partners come with overwhelming funding and complicated politics.

This model of by, with, and through that the U.S. military likes to discuss works only if we recognize this cooperation as a political not technical exercise, and if the partners on the ground share our priorities. Success requires setting realistic goals, clearly and actively communicating our expectations to our partners, and constantly assessing how well they are meeting the objectives we seek. While we cannot control everything our regional partners do, we can control where we set our own limits in the relationship in the support that we provide.

The third dilemma is how do we recalibrate U.S. resources despite the U.S. military's predominance in this region? Since the September 11th attacks our approach to this region has been overwhelmingly driven by military tools. Given the nature of regional threats and the broader security environment, this approach is both costly and increasingly ineffective. We must fully adjudicate thorny tradeoffs in this region and today on key questions of U.S. policy toward the region different parts of the interagency are completely out of sync.

Our military, diplomatic, and economic tools are often giving different messages. That is bad for U.S. interests. Most of this region's challenges will not be fundamentally solved by military tools, but through active diplomacy and political agreements. Executing a nuanced and effective approach requires substantial and capable staff who have meaningful regional expertise, but right now the U.S. approach is too much sword and too little pen. We must recognize there is no such thing as a purely operational presence in the Middle East.

Let me just wrap up with a few key points. One, Iranian bad behavior in this region is a serious problem. Two, while a Gulf security architecture to counter Iran would be helpful, mutual hatreds and long-simmering tensions over regional competition make it unlikely to emerge. And third, the astrategic and ineptly executed Emirates and Saudi military campaign in Yemen has only benefited Tehran. There is little evidence that U.S. support to these militaries as they wage their war in Yemen has made their execution of this conflict meaningfully more effective.

Thank you very much for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Karlin follows:]

Testimony of Mara Karlin, Ph.D.  
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 The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University  
 House Foreign Affairs Committee  
 Hearing on U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula  
 February 6, 2019

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula. The Committee's leadership on this topic is essential, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my expertise and assist with your mission.

### **An Opportunity to Reassess**

As regional challenges grow thornier and the opportunity costs deepen given broader U.S. interests, now is an ideal moment to re-examine U.S. policy toward the Middle East, in particular with respect to the Arabian Peninsula. The United States must not delude itself into thinking it can fully extricate from this region. However, the Middle East is less of a priority to the United States than it once was, particularly in contrast to Asia and Europe, which must command more of our attention.

As U.S. policy currently stands, the United States exists in a kind of Middle Eastern purgatory. We are too distracted by regional crises to pivot to other global priorities but not invested enough to move the region in a better direction. This worst-of-both-worlds approach exacts a heavy price, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula. It sows uncertainty among Washington's Middle Eastern partners, who act in even riskier and more aggressive ways, whether it is assassinating a journalist, detaining a sitting prime minister, or prosecuting a bloody military campaign in Yemen. It reflects the American public's frustration with the region's endless turmoil, as well as with U.S. efforts to address it. It diverts resources that could otherwise be devoted to confronting a rising China and a revanchist Russia; these opportunity costs are real and growing. And all the while, by remaining unclear about the limits of its commitments, the United States risks getting dragged into yet another Middle Eastern conflict.

Simply put, today we should focus on how and in what ways the United States can pursue a more realistic and sustainable approach toward the region, not whether we should do so. This rethinking is long overdue.

### **Wrestling with Regional Dilemmas**

Looking ahead, U.S. policy in the Arabian Peninsula must acknowledge and respond to several key dilemmas:

#### **How to Ruthlessly Prioritize Despite Terrorism's Pull**

A superpower must make tough choices, prioritizing the conflicts and issues that matter most for its global strategy. The Middle East matters less to the United States than it has historically for three reasons: interstate conflicts that directly threatened U.S. interests in the past have largely

been replaced by sub-state security threats; other rising regions, especially Asia, have taken on more importance to U.S. global strategy; and, the diversification of global energy supplies has weakened oil as a primary driver of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Recommendations for a new U.S. approach are often binary. The maximalist version ignores the rockiness of U.S. efforts to date in places like Iraq and Libya, and dismisses how challenging it would be to sustain domestic political support for the large, long-term investments that fundamentally altering this permissive environment for terrorism and chaos would require. The minimalist version ignores the comparative advantage that America's global role has afforded it and underestimates how dangerous the power vacuum could be should Washington withdraw from the region. It is foolhardy to believe that Washington can or should pursue either approach without substantial costs in blood, treasure, and time.

The United States should focus on three key issues in the Arabian Peninsula: protecting freedom of navigation in the region's major maritime passages, preventing oil producers or troublemakers from destabilizing the flow of oil, and containing actors hostile to Washington—including terrorists. While terrorism remains a very real challenge, the United States must approach it in a smarter and more sustainable way. The U.S. government must set clear guidelines about when it will and won't use force; for example, it should clarify that it will target terrorists who threaten the United States or its partners, but will not intervene militarily in civil wars except to contain them. Above all, Washington must be cautious of what bargains it strikes in the pursuit of so-called stability with regional autocrats. For example, the current Saudi leadership's numerous irresponsible actions domestically and regionally in recent years should inspire real caution in Washington, particularly since the leadership in Riyadh remains entirely confident in its relationship with the United States despite serious missteps.

#### **How to Recognize our Friends' Value. . . But Also Their Flaws**

Allies and partners are the United States' comparative global advantage. Outsourcing regional security in places where U.S. interests are not immediately threatened can be beneficial. Indeed, the U.S. military will always fight alongside allies and key partners. Even so, some will be more capable than others and we will perennially face an expectations mismatch between our needs and capabilities, and theirs. Transforming self-interested and shortsighted regional partners into reliable long-term allies is wishful thinking—at least not without incurring enormous costs and long-term commitments.

The United States must rethink how it works with regional partners. For example, the U.S. military is fond of talking about a “by, with, and through” approach; but history shows that building militaries in weak states is not the panacea the U.S. national security community imagines it to be. As examples that span history and the globe demonstrate, American efforts to build up local security forces are an oversold halfway measure that is rarely cheap and often falls short of the desired outcome. Policymakers should not focus just on the promise and ignore the peril of outsourcing U.S. military campaigns. This maxim is particularly relevant for the Arabian Peninsula, where these partners come with overwhelming funding and complicated politics.

This model of “by, with, and through” works only if the United States is willing to acknowledge that this cooperation is a political—not technical—exercise, and if the partners on the ground

share Washington's priorities. Success requires setting realistic goals, clearly and actively communicating our expectations to our partners, and constantly assessing how well they are meeting the objectives we seek. We must be clear about the purpose and scope of these partnerships, including what the partner seeks from it, must consider how to mitigate differences, and how to recognize where they may be irreconcilable. The United States must also acknowledge the limitations of its partners and see them for what they truly are, warts and all. Sometimes, these partners won't be able to confront security challenges without direct help from the United States. In these cases, U.S. policymakers need to accept that if the effort is imperative for U.S. national security interests, Washington will have to do the work itself—particularly if that includes ensuring that problems in the Middle East don't spill over into neighboring regions. While we can't control everything regional partners will do, we can control where we set our own limits in the relationship and the support we provide.

For example, the United States has spent decades trying to build a security architecture among Gulf states; the latest incarnation is known as the Middle East Security Alliance. Even before the current Gulf rift began, this effort had started going off the rails, with many countries allowing mutual hatreds to get in the way of a cooperative effort against Iran. While such a construct could be very helpful in countering Iran, policymakers must acknowledge that long-simmering tensions over regional competition are unlikely to abate any time soon, impeding its emergence.

While Iranian bad behavior across the region is a serious problem, particularly across the Levant, the astrategic and ineptly executed Emirati and Saudi military campaign in Yemen has only benefited Tehran. There is little evidence that U.S. military support to those militaries as they wage their war in Yemen has made their execution of this conflict meaningfully more effective. And to be clear, the Iranian relationship with and support of the Houthis is much less significant than its partnership with other violent entities like Hizballah.

Even our partners will inevitably permit or even encourage the activities of terrorist groups if doing so aligns with their short-term interests. Qatar, for example, has proved willing to work with extremist groups that, at a minimum, give aid to terrorist groups with international ambitions. The United States should recognize that it cannot control everything its partners do, so it must focus efforts on discouraging their relationships with terrorist groups that might pursue operations beyond their immediate neighborhood or acquire game-changing capabilities.

#### **How to Recalibrate U.S. Resources Despite the U.S. Military's Predominance**

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. approach to the Middle East has been overwhelmingly driven by military tools. Given the nature of regional threats—and the broader security environment—this approach is both costly and increasingly ineffective.

The United States must fully adjudicate thorny tradeoffs in considering its policy towards the Arabian Peninsula. This, in turn, requires a whole of government strategy for the wider region to ensure that the United States is using its limited resources in a coordinated way to advance our interests. On key questions of U.S. policy toward the Middle East, different parts of the interagency are completely out of synch, and our military, diplomatic, and economic tools are often giving different messages. That's bad for advancing U.S. interests.



Most of the region's challenges will not be fundamentally solved by military tools, but through active diplomacy and political agreements. Executing a nuanced and effective approach requires substantial and capable staff who have meaningful regional expertise. The numerous empty ambassadorial slots at the State Department and the vacant assistant secretary role focused on this region underscore a worrisome dearth of senior and experienced diplomats to inform and execute policy toward this region. Right now, the U.S. approach is too much sword, too little pen.

Policymakers must recognize that there is no such thing as a purely operational U.S. military presence in the Middle East. In reality, U.S. military bases across the Gulf countries have strategic implications because they create a moral hazard: they encourage the region's leaders to act in ways they otherwise might not, safe in the knowledge that the United States is invested in the stability of their regimes. In 2011, for example, the Bahrainis and the Saudis clearly understood the message of support sent by the U.S. naval base in Bahrain when they ignored President Obama's disapproval and crushed Shiite protests there.

Therefore, it is timely to re-think which contingencies are most consequential and necessary to prepare for in the Middle East, and how to balance those against threats posed by China and Russia. The current heavy U.S. military posture in the Gulf is based on post-September 11 threats and the Iraq war legacy, and represents a historical anomaly. This posture should shift to a smaller, dynamic and sustainable approach focused on deterring Iran, countering transnational terrorists, and securing access to strategic waterways. Furthermore, the United States should streamline its military bases in the region and shift some to "warm" status where they are primarily operated and maintained by the host country under an agreement that permits U.S. forces to surge there when needed. And, the United States will need to design a series of mitigation measures to absorb some of the risks in adjusting its regional involvement. These steps should include deeper coordination with allies in Europe and Asia who also have a stake in regional stability.

#### **Next Steps: Recommendations to Consider**

As the Committee's Members explore the way forward for U.S. policy toward the Arabian Peninsula, I would urge you to consider the following steps:

- Hold hearings and demand briefings or reports from the Administration on U.S. strategy toward the Arabian Peninsula. The State Department should outline a whole of government strategy that includes an assessment of regional dynamics, lays out key U.S. interests; articulates the ends, ways and means to pursue them, and clarifies the division of labor between departments/agencies to implement.
- Push the Administration to prioritize filling open diplomatic positions and request the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine the health of the foreign service, particularly the retention rates for senior and mid-level diplomatic officials, and the tradeoffs in efficacy for political ambassadors vs. career ambassadors.

- Make active use of the Committee's role in foreign and security assistance by undertaking a strategic review with respect to the Arabian Peninsula and the broader Middle East. This review should examine regional contingencies; U.S. military posture; when, why, and under what circumstances the United States should consider using force, including where and how to take risk; and, the impact of U.S. security assistance on regional partners' capabilities and their willingness to take on threats of mutual concern.
- Engage directly with key regional stakeholders and international allies focused on the Arabian Peninsula. This should include consultations on Gulf dynamics and Gulf security affairs with European and Asian allies, in addition to interlocutors such as UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths.

In closing, I do not recommend this approach lightly. To be sure, the Arabian Peninsula will continue to pose considerable and evolving challenges to U.S. national security. However, changing realities of the global and regional security environment paired with U.S. political and budgetary dynamics have prompted my serious reconsideration of policy options.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This testimony includes excerpts from the following publications: Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Mara E. Karlin, "Why Military Assistance Programs Disappoint: Minor Tools Can't Solve Major Problems," *Foreign Affairs*, October 16, 2017. Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "America's Middle East Purgatory: The Case for Doing Less," *Foreign Affairs*, December 11, 2018. Mara E. Karlin and Frances Z. Brown, "Friends With Benefits: What the Reliance on Local Partners Means for U.S. Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, May 8, 2018. Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, "It's Long Past Time to Rethink US Military Posture in the Gulf," *Defense One*, August 2, 2017. Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, "How Should the Pentagon Reshape Its Mideast Posture? Four Indicators to Watch," *Defense One*, January 20, 2018. Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, "Toward A Smaller, Smarter Force Posture in the Middle East," *Defense One*, August 26, 2018.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much.  
Mr. Sullivan.

**STATEMENT OF JAKE SULLIVAN, NON-RESIDENT SENIOR FELLOW, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

Mr. SULLIVAN. Thank you Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, members of this committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to talk about these important subjects and especially to appear alongside such talented colleagues on this panel. And at the outset I would like to make three points to help frame the discussion.

First, Congress can and must take action to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen and help pave the way for a diplomatic solution. The Obama Administration's initial support for the Saudi-led coalition ultimately turned into the blank check of current policy and the moral and human costs are staggering, as both the chairman and the ranking member pointed out in their comments. U.S. assistance and U.S. policy today is contributing to the continuation of what is now the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Now to be clear, the Saudi-led coalition does not bear all the responsibility for the violence and suffering in Yemen. The Houthis have chosen war over diplomacy too and they have immense blood on their hands and Iran continues to provide them material support and cheerleading. But as Dr. Karlin just said, when it comes to countering the Iranian threat our current approach has done nothing but make things worse. It has strengthened the Houthis and it has aided Iran. It has also empowered extremist groups including some who are now in possession of U.S. weapons and technologies.

The right approach for the United States is to put pressure on the coalition to curtail its military activities including by withdrawing U.S. military assistance while increasing constructive efforts to reduce Iran's support for the Houthis. Recent congressional pressure has helped rein in some of the worst instincts of our partners, opening space for diplomatic negotiations that could build on the Stockholm Agreement. But Congress should not stop there.

I believe the War Powers Resolution that passed the Senate last year is worthy of support and that Congress should send that resolution to the President's desk, and I look forward to discussing that with the committee today. I also commend legislative proposals to prohibit logistical support and the sale and transfer of offensive weapons. The goal should be to end U.S. assistance for this campaign while encouraging the administration to take a more active role in diplomacy to reach a political solution to the conflict.

Second, Congress should reinforce its commitment to defending the territorial integrity of regional partners in the face of persistent threats from State and non-State actors. Iran is continuing to provide assistance to the Houthis, as the ranking member said, to help them attack Red Sea shipping as well as firing missiles at land-based targets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

An end to offensive support for the war in Yemen should be accompanied by an increase in tailored defensive support for our partners to counter these threats. This could include increased maritime patrols on the Saudi Red Sea coast and a renewed push

to install more sophisticated missile defense systems in the Gulf. More broadly, Congress should hold the administration accountable for failing to produce a coherent Iran strategy that actually ties available means to realistic objectives. I hope we can discuss that more today.

Third, this hearing should mark the start of a serious bipartisan strategic review of the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Too often in Washington talk of Saudi Arabia and the issue of Saudi Arabia centers around a cartoonish binary, unconditional support or throwing the relationship away. This is both a silly and counterproductive way to approach a complex partnership in a complex time.

If any good can come in the aftermath of the shocking murder of Jamal Khashoggi it should be a serious conversation about how we establish a sustainable relationship between our two countries that advances shared interests while accounting for rather than ignoring or wishing away actions that undermine those interests and run contrary to our values.

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia do still share interests including in countering terrorism and in countering Iran. But for the U.S. that cannot mean blind deference to the judgment of regional partners. That approach has only empowered the leaders in Tehran while undermining American values. There is a better way.

Instead of continuing to support a strategically disastrous war in Yemen, the United States should be prioritizing healing the rift in the Gulf Cooperation Council, considering how to put pressure on Iranian maritime shipments in support to the Houthis, pushing for theater missile defense arrangements, and exercises influence in Iraq, Lebanon, and Qatar where there are natural constituencies for American support.

At the same time, the U.S. should elevate the priority of reform and human rights in the relationship with Saudi Arabia especially in light of the recent repressive actions and trends that we heard about at the outset of this hearing. All of this, in addition to the continuing need for accountability with respect to the Khashoggi murder, leads to the inexorable conclusion as you said, Mr. Chairman, that it cannot be business as usual in this relationship.

Thank you again for inviting me here today and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sullivan follows:]

**Written Testimony of Jake Sullivan**  
**Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**  
**Former National Security Adviser to the Vice President and Director of Policy Planning,**  
**U.S. Department of State**

**United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Hearing: "U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula"**  
**February 6, 2019**

Good morning.

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished members of the committee: Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss U.S. policy in the Arabian Peninsula, and especially the conflict in Yemen. I am pleased to join a panel with David Harden, Mara Karlin, and Michael Singh. Their wisdom and experience on these difficult issues runs deep, and it's a privilege to share a table with them. Likewise, I have the utmost respect for this committee's oversight and policy roles, holding the administration accountable while working to shape a bipartisan strategy for the region that serves America's interests and lives up to our values.

The subject of today's hearing is a broad one — U.S. policy in the Arabian peninsula. Through the course of our testimony and your questions, I expect we will touch on a significant number of pressing issues, from the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, to the U.S.-Saudi relationship, to the continuing breach between Qatar and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to Iran's negative influence on regional security and stability.

I look forward to engaging in detail on each of these issues, and others. At the outset, I want to make three broad points.

**First, Congress can and must take action to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen, and help pave the way for a diplomatic solution.**

I served in the Obama administration when the initial intelligence, refueling, and logistical assistance to the Saudi-led coalition began. The logic behind that assistance was at least in part that it would give the United States influence in pushing the coalition to (a) abide by international humanitarian law and (b) conduct its military action in a way to maximize the possibility of a diplomatic solution and minimize non-combatant casualties. As the years have gone by, it is clear that this approach did not work, a point that I, along with dozens of former colleagues from the Obama administration, made last year in a public letter. Our initial approach ultimately turned into a blank check under the current administration, and the moral and human cost has been staggering. U.S. assistance is contributing to the continuation of a conflict that has created and perpetuated what today is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

This has had devastating direct and indirect impacts on the Yemeni people. The Director of National Intelligence testified to the Congress last week that the "humanitarian impacts of the conflict in Yemen—including, famine, disease, and internal displacement—will be acute in 2019

and could easily worsen if the coalition cuts key supply lines to Sanaa.” The DNI underscored this point with astonishing figures, stating that there are, “more than 22 million people, or approximately 75 percent of the population, in need of assistance, with millions of people at severe risk of famine by the UN definition—numbers that are likely to rise quickly if disruptions to aid access continue.” Late last year, the UN’s humanitarian coordinator said that nearly a quarter of Yemen’s population was on the brink of starvation, with food insecurity affecting two-thirds of the population. Meanwhile, civilian casualties from coalition strikes rose 164 percent between June and September of last year alone, and blockades have prevented food and humanitarian supplies from reaching the people who need them the most. The Stockholm Agreement has been a welcome step, but a tentative and fragile one.

To be clear, the coalition does not bear all of the responsibility for the violence and suffering in Yemen. The Huthis have chosen war over diplomacy, too, and there is an immense amount of blood on their hands. And while the Huthis are not Hizballah, it is clearly the case that Iran continues provide them material support and cheerleading.

Part of the reason this conflict is so intractable is that it has become internationalized, with Iran as well as the Saudi-led coalition—as well as us—fueling it. The longer this conflict continues, the more the participants will destabilize the region—including by unleashing more potent extremist and terrorist forces. Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, for example, has continued to take advantage of the governance vacuum in parts of the country.

The right approach for the United States is to put pressure on the coalition to curtail its military activities, including by withdrawing U.S. military assistance, while increasing constructive efforts—in tandem with our allies and partners—to disrupt and reduce Iran’s support for the Huthis. When it comes to countering the Iranian threat, our current approach has done nothing but make things worse: it has strengthened the Huthis and aided Iran.

At the end of the day, this is a human-made crisis requiring a human-made solution. Fortunately, Congress has already made clear that it wants to be part of that solution. Indeed, recent Congressional pressure has helped to rein in some of the worst instincts of our partners, opening up more space for diplomatic negotiations, building on the Stockholm agreement. But Congress should not stop here. I believe the War Powers Resolution that passed the Senate last year is worthy of support, and that Congress should send that message to the President’s desk—along with a signal to the international community that the time to end the conflict has come. I also commend legislative proposals to prohibit logistical support and the sale or transfer of offensive weapons. The goal should be to end U.S. support for this campaign, while encouraging the administration to take a more active role in diplomacy to reach a political solution to the conflict.

**Second, the Congress should reinforce its commitment to defending the territorial integrity of regional partners in the face of continuing threats from state and non-state actors.**

As Congress sends a powerful signal that it is time to end the war and takes tangible steps to end American support, it can also show that our commitment to the territorial integrity of our regional partners is rock solid. Here too it is worth quoting the DNI, who testified: “Iran continues to

provide support that enables Huthi attacks against shipping near the Bab el Mandeb Strait and land-based targets deep inside Saudi Arabia and the UAE, using ballistic missiles and UAVs.” In response, Congress should support increased maritime patrols on the Saudi Red Sea coast and a renewed push to install more sophisticated missile defense systems in the Gulf.

The bottom line is that an end to offensive support for the war in Yemen should be accompanied by an increase in defensive support for our partners, especially in light of the malign role that Iran continues to play. This security assistance need not, and should not, always take the form of big-ticket items with flashy price tags. It should be shaped to the real threats and real needs confronting each state. For example, the provision of and training on cyber defenses and ensuring inter-operability among Gulf defensive systems can help thwart threats our partners actually face, while also limiting the provision of further offensive capabilities that can find their way on to Yemen’s battlefield. Congress should proceed with a review of security assistance to the Gulf with these parameters in mind.

More broadly, Congress should hold the administration accountable for failing to produce a coherent Iran strategy that ties available means to realistic objectives. The intelligence community continues to believe that Iran is complying with the JCPOA, and in exiting the agreement, this administration has decreased our leverage in holding Iran responsible for its malign behavior. We should not mistake a tool — sanctions — for a strategy. The administration has failed to articulate with any clarity what it hopes to achieve through these sanctions, as well as how those sanctions relate to other aspects of administration policy. The president himself has been all over the map on this issue, from issuing threats to saying the Iranians “can do what they want in Syria.” Congress should demand a clearer approach that holds Iran accountable without putting us on a path to war. And security cooperation with our partners should proceed on the understanding that the United States opposes unnecessary escalation that could trigger a military conflict with Iran.

**Third, this hearing should mark the start of a bipartisan strategic review of the U.S.-Saudi relationship.**

Too often in Washington, talk of the U.S.-Saudi relationship centers around a cartoonish binary: unconditional support or throwing the relationship away. This is both a silly and counterproductive way to approach a complex partnership in a complex time. If any good can come in the aftermath of the shocking murder of Jamal Khashoggi, it should be a serious conversation about how we establish a mature, stable relationship between our two countries (and not just our two leaders) that advances shared interests, while accounting for rather than wishing away actions that undermine those interests and run contrary to our values.

A core pillar of our relationship with Saudi Arabia has been its potential, at least, to be a stabilizing regional force. But friends have to speak honestly: Riyadh has engaged in a number of *de*-stabilizing actions over the past two years, including escalating the conflict in Yemen, leading the blockade of Qatar -- home to the regional headquarters of U.S. Central Command and 10,000 U.S. troops -- and clumsily intervening in the domestic politics of Lebanon. There is little evidence that a necessary course correction, toward a more sober, effective regional strategy, has

begun. Consequently, the United States has to think about the types of measures we can take, including on Yemen and arms sales, to push our partner in the right direction.

The United States must also insist on genuine accountability for Khashoggi's murder. Impunity in the death of a U.S. resident is unacceptable — and everyone involved should face appropriate consequences. Until there is a transparent and complete accounting for this heinous act, it cannot be business as usual.

None of this is about punishing Saudi Arabia — it's about putting this relationship, and American strategy in the region, on more durable footing. For example, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia do still share an interest in countering the threat that Iran poses in the region and beyond. The U.S. should help regional states address that threat, in addition to steps we take on our own. But that does not mean blind deference to the judgment of regional actors; so far, this approach has only empowered the leaders in Tehran. The DNI testified that Iran continues to find ways to advance its regional agenda. He said in his written testimony: "Iran's regional ambitions and improved military capabilities almost certainly will threaten US interests in the coming year, driven by Tehran's perception of increasing US, Saudi, and Israeli hostility, as well as continuing border insecurity, and the influence of hardliners."

There is a better way than outsourcing our regional Iran policy to others. Instead of continuing to support a strategically-disastrous war in Yemen, the United States should be prioritizing healing the GCC rift, considering how to turn up pressure on Iranian maritime shipments, pushing for theater missile defense arrangements, and competing for influence with Iran in Iraq, Lebanon, and Qatar, where there are natural constituencies for U.S. support. Bottom line: America's Iran policy should be shaped in Washington rather than Riyadh.

At the same time, the United States should elevate the priority of reform and human rights in the relationship with Saudi Arabia. The arrest and torture of women activists and other voices of protest and dissent within Saudi Arabia have made the Crown Prince's ballyhooed claims of reform ring hollow. Washington needs to offer a more consistent voice for human dignity and human rights—both in public and in private. Since this administration has proven that it will not be that voice, the responsibility will fall to Congress. A first step would be for Congress to call for the release of those imprisoned for dissenting views, including clerics and activists. Managing the tension between values and interests in the context of the U.S.-Saudi relationship requires a recognition that these are not mutually-exclusive notions. And we must never be afraid to hold Saudi Arabia to a higher standard than we have historically been prepared to do.

Of course, when our partners take positive steps, we should lift them up and give them the credit they deserve. For example, the UAE's invitation to Pope Francis to visit the Arabian Peninsula is a very big deal, and a very good thing.

I am clear-eyed about the fact that President Trump is in the unconditional support camp when it comes to Saudi Arabia and the Crown Prince, and that such support dates back to his longstanding business interests in the region. He seems to think that Saudi Arabia has all the leverage, thanks at least in part to its arms purchases, and we have none. He also seems to have a particular affinity for autocrats. This only increases the urgency for hearings like this one, and for an



ongoing Congressional effort to define the terms of a relationship with Saudi Arabia that works for all. I am one of many who are eager to contribute to that effort.

Thank you again for inviting me here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.  
Mr. Singh.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SINGH, SENIOR FELLOW AND MAN-  
AGING DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST  
POLICY**

Mr. SINGH. Thank you Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and members of the committee. I appreciate the invitation to speak before you and it is an honor to appear at your first hearing leading this committee.

The U.S. is undergoing a strategic shift in the world from a grand strategy focused on counterterrorism to one that is focused on great power competition and I think there is broad bipartisan agreement that this is the right trajectory for the United States.

What is less clear though, is what this implies, what this means for America's strategy in the Middle East. Some have suggested it means basically shifting our resources away from this region and trying to disentangle ourselves from it. I think there is two big problems though with this concept, with this idea. One is that we still have very important interests in this region. Counterterrorism is one of them, nonproliferation is another, and the list goes on.

Second, is that the Middle East, itself, is and always has been, frankly, vital to great power competition. For example, our Asian allies as well as China are highly dependent on the energy resources coming from this region even if we are not. So the key question in my mind is how do we continue to secure our interests in the region and prevent inroads by our rivals while reallocating our resources elsewhere?

The clearest way to do this, is to work as much as possible through allies. Of course this is easy to say and it is much harder in practice as some of my colleagues have noted. Just stepping back a bit, since the regional turmoil that broke in this region in 2011 and since the U.S. has started to, let's say, sort of disengage a bit strategically, we have seen a complex dynamic emerge in the region.

You have three ad hoc blocks of power in this region which are jockeying against one another for preeminence. You have a sort of bloc of conservative powers, the Saudis, the Emirates, tacitly joined by Israel and in an interesting way the center of gravity in the Arab world has really shifted in their direction. You have a more Islamist-oriented bloc consisting of Turkey and Qatar and they often work together. And then you have a bloc that is hostile to the United States consisting of Iran and its partners, Syria, and various proxies like Hezbollah.

This rivalry, this three-way rivalry combined with the phenomenon of State actors moving into the region's security and governance vacuums has prompted an unprecedented burst of regional interventionism. This just is not Saudi Arabia and the UAE intervening in Yemen. It is the UAE and Qatar and Libya, the UAE and Turkey across the Horn of Africa, Iran intervening in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and so forth. The list goes on, frankly. And those results, far from advancing our interests have contributed to instability and set back our interests.

So if we are going to harness our allies' growing capabilities, their willingness to take the initiative, we are going to need to overcome a lot of obstacles. And I agree, with many of my colleagues about those obstacles. It is their limited military effectiveness. It is the poor coordination and the disputes we have seen among our allies.

Their human rights deficiencies, I think this is most egregious in the case of the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, but frankly these problems are endemic to the region. It is the economic problems facing our allies and, frankly, our Gulf partners all face a common set of economic problems. And it is the role of spoilers like Iran and the increasing inroads being made by external powers like Russia and China and in my written testimony I go into detail about these and some proposed solutions for overcoming them.

But on a couple of specific topics which you, Mr. Chairman, and you, Ranking Member McCaul, raised on the topic of suspending or placing conditions on arms sales or security assistance, look, in my view, having worked on security assistance, it should always begin with a common conception of our shared interests and a shared strategy for tackling a particular problem.

In the case of a conflict, our support should be forthcoming only if we think our partners have realistic objectives and a realistic timetable for accomplishing them. Conditionality should be built in upfront in the initial conversations. It should not just be something imposed by Congress. I think, frankly, we should also expect our partners to follow international norms of warfare.

But even as we promote human rights, promote reforms; we need to be careful about tying these issues together because, frankly, doing so has a poor track record. Our partners tend to resent the imposition and frankly, our aid is often insufficient leverage to accomplish the goals that we set for it. I think it is better to avoid that temptation of tying everything together, but I think we need to accept that we will work on those issues separately, some will see faster progress, some will see slower progress.

In Yemen, we need to bear in mind two big picture points in Yemen. First, this is not primarily a Saudi-Iranian conflict in Yemen. It has its roots in the disintegration of the Saleh regime in 2011 and the ousting of the legitimate transitional government by the Houthis.

Second, withdrawing our military support is not going to end the war or ease the problems that Yemen is experiencing. There are multiple conflicts in Yemen. The Houthis against the coalition, there is a north-south conflict, there is the conflict with AQAP and ISIS and so forth, and all of those will go on if we withdraw.

So rather than walking away from our partners, it is important that we work with them to craft a strategy for the next phase of this war, which we and they believe should primarily be a political phase of the conflict. This means, first and foremost supporting the U.N.-led mediation, hopefully building on it. And if those talks falter, as they may, it means narrowing the scope of the conflict to what really matters most and that is improving humanitarian access, countering Iranian proliferation, and deterring missile and rocket attacks.

A third point, we need to reinvigorate our diplomacy in the region. In too many Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, you have too many issues in the hands of too few officials and that creates a fragility in the relationship. We need to use our influence not just to shape the Saudi's behavior but to expand the number of points of contact especially at the working level. But encouraging our partners, frankly, to delegate means practicing this discipline ourselves, and so we need to get officials into place in Saudi Arabia and in Middle East policymaking positions at State and DoD.

And just a final point, even as we seek to work through allies, which we will do more and more in this region and maybe others, we cannot forget that U.S. leadership remains indispensable in this region. There is certain things that we can do that our allies cannot, for example, building international coalitions to counter ISIS or to counter Iran's problematic behavior. We bring unique capabilities to the table especially when it comes to countering some emerging threats like cyber threats, maritime threats, and missile threats.

And to me, our forward-deployed presence is an essential stabilizing factor in the region. I am a little bit concerned about the talk that we hear now about bringing the troops home, because a lot of our deployments in the region are sustainable, they are low-cost, and, frankly, if we depart especially with Russia and China coming in, especially with A2/AD technology spreading, getting back in, will be much more difficult. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Singh follows:]




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## U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula: An Evaluation

Michael Singh

Managing Director, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Testimony submitted to the House Foreign Affairs Committee

February 6, 2019

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Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on this timely and important topic. My testimony will consist of four parts: the U.S. policy context, the regional context, obstacles to U.S. objectives, and a way forward for U.S. policy.

### U.S. POLICY CONTEXT

The United States is in the midst of a broad strategic shift, away from a focus on the “global war on terrorism” and toward an emphasis on great-power competition, particularly with Russia and China. While the discrete policy choices attending this shift are often contentious, the change in strategic direction is one which has been pursued by successive administration and reflects a deepening bipartisan consensus.

Less clear, however, is precisely what this strategic shift implies for American policy in the Middle East. Some have argued that it requires a rebalancing of resources away from the Middle East and toward Asia and Europe, not only because the latter regions are of increasing importance, but because the past two decades of heavy U.S. engagement in the Middle East have produced few clear successes despite a tremendous investment of resources.<sup>1</sup>

Any such effort at a pivot faces two obstacles, however. First, vital American interests remain at stake in the Middle East, and there are no regional or external powers to which we can entrust them. These include countering terrorism, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, ensuring the free flow of energy and commerce, and ensuring the access of the U.S. military. Second, securing these interests is vital to great-power competition itself. Both China and our allies in East Asia, for example, are highly dependent on energy imports from the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “America’s Middle East Purgatory: The Case for Doing Less,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-12-11/americas-middle-east-purgatory>

The challenge the U.S. faces in the Middle East is how therefore to secure our interests in the region and prevent rivals from gaining at our expense, while at the same time reallocating resources from Middle East commitments toward other priorities. The most straightforward answer, and one already being implemented to an extent, is to work as much as possible through regional allies, supplementing their efforts with limited American support. Yet this approach is complicated in practice.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Middle East is in the midst of a prolonged period of flux. Since 2011, the region has undergone what I have termed a “double collapse” – the collapse, first, of states and institutions, and second, of the de facto U.S.-centered regional security architecture.<sup>2</sup> This double collapse has had a number of consequences.

First, the center of gravity in the Arab world has shifted from where it traditionally resided – Egypt and Syria, first and foremost – to the Arab Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE.<sup>3</sup> This has had a number of reverberations, including the shift in Arab states’ focus from issues like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Iran and Islamism.

Second, the relative disengagement of the U.S. has, in the absence of any other great power ready to take the baton as the U.S. did from the UK in the 1950s, contributed to intensifying regional competition. Three ad hoc blocs have emerged in this contest for preeminence – one comprised of conservative powers like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and, tacitly, Israel; a second comprised of states that support political Islamism, primarily Turkey and Qatar; and a third, anti-American bloc led by Iran and supported by its non-state proxies and affiliates and Assad’s rump Syria, and supported externally by the revisionist states, Russia and China. The U.S. is most closely identified with the first bloc, but in fact has very strong military, economic, and diplomatic ties with the first two but hostile relations with the third. These groupings are necessarily simplified, but the regional fault lines are real.

Thirdly, the collapse of states has created vacuums that non-state actors – including those affiliated with Iran – have been keen to exploit. This has been evident in eastern Syria and western Iraq, where ISIS took advantage in the relative absence of any central government authority acceptable to local citizens; in Yemen, where the Houthi movement in 2014 ousted the internationally-recognized transitional government that replaced the Saleh regime; and in Lebanon, where the Iranian proxy Hezbollah has accumulated power due in large part to the weakness and disorganization of the state.

These phenomena have contributed to a burst of interventionism by regional powers. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, supported by the other GCC states, intervened in Yemen and Bahrain. The UAE, largely to support its Yemen intervention and compensate for the feared U.S. departure from the region, has become increasingly active in East Africa. The UAE and Qatar intervened in Libya, supporting different factions in that country’s civil war. Turkey has intervened in Syria, Iraq, and Qatar, and opened its largest overseas military base and

<sup>2</sup> Michael Singh, “The Great Unraveling,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, February 25, 2016, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-great-unraveling>

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Marc Lynch, “The New Arab Order: Power and Violence in Today’s Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-08-13/new-arab-order>

embassy in Somalia. Iran has intervened in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and has a vise-grip on Lebanon. At the same time, other external powers have made increasing inroads into the region. The clearest case of this today is Russia, but over the longer run China is likely to be more active, and indeed has already stepped up its military engagement in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

The overall result of this competition, with limited exceptions, has been to add to regional instability, undermine U.S. interests, create an environment of insecurity for the region's smaller states, and, most ominously, increase the risk of wider regional conflict.

#### OBSTACLES TO A NEW U.S. STRATEGY

Under different circumstances, the U.S. might find itself welcoming the increased willingness of our partners to address problems and conflicts within their own region. Pushing our allies to share burdens has been a global theme for the Trump administration, just as it was to a lesser degree for the Obama administration. Harnessing allies' willingness to act to advance U.S. interests, however, faces a number of obstacles.

**Limited Military Effectiveness** – Despite the tens of billions of dollars that the United States has invested over decades in building up the militaries of our regional partners, those forces' effectiveness remains limited<sup>5</sup>, as demonstrated by the struggles of the GCC in Yemen and Turkey in Syria. This is not strictly a matter of capabilities – regional militaries have spent enormous sums on the latest military hardware – but rather of transforming those capabilities into battlefield results. Nor is the problem strictly one of operational effectiveness; more important, arguably, are failures of strategic planning – setting realistic objectives and devising a plan to achieve them expeditiously – most evident in Yemen. Others among our partners have capable forces, but limited ability to project power beyond their borders.

**Limited Cooperation Among Partners** – Despite facing common challenges, our partners in the region have coordinated poorly and even clashed with one another. This is most evident in the intra-GCC dispute that has pitted Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE against Qatar. But even where these partners are ostensibly working together – for example, the GCC intervention in Yemen – they appear to be working more in parallel than in effective combination. This lack of cooperation is not limited to the military sphere, but also extends to the diplomatic and economic arenas. Traditional regional coordination mechanisms like the GCC and Arab League have diminished in importance and effectiveness, and the Middle East remains less economically integrated than virtually any other region of the world.<sup>6</sup> By all accounts, our partners' advance coordination with Washington on major initiatives affecting our interests also remains poor.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Fontaine and Michael Singh, "Middle Kingdom Meets Middle East," *American Interest*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/04/03/middle-kingdom-meets-middle-east/>

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Pollack, "The U.S. Has Wasted Billions of Dollars on Failed Arab Armies," *Foreign Policy*, January 31, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/31/the-u-s-has-wasted-billions-of-dollars-on-failed-arab-armies/>

<sup>6</sup> Mustapha Rouis, "Regional Economic Integration in the Middle East and North Africa," MENA Knowledge and Learning Quick Notes Series, World Bank,

**Human Rights Deficits** – The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018 and the detention of women’s rights activists in Saudi Arabia that same year have brought increased scrutiny of Riyadh’s human rights record. While these incidents are indeed egregious, they are also representative of endemic human rights problems across the region. As the Khashoggi affair demonstrates, our partners’ lack of respect for human rights creates a tension between U.S. interests and values, and erodes U.S. public support for these partnerships.

But human rights deficits are also a problem for U.S. interests, period – repression gives sustenance to extremism, as does a lack of non-violent channels for the expression of dissent. It can also erode business confidence in partners in need of foreign direct investment. Furthermore, the marginalization of certain communities, like the Arab Gulf’s Shia Muslim populations, creates an opportunity for Iranian interference. In Bahrain, for example, there is evidence that the government’s crackdown on the Shia opposition has led to increased, rather than decreased, opportunity for Iran.<sup>7</sup> The same may be true in eastern Saudi Arabia.<sup>8</sup> An increase in repression may also be taken as a sign of regime fragility, and should raise questions among U.S. policymakers about the stability of partner governments.

**Economic Deficiencies** – In addition to poor regional economic integration, our regional partners suffer from a common set of domestic economic challenges that if unaddressed can pose a threat to their success and stability. Among Gulf oil exporters, these are primarily twofold – first, an overdependence on oil revenue, which given the increasing volatility of oil prices can give rise to unanticipated fiscal pressures; and second, a bloated public sector and underdeveloped private sector.<sup>9,10</sup>

**Spoilers** – Those parties in the region that oppose our partners – including both Iran and non-state actors like ISIS – have sought to exploit and exacerbate the problems noted above. Iran, for example, has reportedly supplied Yemen’s Houthi rebels with advanced capabilities such as ballistic missiles and drones, which have fueled and escalated the conflict there. Iran likely does this in furtherance of a security strategy that involves sowing instability within and along foes’ borders in order to keep them preoccupied and, presumably, unable to focus their attention on Iran proper. Per UN Security Council resolution 2231, the international prohibition on the sale of major offensive weapons systems to Iran will cease in 2020. It is not yet clear whether Iran, which to date has stressed self-sufficiency and asymmetry in its military strategy, will choose to purchase conventional arms from abroad, but the possibility will add to the security worries of U.S. partners in the near future.’

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<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/20566/780730BRIoQN950nowledgeonoteoseries.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>7</sup> Michael Knights and Matt Levitt, “The Evolution of Shia Insurgency in Bahrain,” *CTC Sentinel* (Vol. 11, Issue 1, January 2018), <https://ctc.usma.edu/evolution-shia-insurgency-bahrain/>

<sup>8</sup> Chris Zambelis, “The Kingdom’s Perfect Storm: Sectarian Tension and Terrorism in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province,” *CTC Sentinel* (Volume 9, Issue 1, April 2016), <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-kingdoms-perfect-storm-sectarian-tension-and-terrorism-in-saudi-arabias-eastern-province/>

<sup>9</sup> “Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and Central Asia,” International Monetary Fund, October 2018, <http://data.imf.org/?sk=4CC54C86-F659-4B16-ABF5-FAB77D52D2E6>

<sup>10</sup> Michael Singh, “The Real Middle East Crisis is Economic,” *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/opinion/the-real-middle-east-crisis-is-economic.html>



The increasing involvement of other external powers in the Middle East also poses a challenge for U.S. strategy. The presence of the forces or systems of other external powers could limit the U.S. military's freedom of action and, were the U.S. to return to an "over-the-horizon" posture, even limit our ability to respond quickly to crises. These powers' involvement also risks increasing the capabilities of hostile actors, not just with respect to conventional arms, but with respect to ISR, cyber capabilities, space launch, and other areas.

#### THE WAY FORWARD FOR U.S. POLICY IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Amid outrage over the Khashoggi assassination and concern over mounting humanitarian problems in Yemen, U.S. partnerships in the Gulf – and particularly the U.S.-Saudi relationship – has faced new scrutiny. Some scholars have suggested that the partnership between Washington and Riyadh no longer serves U.S. interests, any more than it is consistent with U.S. values.<sup>11</sup>

In my view, it would be a serious mistake to jettison our partnership with Saudi Arabia or with our other Gulf allies, for three reasons. First, there is a defensive element to these alliances – the U.S. seeks to maintain close ties in Riyadh and elsewhere in order to maintain influence over these states' choices, and to ensure they remain stable. Second, as noted above, working through allies is the clearest way to secure our interests in the Middle East while shifting resources to other regions. Third, severing our partnerships in the region would force these states to look elsewhere for arms and other support, and increase the incentives for other external powers to deepen their involvement in the region.<sup>12</sup>

This is not to say, however, that the U.S. should simply be content with the status quo. Just as walking away from our regional partnerships would undermine our interests, so too would uncritically embracing them or resigning ourselves to the present state of affairs. Instead the U.S. should concentrate its efforts in a number of areas.

**Improve Allied Military Effectiveness** – As noted above, much U.S. military aid in the Middle East has proven to be a poor investment. But not all. With willing partners and a long-term U.S. commitment, such aid can pay significant dividends, as in the cases of Israel, the Palestinian Authority security forces, and the UAE. To be effective, the U.S. should not focus solely on training and equipping, or on modeling regional forces after our own. Rather, as Dr. Mara Karlin has argued<sup>13</sup>, effective military aid must also address questions of doctrine and organization. And as Dr. Kenneth Pollack has argued, U.S. assistance should focus on enhancing positive qualities partner militaries already possess.<sup>14</sup> Congress and the

<sup>11</sup> See for example Emma Ashford, "The US-Saudi Alliance Was in Trouble Long Before Jamal Khashoggi's Death," *War on the Rocks*, October 22, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/the-u-s-saudi-alliance-was-in-trouble-long-before-jamal-khashoggis-death/>

<sup>12</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, see Michael Singh, "The United States, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East in the Post-Khashoggi Era," *War on the Rocks*, December 10, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/12/the-united-states-saudi-arabia-and-the-middle-east-in-the-post-khashoggi-era/>

<sup>13</sup> Mara Karlin, "Why Military Assistance Programs Disappoint," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-military-assistance-programs-disappoint/>

<sup>14</sup> Pollack

Administration should also consider the allocation of military aid within the region; excluding aid to Israel, the lion's share currently goes to support the purchase of major weapons systems by Egypt.

It is important, in my view, that the U.S. exercise care when imposing conditions on military aid or military sales, such as are now being debated with respect to Saudi Arabia. We should avoid, in my view, tying military assistance to unrelated issues, however compelling. The track record of this sort of conditionality is poor, likely because military assistance offers insufficient leverage to address deeper political and social problems in a partner state, and because our partners bristle at any perception that the U.S. is using assistance to impose our views on other matters. Tying multiple issues together means that progress on all will move at the pace of the most difficult among them; it is better to address our concerns separately and accept that progress will be fast in some areas and slow in others.

It is entirely appropriate, however, to tie assistance and sales to the conduct of partner militaries and the manner in which they wage war, as well as on stringent end-use verification. In addition, both Congress and the administration should bear in mind the systemic risks of steadily increasing arms sales to the region.<sup>15</sup> Arms sales and other military assistance can fuel interventionism, distort civil-military relations in recipient states, and result in proliferation in cases of instability or poor custody. Policymakers also need to continue to bear in mind the need to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge – despite warming relations between Israel and our Arab allies – as well as the possibility of conflict between U.S. allies more generally.

Conditionality need not be explicit or Congressionally-mandated. It should instead be implicit in our security coordination with partners; we should only support military actions that serve our mutual interests, are conducted in accordance with international norms, have clear and realistic objectives and timetables, and have a viable political strategy alongside any military plan. This may produce difficult conversations in which we inform partners that we cannot support a particular operation, but this likely less damaging to our partnerships than initially offering support to a dubious action only to walk away when it begins to falter.

This raises the specific case of Yemen. As Congress and the Administration consider U.S. policy options in Yemen, they should bear in mind several points. First, Yemen is not, as it sometimes is portrayed, primarily a Saudi-Iranian conflict. The conflict has its roots in the disintegration of the Saleh regime in 2011 – whose authority beyond Sanaa was already questionable – and the political turmoil which followed. The GCC states intervened only after the Houthi movement ousted the internationally-recognized transitional government and violated several power-sharing agreements, for which the Houthis were condemned by UN Security Council resolution 2216. Iran's involvement has reportedly remained modest, if pernicious. Iran's exports of arms and fuel to the Houthis have helped to sustain and escalate the fighting. However, it is not clear that Tehran has the necessary influence to shape Houthi decision-making, and in any event it is unlikely Iran would wish to encourage the Houthis to stand down since its interests are arguably better served if Saudi Arabia and the UAE remain bogged down in the conflict. There is a silver lining to this, as it also implies

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<sup>15</sup> See for example Trevor Thrall and Caroline Dorminey, "Risky Business: The Role of Arms Sales in U.S. Foreign Policy," Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 836, <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/risky-business-role-arms-sales-us-foreign-policy>

that the Saudis and Emiratis could influence the Houthis directly, and Iranian influence is not necessarily permanently entrenched in Yemen.

Second, the withdrawal of U.S. support to the GCC coalition, or the suspension of U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia or the UAE, are unlikely to end the conflict or ease humanitarian conditions in Yemen. Despite the Stockholm Agreement, the path to a political agreement between the Houthis and Yemeni government forces remains difficult, as the Director of National Intelligence recently noted<sup>16</sup> and as violations of the ceasefire have so far demonstrated.<sup>17</sup> Nor is this the only of Yemen's conflicts; the country is also experiencing a renewed north-south split which may jeopardize its unity, which dates back only to 1990.<sup>18</sup>

The best course of action for the U.S. and its partners is to boost our support for UN efforts at mediation between the Houthis and pro-government forces.<sup>19</sup> Even if these falter, the U.S. should discourage its partners from pressing an attack on the port city of Hodeida, which could have significant humanitarian consequences. Instead, the U.S. should encourage its partners to remain focused on negotiations and improving humanitarian access, in part by addressing the problems identified in the most recent report of the UN Panel of Experts.<sup>20</sup> The coalition's military aims going forward should be modest and focused on direct threats, including countering Iranian proliferation to Yemen, deterring Houthi missile and rocket attacks on neighboring countries and international shipping lanes, protecting areas liberated from Houthi control, and continuing to degrade AQAP and ISIS. While continued offensive military assistance to our allies should be contingent on a shared strategy, we should resist the temptation to walk away from our partners while U.S. interests remain at stake.

**Improve Coordination Among Partners** – While discussion of an “Arab NATO” remains ambitious, the Trump Administration is nevertheless right to press our Gulf partners for more and better multilateral coordination, which is embodied in the Middle East Strategic Alliance, or MESA, initiative. One model for such multilateral engagement is the Bush administration-era Gulf Security Dialogue, or GSD.<sup>21</sup> The GSD was organized around six pil-

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Coats, “Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Committee,” Testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2019, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Michael Knights, “Protecting Yemen's Peace Process from Houthi Ceasefire Violations,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch No. 3065, January 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/protecting-yemens-peace-process-from-houthi-ceasefire-violations>

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Ariel Ahram, “The Stockholm Agreement and Yemen's Other Wars,” Lawfare Blog, February 3, 2019, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/stockholm-agreement-and-yemens-other-wars>

<sup>19</sup> For several recommendations on how to do this, see Dana Stroul, “How to Build on the New Yemen Agreement,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 13, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-to-build-on-the-new-yemen-agreement>

<sup>20</sup> The report is not yet publicly available. For a summary, see Elana DeLozier, “In Damning Report, UN Panel Details War Economy in Yemen,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch No. 3069, January 25, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/in-damning-report-un-panel-details-war-economy-in-yemen>

<sup>21</sup> For background on the GSD, see “The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sales Proposals,” Congressional Research Service, October 8, 2008, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL34322.pdf>

lars: defense capabilities and interoperability, regional security issues and conflicts, counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism and internal security, critical infrastructure protection, and Iraq.

A retooled GSD might have a different membership – states such as Egypt and Jordan could be included, as they are in the MESA concept. In addition, the pillars might be expanded to include regional economic integration, which is not strictly a security matter but is no less important to regional stability and prosperity. Such a construct could offer a structured framework for the U.S. and others to engage likeminded states on long-term security issues, and provide a mechanism for more veteran regional leaders to influence those who are less experienced, and encourage strategic planning by partners whose own domestic national security apparatuses do not necessarily lend themselves to it.

More multilateralism of this sort is not likely to solve the rift within the GCC, which is deep and longstanding and has defied efforts at Kuwaiti mediation. The U.S. should continue to support Kuwaiti efforts and add our own pressure on the parties to resolve a dispute that risks benefiting U.S. adversaries. In the meantime, the U.S. should continue to press Qatar to improve its performance on matters such as countering terrorist finance and other longstanding U.S. concerns.

**Press for Domestic Reform** – U.S. officials should elevate the human rights issue in bilateral and regional agendas and ensure that American messages on these issues enjoy clear, high-level diplomatic support. Making clear to partners that these issues will always be a topic of conversation when high-ranking U.S. officials visit, and that visiting officials' itineraries will include meetings with civil society representatives, can help rein in abuses and create space for civil society in the region, which is vital to our partners' prosperity and stability. When violations occur, the U.S. should be prepared to impose targeted costs, such as the sanctioning of seventeen Saudi officials following the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. These steps, in turn, can contribute to sustaining domestic U.S. support for these relationships. The U.S. should be prepared to take a patient, case-by-case approach, focusing less on headline gains such as elections and more on the incremental work of building and strengthening the institutions that are vital to resilient states.<sup>22</sup>

As noted above, the U.S. should not focus merely or even primarily on political reform, but should also stress economic reform, which arguably is just as important for regional stability and individual dignity, and regarding which our partners are generally more open to U.S. advice. Ideally this should take the form of supporting plans devised by our partners themselves, such as Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" plan, or recommendations formulated by the IMF and World Bank.

**Reinvigorate Regional Diplomacy** – At the moment, the U.S. has multiple regional ambassadorships vacant, and has no confirmed Assistant Secretary of State or Defense for the Middle East region. As for our partners, they increasingly choose to deal with the U.S. through a small number of interlocutors, regardless of the issue. This dynamic presents

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<sup>22</sup> This passage drawn from Michael Singh, "The United States, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East in the Post-Khashoggi Era," *War on the Rocks*, December 10, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/12/the-united-states-saudi-arabia-and-the-middle-east-in-the-post-khashoggi-era/>

significant risks, because such a small circle of people – who are also engaged on other foreign and domestic policy matters – can necessarily only devote so much attention to our regional partnerships. In Saudi Arabia, for example, it would be both to the U.S. and Saudi advantage to broaden our points of contact on security issues, particularly at the working level. The first step to encouraging delegation by our partners, however, is to practice it ourselves, by confirming and empowering a U.S. ambassador who can develop a broad set of relationships in Riyadh. If done in a spirit of friendship, our partners should see this not as a threat but as a step to strengthen our bilateral relationships.

Having personnel in place, however, is insufficient. In addition, the U.S. should ensure that we have a robust strategic planning process for devising our own regional policies, and should include as part of that process consists of consulting with partners. The United States is viewed as increasingly unpredictable, and our commitment to the region is increasingly called into question. Our partners should not be given a veto over our policy choices, but their views should be taken into consideration, and they should be given whatever advance warning they need to prepare for the consequences of our decisions.

**Counter Spoilers** – As noted above, where Iran and non-state actors such as ISIS have expanded their footprint, they have generally been taking advantage of preexisting conflicts rather than initiating them. While resolving these conflicts – especially in Syria and Yemen – can reduce these actors' room for maneuver, doing so is inordinately difficult. For this reason, the U.S. and our partners should also focus on denying them new opportunities to exploit by using diplomacy and deterrence to prevent conflict, pressing partner governments to embrace marginalized minorities, and address grievances and ideologies that can fuel extremism and conflict.

Such steps, however, will only accomplish so much in the face of actors who are determined, well-organized, and well-resourced. For this reason, the U.S. should continue to play a lead role in organizing regional and international partners to share intelligence on and counter the terrorism, proliferation, and associated financial threats posed by Iran and non-state actors. This is a role that we must continue to play ourselves, in part because our partners lack the international diplomatic and economic influence to do so, because these actors' activities are often global in scope, and because we possess the ability to respond to threats, such as Iran's maritime threat in the Gulf, which our partners do not. In order to do this effectively, the U.S. should retain a forward-deployed posture in the region; due to the increasing involvement of other external powers and the proliferation of A2AD capabilities, we cannot otherwise be assured of the ability to quickly respond to threats to our interests in the region or surrounding regions.

To be most effective, U.S. efforts must be seen by partners in and outside the region as rooted in evidence, and proportionate to the threat. In the specific case of Iran, this implies a need to reach a *modus vivendi* with European and Asian allies regarding the JCPOA – even if the U.S. continues to remain outside the agreement while those allies continue to abide by it – in order to refocus multilateral discussions on shared threats that are a matter of

broader agreement, such as Iran's support for terrorism and non-state proxies, its cyber activities, and the advances in its ballistic missile and other advanced weapons programs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For a fuller treatment of this issue, see Michael Singh, "How Trump Can Get a Better Deal on Iran," *Foreign Policy*, October 10, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/10/how-trump-can-get-a-better-deal-on-iran-sanctions-european-union-pompeo-trump-missile-program/>

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Singh.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for some questions. Earlier this week, CNN reported that Saudi Arabia and the UAE has transferred U.S. weapons to al-Qaida-linked extremist groups fighting in Yemen. The report also said that American weapons are being used by the Houthi rebels which means they have probably also been in the hands of the Iranians.

These reports are very troubling, and the Trump administration must investigate further and work to prevent this from happening again. In light of these allegations, should Congress pursue greater restrictions on offensive weapons to the Saudi coalition? What benchmarks should they be required to meet before sales and transfers can continue?

Let me start with you, Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was equally troubled by these reports which indicate that sophisticated American weaponry is now finding its way into the hands of al-Qaida linked extremists as well as the point you made which is that Iranian intelligence operatives now have the chance to take some of this weaponry and materiel, pull it apart, and learn quite a bit about their adversary the United States' capabilities and capacities.

And this underscores the risk of continuing to provide offensive military capabilities to a coalition that is using them in disregard of human rights and civilian casualties, but is also using them in disregard of effective military action including cutting all kinds of deals with al-Qaida linked extremists throughout the country, some to get them to fight with the coalition, some to pay them off to just go back into the countryside with all of these weapons and the money to boot to only buildup more strength to potentially threaten the United States and its partners.

And so my bottom line view in answer to your question, Mr. Chairman, is that the time has come for the United States to cease providing offensive weapons for purposes of use in Yemen altogether.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Harden, let me ask you this. In a post-conflict scenario, which is hard to imagine at this point, what should be the responsibility of the Saudi coalition in rebuilding critical infrastructure in Yemen? What message should the United States be sending to ensure that that planning starts now?

Mr. HARDEN. Well, I think for sure the Saudis need to be one of the lead donors and forces in the reconstruction of a post-conflict Yemen. I do not think it should be limited to just the Saudis. I think the UAE and the rest of the Gulf States should contribute, but overwhelmingly it should be the Saudis.

One additional point I would just add is that rebuilding alone is not enough. The trading opportunities that Yemen would have with Saudi and high-end markets are very important and I would encourage the Saudis to look at that as a means of both helping to provide economic opportunity to Yemen and integrating into the world economy better. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. Let me ask Dr. Karlin and Mr. Singh if they would care to comment on any of the questions I asked Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Harden.

Ms. KARLIN. I would just like to add a little bit to that first question on the possible movement of U.S. materiel to unsavory actors. The U.S. military has an extremely rigorous end use monitoring system, so whenever materiel is given to our partners and allies around the world it is incumbent on them to keep a close eye on where it is and U.S. embassy officials regularly will go and check to confirm that materiel is where it is supposed to be.

This is probably among the most worrisome things I have heard in our cooperation with these militaries and that is a pretty high bar given some of the things we have been discussing so far. Of all things that would make me consider an immediate halting of our cooperation, this is actually on the top of the list.

If we cannot trust that the sophisticated materiel we give our partners and allies sticks with them, then I think we actually need to rethink the entire relationship. If I were in your position I would call on a serious investigation by the Pentagon of what happened here and what went wrong and who will be held responsible, both on the U.S. Government and with our partners.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. Well, I agree. I would say that from my point of view end use monitoring and end use verification, this is always very difficult in these types of conflict situations. We saw similar phenomena in Syria and in Iraq where weapons ended up in the hands of ISIS, oftentimes because they were dropped on the battlefield by our partners.

I do think that the right response is not to say, well, let's cutoff all assistance as a result. I think the right response is to look more carefully into these reports, find out what is happening, why it is happening and so forth, and then act appropriately. Work with our partners, if necessary, to improve end use verification.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

I would now like to recognize the ranking member for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I kind of look at this as sort of a geopolitical interest, a tricky area of the world for sure. But I see Iran. I see Saudi. I see Yemen. I see Israel. Iran is in Yemen.

Mr. Singh, can you tell us what Iran is doing in Yemen and why are they supporting the Houthis?

Mr. SINGH. Thank you.

From what I have seen, the Iranians have provided materiel to the Houthis and it is possible they have also provided some level of, say, training and even operational assistance for the systems they provide the Houthis. So, for example, the rockets and missiles that are fired into Saudi Arabia, the missiles that have been fired in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait that have endangered international shipping and the U.S. Navy, we suspect a lot of that traces back to Iran.

Why is Iran doing this? I think Iran has a national security strategy in the region which focuses on keeping potential adversaries destabilized. I think Iran wants to see instability on the border of Saudi Arabia so that Saudi Arabia has to focus south and not focus on Iran proper. It is the same concept that Iran follows



in Lebanon keeping pressure on Israel's northern border as a sort of tool to use leverage against Israel.

That is why I think that, frankly, the Iranians probably do not have much interest in the resolution of this conflict in Yemen.

Mr. McCAUL. So they are supporting the Houthis I guess, presumably, against the Saudis. Does this affect Israel in any way?

Mr. SINGH. I think the Israelis as well as our other allies in the region are very concerned about Iran's cultivation of proxies across the region. Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, they are trying to do it Bahrain and probably trying to do it elsewhere as well, because what we have seen is that there is a sort of transfer of knowledge, equipment, funding, and so forth between these proxies.

Hezbollah has boasted about assisting the Houthis. Hezbollah is active in Iraq. We have seen Bahraini Shia extremists go and participate in Iraqi Shia militias and so forth. So it is that network of Iranian proxies across the region, the transfer of weaponry, technology, funding, and so forth that is concerning to all of our allies in the region.

Mr. McCAUL. OK. So in my briefings, and I had one just yesterday, our involvement in the region is not one of engaging in hostilities against the Houthis, but rather a counterterrorism mission against AQAP, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and ISIS. I was chairman of Homeland Security for 6 years. Every time we have an external plot threat briefing in the classified space, it was always coming out of AQAP wanting to hit airliners, bring down airplanes.

Can you tell us—and DNI Coats has testified that AQAP remains one of the largest and most capable terrorist groups globally. In your assessment, is our mission limited to counterterrorism in Yemen and not a broader as some would say against the Houthis, is that a righteous mission for us to be there?

Mr. SINGH. Oh absolutely, Congressman. I think that America's direct involvement in Yemen is limited to our actions against AQAP and other affiliated groups. That mission has continued throughout this conflict which has obviously posed big challenges for that mission. But if you look at the record over the past year or 2 years, in fact, I think we have made some strides in that mission against AQAP, but it remains a very serious threat. I think most of our CT personnel agree on that.

Mr. McCAUL. So I would to my colleagues, I would say as we debate this resolution that we have no involvement. We have no active engagement of hostilities in Yemen from a military standpoint. Our only presence in Yemen is a counterterrorism presence against AQAP al-Qaida under a 2001 authorized use of military force that was authorized after 9/11 to go after al-Qaida.

And we have a humanitarian assistance presence. There is no presence in Yemen to actively engage in hostilities against the Houthis. Would you agree with that, Mr. Singh?

Mr. SINGH. I would agree with it. I think the types of assistance we are giving to the Saudi-led coalition, whether it is intelligence sharing, midair refueling, which obviously we are not doing anymore, to me these would not constitute engaging in the hostilities. And if we were to consider then that, it would set, a pretty difficult precedent for our actions around the world.

Mr. McCAUL. Thank you, sir.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Sherman.

I am going to ask him to take the chair for a few minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN [presiding]. American national security starts with nonproliferation. The new crown prince MbS has said that he wants a nuclear program for Saudi Arabia and has hinted that the reason is so that he can have the same or better nuclear capacity than Iran when it comes to weapons. The least expensive way to generate electricity most of the time is to burn natural gas when the natural gas is very cheap. There is a lot of natural gas on the Arabian Peninsula where it is inexpensive or you can go through the highly expensive cost of liquefying it and exporting it.

So the question here is, is the Saudi nuclear program being created because it is some efficient way to generate electricity or is it being created for the purpose of giving Saudi Arabia an opportunity to learn the nuclear technology and develop the systems necessary so that they could choose to move forward with a nuclear weapon?

Does anybody have a response? Mr. Sullivan?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Congressman, it is a matter of U.S. national security that we work against nuclear proliferation across the Middle East starting with blocking Iran's attempts to seek a nuclear weapon. But very much focused on working with our partners in the Gulf to choose alternatives to trying to develop an indigenous enrichment capacity, we have signed a 123 agreement with the UAE, for example, in which the supply of nuclear technology comes from the outside so there is no proliferation risk.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. I would point out that Saudi Arabia is resisting signing the same kind of protection and limitation agreement that UAE signed and that the only reason for them not to agree to standards designed to prevent them from having a nuclear weapon is because they want the capacity to have a nuclear weapon.

We may differ on what our policy should be in Yemen, but at a minimum I do not see how we can cooperate with Saudi Arabia on Yemen or many other things until they agree not to develop nuclear weapons and that any nuclear program they have would be subject to the same gold standard that Mr. Sullivan provides. The Washington Post cited satellite imagery indicating that Saudi Arabia has secretly built a ballistic missile production factory.

Do any of you have any information as to which country is helping them build that factory? I am not sure any of you would. I will move on to the next question.

Yemen poses a great moral quandary for us because terrible things are going to happen next year and the year after and this year in Yemen. And the question morally for us is, are we morally pure if we can at least say we are not involved?

Saudi Arabia has air power. Whoever uses air power is subject to a lot of attacks in the press because when it goes wrong it is obvious and it is big. The Houthis have small arms. What they do may be just as deadly, their use of child soldiers, their stealing of aid payments and food has been well documented. But the Saudis

use bombing and they are occasionally, perhaps more than occasionally, going to hit civilian targets.

So I think we are in a—but if we do not help them they are still going to bomb them, they just may be more inaccurate. So which is the more morally pure position for the United States? To help Saudi Arabia with its bombing program knowing that even with our help they are going to hit two school buses this year, or to wash our hands of the program knowing that they are going to keep bombing and then without our help they are going to hit four school buses this year?

So the question for the panel is, would cutting off targeting assistance, and that is the focus of the question, targeting assistance, to Saudi Arabia cause them to reduce their bombing or would they simply reduce the accuracy of the same number of sorties?

Mr. HARDEN.

Mr. HARDEN. So I mean, I think the United States needs to remain engaged in Yemen and it is hard to disaggregate between the military component of it and the humanitarian—

Mr. SHERMAN. I am just focusing on—

Mr. HARDEN. No, I understand.

Mr. SHERMAN. I have very limited time.

Mr. HARDEN. Right. So if we are not involved we are not going to have influence and we are not going to be able to affect the outcome in a way that would be constructive for the Yemeni people.

Mr. SHERMAN. Does anybody have a very quick answer? Would the Saudis reduce their bombing or just reduce the accuracy?

Ms. KARLIN. Where is the evidence that the U.S. support for targeting assistance over the last few years has meaningfully helped the situation?

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, we cannot count the buses that have not been hit and we do not know. We simply do not know, but my time has expired and I will move on to the next witness, next member.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank all the witnesses for being here today.

In December I visited Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling where at a hangar—and I hope my colleagues go by and visit—it is to me a shocking display of weapons that were seized in Yemen which clearly have been provided by Iran. They make it very simple. Some of the materiel, some of the weapons are in English, “Made in Iran,” but really said, one of the centerpieces is debris from a short-range missile fired by the Houthis in Yemen at a civilian airport in Saudi Arabia.

So this is not just the conflict within the country, but it is a direct threat and with the missile capability that is being provided by Iran, it is a direct threat to the whole region. And I indeed hope our colleagues go by and see this.

With that in mind, Mr. Singh, how would you describe Iran’s relationship with the Houthis? What kind of financial training and arms procurement support does Iran provide?

Mr. SINGH. Thank you, Congressman.

I think that from what I have seen, and I am not privy to all the information on this, basically the Iranians are providing the Houthis with the types of weapons that you are describing, quite recklessly, I agree. And they are also providing them perhaps with

some training to go along with these weapons. They are also providing them with oil which constitutes financial assistance, more or less. The Houthis then tax that oil when distributing it.

Again I think that the Houthis are not exactly an Iranian proxy. I do not think the Iranians can tell the Houthis what to do if we ask them go tell them to stop. I think for the Iranians this is really about destabilizing Saudi Arabia's border and not about anything aimed at resolving the conflict.

Mr. WILSON. And I want to point out too that it was really clear of the advanced drone technology of all things that has been provided to the Houthis which could have far-reaching consequences.

Mr. Harden, last month Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held the second Strategic Dialogue in Doha, Qatar which reaffirmed our partnership with Qatar. The U.S. and Qatar affirmed support for a strong and unified Gulf Cooperation Council. Sadly, we have a circumstance of the ongoing dispute between Qatar and its neighbors which impacts America's security interests. What can be done to address this?

Mr. HARDEN. Sorry. I am not, frankly, the best person to answer how we resolve the Qatar GCC rift. It is extraordinarily complicated and I am not sure there is an easy path forward. I am also not sure how much leverage we actually have to make that happen, but I would defer to others.

Mr. WILSON. And then, in fact, I was going to refer to Mr. Singh. Do you have any suggestions on how the United States can help resolve the conflict between Qatar and its neighbors who we all need to be working with?

Mr. SINGH. Well, it is a longstanding rift, Congressman, and I think that, frankly, our tools are pretty limited to solve it. We have been trying, I think, to support the Kuwaiti mediation. I think we should continue to do that but I think that there is not much we can do directly to solve the problem.

I think, frankly, we can continue to work with both sides and we should continue to work with both sides and cultivate good relationships on both sides, frankly, for better or worse. In this region as well as some other regions we have experienced working with allies who do not work well together.

Mr. WILSON. And I appreciate you pointing that out about Kuwait being involved. This is so important to our country with Al Udeid Air Base located in Qatar, the significance of our working with them, the potential for economic investments in our country. But again I am just so hopeful that Kuwait can make a difference. I yield back.

Mr. SHERMAN. The gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I listen to your comments, obviously a political solution is better than anything else. But how do you get a political solution when instability is promoted by the Iranians and they use it as a weapon for their security? So how do you get some sort of a political solution? I mean the Iranians they want instability, they do not want a political solution. And if you do not have Iranians at the table, I do not think there is a possibility of a political solution.

And I am not saying a military solution is the way to go, but you know, I think that after the Iranian deal that we withdrew from

I was just wondering are they getting more aggressive, the Iranians? So.

Mr. HARDEN. Just in terms of political negotiations and solutions, this is a multidimensional, multi-actor war. By my count there is at least five overlapping, interlocking wars and so a political accommodation would have to resolve all of that. To the extent that the Yemeni people, themselves, can take the lead in resolving that, that would be the most useful.

Civil wars that are externally funded and financed do not extinguish themselves easily at all. The evidence is very clear about that. So I am not hopeful that we can get to a political accommodation any time reasonably soon. Even if Martin Griffiths was able to reach an accommodation that is only one element of it. That is the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis for all intents and purposes. There is four other wars that are going on. That is not a part of the negotiation.

Just in terms of the Iranian-Houthi element about this, I would just like to kind of reemphasize one point that Michael Singh made and that is it costs the Iranians almost nothing to destabilize Saudi Arabia. It is a very easy way to continue to poke them and to unsettle them. And I did say in my statement for the record there was 216 Iranian ballistic missiles that have been fired into the Saudi space. And in addition, the Houthis have at times controlled actual territory in Saudi. So this is an extraordinarily complicated conflict.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Just a couple points to add to underscore what Mr. Harden was saying before. In some ways actually getting to a political accommodation between the Saudis and the Houthis is easier on the list of difficult conflicts than some of the other ones that are happening. Now the Iranian element here remains a very problematic one, but in a way choosing a strategy vis-a-vis Iran where it is you have to fulfill 17 conditions before we will do anything with you makes it very difficult to try to do anything with respect to Yemen. Because we have not essentially adopted an approach that tells the Iranians that there is kind of no, there is no carrot and stick related to their activities in Yemen, whatsoever, it is all connected to a whole series of other broader issues.

And I think that that strategy is unrealistic and until we hear from the administration how they intend to size and shape their strategy vis-a-vis Iran to deal with the specific conflicts, including the conflict in Yemen, we are not going to make a lot of progress. But the one thing that we can do practically in the near term is work with our partners on disrupting and interdicting Iranian shipments both by land and by sea to the Houthis. And I think the United States should, and there should be bipartisan support in Congress to press the administration to develop a strategy to do that.

Mr. SIRE. Mr. Singh.

Ms. KARLIN. We should also recall that Iranian support to Hezbollah is meaningfully more substantial and more problematic for U.S. national security interests and U.S. interests in the region than its support to the Houthi.

Mr. SIRE. Well, that is precisely what I am saying. You know, you have Yemen. You have Lebanon. You have Syria. They are all

playing the instability game there, so how do you come to a solution for this?

Mr. SINGH. So—I am sorry.

Ms. KARLIN. Let me just quickly add. Yes, they are and it is pretty easy for them to do so and it is pretty cheap particularly in the case of the Houthis. You know, the relationship with Hezbollah is decades and decades long has only deepened in the last few years. You now have a situation where effectively Hezbollah is taking a number of steps not in its interests domestically, but because the Iranians have made them do so. That is not the case with the Houthis. There is a differentiation between them.

Mr. SIRE. Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. I think that we do want to see a political resolution to this conflict. I think our allies want to see a political resolution to this conflict. Iran does not, want to see a political resolution to this conflict. The longer it goes on, the better it is I think for Iran and the more the chance Iran has to deepen its influence there.

By the way, I will also add that I think for Iran it would be a major strategic victory if their actions in this conflict led us to asunder our relationship with our traditional allies of 70-plus years in the region and so we need to be very careful about doing so. I think that in Yemen obviously trying to drive the conflict to a resolution, a political resolution which the Houthis have resisted is important.

I think across the region denying Iran new opportunities to meddle is very important as well and I think you do that really in two big ways. One is by strengthening our allies and the other is by ensuring that——

Mr. SIRE. My time is up. I do not want to keep taking other people's time.

Mr. SINGH. Just to finish this thought very briefly, to ensure that these marginalized populations around the region really are embraced by their governments and not marginalized.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Perry, the chart prepared by the committee identifies you as a member from California and I know that is an honor to which you aspire, but in the meantime you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the panel.

Mr. Sullivan, can you tell us what they behead people in Saudi Arabia for? What kind of alleged crimes or accusations are people beheaded for in Saudi Arabia, if you know?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I am not an expert on Saudi criminal law, but they have had a history of beheading people for a range of crimes relating to crimes against the State, blasphemy, other things that are somehow an affront either to the Saudi kingdom or to the religion of the country.

Mr. PERRY. Sure, violating the First Amendment as we would see it in the United States. How about drugs, trafficking in drugs, narcotics?

Mr. SULLIVAN. So I do not know if that is a beheading offense.

Mr. PERRY. OK. Well, I do know and it is. And do you know how many beheadings on an average they have in Saudi Arabia?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I do not.

Mr. PERRY. OK, so The Guardian, not a bastion of conservatism, reported just last year that 12 per month. Now I suspect, I do not know but I suspect this has been going on for a long time, and we have had a long relationship with Saudi Arabia. I am curious about the newfound outrage—look, what happened to Khashoggi is horrific.

But the point is, is this is the Saudi Arabian Government and they do this in their country on a regular basis, on a daily basis, almost. And I am concerned about it seems the feeling of the panel, at least some on the panel and some in our country that we need to now detach ourselves from our relationship, a longstanding relationship with Saudi Arabia over this issue alone and put the region and the relationship and the greater issue in peril. That concerns me and that confuses me and I find that intriguing that suddenly this is an issue after all this time.

Now you have said that we should abandon the current policy and essentially what I think you said is do something more constructive regarding our posture vis-a-vis Iran. And I just heard what you talked about interdicting some of the shipments and so on and so forth, but it almost portends that we should stop what we are doing now, because what we are doing now is making it worse, and then and interdict and try more diplomacy.

And it seems to me that if we stop what we are doing now Iran is not going to be like, well, listen, the Americans stopped so we are going to take our foot off the gas and we will take it easy on Yemen now. I do not think they are going to do that. It seems to me we should continue what we are doing and add the other components of what you talked about. Is that something that you could espouse?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I strongly agree with you that Iran's reaction to the U.S. deciding to stop supporting the activities of the Saudi-led coalition is not going to lead them to stop fueling the conflict. They will not, which is why I am proposing a two-step process, one in which we stop supporting something which is deeply ineffective to American interests and is helping Iran; and then second, we also step up activities that would be far more effective in curbing Iran's capacity to aid the Houthis.

Mr. PERRY. So helping our ally, albeit flawed, our relationship is what it is. I am sure you are all familiar with the petrodollar arrangement with Saudi Arabia over a long time. They are an imperfect actor in this, but you are saying that stopping assisting and targeting, their targeting of their enemy and potentially and substantially our enemy supported by Iran, is going to help the situation?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I believe that the current coalition operations, particularly as they relate to the conflict vis-a-vis the Houthis, have been counterproductive to Saudi and Emirate interests and counterproductive to American interests and helpful to Iranian interests. They have—

Mr. PERRY. So the Saudis are working against their own direct interest right now.

Mr. SULLIVAN. In this case, I do not think they are doing it on purpose. They are not waking up in the morning and saying we want to do that, but the net result of their military operation is to

put them in a worse position strategically vis-a-vis Iran. And the United States should be able to make a strategic assessment of that and say let's course-correct. Let's course-correct in terms of American policy and let's convince our partners that the best way forward here is not to continue the coalition operations as they have been carried out so far.

Mr. PERRY. So letting Iran have free rein and free range over Yemen?

Mr. SULLIVAN. No, of course not. And that is why I am arguing for a strategy that says enough with the bombing campaign which has caused a significant number of human casualties, has disrupted the provision of humanitarian assistance, and has driven more people to the Houthi side while not dislodging the Houthis from Sanaa, by the way, and let's instead really focus on the threat which is the ballistic missile threat, the provision of materiel from Iran to the Houthis.

Let's get focused like a laser beam on that and provide our partners with the tools and technologies they need to take that one. That will lead to greater Saudi and Emirate stability. That will undermine Iran's interests in the region. And I believe it will also contribute to—

Mr. PERRY. Seems to me—thank you, Mr. Sullivan. I do not want to cut you short but I am out of time here. It seems to me that applying more pressure as opposed to less on all fronts is a better strategy than relieving the pressure at one point and adding it to another and freeing them up completely on the battlefield.

With that I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHERMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You have all said, I believe, that it is important to enhance our diplomatic efforts, our political efforts in the region and not walk away from it. Let me give you an example of concern. It was brought up by Mr. Wilson when he was asking about Qatar. When the blockade was there, then Secretary Tillerson did begin diplomatic efforts. He contacted people in the region. He contacted our allies in Europe and asked for support and pressure to make a negotiated effort to resolve that.

At the same time, with one of our allies, the President, when given that kind of opportunity to say we are with the U.S., we have talked with Secretary Tillerson on this issue, we will be with you on negotiations, the President responded, well, that was Tillerson's opinion, I am with the Saudis. Now how can the U.S. be effective in negotiating diplomatically when we are not speaking in one voice? How big of a problem is that?

How damaging is that first as exerting our influence as a country itself, and second, trying to work with allies to try and enhance this diplomatic presence?

Mr. HARDEN. So I worked most recently in the Yemen Affairs Unit which is our embassy-in-exile. Yemen and Saudi Arabia, it is not the first time that the administration or any administration speaks with mixed messages and conflicting—

Mr. KEATING. Yes. If I could interrupt, this was our Secretary of State and the President of the United States.

Mr. HARDEN. Yes. No, but you are asking a very specific question and that is, what is it that we can do.



And, frankly, we—this is an extraordinarily complicated war. The humanitarian crisis is the worst in the world. We do not actually have enough people on the ground at the Yemen Affairs Unit to even begin to do any of the analysis that is underlying this and to work through some of the challenges.

I mean we cannot be a great power if we do not have people in place. I mean that is a simple, simple answer to your larger question, but it is also necessary—

Mr. KEATING. What about the importance—my time is limited, sorry. What about our importance of our allies and trying to really bring them together as a coalition, particularly our European allies and particularly in light of the JCPOA with what is happening that could cause a great division with our European allies in that region?

Ms. KARLIN. Our allies and partners are our comparative global advantage. There is no other power in the entire world that can command so many relationships. When something goes wrong various countries look to Washington to help figure out what to do. That is good and I would rather it be us than Moscow or Beijing.

Things we could do would be, say, having an ambassador in the UAE or in Saudi or in Qatar, having senior officials at the State Department who can focus on the Middle East. As Mr. Harden said, we do not have enough people. I would further that point. We do not have enough capable people with the right experience at the right level to actually allow the deft diplomacy, the carrots and sticks that we really need to exert in this complicated region.

Mr. KEATING. Does anyone else see the danger in not being able to fully utilize that advantage we have as working as a coalition when you hear these things and you see the reactions with the JCPOA in our European allies?

Mr. SULLIVAN. You know, one of the things that really concern me about the U.S. approach to the JCPOA is that in pulling out we would put ourselves at odds with all of the rest of our partners in NATO, and the Europeans do not have as heavy either a diplomatic influence or a military presence in the Middle East, not by a long shot.

But being able to speak with one voice with our European allies and partners particularly when it comes to applying pressure to Iran was a useful tool that we previously had that we have now put back on the shelf to a significant extent. And we are trying to coerce the Europeans, but they are dragging their feet and as a result our capacity to influence Iranian behavior, I believe, is less than it was when we had global unity around that issue.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. Just a quick question back and forth, I know it is difficult but we talked about the actions of the Saudi crown prince. We have talked about what he has done to repress women who have spoken up, where he has imprisoned them, where he and there is reports of torture and sexual harassment even.

Would you call the crown prince a reformer by any stretch of the imagination, yes or no?

Mr. SINGH. Look, Congressman, I agree with what you said and I think we need to raise the profile of these issues in the U.S.-Saudi relationship. That said, I think when it comes to economic

reform and some of those other things, you see that a lot of Saudis, especially young Saudis, do want to see the types of reforms that the crown prince has talked about, so there is a bit of a contradiction there.

And the question is can we support the pieces that we think would actually be good for Saudi Arabia like diversifying its economy and allowing expanding women's rights and reducing especially Saudi support for extremism while trying to influence Saudi behavior on those other areas where, frankly, their policies are way out of whack with what we would like to see them be.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. My time is up, but I do agree with your points that it should not just be a binary relationship, all or nothing. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Yoho.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations on your first hearing. For the panel, thank you for being here.

I do not need to give anybody a history lesson, you guys know it. But if I look back with our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, 17 going on 18 years, the trillions of dollars, loss of life, I look at Russia when they fought in Afghanistan, I see what is going on in Syria, probably one of the worst, if not the worst civil war in our history with multiple competing factions, and then you look at Yemen with what is going on in there and then we go back in biblical times, it has really been conflict after conflict after conflict.

I look at the Carter Doctrine that President Carter came up with to deal with energy, to deal with stability, and keeping the shipping lanes open there, and we talk about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen which is terrible, and we talk about this conflict and that there is not a military solution to this, that we need to look to diplomacy.

Is there a functioning government in Yemen, for the panel?

Is that a consensus—no, no, no, no, four noes?

All right. If there is not a functioning government in Yemen can you have a political solution to this? Anybody? Mr. Singh?

Mr. SINGH. Well, look. I think—

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Harden, you can come next then.

Mr. SINGH. We maybe will say the same thing, I am not sure. But I think the ideal outcome to this from our point of view and, frankly, from our allies point of view would be some kind of power sharing arrangement between the different factions. As my colleagues mentioned there is multiple conflicts going on.

Mr. YOHO. There is.

Mr. SINGH. But in Yemen that has typically been how these types of conflicts end. It is through some kind of political compromise and power sharing arrangement.

Mr. YOHO. All right, real quickly, Mr. Harden.

Mr. HARDEN. So in general the Hadi government does not exercise much control, credibility, or legitimacy. There are pockets within the government that do and I would look to the central bank Governor as a good example, which by the way is a crucial, crucial point. And as Mr. Singh had mentioned, the Yemenis have typically resolved their conflicts themselves. In this context, however, with all the external actors that are involved we should brace

ourselves for a war that is going to go on longer than any of us can bear.

Mr. YOHO. It is. And it is something we just see over and over again. I mean we look at what we did in Syria we supplied weapons to the Syrian free rebel fighters that wound up in the hands of the bad players. We are seeing it play out here as the chairman brought up with the CNN report. There has to be a better way.

And then we talk about the U.N. has to get in there and put some influence on there. Can the U.N. even be effective in that area on a humanitarian crisis if you do not have a political solution to this, and if you do not have a functioning government you cannot have a political solution. And it just seems like a catch-22 you just go around and around.

It does not mean we do not try. But there has to be something that we can do outside of the box that we have not done that—I mean you guys are smart people, ma'am, all of you. You are all smart. We should be able to bring resources together in a different way that we have not done in the past. Any suggestions other than well, we have to do the humanitarian and have a political solution?

Mr. HARDEN. I mean the humanitarian is extraordinarily expensive. It saves lives.

Mr. YOHO. Oh, it is.

Mr. HARDEN. But it is also insanely expensive.

Mr. YOHO. And it will never end unless we get a solution, so we are just treating the symptom.

Mr. HARDEN. But I also just want to hammer home this point. We do not have enough people that are involved on this—

Mr. YOHO. Enough people where?

Mr. HARDEN. We do not have enough American Foreign Service officers in who are tracking Yemen in the Middle East. USAID has three people. The largest humanitarian crisis on the face of the earth, in the region, I am not counting all the people that are back—

Mr. YOHO. All right. So is that an agreement with everybody that more U.N. people there, USAID—

Mr. HARDEN. No, U.S. U.S. I am talking about U.S.

Mr. YOHO. Right. I am sorry, U.S. boots on the ground.

Mr. SINGH. I mean, I am going to disappoint you on this, Congressman, because I think there is no out-of-the-box solution to this. I think actually supporting the U.N.-led mediation effort as much as we can is probably our best bet right now. Martin Griffiths, the U.N. Envoy, I think, has made more progress recently than has been made in the past. I think there is hope.

Mr. YOHO. Is he dealing with all factions that are fighting there or just the main one?

Mr. SINGH. Well, he is dealing, I think, specifically with this conflict between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition, which is important to do. It is not the only conflict in Yemen. I think we need to support that and then bring our unique capabilities to bear on some of the other problems we have talked about, for example interdicting the flow of arms to the Houthis not just by sea but also by land through Amman and so forth.

Mr. YOHO. Well, and we know it is coming from Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and there is a lot of bad players in there. I am

out of time. It is just a frustrating thing again and a repeat of kind of a Groundhog Day. And it is too bad for the people of Yemen. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Bera.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to followup on two questions. First off, our colleague Mr. Wilson raises a question of how do we solve this blockade and this challenge between the Saudis, UAE, Qatar, but more importantly something that Mr. Keating touched on. And this may be a little bit in the weeds, but I think we have some concern and I think this is bipartisan on both sides of the aisle, the decision-making process within the administration.

I will use a very recent example, the decisionmaking process to withdraw from Syria, I think, is a very big concern here. I was in the Middle East in December and we had a chance to have dinner with our Special Envoy Brett McGurk and have a conversation with him. There was no indication while we were making progress in the battle against ISIS, there was no indication that this was near done.

We met with our military commanders outside of Doha and again their mission was progressing in a positive direction, but again no indication that we were nearing the end here. You know, take that to what General Votel said yesterday that he was not consulted and had no idea that this was coming.

So the following week after we get back from the Middle East talking to folks, a tweet goes out and says mission's complete and we are—and I have no idea how that decision was made. Best I can tell is the President had a conversation with Erdogan in Turkey and made some decisions. And I think that is real concerning to this body and should be concerning to all of us in Congress that there is not that consultative process.

And we do not have to guess if Mr. McGurk was consulted because he wrote a Washington Post op-ed that said he was not consulted. This is our Special Envoy who is there who is our most knowledgeable person who—and that is of deep concern. If we take that to the blockade I have real concern about how the decision and what message we are sending to the Saudis.

If you look at the President's relationship and Mr. Kushner's relationship with the crown prince he had a meeting here with the crown prince in March 2017. In May 2017, the President and Mr. Kushner visited Saudi Arabia. The next thing you know in June, early June, the Saudi blockade to Qatar started.

Now how can we address these issues if we do not actually know what the administration's strategy, if we do not know what is leading to this? And the best I can tell we are told that National Security Advisor John Bolton has stopped the interagency decision-making process, and again as a body that has oversight responsibilities, here, I think we are very concerned about this.

You know, Dr. Karlin, maybe I will start with you. Do you have any idea what the decisionmaking process within the administration is?

Ms. KARLIN. Everything I have heard echoes your profound concerns. These are hard issues. There is no easy answer. The last

thing one would want to do is not actually try to deliberately think through them. And I think that is not only unhelpful for our policy, but it plays a really problematic signaling role to our allies, partners, frenemies and adversaries.

You know, part of the reason those troops in Syria are helpful is operational, part of it is signaling. If there is uncertainty as to what is going to happen just based on what happens in a tweet, it is really, really unhelpful.

Mr. BERA. Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think there are—every administration, and I think Mr. Harden made this point, struggles with coordination in speaking with one voice. But I believe the current administration has elevated this to a kind of art form, a disturbing art form. It is not in the same league as previous administrations in terms of any kind of credible, consistent policy process that produces results based on the evidence, the facts, and consultation with the military and civilian experts.

There are four basic consequences of this. The first is that it confuses and demoralizes our allies who do not know that they can count on us, the second is that it leaves our troops in a bad spot. They are out there twisting in the wind while the President is on again and off again when it comes to, say, leaving Syria.

The third is that it emboldens our enemies. And finally it undermines the credibility of the commander-in-chief himself, but also anyone else who goes out to purportedly speak on behalf of the United States because no one can trust the word of an American official. And that has the net result, I think, of deeply undermining America's national security interests.

Mr. BERA. Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. I tend to agree that American unpredictability is certainly not a stabilizing factor here. I think our allies in this region and other regions are concerned about American unpredictability and it leads them into all sorts of hedging behaviors which tend to be bad for us.

I think that it is the President's right to make a decision and every administration has a different decisionmaking process and that balance between deliberating and sort of boldness is a different balance struck by every administration. But it is very important I think that when a decision is reached we be very careful and sort of consider it in the way that we carry out those decisions. And that is what I would personally like to see more of.

Mr. BERA. Thank you. I will yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here today. I know we are going to get more into the discussion of the details of the Saudi War Powers Resolution but I want to address some of that here.

One of my biggest pet peeves in foreign policy is when people allow whoever is President to change their foreign policy view because maybe they either just want to support this person or oppose this person, and by the way my side did some of that as well in 2013. When there was an attempt to bomb Syria for its use of chemical weapons, I had Members of Congress come up to me and

say that they think we should do it but they are worried that they do not want to give President Obama the authority to do that. That was a huge pet peeve of mine.

What else is a huge pet peeve of mine is this newfound kind of religion on the situation in Yemen and the situation in Saudi Arabia that has been found by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I would like to make the point that it seems in this Yemen debate and Yemen policy it always comes back to somehow it is the United States' and Saudi Arabia's fault for a humanitarian crisis, even though there is sometimes a caveat which says, as Mr. Sullivan did in his testimony, "to be clear, the coalition does not bear all of the responsibility for the violence and suffering in Yemen."

Well, that is true. Because as something that I think is not discussed very often is that the Houthis overthrew a legitimate government. The Houthis used food as weapons to starve innocent civilians. And as terrible as every bomb that misses its target or it hits an intentional target of innocent civilians from the Saudis is, I can point to incidences where the Houthis and backed by the Iranians used weapons to kill innocent people and to block innocent children from having food to put into their mouths to live by.

We look at the Houthis that placed war materials among civilians so that the Saudis bomb it. This is not a new tactic to us. We have seen it from the beginning of war in the Middle East. Civilians are actually to be used in the information side of war so that hopefully the Saudis in the thinking of the Houthis bomb this facility or something we have, kill civilians, and then we can go to the international media and try to turn them against the Saudis. Our assistance for the Saudis by the way started under a prior administration and it is only recently that it has become an issue to use as an attack against President Trump.

While I appreciate having this hearing, Mr. Chairman, and I really do, and I think this is the beginning of the discussion that Congress should have on this issue, in about 2 hours we are going to vote to try to take away the President's ability to be commander-in-chief. We are going to vote probably out of this committee to take away the President's ability to use counterterrorism strategies in the Arabian Peninsula to destroy the enemies of the United States of America.

Most of the members of this committee are new. Most of the members of this committee have never sat through a classified briefing about what is really going on in Yemen. We had that last year. And even though some complained that it was not deep enough, I agree. Let's do another one with this whole committee before we go voting on policies that have to do with life and death.

When we take, if we take our material support away from Saudi Arabia, it is not like Saudi Arabia is going to quit executing the war. But what they will quit doing is living to some extent by the law of armed conflict that we demand they do. They will to some extent quit living by, when we enforce on them and show them the legitimate targets in Yemen and now they will see more illegitimate targets, potentially, of targets because they do not have the resources that the United States has.

So while I understand and am concerned and am compassionate about the humanitarian concerns in Yemen, the reality is if we act

politically on this committee which I think we are poised to do because we can all go out on TV and say that we are opposing the Trump administration, because we can all go out on TV and say that we are fighting for humanitarian rights which we all want to do, but the impact of that will be far beyond, I think, what we are even debating now.

So I hope that when we do that and I am going to talk more about it then that we actually think about maybe having a classified briefing. Bring Republicans and Democrats in and talking about what is really at stake.

Mr. Singh, just with the 40 seconds I have left, what happens if the United States pulls all material support for Saudi Arabia and the coalition, is it going to save lives or do you think it might potentially cost more lives?

Mr. SINGH. Well, I would say two things, Congressman. One is the war will go on. I think that it will not cause the conflict in Yemen to end, the suffering there will continue and I do worry that we then lose our leverage and influence with those allies.

But second, I also worry, frankly, about the wider effect again of considering these types of activities, intelligence sharing, midair refueling under acquisition and cross-servicing agreements, to be engaging in hostilities. I mean what does that mean for the routine types of cooperation we do with allies around the world? So I think it goes even beyond Yemen.

Mr. BERA [presiding]. Ms. Wild from Pennsylvania.

Ms. WILD. Thank you.

I want to switch gears and ask all of you this, but I am specifically directing my questions to Dr. Karlin. The Saudi-led coalition is reportedly recruiting and deploying children to fight in the Yemen campaign, as I understand it, including a large number of children from Sudan. And some reports suggest 20 percent of the units are made up of children while others report 40 percent. Some of these children have been reported as wearing U.S.-produced uniforms and carrying U.S. weapons. Under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008, the U.S. is prohibited from providing several types of military assistance to governments known to use child soldiers.

My question to you is this, and as I said it is to any of you who can offer information on this. What oversight is available to determine Saudi compliance with the Child Soldiers Prevention Act and are we employing those oversight efforts? And what further what should Congress be asking of the administration to ensure that the coalition is complying with this?

Ms. KARLIN. I think there are two questions in here. Question 1 is what effect is our support having? That has come up in a lot of the questions, right. Are we playing a more positive role or a more problematic role? The second question that I think you are walking to is are our partners actually following U.S. law, whether it is Leahy law, whether it is the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, and all of that should be reported by the Departments of State and Defense potentially in classified hearings, but that is incumbent on them to be able to say at a minimum whether or not our partners are actually following our laws. And, frankly, if they are not, then the first question is almost moot.

Ms. WILD. Does anybody else have anything to add on that? OK. I want to switch gears then to Mr. Harden. I understand that you do not believe that humanitarian aid is the only path forward; in fact it is we need to open up lines of commerce and so forth.

But I am deeply concerned that despite the huge amount of aid that has been directed to Yemen, despite the food and agricultural organization providing crops and vegetable seeds and fishing gear and poultry production kits and vaccinations and treatment for livestock, and despite UNICEF treating nearly 230,000 children suffering from severe, acute malnutrition, this conflict still prevents significant obstacles to reaching the 12.5 million Yemenis that we have been unable to reach.

So understanding that your position is that humanitarian aid is not really the direction we need to go in, I think that is your position, what concrete actions should be taken to ensure that we do have humanitarian access for the U.N. and international NGO's?

Mr. HARDEN. Yes. So humanitarian aid is vital for the most vulnerable and we should not minimize it. My point is that of the total amount of basic commodities that go into Yemen, so food and medicine, 95 percent of it is imported through private sector channels. And so that really has to be the solution.

This is not a drought famine so it is not that there is not enough food in the market. There is enough food in Yemen. It is a pricing and currency collapse issue. The splintering of the central bank in September 2016 was a unique event in civil wars. It does not happen in civil wars and this happened here. And what that caused is an immediate deleveraging of the economy that made basic commodities out of reach of households.

And so stabilizing—and let me just add one other point. In my 25 years of engaging in civil wars and complex crises, I personally have not come across a situation like this with the central bank basically deleveraging into regional, subregional banks. And so that crisis is the primary driver for the inability of people to pay for food. There is a lot that the Saudis and others could do.

And by the way, to the point, the Houthis could end the humanitarian crisis tomorrow. They are the only actor that actually has that capability. I think that that is important. All the other actors can impact it, but they are the ones that actually give up Hodeida port and allow food to flow in through all avenues. I think that the Saudis should open up their land border crossings in a much more robust way to allow food to come in and that all ports should be robustly engaged.

And the last point I would just say is the Hadi government allows for a system of vast corruption that impedes the flow of basic commodities into the country.

Ms. WILD. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BERA. Mr. Mast from Florida.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairman.

I just want to start by saying I have thoroughly enjoyed this debate on both sides and your comments. I think there has been a lot of insight been given here. And that being said, I just want to get a kind of overview of your perspective on the region to help me gauge some of the comments that were made, so I just have a couple of questions that I think will assist me in this.



Just No. 1, when we look at this Middle East cold war that is going on throughout the region, I would love to know, do you consider it possible or likely that we see open war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, No. 1. Just we can go down the line. I do not care which side we start on here.

Mr. SINGH. I would say, Congressman, that I do think it is possible. I think as you see these, as I said, sort of bouts of regional interventionism, as you see the Iranians looking to take advantage of destabilized situations, I do not think we can rule out that that could then lead to more direct conflict between the powers involved.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think it is definitely possible. I would not today go so far as to say likely, but it could shift from possible to likely with a trigger just like that.

Mr. MAST. Any further on a trigger that you might—

Mr. SULLIVAN. Sure. I mean there is a few different things here. First, as Mr. Singh was saying before, the Iranians before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action after will always look for opportunities to escalate their destabilizing activities across the region. They could overreach someplace which would cause a reaction from the Saudis or for that matter from the United States itself.

Second, the Saudis, particularly if they are continued to give a blank check, could increase their own regional adventurism vis-a-vis the Iranians. And so I think both of these could contribute to the, what is now certainly a possibility of conflict between them, but could move up the continuum to likely on the basis of each side feeling that they have the wind at their back to go against the other.

Mr. MAST. Ma'am?

Ms. KARLIN. I agree with both Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Singh and have nothing to add.

Mr. MAST. Sir?

Mr. HARDEN. Then I think we will more likely see proxy battles than direct conflict, but I would not rule it out. The other element I would add is I see a realignment between the Israelis and the Sunni bloc that will deepen over the next years.

Mr. MAST. I think that is a good lead into my next question. Give me a good outline of who you see as the should this occur the Saudi coalition versus the Iranian coalition, give us a broad perspective of that, whether you want to go down into militias specifically or just into countries.

Mr. HARDEN. Let's start with Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. Well, it is a tough question to answer in the hypothetical. You know, Iran tends in the region to work through proxies. They have an asymmetric strategy.

So in Lebanon we see Hezbollah. In Syria they are importing not just Hezbollah from Lebanon but Pakistani and Afghan groups as well as Iraqi Shia militias. In Yemen they have provided support to the Houthis and so on and so forth.

Whereas, we have seen the Saudis and Emirates operating what I would say is a more traditional way, using their own forces directly and the partnering with the likes of, say, the Hadi government and sort of allies on the ground there.

Again it is hard to answer in the hypothetical. It would depend on where the conflict is is it an Israel-Iran conflict in the Golan

Heights? Is it something something that is erupting in the Gulf? That would really determine sort of who the players are and how it shapes up.

Mr. HARDEN. I would just add I am not entirely sure that the UAE or the Saudis have the power projection to really take a fight to Iran and would probably pursue a destabilizing proxy battle like the Iranians are doing in the Yemen, but somewhere on the Iranian border perhaps with the Kurds or others.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Harden, you keep—go ahead.

Ms. KARLIN. Sir, I was just going to add and one big difference of course is the Iranians have had a whole lot of practice working with proxies. They are really good at it and have only gotten better in recent years. And I would not say that is the case, say, with the Saudis.

Mr. MAST. I agree they have done a great job. I actually call it colonizing the region. That is what I, in my opinion, I see them out there doing.

But again you keep leading me into exactly where I want to ask. You know, when we look at certainly what on the Iranian side could be considered a Shia coalition what kind of force do we surmise that they could produce in the region with that kind of Shia coalition?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, beyond their direct capacities that they have built up and continue to buildup they have recently tested ballistic missiles further to attack potential State targets in Saudi and the UAE. Probably the most sophisticated, most well-armed militia that has some amount of command and control coming out of Tehran is Hezbollah which has tens of thousands of rockets and missiles pointed at Israel. And if I was to look at the single most proximate threat to a core U.S. national security interest in the region emanating from Iran, below Iran getting its hands on weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapon, its ability to use Hezbollah to threaten the State of Israel is at the top of the list.

Mr. MAST. My time is expired. Again I appreciate everybody's comments today.

Mr. CASTRO [presiding]. Any other comments on that question can be submitted for the record. We will go now to Dean Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and to all of our witnesses.

Mr. Singh, in your opening testimony you refer to the next phase in Yemen, presumably from a conflict to diplomacy. I have heard conflicting perspectives outside of this room on whether that is already underway and even if it is achievable at all. I would welcome each of your perspectives starting with you, Mr. Singh, on if there is any evidence that that is already occurring and, if so, if you can expand on it.

Mr. SINGH. Well, I think it is certainly our hope and, frankly, I have heard from the coalition members directly that it is their hope that we have now moved into a political phase, as it were, of the conflict. And I think that that hope rests upon this current U.N.-led mediation succeeding. We have had the Stockholm Agreement which was a breakthrough in a sense. It hasn't been perfectly implemented. We have seen lots of Houthi violations. But I think the hope is that that will stick and if it sticks we can then build on

it with confidence-building measures and other steps around Yemen that will start to de-escalate the conflict.

And of course the question that rises, I am sure, in everyone's mind is, well, what if it fails, what then happens? And I go into this in my written testimony. I think that if that happens we need to encourage our partners and work with them, frankly, to craft a strategy to address what we consider the most significant threats emanating from this country.

So that would be as Mr. Sullivan was talking about, the Iranian arms going into Yemen and then the firing of missiles and rockets. It would be improving the access for humanitarian supplies. It would be trying to protect the maritime corridors there and so on and so forth. That would be, frankly, a difficult conversation with our partners, but I am not sure that we are in totally different places from our partners on those points.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

Others?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think the Stockholm Agreement that was reached in December that Special Envoy Griffiths is trying to carry forward is deeply fragile right now and could break down at any time. One of the key markers will be whether this prisoner exchange that is under negotiation as we speak actually goes through, and then whether or not the two conditions that Griffiths has identified as having to hold that there be no strikes within the cease-fire area and no offensive efforts to take territory continue.

So and I agree with Mr. Singh that actually the coalition to a greater extent than the Houthis, in my view, wants to see this sustained. And I agree with Mr. Harden that the Houthis have more power to actually cause the provision of humanitarian assistance to get through Hodeida right now, and I think that working with the entire national community to bring as much pressure to bear on ensuring we do move into that next phase is the most important thing in the days and weeks ahead.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

Dr. Karlin.

Ms. KARLIN. It is hard to be sanguine about the situation in Yemen and how much better it could look a year or 2 years from now and no matter which phase it goes into. I might suggest where you really want to focus on is three opportunity costs. First, obviously the horrific humanitarian situation; second, the price we pay to try to contain what is coming out of it; and third, the distraction that it poses both for us and for our regional partners.

Mr. HARDEN. I think that while I believe there is no military solution to this and most of us who follow this believe that, I think the combatants believe that there is a military solution. And so the Stockholm Agreement may hold and it may deepen, but if I were to bet I would say that the Stockholm Agreement fails and that we have a battle for Hodeida sometime in the next year.

And I will just point out that the situation has only gotten worse in the past year. So the humanitarian appeal this time last year from UNOCHA was three billion dollars. In February, at the end of February it is going to be four billion dollars. So I agree it is hard to be sanguine.

Mr. PHILLIPS. All right, thank you all.

Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Congressman Fitzpatrick.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the panel for being here.

There has been a lot of focus on the CT threat coming out of the region specific to Yemen. Are you seeing any CI and/or cyber concerns coming out, No. 1, and No. 2, from our domestic intel community perspective, do you feel the U.S. intelligence community and all the agencies that are part thereof are sufficiently on top all the complications in that region? There is funding concerns. There is recruitment issues as well on our intel side which are assessment of how on top of the region and all the complications that exist therein.

Mr. HARDEN. So I think that the chaos in Yemen, including the chaos in the southern portion of Yemen because primarily we have been talking about the north, gives space for terrorists and that space has probably deepened. I do not think that we can kill our way out of it and so I agree with the assessment that AQAP has a very large and sustained base in Yemen.

In terms of cybersecurity threats I would be doubtful that would originate from Yemen.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I would just add that just as it has created greater safe havens and, frankly, weapons and recruitment opportunities for AQAP, I do think it has some hindrance to our operational capability to develop the kind of on-the-ground efforts against AQAP. Not so much the direct operations that the UAE and others are working, but building the kind of strategy that we had before the conflict started to try to weaken AQAP's grip in some of those southern provinces.

With respect to the broader question of resources, I do not know enough about where things lie in the intelligence community to answer. But I would say that I am very impressed with the intelligence community's general development of knowledge particularly about the counter terrorist threat coming out of Yemen over the past many years and the contributions they have made as our partners, the Saudis and Emirates have made to foil plots that the ranking member was referring to in his opening statement.

Mr. SINGH. So I would just add, I think we have together with the Emirates especially been able to enjoy some success against AQAP. There have been several high profile HVTs who have been taken down in Yemen in the last year or two.

Your larger question about cyber, is a good one for this region because I think we have seen in this region as this kind of tripartite conflict or rivalry has developed that I talked about, seen cyber tools used in a sort of groundbreaking way by lots of parties in the region. And we have seen the Iranians as was detailed in the DNI's Worldwide Threat Assessment increasingly use those tools against the United States in particular.

I think there is also a growing maritime and missile threat in the region and I think that that will grow in part because let's not forget that next year, 2020, the conventional arms ban on Iran will end under the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear accord.

And so do we have enough resources devoted to this? I am not sure. I think that is a question that you should be asking the intelligence community and the administration in general. But I do worry that especially as we are sort of rebalancing toward Asia, toward the Russia challenge that it is possible that we could see a shortfall in resources devoted to these problems.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Colin Allred of Texas.

Mr. ALLRED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would like to thank Chairman Engel for calling, this is our first hearing.

I am deeply concerned with the results of our involvement in Yemen. I am also cognizant of our regional relationships there and their importance for us and our mission and our ongoing mission against AQAP there. I think that we are here today to discuss this region certainly, but also to talk about the role of Congress in our foreign policy.

We have seen I think a number of steps by past congresses to cede some of that authority and I think that it is important that we exercise our constitutional duties to oversee what is going on and how U.S. involvement is playing out around the world. And so that is why I think it is so important that we are here today.

And Dr. Karlin and Mr. Singh, you have both mentioned in your statements the trend in our foreign policy away from counter terrorism and toward greater powers in State actors, so want to talk about Iran as others have as well. As you note, Iran has provided support and training in ballistic missiles to the Houthi rebels despite the blockade that has been in place since 2015. And heavy weaponry such as long-range missiles have been used against targets inside Saudi Arabia and against our own ships.

Dr. Karlin, how can the U.S. help its partners more effectively interdict these weapons from the shipments from Iran both at sea and via land?

Ms. KARLIN. Thank you. Part of what we can do is work with our partners together on knitting together cohesive ways both in the air and by sea to try to counter these weapons. So that involves things like maritime security exercises, looking at the sorts of assistance maybe through war gaming or tabletop exercises, showing our partners the sorts of capabilities that they need to be able to effectively counter these challenges.

Mr. ALLRED. Thank you.

And are there any additional sanctions or measures that could be taken by the Department of Treasury to contain Iran's ability to use front companies or individuals to traffic arms to the Houthi rebels and where are the pressure points that we can assert that pressure with the Houthis? To Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. You know, I tend to think, going back to what Mr. Harden said about the fact that it is really the Houthis in control of that Hodeida port through which not just humanitarian assistance and food and so forth passes, but also presumably some weapons, we would like to see, I think, much more international pressure on the Houthis.

So far there has been a lot of conversation about the Saudis and Emirates. A lot of those concerns are justified and valid, I think. But we have seen far less conversation about the role that the

Houthis are playing both in sort of the importation of weapons and the suffering that is taking place. I would like to see more action on that front.

I think we should be recruiting our allies elsewhere in the world, especially Europe, to join us in that as well as to join us in that interdiction mission. And I think I would like to see the focus of our conversations about Iran with those allies be that sort of issue rather than, say, the nuclear agreement and so on and so forth.

Mr. ALLRED. Mr. Sullivan, you have spoken some about the steps we need to take to counter Iranian influence. Can you expand upon that and how we can use our Arab allies in the region to counter that?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Sure. I mean one of my concerns which I express in my written testimony is that the current strategy seems to be to try to ratchet up pressure generally to no kind of clearly defined end. It seems like maybe the end is regime change and we will not stop until we are at that. And my view is that you buildup pressure against an adversary like Iran in an effort to convert that pressure into some progress on an issue that matters to us. We did that with the nuclear deal.

I agree with Mr. Singh we have to look at a broader range of issues beyond the nuclear deal as well. But my biggest concern about what the administration is doing right now is that it seems to just be pressure for pressure's sake, not pressure to actually try to produce practical change on the ground in the region.

So, for example, you asked the question about authorities. I do think that if we dedicated some resources at Treasury to specifically tracking the means by which these weapons are transferred and ultimately delivered, Mr. Singh mentioned that it is not just sea, it is by a land route as well, that we would be in the position to be able to put some curbs on that both through intelligence-led operations but also through the application of financial sanctions.

My concern is that instead we are just taking a very broad-based approach with the hope of kind of crashing the regime and I think that is, A, not in keeping with U.S. policy, but B, and more importantly, it is prohibiting us from focusing on trying to shape Iran's behavior on more targeted bases like their support for the Houthis.

Mr. ALLRED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Curtis.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Panel, thank you for being here today. I too have enjoyed this discussion. I have heard the word "chaos" a lot today and I am going to use it again. My experience is no matter where you go in this world if there is chaos, when you peel back that curtain you are going to see influences from China and from Russia. Is that the case here and can you give me a sense of how much influence is being exerted by those two countries?

Mr. Singh, let me maybe start with you and others that may want to comment on that.

Mr. SINGH. Are you asking, Congressman, specifically about Yemen or about the Gulf region in general?

Mr. CURTIS. My thought was specifically about Yemen, but I would be curious to know just the overall influence in the region.

Mr. SINGH. I think what we do see in the overall region is certainly an increased interest by Russia in becoming involved in the Middle East and in the Gulf region as well in an effort to sort of project their own influence and power to blunt American influence and to do other things like sort of promote their arms sales and so on and so forth. So they are competing with us, for example, for arms sales in places like Saudi Arabia and so forth.

The Chinese to some extent are doing the same thing, competing that we have seen, for example, a significant increase in the export of armed drones by China to places like the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The Chinese, I think, are less active or at least less overtly active in the region than the Russians are, but I think we will see their involvement increase.

They are involved right now in the development of an Omani port called Duqm which is sort of at a pivot point between the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. They have established their first overseas military base in the Horn of Africa in Djibouti, where as I mentioned a lot of these States, the UAE, Turkey, and others are also very active and where of course the U.S. is very active.

And so I think there is a worry that you do see especially Russia partnering with Iran, partnering with Iran's proxies. We see this clearly in Syria in a way which is destabilizing and potentially threatening to the United States. And I also worry about the potential for the development of more great power conflicts in the region especially as China steps up its activities.

Mr. CURTIS. You mentioned just a brief moment ago the need to call on our allies with the Houthis, to influence the Houthis, and when you said that it made me wonder who truly influences them and would that influence be greater by Russia and is that a possibility and, if so, should we be calling on Russia for help with humanitarian aid specifically in that venue?

Mr. SINGH. You know, I do not know that the Russians have direct influence on the Houthis. I do not get that perception. Where Russia comes into it, I think, is Russia obviously sits on the U.N. Security Council as a veto-wielding member of that Council and has the ability to, as they have done time and time again especially in recent years, protect Iran which is Russia's main partner in the region and by extension Iran's proxies.

And so I think where you need the Russians is to allow sort of the U.N. Security Council to play a bigger role here, and maybe our Saudi allies or Emirate allies countries where Russia would like a role of like a relationship, the Israelis can play a role in putting pressure on Russia to do that.

My point more broadly is I think that there has not been enough of that international pressure on the Houthis and I think that is especially important because I am not sure there is any single external power that can compel the Houthis to the table or sort of force a solution on them.

Mr. CURTIS. OK.

Mr. Harden.

Mr. HARDEN. I would agree. I mean there is not a lot of leverage points for the Houthis. Part of their power is the fact that they are so indigenous and so capable of operating within their own country. And again I just want to reemphasize one point. They are not prox-

ies of Iran. They have common aligned interests and they use those interests to further their own benefit, but the only leverage points might possibly be the Omanis.

Back to China and Russia in terms of the chaos in Yemen, I do not see it, to be quite frank, except for the race for the ports which would include some Yemeni ports and clearly both the UAE and China have great port desires. Hodeida is a great example.

Ms. KARLIN. I would just add that we have historic examples where active and serious U.S. diplomacy has pushed the Russians out of the Middle East and when you see a lack of it, unsurprisingly, it is an easy place for them to make problems.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you. I yield my time.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks to the panelists for your erudite and excellent discussion. I want to put you on notice that I am here representing my 13-year-old daughter Molly who was bat mitzvahed on December 15th and she wrote her Torah talk on the unimaginable suffering in Yemen and our complicity in it. So she will be watching.

My first question is for Dr. Karlin. During the first year of the Saudi military campaign many of the indiscriminate attacks on Yemeni civilians, hospitals, markets, schools, were ascribed to Saudi pilots' inexperience, high altitude aerial bombardments and other forms of negligence. Over time, however, Saudi bombings of school buses, cholera treatment centers, and the use of double-tap strikes suggested that this was a more intentional strategy. Would you agree with that assessment?

Ms. KARLIN. Thank you. You know, the Saudis really do not have much of a history of using their military. For a very long time they spent lots and lots of money buying all sorts of sophisticated capabilities, so Yemen has been kind of their testing and their operational testing ground, for better or worse and largely it appears worse.

I think the Obama Administration's view was if they are going to start to engage let's see how we can be helpful here, and that is why you saw the support that really started in 2015. As I have said previously, I do not see much evidence that that support has been helpful and I am not sure whether it is deliberate or indeliberate. I do not think I am capable of making that call without access to classified information. However, it is worrisome that they do not appear to be getting a whole lot better.

Mr. LEVIN. All right. Well, under those circumstances what should the U.S. do? Should we work to try to change the coalition's behavior or should we try to extricate ourselves entirely? That is another question for you, Doctor.

Ms. KARLIN. Of course. So I would suggest a mix of carrots and sticks. I would figure out what sort of capabilities we can help the Saudis acquire, so for example the Terminal High Altitude Aerial Defense System, the THAAD system, could help them feel more secure at home. And I think that that is a pretty decent carrot.

But I would also work on sticks and show them that we are willing potentially with a national security waiver to have this body say that their efforts are extremely problematic and we do not want to support them anymore.



Mr. LEVIN. Thank you.

I would like to turn to human rights within Saudi Arabia and ask a question of Mr. Sullivan. Under MbS the Saudi Government has cracked down on dissidents and human rights activists. Reports indicate that authorities have arrested and even tortured activists. Is it fair to say that the U.S. has leverage to press Saudi leadership to respect human rights?

Mr. SULLIVAN. You know, it is always a complicated question, our leverage to get other countries to conform to our values and our human rights standards. Oftentimes we overestimate the leverage we have, but a lot of times we turn a blind eye to bad behavior by close partners to our, the detriment of our interests and our values.

And I think in the case of Saudi Arabia, and this was true under Democratic administrations as it has been under Republican administrations, I think we have too frequently been willing to say we have to make human rights concerns a fifth, sixth, or seventh tier priority rather than something on the plane with other more fundamental interests that we have, and I think that should change.

Will we be able to get them to fully live up to our expectations, probably not. But can we do a better job than we have done, I believe we can.

Mr. LEVIN. And how has the Trump administration been doing in using what leverage we do have?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think the Trump administration has actually sent a very clear message not only that they do not really care about the issue, but even more they are perfectly happy to have the Saudis crack down on folks within their own country. That is the Saudi's business as far as Donald Trump is concerned.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. Let me ask you another question about the Trump administration. The government of Saudi Arabia has reportedly spent heavily at Trump hotels in Washington and Chicago and apparently financial relationships between the President and the Saudis go way back. In October, the Chicago Tribune reported that Trump's business relationships with the Saudi Government and rich Saudi business executives go back to at least the 1990's.

In Trump's hard times the Saudi prince bought a super yacht and a hotel from him. The Saudi Government has paid him four and a half million dollars for an apartment near the United Nations. Is it possible that the President's conflicts of interest have impacted the administration's actions or lack thereof when it comes to Saudi Arabia?

Mr. SULLIVAN. You know, it is amazing that this question can even be posed with such credible evidence behind it. That is where we have arrived and it is not just with Saudi Arabia that the potential that this President's personal interests are conflicting with the American national interest. That is certainly possible with Saudi Arabia. It is certainly possible with a number of other countries, and I do think that this committee and this Congress should take a hard look at that.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul, I would like to start by saying how honored I am to serve alongside you and represent Hoosier values on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thank you.

To all the witnesses today, thank you for being here. Your time and your fascinating testimony educational; Mr. Singh, specifically, I found your testimony to be particularly interesting. Specifically, I am interested in your opinion on the most effective role of Congress with respect to the U.S. policy in the Arabian Peninsula.

In your written statement you expressed your view that it would be a mistake to end our partnership with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States. You talked about that today as well. You continue by saying that this should not prevent us from having frank conversations with our partners when disagreements arise. Instead, you suggest, and I quote, the U.S. should concentrate its efforts in a number of areas. In that spirit you listed examples such as improving allied military effectiveness, improving coordination among partners, pressing for democratic and reform, and reinvigorating regional diplomacy.

In your opinion, what do you think is the most effective role of Congress to help achieve our strategic objectives while also promoting and protecting our fundamental American values? Is there one of these areas that you identified that stands out where Congress should, as you say, concentrate its efforts?

Mr. SINGH. Well, sure, Congressman, and thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I do think that when you are in government working on these issues you have a tendency to have a hard time looking beyond even the next week. You know, a situation like Yemen, a situation with Saudi Arabia, these are fast-moving situations in a region which is a very turbulent region.

I think what Congress can really do in a way that is hard for the executive branch to do, besides of course its constitutional roles of oversight in providing that sort of that check, is take a longer range view. For example, look at the systemic risks of arms sales to the regions. You know, you are asked to approve or disapprove individual arms sales, but there is no reason you cannot step back and look at the whole and say is this adding to stability or is this detracting from stability. Is this advancing or setting back our interests?

When it comes to human rights, which we were just talking about, again oftentimes I think that even if American officials care about human rights, want to press them, there tend to be four or five other issues which are this week's issues which get in the way. And so I think Congress again can play a very useful role in ensuring that human rights, and not just human rights but political reform, economic reform, remain on the agenda for U.S. policy.

And I do think, frankly, as and I think that we are seeing this today in Yemen that congressional pressure can play a role in shaping the actions of our partners. And so we may have a very close partnership with Saudi Arabia, with Yemen, and when the CENTCOM commander goes and talks to them he may be talking to them about operational issues. But when a CODEL comes, when Congress speaks, I think oftentimes it can put some of that pres-

sure on especially on those longer term issues in a way which is tougher for American officials to do.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield my time.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Ms. Spanberger.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much to those presenting today. I appreciate your time.

I wanted to start with a question for Mr. Singh. General Votel made comments yesterday talking about the fact that U.S. military engagement with Saudi Arabia and UAE allows us to has leverage and influence over their actions in Yemen. And in your comments today, you made a comment to the effect that we cannot expect, we should expect our partners to follow human rights norms, but we cannot tie it together with our engagement. I would ask if you could expound upon that ever so briefly about how it is that we can continue our engagement or could continue our engagement be it with Saudi Arabia, UAE, or any other country and separate that from the expectation that we have of how it is that they are engaging.

Mr. SINGH. Thank you, Congresswoman. And let me just start by saying thanks for your continued service to the country in your new role.

I want to be very clear about what I mean when I write this. I think it is absolutely appropriate for us to tie arms sales, security assistance programs, training and so forth to the way that our partners are conducting themselves in war. You know, to the question that was asked earlier, if we do not believe that our partners are committed to following the laws of war and international norms of warfare we should not be partnering with them.

It is very important for our military that we not be asking them to compromise themselves, their morals, their values by working with partners who are not committed to those values. What I am trying to point out though is when we talk about those larger issues of politics, of human rights, of social reform and so forth, I do not think it has been effective to try to tie those issues to security assistance, to use security assistance as sort of in a crude way as leverage over unrelated issues. I think that our track record and I have as a U.S. official and as an observer have been through so many of these cases, I think our track record in doing that is poor.

Ms. SPANBERGER. OK. Thank you for that clarification.

And then my other question and I will open this up to you, Mr. Sullivan. During your opening statement you made the distinction between offensive and defensive military support to Saudi Arabia. And I was wondering if you could expand upon that briefly, how can we ensure that weapons, intelligence, military capabilities that we are providing to Saudi Arabia are for defensive purposes not offensive purposes and where you might see some of that overlap and challenges in the way that we are looking at this question?

Mr. SULLIVAN. It is an especially pertinent question in light of the recent reports that what we would historically have classified as a defensive system, like the TOW missile system, is being used offensively having fallen into the wrong hands, in the hands of extremist groups and others.

So I concede that a clean distinction between offensive and defensive systems is not always easy to come by, but I do think there are some clear cases. And the two cases that I referred to in my testimony were, one, theater missile defense and missile defense systems more broadly. Dr. Karlin mentioned the possibility of THAAD. I think we could pretty well agree that that is a classically defensive system that cannot be used readily for offensive purposes. And then, second, that the United States itself would increase the conduct of maritime patrols where we control the extent to which we are engaged defensively as opposed to offensively.

So those are the types of things that I have in mind, rather than the sorts of things which fall on that line and we may hope they would be used for defensive purposes but could easily be converted to offensive purposes.

Ms. SPANBERGER. OK. And I have one last question that I would like your input on. As a former intelligence officer myself, I am sure you are aware that last week it was revealed that the UAE hired a team of former U.S. intelligence officials to help with their cybersecurity and electronic surveillance.

What actions should the U.S. Government take, if any, in your estimation, to prevent former intelligence officers from using the tradecraft that they learn through their service to the United States on behalf of a foreign government or a private company in this way?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Congresswoman, I read the same reports and was disturbed by them. There is not currently a legal framework for tradecraft. There is for obviously the provision of classified information but not for tradecraft, particularly the specialized tradecraft that intelligence officers, and you know this better than anyone, are getting in the United States that they can then go ply to other countries. I think that is pretty disturbing.

But I also think that because it is an issue that I do not think has been much on the mind of policymakers or legislators of late it requires some real study. And so what I hope this committee and others will do is take up this question. Should there be additional legal restrictions on the training and craft that intelligence officers are getting for use elsewhere?

I would just add that there are some reports that suggest this tradecraft was turned back on American citizens or American companies; I think that clearly is against the law. But even if it is being used just out there in the world not in relation to U.S. citizens I think we are going to need further legal parameters around it, but I would defer to a deeper dive into the issue and the trade-offs and leave it at that.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Watkins.

Mr. WATKINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Mr. Singh. Sir, what tools and strategies are the U.S. using to help our Gulf partners stop Iran's smuggling of weapons to the Houthis?

Mr. SINGH. So my understanding of what we are doing is something which is not limited to Yemen, right, because obviously we are concerned about the Iranian proliferation of weapons around

this region and there is a toolkit that we can draw on to address it. It starts with intelligence. We have the best, I think, intelligence. Israel obviously has very good intelligence as well in terms of detecting the movement of weapons from Iran to the region.

One of the reasons we are concerned, just as a footnote about Iran, say, establishing missile factories in, say, Lebanon or Syria is that that reduces kind of our visibility into the movement of these weapons and that is something we should be concerned about potentially in Yemen in the future not perhaps today as well. So there is the intelligence aspect.

And then there is the partnering aspect with countries in the region, Oman, countries on the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, to then act on that intelligence to ensure that weapons can, in fact, be interdicted when they are on their way. That is something which I would say happens more rarely. Oftentimes by setting up the right mechanisms you can deter the movement of weapons in the first place. You do not often get to that point of actual interdiction.

I think there is a third element to it though and this element is much harder and that is cost imposition. You know, part of deterrence is not just erecting barriers to these actions, it is ensuring that there is a penalty to be paid when they do succeed. There, I think we have not been as successful because balancing the risk of escalation with the need to impose cost is something that every administration has struggled with. I am concerned though that we are kind of finding ourselves more on the risk-averse side of that too often these days.

Mr. WATKINS. Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin by saying that in the last administration I had the perhaps dubious honor of overseeing some of our effort to try to leverage our influence with Saudi Arabia to persuade them to, in effect, bomb better. And I can tell you from that experience that it was worth trying. We tried very, very hard over a long period of time and it had absolutely no impact.

It had no impact on their accuracy in part because accuracy was not the problem. They were very accurate in bombing markets, schools, bridges. In fact, we gave them a list of targets they were not to strike and they then proceeded to accurately strike them and the result is a conflict that as we have heard has massively impacted the civilian population and helped Iran.

The question has been raised, what influence would we have if we stopped? And I wanted to ask you, Dr. Karlin. You know the full extent of our relationship with Saudi Arabia, how embedded we truly are. It is much more than just targeting assistance. And I wanted to ask you if we pulled back entirely, including on the assistance that we provide for the servicing of Saudi aircraft, the U.S. Government and contractors and private companies, how long could the Saudis actually, practically, sustain significant air operations over Yemen? Could they go on the offensive for a sustained period of time?

Ms. KARLIN. Thank you. While I cannot give you an answer in terms of time, I can say that U.S. support is critical to the Saudi effort. Moreover, when you look across the range of U.S. support to the Saudi military there are a number of different programs, whether it is with the Saudi navy, the Saudi air national guard, it is just—excuse me, the Saudi national guard—there is kind of a plethora of programs that permeate the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

So when we are talking about pulling back it is important to think through what do we want to pull back and what do we actually maintain? And too none of us want to see it in a binary sense, I think, completely. You know, one of the challenges we do have here is over the last 2 years we have seen what the new power center in the crown prince has kind of, how he has governed, how he has governed Saudi Arabia. And we have seen just a number of extremely problematic decisions domestically and across the region that I think have caused a lot of us to call into question his ability to make the right choice.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It has also been suggested that if we were to pull back in that targeted way the Saudis could go to other powers, to the Russians, to the Chinese, that they do not actually need American support.

Mr. SULLIVAN, if I could ask you to address that and specifically perhaps tell us could the Saudis service F-16s with MiG parts, for example?

Mr. SULLIVAN. It would take—well, the short answer to that question is no, they could not.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. If Iran were to start interfering with shipping in the Persian Gulf would the Chinese navy come to Saudi Arabia's rescue?

Mr. SULLIVAN. No.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. No. Saudi Arabia has an existential interest in maintaining a relationship with the United States. I assume all of you would agree with that.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Yes. And I do not think they can just say, well, we do not need the U.S. because the Russians and Chinese will come fill in the gaps. I do not think they will, they can do that.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Let me also bring up the Khashoggi case which we have not really discussed very much here. It has been suggested accurately that there are a lot of human rights problems in Saudi Arabia, beheadings, journalists are arrested and killed, it is absolutely true. I would argue that this is very different.

It is not a human rights issue in Saudi Arabia. This is an example of a country reaching across its borders to kill somebody who had been given protection in the United States in a democratic country in the Western world. This is not normal. This does not happen frequently in the world. The Russians did it to somebody in England recently. There are very few other examples I can think of.

But would you agree that it is a paramount interest of the United States as a country who is home to thousands of Jamal Khashoggis, people who are in exile from their countries, who are critics of their governments, is it not a paramount interest of the United States to come down extremely hard when something like this happens so that it does not become a norm?

Ms. KARLIN. We should absolutely be concerned. And what is sad, to be honest, is that we should not even be that surprised by what happened with Jamal Khashoggi. You had already seen the kidnapping, if you will, of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri. You had obviously seen all these actions in Yemen. You have seen the arrests of a whole bunch of, frankly, the crown prince's relatives in the Ritz Carlton.

So we have seen kind of example after example, the Qatar blockade of just making the wrong choice over and over and unfortunately this has been the most spectacular. What worries me the most also is that the Saudi leadership still seems pretty confident. And I think this body has an important role to say to remind them that we have at least some lines.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. Well said.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Guest.

Mr. Guest, if you just push the button.

Mr. GUEST. I am sorry, thank you.

Mr. Singh, in your written testimony on page 3 you talk about the fact that there is ongoing disputes between members of the GCC and that has caused limited cooperation. Has that limited cooperation, has it, and please tell us how it has impacted the region as a whole.

Mr. SINGH. Sure, thank you, Congressman. I think that the split in the GCC between Qatar on the one hand and Saudis, Emirates, Egyptians who are outside the GCC on the other hand, has been troubling for the United States because I think we had hoped to forge an alliance between the GCC, other like-minded States in the region, and ourselves to tackle common threats like terrorism, the threats posed by Iran and so forth. And this dispute has undoubtedly distracted from that.

It is also probably, arguably, led the Qataris into closer relationships with, say, the Iranians, the Chinese and Russians, and so on and so forth. It is a longstanding dispute and so we should not be surprised, I think, by it. I think there is a larger problem though in the region that this is just one part of and that is just poor coordination overall. We have seen traditional political groupings like the Arab League diminish in importance and effectiveness.

This region has the least economic integration of, I think, any region of the world and so it is the overall integration not just militarily, but also diplomatically, economically, which I think limits the effectiveness of, say, these partners to solve problems within their own region.

Mr. GUEST. And, Mr. Singh, you also said in your written testimony, on page 5 you said in your view it would be a serious mistake to jettison our partnership with Saudi Arabia or other Gulf allies. Could you expand on that very briefly?

Mr. SINGH. Absolutely. Well I think that there is two reasons for that. No. 1 is this alliance, these alliances we have in the region are not just about accomplishing things through the allies, it is about preventing adverse scenarios, preventing worse outcomes. We want to influence Saudi decisionmaking so that they make better decisions. That is obviously challenging right now. We want to

see stability in these countries. Instability in a place like Saudi Arabia could be devastating for our interests in the region.

Over time, I think if we are serious about reallocating resources to other regions of the world about a great power or competition strategy, we will need to work more through allies in this region if we are not going to simply put our interests aside. And so that means that over time we have to turn them into allies like the Israelis, like the Emirates to some extent who can act in our stead, in a sense.

And so, look, these are the allies we have in the region. If it were not for difficult partners in the Middle East we would not really have any partners, would we? And so turning these partnerships into better partnerships needs to be our goal.

Mr. GUEST. And if we were to end this relationship with the Saudis, do you believe that it would damage our ability to influence them as it relates to improving issues such as human rights in their country?

Mr. SINGH. Absolutely.

Mr. GUEST. And then finally a kind of a followup, and I think you touched on this earlier. On page 7 of your written testimony you say that the withdrawal of U.S. support to the GCC coalition or the suspension of U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia or the UAE are unlikely to end the conflict or ease humanitarian conditions in Yemen. Do you still feel that way?

Mr. SINGH. I do, yes. I think it is important to bear in mind that as we have this conversation about our security relationship with the Saudis or with the Emirates that is not the same as talking about a strategy to end the conflict, the multiple conflicts in Yemen. If we were to withdraw our support, yes, we might increase the difficulties the Saudis have in sustaining their operations.

But I do not believe the conflict would end. I do not believe that the other conflicts in Yemen would improve either, nor, frankly, do I think we would absolve ourselves of responsibility for our long-standing involvement in the conflict.

Mr. GUEST. And, Mr. Sullivan, as it relates to Mr. Singh's answer to the last question, do you agree or disagree with his assessment?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I agree to the extent that it would not end the conflict, of course. I do not agree that it would have no impact on the conflict. I believe that the threat to reduce or curtail our aid has over time made the coalition make different and, in my view, more constructive decisions. At the end of last year they were more likely to enter the Stockholm Agreement because of what the Senate did. Earlier, CENTCOM withheld certain provision of various types of technologies, minesweepers and other things, and it changed their calculus as respects Hodeida.

So I do believe the United States deciding to pull back its offensive support to the coalition would have an impact on coalition decisionmaking that I believe would be positive. And even if it didn't, I would argue we have only contributed to a worse situation by being in and so we should no longer be in.

Mr. SINGH. Can I just make one point in response to that because I do not think we fundamentally disagree, but I think that having that leverage and achieving those outcomes requires that



there be some possibility that you will continue the partnership if they take certain actions. If you just cut the support off then you do not have that leverage.

Mr. SULLIVAN. And to clarify, I am not saying cutoff the partnership with Saudi Arabia. I am saying cutoff certain systems that they are using and certain assistance that they are using to bomb civilians in Yemen. We have plenty of leverage through the broader security partnership with Saudi Arabia that we can bring to bear in a constructive dialog with them.

Mr. HARDEN. Yes. I just want to add one point on this. I mean UAE is actually also quite involved on the Hodeida operations and so that is an element that I think we are missing in this conversation as well. So if you cutoff the relationship with the Saudis, you are also going to cutoff the relationship with the UAE over Hodeida. I do not think that we will, or at a minimum we need to discuss it.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Trone.

Mr. TRONE. I thank you all for coming here today.

In your written testimony, Mr. Sullivan, you spoke about actions taken by Saudi Arabia in the last few years and maybe we could just say versus Saudi Arabia and say the crown prince regarding destabilization in Yemen; the Ritz, we will call it a robbery, extortion; the kidnapping in Lebanon of the Prime Minister; the repression throughout Saudi Arabia, kidnapping, et cetera; the blockade of Qatar; and of course, Khashoggi.

What is the most effective thing we could do to help combat and tell the Crown Prince enough is enough; we cannot keep going down this route item after item after item?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, I think it starts by saying that we are going to need to redefine the terms of this relationship. Not to throw it overboard, not to just try to punish Saudi Arabia for the sake of it, but to make sure it aligns better with U.S. interests. So I think you start there then you work through each of the issues you just said.

With respect to Yemen, as I have proposed I believe that we should end support for the offensive operations in Yemen and no longer be giving the crown prince the support that he has been getting to carry on an operation that is counterproductive to our interests.

With respect to the GCC issue and the blockade of Qatar, I think this is something where the United States is going to have to be an honest broker on both sides, but we have to tell the leadership in Saudi Arabia that this is running counter to U.S. interests as long as it continues.

And then with respect to Khashoggi, I believe there needs to be an impartial, independent investigation and the Saudi investigation is not sufficient. And Secretary Pompeo basically saying it is sufficient, I think, flies in the face of basic logic. There needs to be an independent investigation and anyone who was complicit in this decision needs to be held accountable.

Mr. TRONE. In December I was in Israel and we met with all the various leadership there, and it is certainly crystal clear that they

do not want to run from Saudi Arabia. They think if we do not continually unconditionally support Saudi Arabia we do not have the block against Iran. But at the end of the day I take a little different view, I think, long term.

Crown Prince is 33 years old. We have seen the litany of things that he has accomplished, none of which are good. And the question is, if we do not continue to—if we do not stand up, if we do not draw a marker in the sand at some point in time and say enough is enough, we are going to have him as the king for 50 years, so 50 years we are going to enshrine an individual that is morally bankrupt that has been an ongoing problem against U.S. interests.

So what can or should we be doing to try and think the long view for the next 50 years?

Mr. SINGH. Can I chime in on this, Congressman? I do not know if you were directing that question just to Jake, but I think that the problem we face is that he will be there for 50 years whether we do those things or not.

Mr. TRONE. But does he have to be there for 50 years or do you just want to accept that?

Mr. SINGH. And I think that it is a false choice between, say, walking away from the alliance or uncritically embracing the leadership in Riyadh. I think the third way, as it were, is a more intensive form of engagement where we try to influence the leadership in Saudi Arabia supporting the elements of his program that we like and there are elements of the program that we like.

Mr. TRONE. Any of those issues I mentioned do you like?

Mr. SINGH. What is that?

Mr. TRONE. Any of those items I mentioned you like?

Mr. SINGH. Well, I think there is things you hinted at that we do like. We like the fact that they are drawing closer to allies like Israel. We like the fact that they are stepping back their support for extremism around the world. Frankly, I think most American officials would say we agree with the need to diversify the Saudi economy which is part of his agenda.

What we do not like are a lot of those foreign policy actions that you saw. But I think again the way to influence those things is through intensive engagement. We have no Ambassador in Riyadh. We have no Assistant Secretary of State for near Eastern Affairs. We need to get these officials in place, we need to empower them.

And then on the Saudi side we need to try to expand the points of contact in this relationship so that there is not that kind of single point of failure that I think we have right now.

Mr. TRONE. But should we just accept, Mr. Sullivan, blindly for the next 50 years this individual running the key ally in the Middle East?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I do not think that we at the end of the day are going to be able to dictate who the leader of Saudi Arabia is, but we are going to be able to dictate how we relate to that person whoever it is. And here, my concern is that the administration has basically decided that it is unconditional support. That is the strategy.

And I believe the Congress therefore has a deeply critical institutional role to play to provide balance in the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

Because at the end of the day, I think where Mr. Singh and I do very much agree is we are going to have to find that middle way which is going to have to involve much more constructive engagement.

And this administration does not seem interested in providing that and therefore I think the Congress has to come forward with a variety of measures to shape this relationship and to send a clear message to the leadership in Saudi Arabia that we are not going to simply accept any and all activities that he is undertaking including those things that run contrary to our interests and values.

Ms. KARLIN. We should also just remember this is not an alliance. It is an insult, frankly, to our European allies, for example, in NATO or our Asian allies like Japan when we refer to partnerships as alliances. So I just caution us all. I say this from having spent a lot of time in the Pentagon where one thinks a lot about what an alliance is and the responsibilities, frankly, that it makes incumbent on the United States.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you very much.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Burchett.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you. I caught some of your, you were talking at one point about your strong voice against anti-Semitism and I wanted to thank you for that. I represent a lot of folks that share your views as well as I do on that issue, so I personally thank you for that.

And I have a couple of small questions. Due to my seniority, all the questions that I would have asked are already asked so I will not indulge the committee by asking them the fourth or fifth time. But I did notice a great deal of frustration out of the first couple of folks speaking and it just seemed to me like what the heck are we doing there? I mean outside of humanitarian interests why are we involved? Is it oil? Is it—what is it?

If I could maybe just go down the line and you give me like a two-sentence answer if that is possible. Pretend like all the cameras are not here and it is just you and your family.

Mr. HARDEN. I mean with respect to Yemen or the Arabian—with respect to Yemen, I mean there is an enormous set of interests in Yemen. Of course there is the humanitarian, but there is also the Iranian element of this. There is the free movement of trade and there is just the strategic nature of the Arabian Peninsula itself.

So I am not, I would not advocate that we abandon the region or Yemen.

Ms. KARLIN. I would agree. We need to think about freedom of navigation. The U.S. has had a special role in that over decades and decades across the world. We do need to think about energy concerns. And then, frankly, we need to think about containment. Vegas rules unfortunately do not apply to the Middle East.

Who would have thought that a conflict in Syria would have resulted in actually throwing apart the integrity of the European Union? So we need to play a role. However, we need to recognize the opportunity costs of our involvement in this region are only getting higher and higher.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, I think with respect to Yemen, specifically, the way the United States got engaged in this conflict as an indirect participant is because Saudi Arabia and the UAE and other Arab countries decided that it represented a direct threat to them and we decided we were going to work with them to try to respond to that threat. The issue that I have consistently tried to raise over the course of this hearing is, I think now with going on 4 years of experience under our belt in trying to help them, the course that we have taken has made things worse not better and therefore we should change course.

Mr. SINGH. I do not have a lot to add to that, Congressman. I just want to point to something which has already been said that of course we also do have a direct engagement in Yemen to counter al-Qaida and to counter ISIS and I think it is important we not lose sight of that.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Ms. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today. And I agree that I have at this point few questions to ask that are unique but some to followup on. And I guess my first followup is a conversation that Representative Pence started to have, which has to do with what can Congress do, what are the powers and the authorities of Congress in a situation like this?

And I guess what I would like to ask, and I think, Dr. Karlin, based on our conversation so far I think you might be the first person who can answer this which is if we can go way back into the Obama Administration and we talk about the original decision to begin things like refueling and other sorts of support for the Saudi coalition, what do you think that that administration saw, what was their thinking or their mindset at the time that deemed it necessary and appropriate at that time to go in, in the way that we did without the authority and the authorization of Congress?

Ms. KARLIN. Thank you. While I was not a part of that discussion, my assumption is the thought process was that the Saudis are a close partner that are very helpful for a number of regional concerns, they are getting involved in a conflict, and we have a lot of experience with these sorts of things so we should see what effect our help can have.

So I think as Mr. Sullivan has discussed previously I think it was a good faith effort to see how we could help them really use their military force for one of the first few times they had done that in a meaningful way. Where Congress, I think, can be especially helpful is forcing something that Mr. Singh suggested earlier, forcing that step back. Forcing that assessment in saying, OK, it has been a couple years. What effect have we had, what effect should we have expected to have, and what are the costs?

Ms. HOULAHAN. And I agree with you, because his conversation also talked a little bit about the responsibility of Congress having a longer term view in making sure that we are thinking hard about why we are at places that we are and whether we should stay there. And it just feels as though we are in this place right now where we have made a decision and even with your description did

not sound like a decision that was imminent or pressing or needed some sort of a step around Congress.

Here we are and now we kind of have the opportunity to step back and look at it. So you do not see that there is anything now that would continue to require that there not be an authorization on the part of Congress to continue to be involved in this area?

Ms. KARLIN. I think Congress's involvement is crucial. It is really hard to step back and assess how well the policy you are working on is actually working or having the effect you want.

And I think for this committee, writ large, the U.S., the executive branch and the military in particular, has focused largely on this region for the last 18 years. It is going to be extra hard then for any administration to feel comfortable stepping back and saying what have we achieved and what have not we achieved. That is an uncomfortable and awkward and yet crucial discussion that this committee can really help facilitate.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. And I really do agree. I do not think it is necessarily about one administration or the other, but really a question of whether or not this body, this Congress should also be involved in that decision of whether or not to appropriate these kinds of resources.

My second question, if I have time, is probably for Mr. Sullivan. You spoke really eloquently several times about the fact that we should have a bipartisan and very serious conversation about a sustainable relationship ongoing. You did speak about ideas like curtailing logistical support, about disrupting maritime lines, and you also spoke about finding a political solution and your hope that there was something there.

Dr. Karlin, you also spoke about efforts for—that the military efforts and the diplomatic efforts in many cases are at odds with one another and acting counter to one another right now. So here we are years later and whatever we are doing is not working, so if we end up sort of pulling back one aspect, maybe the offensive engagement that we have right now, if you can envision not militarily what the consequences will be because we talked about that over here, but in terms of energy, commerce, all the other sorts of implications about our relationship with Saudi Arabia, what can you imagine or speculate would happen if ended up offensively pulling out of our relationship right now?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Do you mean pulling out altogether saying sort of breaching the relationship more fundamentally or—

Ms. HOULAHAN. No.

Mr. SULLIVAN [continuing]. Just with respect to Yemen?

Ms. HOULAHAN. Just with respect to Yemen, exactly.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Look, I believe that we put in a good faith effort to support and provide assistance to this coalition effort over an extended period of time and we can make a good faith case to our partners that we are done because we do not think it is working and, frankly, it is shocking our conscience what is happening as a result of this. And I do not believe that that needs to or would lead to a fundamental breach or disruption in our relationship and that the positive elements of that relationship could continue even if the United States no longer participated in this and that would be the policy I would aim for.

Ms. HOULAHAN. OK. I appreciate your time very much and I yield back the remainder of my time to the chair.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much.

Mr. Reschenthaler.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Thanks. I thought I had it. Thank you, Greg. I just want to express my gratitude for being appointed to this committee and I look forward to working to ensure America's continued leadership on the world's stage.

So having served in Iraq, I know firsthand the challenges facing our counterparts in the Middle East and the escalating sensitivity of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen is devastated by violence and human rights atrocities as you have discussed today. It is estimated that 80 percent of the Yemeni population needs humanitarian assistance, 17.8 million civilians are food insecure, and approximately 60,000 people have been killed since January 2016.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen must be addressed immediately. However, continued calls for the United States to withdraw security assistance from the Arabian Peninsula because of this crisis would be a serious mistake. Iran, the world's largest sponsor of terror, has been illegally supplying Houthi rebels in Yemen with missiles, training, and support in violation of the U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The Houthis use these illegal arms transfer to terrorize American allies and counterparts, targeting Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, as well as civilian aircraft in the region. Just this past January, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats testified that al-Qaida affiliate in Yemen, AQAP, remains one of the largest and most capable terror groups in the region.

This is why I fully support continued U.S. security assistance and the administration's goal to create the Middle East Security Alliance, a regional NATO-like body that will deepen cooperation on missile defense, military training, counter terrorism, and strengthening regional and economic diplomatic ties. I strongly support the U.S. working in coordination with our counterparts in the Gulf region. However, cooperation shared goals do not equate to blind allegiance and obedience.

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi and detention of women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia do not align with the values of the United States and deserve scrutiny. However, holding others accountable should not come at the expense of the safety and security of the American people.

Following this hearing, this committee will consider a resolution directing the removal of U.S. security assistance in the Arabian Peninsula. This resolution is misguided and based on a false premise. It does nothing but open the door for rogue actors like Iran, China, and Russia to gain a stronger foothold in one of the most turbulent regions in the world and continue to sow further chaos.

So with that, Mr. Singh, what are the core functions, in your opinion, of the Saudi-U.S. relationship and what other interests in the Middle East does this relationship support?

Mr. SINGH. Well, thank you, Congressman. I think you made a lot of excellent points there. The U.S.-Saudi relationship is one of our major relationships obviously in this part of the world. It is obviously not the only one, but U.S.-UAE relationship has been dis-

cussed here. We have relations with the Bahranis, the Kuwaitis, and others who are engaged in some of these conflicts.

Our interests in the Middle East are, I think, quite compelling and of concern to ordinary Americans, things like counter terrorism, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, ensuring the free flow of energy and commerce, and ensuring freedom of action for American forces. As you know, Congressman, our military facilities in the Gulf are used not just to prosecute conflicts or wars or operations within this region but elsewhere, to project power outside of this region.

These allies like the Saudis, the Emirates, and so forth are key partners in all those efforts. Our counter terrorism relations with the Saudis are good and with the Emirates are good, and frankly we would suffer if we did not have their cooperation. They would suffer if they did not have our cooperation. It is mutually beneficial.

I think that again the question is can we turn these relationships into something more. And the example of Yemen, the example of Syria is discouraging and suggests the need for a lot more work in engagement and maybe a rethinking of how we are doing our military partnerships, how we are conducting our military partnerships. And I think it is absolutely appropriate to explore that, but I think that is very different from saying let's disengage or walk away or withdraw our assistance.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Singh, if we did withdraw, who do you think would fill that power vacuum and how would you see that playing out?

Mr. SINGH. I think as the U.S. steps back, look, there are other great powers, other external powers, let's say, who have also interest in this region. The Russians have an interest in the region. The Chinese have an interest in this region. And whether they wanted to or not, I think as the U.S. steps back it increases the incentive for them to increase their involvement of the region.

Already, for example, the Saudis have a tremendous economic relationship with the Chinese. I think if the U.S. stepped back they would need to look to diversify their external relationships.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Thank you.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would yield back the rest of my time.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Ms. Omar.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, Chairman. I want to first thank our distinguished witnesses for coming to testify. Thank you so much for taking the time.

The Saudi-led coalition has engaged in a military action in Yemen for a little over 3 years now and the ongoing military campaign has triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. In the last three and a half years more than 17,000 people have been killed and another 40,000 wounded. Further, three million have been internally displaced and according to USAID, 22.2 million Yemenis or three quarters of the Yemeni population need humanitarian assistance. Millions are on the verge of starvation. There is a cholera outbreak that is tied to the Saudi-led war that has erupted in 21 of Yemen's 22 provinces infecting more, approxi-

mately a million Yemenis making it one of the worst cholera outbreaks in our history.

And I know that we are having a conversation about what our interests are, but I want us to root this conversation in the interest of protecting human life and furthering our values of protecting human life. I agree with my colleague, Mr. Perry, that we have known for years about Saudi brutality and its atrocities, its atrocity record of human rights, women's rights, and religious freedom. Where I strongly disagree is that we should not have even tolerated this type of behavior from an ally.

As Chairman Engel noted earlier, there is also evidence that the coalition is arming the al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula linked fighters in Yemen, directly undercutting our military's objective there. This is also far from the first time the Saudis have supported and enabled jihadis. My concern is about the way our support for the Saudis, in spite of these clear contradictions with our values and our interests are affecting our diplomatic credibility in the region. When we see other members of that region like Iran commit human rights atrocities or engaging in activities that are destabilizing the region, we are quick to condemn them and call them out.

So my question is to Mr. Sullivan. In your answer to Mr. Levin's question earlier, you said human rights needs to be at a higher priority. Can you explain why that is?

Mr. SULLIVAN. In a number of our significant relationships around the world including the U.S.-Saudi relationship we sometimes have to make decisions about what we are placing paramount priority on in terms of what we deal with on a day-to-day basis. And there are instances throughout Democratic and Republican administrations where human rights take a back seat to short-term security interest concerns. That has happened in the Obama Administration, the Bush Administration, the Clinton Administration. It is happening with much more frequency in the Trump administration.

The issue I see with Saudi Arabia is that we have allowed that to become so embedded in our muscle memory in the relationship that we basically do not really press on human rights concerns much at all. And particularly with the current President essentially saying, I do not care about those issues, do as you please, I think this has reached a point where it is no longer sustainable for the United States and that we have to find a way consistent with the complexity of our interests in the region to elevate the dialog and discourse and urgency of our demands of our partners that they do better when it comes to how they treat their citizens.

Ms. OMAR. And do you think this double standard is impacting our diplomatic credibility in the region?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think it is a broader issue with U.S. foreign policy. Any time you are both engaged in power politics in the world and you are trying to advance values as the United States does, you are going to have certain instances of inconsistency and hypocrisy. That is built in to a unique attribute of American policy, which is we do care about these issues the way a lot of other countries do not and so necessarily sometimes there will be inconsistency.



I do not think that has to undermine our credibility, but it does mean we have to be more forthright and honest about it and do a better job of making sure that we are not simply ignoring human rights issues, I think, as we all too often have done in this relationship, again in a bipartisan way. I am not trying to use this as a political cudgel just against this administration.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Ms. Wagner.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the chairman and the ranking member for organizing this hearing and thank our witnesses for being here.

Our Gulf partners have proven invaluable in opposing Iran's destabilizing agenda, fighting terrorism, and recognizing Israel's right to exist, and I believe we must continue holding our allies to a high ethical and humanitarian standard. I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about U.S. efforts to prevent civilian casualties and foster respect for human rights in the Arabian Peninsula.

When Canada's foreign minister criticized egregious human rights abuses, the Saudi Government expelled the Canadian ambassador, withdrew its own Ambassador to Canada, and froze pending trade and investment deals. The Saudis have engaged in similar disputes with Germany and I believe Sweden also.

Mr. Singh, are Canada, Germany, and Sweden coordinating a response to the latest diplomatic feud and how can we support our Canadian partners?

Mr. SINGH. Thank you, Congresswoman. I do not know that they are coordinating a response, so it is not something I have heard about. But I do think that the episode you cite is an example of the kind of, frankly, reckless actions by the Saudis that are concerning to us, that are troubling to us, because it was a valid criticism and the Saudi response was, in my view, totally out of proportion to what the Canadians had done.

I would have liked to see us back up our Canadian allies in their criticism of the Saudis because I do not think, and this goes to what Mr. Sullivan was saying, I do not think it is good for us or, frankly, good for the Saudis that they feel as though they can kind of intimidate other countries into not criticizing them.

From my point of view this is not just a matter of values or morals, though those things are important, when human rights abuses are allowed to go forward unchecked I think it also endangers the stability of these countries and it encourages extremism.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you.

Increasing access to affordable food, fuel, and medicine is key to restoring stability in Yemen, but Houthi rebels have disrupted the movement of imports by targeting commercial and military vessels transiting the Red Sea and Saudi Arabia has imposed periodic blockades. Dr. Karlin, how can the international community support freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and facilitate the movement of necessities to Yemeni ports?

Ms. KARLIN. Thank you for that question. I think the U.S. military can be helpful as can regional militaries in facilitating freedom of navigation through these areas whether it is assisting and transporting, whether it is helping regional navies through exercising by

showing them how they might responsibly operate in that area, all of which can be useful.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Singh, preventing civilian casualties in the Yemen conflict is a primary goal of the U.S.-Saudi military cooperation. Can you describe how the United States is working with the coalition to end the killing of civilians? How effective have these efforts been?

Mr. SINGH. Well, Congresswoman, obviously this is, I think, a top concern for our military officials and also our diplomatic officials who are dealing with this issue. As has been discussed here a little bit, we have done a number of things. One is by providing precision munitions to our allies. We have especially in the wake of particular incidents worked on the training of pilots, we have tried to help the Saudis in terms of investigating incidents to determine exactly what occurred, and we have also worked with them on questions of intelligence in these sort of do-not-target lists and so forth.

As far as I understand it, and obviously you would want a full briefing from our military officials, that is what we have done. I think that my impression is that the—I have not heard any U.S. officials, let's put it that way, say that they feel as though the Saudis are deliberately targeting civilians. If we felt that way I think we would have to end our cooperation with them.

But I think we need to appreciate that the level of care and precision that the U.S. military brings to these conflicts is simply frankly, unmatched almost anywhere else in the world and that is why these kinds of long-term efforts of bringing up the abilities and capabilities of our allies is so important.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Sullivan, U.S. agencies and international NGO's are struggling to access areas in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. How can we work with our allies to do more to increase access for the U.N. and international NGO's and any points of leverage that can be used to achieve this with the Saudis and the Emirates?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I defer to the expertise of Mr. Harden who I think has made a couple of really important points today. One is that a lot of this rests with the Houthis over whom we do not have influence but who we should be sure to be shining a spotlight on the extent to which they are blocking access through Hodeida.

But with the Saudis and Emirates, I do think that we have influence and leverage both to open corridors across the Saudi border, as Mr. Harden said earlier, and in respect to the Stockholm Agreement which is fragile and sort of quasi-holding, working to restrain the Saudis and Emirates so that more channels coming out of Hodeida can be opened beyond the basically the one road that is coming out right now.

So those are available to us, but it is an imperfect set of tools because so much of this rests on making sure the Houthis step up to do their part.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much.

Mrs. WAGNER. My time is expired.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to first just followup on Congresswoman Omar's questioning about where human rights fits into our foreign policy.

And, Mr. Sullivan, when you said that, you talked about power politics in advancing values and the need for inconsistency when using power politics in advancing values, obviously the suggestion being that there is always or, if not always, certainly many times where those two things are inconsistent.

Can I ask—you started talking about the ways that we can use our leverage. Isn't advancing our values, is not standing up for human rights, does that not actually give us more power? Doesn't that when we engage in power politics making clear what it is that motivates us, strengthens us as we confront the difficult issues and sometimes difficult challenges in governments that we deal with?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to potentially clarify because it sounds like I may have not made myself clear. I am not arguing that the United States should not be standing up in a consistent and resolute way for human rights. Indeed, I said in my earlier answer to Congresswoman Omar that there is something unique and special about the United States in this regard and we need to work desperately to hold onto that.

What I am saying is that in a complex world where we have a range of interests with any given country, there are necessarily going to be times where standing up for human rights is not going to be the only issue on the agenda. And just to give an example, when the street protests began in Bahrain and Bahraini activists came to us and said essentially support us over a government who is repressing us, we had to think very hard about the fact that the Fifth Fleet is headquartered in Manama. That was a factor in our decisionmaking.

Now I would say at the macro level long term there is nothing inconsistent between our interests and our values, they converge. But in the short term there are going to be times where we do business with countries with whom we radically disagree, where we have partnerships with countries who do not share our values. And in that I think we just have to get more, I think, forthright and honest about the extent to which these are sometimes difficult circumstances.

And the problem I see in the Saudi relationship is we have allowed that thinking to go to its extreme to the point where we really do not treat human rights as a key feature of the relationship at all. That is my view.

Mr. DEUTCH. So sticking with the Saudi relationship, when you say that we may overestimate our leverage, I know there has been a lot of discussion about weapons sales. What other leverage do we have and getting back to the power politics and advancing values, in an instance where a journalist is murdered and decapitated, how does speaking out forcefully against that and looking and demanding accountability and looking for ways to ensure that there is accountability, how does that interfere with the power politics that are very much in play?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well this is a great example of where there is a vigorous debate and many in the administration are very much on the other side of this debate, basically saying if we push too hard

on the Khashoggi issue we are going to lose Saudi Arabia and that will come at a cost to our larger interests in the world.

Now I happen to radically disagree with that both because I think we have much more leverage in this relationship than the Saudis do and because as others have said on the panel, at some point you reach a breaking point. And the wanton murder of somebody who was under U.S. protection was a resident of the United States in a foreign embassy is well past that breaking point, in my view.

So the argument I am making is that we can—it is not enough to simply say we stand for human rights and that is great, it is to problematize the situation. It is to stare it square in the face. It is to say oftentimes we say that and then we do not really do it and more and more with respect to Saudi Arabia we should be doing it.

Mr. DEUTCH. And so play that out then. So again other than weapons sales or in addition to weapons sales, what is the leverage that we should be looking to utilize?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, one thing that we have done so far of course is under Global Magnitsky we have sanctioned 17 Saudi nationals who we believe were engaged in this. But I think we should take an additional step of demanding an independent, impartial, international investigation and whomever is determined to have played a role in this or been responsible or directed this should equally be held accountable under United States law.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks, Mr. Sullivan. Thanks to all of our witnesses for being here.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Lieu.

Mr. LIEU. I thank you, Mr. Chair.

Getting the U.S. out of Yemen is not and should not be a partisan issue. I and other Democrats and Republicans in 2015 started criticizing the Obama Administration. We wrote letters. We did press conferences. We introduced legislation. And it was not just a humanitarian catastrophe that was happening, one of the primary drivers was war crimes and as result of the pressure the Obama Administration, in fact, took action.

So, Mr. Sullivan, it is correct, is not it, that the Obama Administration actually stopped a shipment of precision guided munitions to Saudi Arabia?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Yes, they did and then it was restarted.

Mr. LIEU. Under the Trump administration.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Right.

Mr. LIEU. Now the reason the Obama Administration stopped that shipment is they did a review and they figured out it was not the case that the Saudis were trying to hit some moving Houthi, missed, and then hit a funeral. What, in fact, happened is they very precisely intended to hit the targets that they hit, they struck schools. They struck hospitals. They struck wedding parties. They struck civilian markets. And then they struck a funeral that had hundreds, that killed hundreds and injured hundreds of people, and then the jets came around, struck the same funeral again.

So the Obama Administration figured out then, in fact, precision guided munitions were killing more civilians than if they were not

precision guided. And is not that one of the reasons they decided to stop that shipment, Mr. Sullivan?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. LIEU. OK.

So, Mr. Singh, I am going to give you an opportunity to talk because I disagree with what you said and you did give testimony that somehow precision guided munitions would cause less civilian casualties. It looks like it is the opposite. Especially because if you just look at what happened a few months ago, the Saudis very precisely struck a school bus killing over 40 children and then they admitted they intended to hit that bus. So if you would like to comment, Mr. Singh.

Mr. SINGH. Well, Congressman, I cannot—obviously I am not a military official or privy to the intelligence that you are privy to. All I can tell you is that when I have asked U.S. officials these questions they have suggested to me that they feel the problem is a question of competence and ability as opposed to the question of intent on the part of our partners. But I think it is, frankly, Congressman, a question you should be asking the administration rather than me because I do not have that information.

Mr. LIEU. I am not asking you. You had made a statement to a colleague of mine that somehow precision guided munitions would somehow cause less civilian casualties.

Mr. SINGH. It is generally the belief, Congressman.

Mr. LIEU. Right.

Mr. SINGH. That is why we use precision guided munitions because they reduce civilian casualties.

Mr. LIEU. Correct. Right.

Mr. SINGH. And if you compare Yemen to Syria, I think you can see that very clearly. But the specific question as to the targeting and intent of our allies, I have to refer you to our military officials.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. And so my only point is they reduce civilian casualties if the civilians were not, in fact, targeted. So that is a problem, right, the Saudis are, in fact, targeting civilians. How do we know? They admit it. They admitted publicly they intended to strike that bus. So I would suggest that the U.S. officials you are talking to are, in fact, lying because just based on public Saudi statements. That is why I wrote a letter to the Department of Defense Inspector General to investigate whether DoD personnel or other personnel are complicit in war crimes.

So I am going to ask you, Mr. Sullivan. It is true, right, that both international law as well as regulations in domestic law prevents U.S. personnel from engaging in war crimes?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Yes, of course.

Mr. LIEU. Right. And then you cannot actually aid someone that you know who is committing war crimes as well; is not that right?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Correct.

Mr. LIEU. OK. So let me now move to a related but separate area. A public reporting is that the crown prince had bragged that Jared Kushner was in his back pocket. We also know that based on this reporting Jared Kushner made an unannounced trip to Riyadh catching some intelligence officials off guard. This was not a trip that he had disclosed to anyone. And then we see sort of this

complete kowtowing to Saudi Arabia by Donald Trump and the administration.

So, Mr. Sullivan or any other members on the panel, I just want to get your thoughts on whether you think it is that they just happen to think Saudi Arabia has a bunch of money and oil, or is there something more nefarious going on?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think there is sufficient legitimate questions about the potential business interests of both the Trump organization and Trump family and the Kushner family with respect to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia in particular that it demands more investigation. But we cannot jump to conclusions on that. That is something the Congress could take up.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

And let me thank Chairman Engel for creating a subcommittee of Oversight on the Foreign Affairs Committee to do exactly that. And I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Costa.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman. And I know, I think I am the last one so most of the questions have been asked already.

Chairman ENGEL. Well, actually, Mr. Castro, Mr. Costa came so I am going to call on him.

Mr. CASTRO. All right.

Chairman ENGEL. And then you will truly be the last one.

Mr. CASTRO. All right.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and the ranking member. It is good to be back on the Foreign Affairs Committee. We have had a very impressive group of witnesses testify today. And I apologize, with other committee hearings I have been in and out of the meeting, so I obviously have not been able to track all of the questions and your comments but, and I apologize if this question has been asked already.

But in the event that this resolution that comes up and as we look at our ability to develop some renewed effort and this committee has been good at it, generally speaking, on bipartisan agreements on issues affecting our country off the water's edge, but what do you think are the likely consequences of passing this resolution today and the impacts as we go ahead to try to put some borders in terms of a foreign policy in this country that has continuity and that reflects a tradition that has existed through past administrations both Democratic and Republican that protects and reflects the alliances that have been crucial post-World War II to the world we live in today?

And I would like in that context to get your thoughts on because I think obviously there are going to be future resolutions that we will be acting on that will come to us as we try to provide some sidewalls, I guess, for a better term in terms of this zig-zagging or ricocheting of a foreign policy that many of us perceive as taking place over the last 2 years.

Mr. SULLIVAN. So I would start by saying that the first thing that this can do is actually much beyond just Yemen. It is something that was built into your question which is it is the assertion of Congress that it has an important bipartisan role to play in the

participation of the United States in military activities across the Middle East and across the world. And that is relevant to a series of questions that have not really been visited by the Congress since the passage of the resolutions in 2001, to use military force in 2001 and 2002.

So I think it would be a big step forward in terms of the assertion of this body that it is going to be a fundamental part of the conversation about the balance of U.S. interest in the region and where military force and activity is appropriate and where it is not. I also think it will send a message to the international community and to the participants in this conflict that the United States is not simply going to allow business as usual to continue.

And I think the Senate passing the resolution last year did have some effect on the calculus of the Saudi-led coalition. I do not think it will impact the Trump administration. I think they will conclude that they can continue their activities uninhibited, but I think it will have its due effect.

Mr. COSTA. They may. But I think it certainly provides an illustration of what we think the importance of a well thought out foreign policy and not one based on tweets as you said in your earlier comments today that is unprecedented, I think, with any previous administrations. The fact is, is that we should assert ourselves. Congress in recent years has abdicated its role to a large extent, I think, and clearly there are other issues. Many of us work with our European allies. They are very concerned and wondering what our policy is on any given day.

Would some of the others, would you care to comment?

Mr. SINGH. You know, I have to say, Congressman, that I do not fully agree with Mr. Sullivan on this point. I am a strong believer in congressional oversight of the executive branch. Having only worked in the executive branch myself, I think Congress plays an important role. I do not think though that it is right to say that the types of support we are offering to our partners, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, constitute hostilities if this is the question before the committee.

And I worry about the precedent that would set for our ability to support partners around the world. We want other States in general to step forward and take some of the burden off the United States and we see partners in some parts of the world doing that. The French are active, for example, in the Sahel in Africa. In exigencies if there were, for example, a war between Israel and Iran, we want to be able to provide certain types of assistance below the level of engaging in hostilities with our partners.

Mr. COSTA. No, of course. But of course it depends upon how that policy is pursued and its impacts and the effects of it and whether or not, I mean sometimes we support a policy and it does not turn out the way we had hoped it would.

Mr. SINGH. That is absolutely true. I would just be careful. I would, actually, I would advise caution on the terms of the precedent that is being set.

Ms. KARLIN. We need to be cognizant. Our partners have some warts, no doubt. The most effective U.S. policy is one that blends carrots and sticks. I think what we have seen from this administration so far has been all carrots vis-a-vis the Saudis and that is

problematic. And Congress can be helpful in shining a light on many of the warts.

You know, Mr. Sullivan, I think, clearly articulated that there are a number of times where the U.S. for various reasons ends up making compromises. It is important that we are sober and clear-eyed about when we are making those compromises and it is worth reminding ourselves of course that the Houthis do not pose a transnational threat to U.S. national security.

If this were a conversation about Hezbollah I would have a very different response and I suspect many of us would as well. But a reminder that U.S. assistance comes with some sticks is crucial and there are various ways one might exert that.

Mr. HARDEN. So I just want to note that the role of Congress at the Foreign Service level in embassies and at the diplomatic exchanges has a very profound impact on how we shape our conversation and the points that we push, so we should never minimize that. Second, I would associate myself with Mr. Singh in the sense that the oversight role of Congress is extraordinarily important, but the narrow question as to whether or not these activities constitute hostilities, I think, may be beyond what the goal is in terms of carving back actual hostile actions by the administration.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much.

And now we go to Mr. Castro this time, last but certainly not least.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. I was going to say earlier that I had three committee hearings at the same time, so I think most of the questions have been asked already.

But let me ask you all and whoever wants to answer it whether you think MbS is a rogue or a reformer based on what you have seen so far?

Mr. HARDEN. I do not think—that is too crass of a choice, I think.

Mr. CASTRO. No, I know. You said it is non-binary, what is he?

Mr. HARDEN. I think he could be a reformer who is also acting in authoritarian ways that is counterproductive at times, so both.

Ms. KARLIN. We have seen evidence that he has taken steps in both directions and I think we should recognize those steps. Yes, he has made progress in terms of opening up Saudi Arabia, women driving, all of that the economy piece, great. He has also taken a number of really irresponsible steps as we have discussed a bit here, whether it is arresting folks in the Ritz Carlton; the Hariri hostage-taking, if you will, or kidnapping; obviously the blockade against Qatar; the Jamal Khashoggi affair; the war in Yemen.

And so he is on one level stumbling in really key and worrisome ways, on another level he is taking some steps that are meaningful. When you go to Saudi Arabia it is a little bit different than it was when you went 10 years ago. So figuring out how to sort of tame his worst instincts of which I think they are profound, and I cannot kind of underscore that enough, while trying to elevate the handful of right steps he is making is important.

Mr. CASTRO. And, Dr. Karlin, you mentioned in your last comment that with respect to the Trump administration it has been mostly carrots with respect to Saudi Arabia and that there have been really no sticks. What sticks would you apply to Saudi Arabia?



Ms. KARLIN. I would encourage investigations, so mandating, say, that there needs to be an investigation into the Khashoggi affair and an actual independent one, not one that is coming obviously from the leadership. I would look at tightening the U.S. security cooperation more broadly with the Saudis.

And I would not underestimate the significance of just verbal articulation of what is wrong. People hear that, people know that, and it should start to worry them. If the leadership in Riyadh is only hearing kind of positive endorsements from the administration, it is crucial that that gets balanced by Congress emphasizing that there are things that are right and things that are wrong.

Mr. SINGH. Can I just say I do not really agree with the characterization of the Trump administration's policy in the sense that—

Mr. CASTRO. Which part, that there have been no sticks?

Mr. SINGH. That there have been no sticks. I mean we have seen 17 Saudis sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Act as a result of the Khashoggi assassination. Sanctioning members of allied governments is a significant step. I think we need to acknowledge that. We have also seen the Trump administration partly, I think, in response to pressure from Congress suspend the midair refueling for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. And also I think my understanding is that Secretary Pompeo in his private meetings with the Saudis has delivered messages on some of these issues, the women's rights activists, Khashoggi, the war in Yemen. I think publicly they have been quite supportive.

Mr. CASTRO. Do you think we have done enough in response to Khashoggi and the situation in Yemen?

Mr. SINGH. I think Congressman, that what we need is much more engagement with the Saudis at multiple levels. My concern is that right now this relationship is in the hands of too few individuals on both sides. I would like to see us have—

Mr. CASTRO. You mean Jared Kushner?

Mr. SINGH. What is that?

Mr. CASTRO. Jared Kushner?

Mr. SINGH. I think on both sides it is in too few hands. We have no Ambassador in Riyadh, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs nomination is held up right now, and I think this relationship will only be healthier when we are able to broaden it and diversify it in that way and it will involve both carrots and sticks. And I think sometimes it is appropriate that it will involve tough private messages but some public support.

Mr. CASTRO. Anything, Jake?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I think I do not have confidence presently that there is a huge difference between the private messages we are sending the Saudis and what we are hearing publicly. I have not seen evidence of that. I do not see any sense in which the leadership of Saudi Arabia and the crown prince right now feel that they are under any meaningful pressure from this administration. And I do think we need to take further steps in response to the Khashoggi affair, that it is not sufficient, the 17.

Mr. CASTRO. I think part of the difficult part of that is that the President really sidelines all of his advisors. I do not think there is anybody that can reliably speak for the President including the

Vice President. Most notably, when he came to Congress to cut a budget deal and on his way back to the White House it was undone. I think that makes it even more difficult because it is hard enough for Americans to read the President, American politicians; I suspect it is even harder for folks who are overseas.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

This concludes our hearing. Let me first announce how we are going to work this. First, I want to thank the witnesses for outstanding testimony and when you signed up for this I know you did not think it was going to be this long. But as you can tell we had very thoughtful members on both sides who really had a lot of good questions to ask. I know I have learned a lot and I am sure everybody has as well. So we are going to give you a couple of minutes to leave and I want to thank you again.

And then we will conclude—we will begin the markup immediately after, say, in a minute or two. I want to thank you very much for coming and thank you for your time.

Mr. SINGH. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. What we are going to do is begin our markup shortly and return after floor votes to conclude the markup. There is going to be floor votes at what time, now, momentarily. And so the hearing is now adjourned and in a minute or so we are going to start the next phase and Mr. McCaul and I are going to start with our opening statements and then we are going to have everybody come back to make remarks after the votes and to vote after the votes.

[Whereupon, at 1:31 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

## APPENDIX

**FULL COMMITTEE HEARING AND MARKUP NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Eliot L. Engel (D-NY), Chairman**

February 6, 2019

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing and markup of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 6, 2019  
**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.  
**SUBJECT:** U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula

**WITNESSES:** Mr. David Harden  
 Managing Director  
 Georgetown Strategy Group

Mara Karlin, Ph.D.  
 Director of Strategic Studies and Associate Professor  
 School of Advanced International Studies  
 Johns Hopkins University

Mr. Jake Sullivan  
 Nonresident Senior Fellow  
 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Mr. Michael Singh  
 Senior Fellow and Managing Director  
 Washington Institute for Near East Policy

**\*MARKUP WILL BEGIN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HEARING\***

**MARKUP OF:** H.J. Res. 37, Directing the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress.

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date 02/06/19 Room 2172

Starting Time 10:06 a.m. Ending Time 1:31 p.m.

Recesses 0 (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ )

**Presiding Member(s)**

*Chairman Elliot L. Engel, Rep. Brad Sherman, Rep. Ami Bera, Rep. Joaquin Castro*

*Check all of the following that apply:*

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

**TITLE OF HEARING:**

*U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula*

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

*See attached.*

**NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

*N/A*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

*(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)*

**STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD:** *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

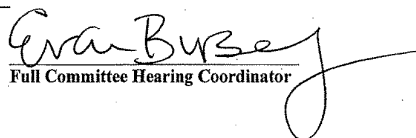
*SFR - Rep. Gerry Connolly*

*IFR - Rep. Ted Lieu*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 1:31 p.m.

  
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*FULL COMMITTEE HEARING*

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Eliot L. Engel, NY
X	Brad Sherman, CA
	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
X	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
X	Ami Bera, CA
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
X	Dina Titus, NV
X	Adriano Espaillat, NY
X	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
X	Ilhan Omar, MN
X	Colin Allred, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
X	Abigail Spanberger, VA
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA
X	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	David Trone, MD
X	Jim Costa, CA
X	Juan Vargas, CA
X	Vicente Gonzalez, TX

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Steve Chabot, OH
X	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Scott Perry, PA
X	Ted Yoho, FL
X	Adam Kinzinger, IL
X	Lee Zeldin, NY
	James F. Sensenbrenner, Jr., WI
X	Ann Wagner, MO
X	Brian J. Mast, FL
X	Francis Rooney, FL
X	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
X	John Curtis, UT
X	Ken Buck, CO
X	Ron Wright, TX
X	Guy Reschenthaler, PA
X	Tim Burchett, TN
X	Greg Pence, IN
X	Steve Watkins, KS
X	Michael Guest, MS

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Statement for the Record from Representative Gerry Connolly**

U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula

February 6, 2019

When it comes to U.S. policy in the Arabian Peninsula, the Trump Administration has put all of its eggs in Saudi Arabia's basket, often to the detriment of American values and national security interests in the region. This retreat has fostered a culture of impunity in the Gulf that permitted the brutal murder of my constituent Jamal Khashoggi, a growing humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, and disregard for human rights at every turn. The United States must take stock of our strategic interests in the region and reexamine our relationship with Saudi Arabia to ensure that U.S. policy is rooted in American values, particularly respect for human rights. Doing so requires an understanding of what is driving the Trump Administration's agenda in the region and whether the President's potential conflicts of interest are playing a role.

Shortly after the 2016 presidential election, the Saudis reportedly began courting Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, as a point of leverage in the incoming Administration. Kushner had made clear his desire to reach an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal, and the Saudis presented themselves as an integral player to resolve that dispute and to help achieve several other Trump campaign pledges. Lobbyists representing the Saudi government paid for an estimated 500 nights at the Trump International Hotel in Washington in just three months. Kushner also sought financing from Qatar's sovereign wealth fund for his company's troubled Manhattan property. Those talks collapsed shortly before Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates launched a blockade against Qatar in June 2017, with the Trump Administration's backing. Kushner and President Trump's sprawling business relationships in the Gulf spark legitimate questions about the motivations behind the Trump Administration's regional policies.

Despite the assessment of the U.S. intelligence community that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) ordered the brutal murder and dismemberment of U.S. resident and internationally renowned journalist Jamal Khashoggi, President Trump has inexplicably allowed MBS to evade justice. Last month, during the Secretary of State's visit to Riyadh, Pompeo said the Trump Administration expects Saudi Arabia to hold accountable "every single person" responsible for Khashoggi's murder, as he smiled alongside the chief architect of the assassination plot. If President Trump refuses to enforce accountability for Khashoggi's murder with sanctions for all those responsible, then Congress must do so, no matter how high up it goes. Furthermore, the United States should declare persona non grata the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., Khalid bin Salman (who is also MBS' brother) for luring Khashoggi to his death by assuring his safety in traveling to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Since 2015, the United States has provided support to the Saudi-led coalition in its war against Houthi rebels in Yemen. In addition to claiming an estimated 60,000 Yemeni lives, this war is fueling the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian agencies estimate that 85,000

children have died from malnutrition, more than half the population currently requires emergency food assistance, and one in every 10 Yemeni children has been forcibly displaced from their homes due to the conflict. In September 2018, Secretary Pompeo certified to Congress that the Saudi and Emirati governments were mitigating harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen; meanwhile, the Saudi-led coalition has conducted attacks killing dozens of civilians at a time, often with U.S.-provided munitions. Congress must reclaim its constitutional foreign policymaking authority to cease American complicity in this ongoing crisis. That is why I am glad that today this Committee will be marking up H.J. Res. 37, which would direct the removal of U.S. armed forces from hostilities associated with the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen.

In Secretary Pompeo's Cairo remarks last month, he said "when America retreats, chaos often follows." And we have seen no more disastrous retreat from U.S. global leadership than that of the Trump Administration. The unqualified endorsement of Riyadh's domestic and international ventures is no way to protect U.S. interests in the Gulf. The Trump Administration has demonstrated that they are not willing to hold our partners accountable, so Congress must do so.



February 5, 2019

Rep. Eliot Engel, Chairman  
Rep. Michael McCaul, Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Re: February 6 hearing on "US Policy in the Arabian Peninsula"**

Dear Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA ("AIUSA") and our more than one million members and supporters nationwide, we urge this Committee to highlight the rapidly deteriorating human rights crises on the Arabian Peninsula and the ongoing war and humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

**Deteriorating Human Rights and Conflict in the Arabian Peninsula**

The human rights situation in the Arabian Peninsula continues to deteriorate amidst continued crackdowns on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, the arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights activists, the institutionalised inequality of women, and the ongoing conflict in Yemen. With the United States and key international actors continuing to invest heavily in the economies and militaries of the Arabian Peninsula, an environment of impunity surrounds the human rights violations perpetrated by these states.

This continues to be the case in Yemen, where the United States directly assist the Saudi Arabia-UAE led coalition's campaign that has led to one of the most severe contemporary humanitarian crises of our time. The U.S. has in the past been receptive to reports on rights abuses, ending the sale of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia following reports of their use against civilian populations. This has not, however, deterred Saudi authorities from accessing these weapons



from other sources. Moreover, despite reports demonstrating Saudi Arabia's misuse of U.S. munitions, and reliance on logistical services such as mid-air refuelling to conduct strikes on civilian populations that might amount to war crimes, the U.S. has continued to invest significantly in building Saudi Arabia's military capacity.

The United States has close military ties with Saudi Arabia and the states of the Arabian Peninsula and maintains military bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Saudi Arabia is the single largest importer of U.S.-manufactured arms, with the UAE and Qatar following closely.

As conditions in the region continue to worsen across a range of rights issues, and as the Yemen conflict moves into its fourth year, continued US inaction on ongoing human rights abuses cannot be afforded. The significant reliance of the Gulf States on U.S. economic and military support grants Washington with the leverage necessary to press regional leaders to comply with international humanitarian laws and norms.

Amnesty International USA would like to highlight some of the key concerns that we feel the United States must directly address with its partners in the region:

- The Saudi-UAE led coalition's conduct in Yemen
- The arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders
- Continued crackdowns on freedom of religion, expression, association and assembly
- The ongoing discrimination against women in law and in practice
- The violation of the rights of foreign workers
- Rule of law and the continued use of the death penalty

### 1. The Saudi-UAE led coalitions conduct in Yemen

The civil war in Yemen continues to represent one of the gravest humanitarian crises of the modern era. So far, the conflict has resulted in the deaths of 80,000 and placed 11 million at risk of famine<sup>1</sup> – with severe and acute malnutrition threatening almost 400,000 under the age of 5 . Three million people have been displaced without refuge as a result of Saudi Arabia's border blockade, and 22 million rely on humanitarian assistance to survive.<sup>2</sup> A land, sea and air blockade enforced by the Saudi-led coalition of eight mostly Sunni Arab states including Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Sudan – backed by the U.S., UK and France – has restricted the provision of vital resources including humanitarian aid, food and fuel to the impoverished nation.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Saudi Violations*

Saudi Arabia is a key actor in the conflict, primarily responsible for leading the coalition currently engaged in quelling the Houthi rebellion and restoring the former Yemeni government. Amnesty International reports over 36 airstrikes undertaken by the Saudi-led coalition may have violated international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. These strikes claimed over 500 civilian lives including 157 children. The attacks appeared to have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects such as hospitals, schools, markets and mosques – which would amount to war crimes.

Throughout 2017, the Saudi-led coalition regularly employed cluster munitions, lethal explosive weapons banned under international law. Investigations by

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Yemen <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/yemen.html>

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Pledging Conference on Yemen, 3 April 2018

[https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news\\_media.nsf/\(httpNewsByYear\\_en\)/27F6CCAD7178F3E9C1258264003311FA?OpenDocument](https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/(httpNewsByYear_en)/27F6CCAD7178F3E9C1258264003311FA?OpenDocument)

<sup>3</sup> New York Times (2018), "The Tragedy of Saudi Arabia's War", 29 October 2018

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch found unexploded BLU-108 skeets and other remnants of U.S.-origin smart cluster munitions in Yemen. After reports of civilian casualties resulting from use of cluster munitions by the Saudi coalition, the U.S. suspended further transfers to Saudi Arabia in 2016 and the manufacturer Textron ceased production of cluster munitions.<sup>4</sup> Saudi Arabia was, however, reported to have employed cluster munitions throughout 2017, manufactured by Brazil.<sup>5</sup>

Amnesty International has called on Saudi Arabia and its coalition to destroy its cluster bomb stockpiles and accede to the International Convention on Cluster Munitions but Saudi Arabia has yet to do so.

#### *Houthi Violations*

Houthi forces have been involved in the arrest of political opponents, human rights defenders, journalists and academics arbitrarily seizing critics at gunpoint and subjecting some to enforced disappearances in an attempt to quash dissent. A report commissioned by UNSC Resolution 2342 (2017) and produced by the Panel of Experts on Yemen found that economic challenges facing Houthi-controlled territories have “resulted in children being compelled to search for economic alternatives on behalf of their families” – including recruitment to armed conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Amnesty International has investigated 30 ground attacks conducted by both pro and anti-Houthi forces which did not attempt to reduce civilian casualties,

<sup>4</sup> Arms Control Association (2016), “Textron to Halt Cluster Bomb Production”

<https://www.armscontrol.org/Texttron-to-Halt-Cluster-Bomb-Production>

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International (2017), Yemen: Saudi Arabia-led Coalition uses banned cluster munitions on residential areas”, 9 March 2017 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/yemen-saudi-arabia-led-coalition-uses-banned-brazilian-cluster-munitions-on-residential-areas/>

<sup>6</sup> Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen mandated by Security Council Resolution 234 (2017) <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1800513.pdf>

killing at least 68 – most of whom were women and children. These involved the use of imprecise weapons such as artillery and mortar fire, Grad rockets in heavily populated areas and operated amidst civilian infrastructure including residential areas, schools and hospitals. The UNSC report cited above found Houthi-Saleh forces responsible for several cases involving the indiscriminate use of ordnance against civilian populated areas.

#### *UAE Involvement*

The UAE is a leading member of the Saudi-led coalition operating in Yemen. Human Rights Watch has documented 87 apparently unlawful coalition attacks, likely constituting war crimes, that have killed nearly 1,000 civilians since March 2015.<sup>7</sup> The UAE had deployed 30 aircraft to take part in coalition operations. The UNSC Yemen report concluded that “the government of Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and Houthi-Saleh forces have all engaged in arbitrary arrests and detentions, carried out enforced disappearances and committed torture.”

The UNSC report found 12 instances of individuals deprived of liberty held in detention facilities operated by the UAE that involved beatings, electrocution, “constrained suspension and imprisonment in a metal cell”, denial of medical treatment, and enforced disappearances. The UAE is known to run at least two informal detention facilities in Yemen, and authorities have ordered the continued detention of people despite release orders. Amnesty International documented 49 cases (including four children) who were arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared in the provinces of Aden and Hadramout in 2016, primarily undertaken by UAE-backed security forces.

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<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch (2018), “Hiding Behind the Coalition”, 24 August 2018

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/08/24/hiding-behind-coalition/failure-credibly-investigate-and-provide-redress-unlawful#>

### *U.S. Involvement*

The United States, along with the UK and France, have assisted the Saudi-led coalition throughout the Yemen conflict through the provision of logistical support, the sale of weapons and aircraft, and mid-air refuelling support, amongst others. Saudi Arabia is the single largest market for U.S. arms sales. In 2017, a Saudi-U.S. arms deal resulted in an immediate arms purchase of \$110 and \$350 billion over 10 years.<sup>8</sup> The sale occurred in the backdrop of Saudi Arabia's deepening involvement in the Yemen conflict, and ongoing crackdowns on free expression and assembly in the country – contributing to the environment of impunity in which the Kingdom operates.

This has included the sale of 30 F-15 fourth-generation fighter jets, 84 combat helicopters, 110 cruise missiles, and nearly 20,000 guided bombs.<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International has confirmed that US-made munitions by Saudi airstrikes in which civilians have been killed, including children, and that mid-air refuelling support provided by the U.S. Saudi-UAE coalition targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure and irrigation wells.<sup>10</sup>

In December 2018, progress was made towards ending US complicity in war crimes committed by the Saudi-led coalition when the Senate voted to end military assistance to Saudi Arabia in the wake of the assassination of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi and in response to mounting allegations of war crimes.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> CNBC, "US-Saudi Arabia Seal Weapons Deal", 20 May 2017 <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/20/us-saudi-arabia-seal-weapons-deal-worth-nearly-110-billion-as-trump-begins-visit.html>

<sup>9</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's Arms Transfer Database

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch (2016), "Yemen: Embargo Arms to Saudi Arabia", 21 March 2016 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/21/yemen-embargo-arms-saudi-arabia>

<sup>11</sup> New York Times (2018) "Senate Votes to End Aid for Yemen Fight Over Khashoggi Killing and Saudis' War Aims", 13 December 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/politics/yemen-saudi-war-pompeo-mattis.html>

## 2. Arrest and detention of Human Rights Defenders

### *Saudi Arabia*

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi marked one of the most publicised and egregious rights abuses committed by Saudi Arabia. The dissident author and *Washington Post* columnist was assassinated at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul on 2<sup>nd</sup> October by Saudi government agents. He was editor of the Saudi Arabian newspaper *Al Watan*, which became a platform for progressive journalists under his tenure. Amnesty International maintains the murder of Khashoggi should be the subject of international investigation. Turkish investigators have identified 19 suspects, but as of yet nobody has been punished for the crime.<sup>12</sup>

At least twelve Saudi human rights defenders have been arbitrarily detained without charge since May 2018, many of them women. They have reportedly faced sexual harassment, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment during interrogation. One such human rights defender, Samar Badawi, was a recipient of the State Department's International Women of Courage Award in 2012. Many face trials before counterterrorism courts and up to 20 years in prison for their human rights activism. The heightened tension in the region as a result of the geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has fuelled the Yemen conflict and Qatar blockade, amongst others, has fuelled a bolder policy of cracking down on dissent in the country and across the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>13</sup>

### *Bahrain*

<sup>12</sup> Reuters (2018), "Amnesty international Urges UN Investigation and independent autopsy in Khashoggi death", 20 October 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-khashoggi-amnesty/amnesty-urges-u-n-investigation-independent-autopsy-in-khashoggi-death-idUSKCN1MU0J2>

<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International Report 2017/18: Saudi Arabia <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabia/report-saudi-arabia/>

Human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh was arrested and interrogated by the National Security Agency following a decree authorizing the expansion of the agency's powers. Al-Saegh is reported to have been tortured and sexually assaulted while in custody. Nabeel Rajab was sentenced to two years in prison for "spreading false information and rumours with the aim of discrediting the state". Opposition leaders and prisoners of conscience Sheikh Ali Salman and Fadhel Abbas Mahdi Mohamad remain arbitrarily detained.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Kuwait*

UK-based writer Rania al-Saad was sentenced on appeal in her absence to three years in prison on charges of "insulting Saudi Arabia" on Twitter.<sup>15</sup>

#### *UAE*

Leading human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor was arrested and received a 10-year sentence, recently upheld on appeal, and held in solitary confinement with no access to a lawyer. The 10-year sentence for prisoner of conscience Dr. Nasser Bin Ghaith was also upheld, following his arrest in 2015 and trial in which he stated he had been tortured. Ghanim Abdallah Matar was detained for a video he posted online expressing sympathy toward Qatar, an offence which could result in up to 15 years imprisonment. Human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Dr. Mohammad al-Roken remains in prison serving a 10-year sentence imposed after a mass trial in 2013.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International Report 2017/18: Bahrain <https://amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/bahrain/report-bahrain/>

<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International Report 2017/18: Kuwait <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/kuwait/report-kuwait/>

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International Report 2017/18: United Arab Emirates <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/united-arab-emirates/report-united-arab-emirates/>

