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Library Research Award Essay

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I wrote this research paper as my capstone project for the College Park Studies program. I was first interested in writing on the topic of civil war in Yemen based on a smaller paper I had written for a class on a similar topic. In this first paper I examined the way the war in Yemen could be considered a just war based on the jus ad bellum principles of just war. This paper sparked my interest in Yemen which I then transferred into my capstone paper. For my capstone research I decided to look at the Yemeni conflict as a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. To do this, I compared the 2011 Yemeni civil war to the Vietnam War and Korean War which are widely accepted to be proxy wars between the United States and the USSR.

In some ways sourcing for this paper was difficult. To establish Yemen's status as a proxy war I compared it with the Vietnam war and the Korean war. For those conflicts it was fairly easy to use the library databases to find sources as these are older conflicts that have been heavily studied and documented. Since the war in Yemen began in 2011, there hasn't been time to have many scholarly, peer reviewed works published. To account for this, my advisor for my capstone project gave me permission to use non-scholarly sources such as news articles so long as they were from a reputable source such as the Washington Post or the New York Times. When searching for scholarly sources I was very general in my search terms. I mostly just searched "proxy war" along with "Vietnam war" or "Korean war." Because they are such heavily discussed topics, I had no problem finding papers that were useful. When searching for articles on Yemen I was generally much more specific. I would usually search for an article that addressed something specific I was looking for based on my other research.

I mostly did research on my own but I also asked some of my professors for help. Of course I talked to my advisor a lot. She gave me a lot of general advice about using databases and also gave me some specific recommendations for journals or authors to check out. Near the end of my project I asked one of my other professors for advice on where to find more information to round out my paper. He gave me a few sources that I had not yet found. Their advice was very useful to me. Since they have spent much longer researching political science and international relations topics they are much more familiar than I am with the resources out there that I might be able to use. The resources they provided have proved useful on many subsequent projects.

I had a very strict method of evaluating my sources that were related to the Vietnam and Korean wars. Since these are much older conflicts there has been enough time for peer reviewed

sources to have been published about them. Since this was the case, I only used peer reviewed sources that were published in reputable political science journals such as the American Journal of Political Science and the International Political Science Review. I also used sources like Britannica for general information on the wars since this is generally accepted to be a reputable source. The Yemen war is much more recent and has not yet concluded which makes finding peer reviewed sources much more challenging. Because of this, I was allowed to use non-scholarly sources on my paper. There were two things I did to make sure I was still getting correct information. First, I only used highly respected news sources like the Washington Post. Second, I made sure that any information I had, I could find in at least two publications. This made it more likely that the information was accurate.

Working on this paper was extremely useful to my academic career. I had done research papers before, but never anything this in depth. This taught me how to do a deep dive into a particular subject without losing interest. It taught me how to carefully evaluate a variety of sources and synthesize them all into a cohesive narrative to make my argument. These skills are invaluable going forward. This semester, I am beginning my thesis project for the Government and Politics Honors program which will also be about Yemen. At 70-100 pages long my Yemen paper dwarfs in comparison, but I hope to be able to use the skills I have already learned on my first paper to be successful in my thesis.