

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: PETROAGGRESSION DECONSTRUCTED:  
VARIATIONAL PROPOSITIONS

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It is widely believed that "petrostates," or countries whose economies rely heavily on oil exports, are at greater risk from external aggression. This popular view has made frequent recourse to the neo-Malthusian intuition that, in a world of material scarcity, resource predation will be rampant. Recent empirical research, however, has shown that petrostates are neither more common targets of military attack nor particularly peaceful members of the international community. In fact, available statistical analyses overwhelmingly suggest that, in terms of conflict initiation, these states are mostly on the offensive in world politics—a phenomenon often referred to as "petroaggression." Despite this finding, little is known about what accounts for variation in petrostate belligerence. Not all petrostates are international troublemakers, and their propensity to threaten or use

military force has varied both across geography and over time. This dissertation attempts to explain this within-group variation, using two conceptual experiments. The first heeds to the internal organization of petrostates, examining how differences in their regime institutions could mediate (strengthen or weaken) the conflict-inducing effects of oil income. It is argued that, because of certain compositional and identity characteristics of their ruling coalitions, petrostates with personalist institutions would be more potent conflict initiators than comparable oil exporters of nonpersonalist institutional makeup. The second conceptual experiment abstracts from petrostates' internal attributes, exploring potential sources of variation in their external environments. Adopting a system–subsystem perspective, this analysis proposes that, all else equal, exogenous structural variables—in particular, superpower penetration in regional subsystems containing petrostates—could account for differences (spatial and temporal) in those states' conflict behavior. Although the dissertation's main thrust is theoretical, empirical evidence providing preliminary support for these variational propositions is also offered.

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by

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## Dedication

To my parents, Ekaterina and Hristo, and my brother, Yasen, for nurturing my interest in creative pursuits from an early age.

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For the eventual completion of this project, I owe many. My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Marta, for her unwavering support over the years, and my children, Martin and Ana, for enduring my poor parenting while showing nothing but affection. I am also in great debt to my academic advisor, Dr. Paul Huth, whose patience, wisdom, and steady guidance have kept me from giving up. At critical points of this project, I also received invaluable help and encouragement from the distinguished members of my dissertation committee; from our amazing graduate program coordinator, Ann Marie Clark; and from distant associates who were kind enough to answer questions from a complete stranger. My sincere thanks go to all of them. All errors and omissions herein are my own.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Preliminaries

A little over a century ago, it became clear that petroleum would play a major role in international security affairs for years to come. Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, in 1912, Great Britain completed one of the most sweeping transformations of its Royal Navy, reequipping all of its vessels, previously reliant on coal, with oil-powered engines.<sup>1</sup> The decision, greatly influenced by Winston Churchill—then First Lord of the Admiralty—was controversial and required a swift action. A state without known indigenous oil reserves at the time, Britain had to secure reliable petroleum supplies, and it did so by strengthening its foothold in Persia and ensuring a 51-percent British stake in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Germany, the main reason for the British switch to oil, engaged in similar activities, modernizing its budding blue-water navy and seeking access to Middle East oil through large-scale rail projects in the heart of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Over the next century, great power strategic decisions were tightly intertwined with petroleum, whose importance for economic and military power, as well as a state's ability to project force, became increasingly apparent. In December 1941, Imperial Japan,

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<sup>1</sup> Erik Solem and Antony Scanlon, "Oil and natural gas as factors in strategic policy and action: a long-term view," in *Global Resources and International Conflict: Environmental Factors in Strategic Policy and Action*, ed. Arthur Westing (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> F. William Engdahl, "Oil and the origins of the 'War to make the world safe for democracy'," June 22, 2007, [http://www.engdahl.oilgeopolitics.net/History/Oil\\_and\\_the\\_Origins\\_of\\_World\\_W/oil\\_and\\_the\\_origins\\_of\\_world\\_w.HTM#\\_edn18](http://www.engdahl.oilgeopolitics.net/History/Oil_and_the_Origins_of_World_W/oil_and_the_origins_of_world_w.HTM#_edn18).

starved by a punishing oil embargo imposed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July of that year, invaded and occupied the Dutch East Indies in an effort to improve its fortunes and ability to wage war. In January 1980, partly in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the previous year, President Jimmy Carter proclaimed his famous Carter Doctrine, publically pledging the growing U.S. military might—and the country's international credibility—to the defense of the oil-rich Persian Gulf,<sup>3</sup> a former "British lake" now turned American. And most recently, oil has found its way into discussions of the motives behind the two U.S. interventions against Iraq (1990 and 2003), a state believed to have the second-largest oil deposits in the world, prompting leading intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky to exclaim, "It's the oil, stupid!"<sup>4</sup>

Oil's importance for military affairs, its implications for a state's standing in the international hierarchy of power, and the behavior of great powers over the last century all allude to some kind of relationship between petroleum and interstate conflict. Not least because of anecdotal examples such as those put forth above, many foreign affairs commentators—including political scientists—have seen this relationship as tied to the notion of resource capture, or the intuition that oil, and its physical control, could be a hefty price for aggressive states motivated by either greed or need. This so-called "blood-oil" thesis has a long pedigree and owes much of its appeal to the well-documented scramble for resources that dominated the pre-oil era of 19th-century colonial expansion. Importantly, at the core of this thesis lies a testable proposition, namely, that oil-rich

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<sup>3</sup> William B. Quandt, "America and the Middle East," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 68.

<sup>4</sup> Noam Chomsky, "It's the Oil, stupid!" *Khaleej Times*, July 8, 2008.

states, or "petrostates,"<sup>5</sup> are at higher risk of falling victim to the aggressive whims of external powers. In the somber words of one of the thesis' chief proponents, "[oil] surplus states, lacking strong armies or powerful friends, remain vulnerable to invasion by powerful energy-importing states."<sup>6</sup>

The simplicity of this prediction is not to come to its detriment; what seems more damaging for the blood-oil thesis, however, is the budding, recently presented evidence that its key proposition does not hold in any systematic fashion. Statistical analyses of large-*n*, cross-national data have offered either weak or no support for the claim that petrostates are more frequent targets of external aggression, either monadically or dyadically, than are nonpetrostates.<sup>7</sup> To make things even more intriguing, another consistent finding of this research—a finding that is the focal point of this dissertation—has confirmed the presence of what has been termed "petroaggression," or the observed elevated external belligerence of petroleum-abundant states. In fact, as reported in one study using the Correlates of War (COW) Project database, petrostates are 94 percent more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) than are nonpetrostates, a statistically significant difference.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation, the term "petrostate" refers to a state whose dollar value of oil exports represents 10 percent or more of gross domestic product for at least 80 percent of the years in the study period (1971–2001). For further information on methodology and measurement, as well as a list of petrostates, see chapter 4. Occasionally, the term is used more loosely, mainly to illustrate key theoretical points.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 17.

<sup>7</sup> For monadic results, see Georg Strüver and Tim Wegenast, "Ex oleo bellare? The Impact of Oil on the Outbreak of Militarized Interstate Disputes," GIGA Working Paper 162 (German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2011); for dyadic, see Indra de Soysa, Erik Gartzke, and Tove Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy: On the Relationship Between Petroleum and Interstate Disputes," 2009 (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>8</sup> Jeff Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments: Fuel for International Conflict," *International Organization* 64, no. 4 (2010): 664.

## 1.2 Purpose, theoretical approach, and contribution

One need not be versed in statistical analysis to see why the moniker petroaggression could be well deserved. The external behaviors of some major oil exporters—Iraq and Libya being two prime examples—have been notoriously aggressive, producing some of the most destructive and lengthy conflicts in the post-World War II period. The Iran–Iraq War (1980–88), for instance, was the most protracted conflict of the 20th century—more so than the two world wars—and caused well over half a million deaths and more than a trillion dollars in financial costs on both sides.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Libya, massive arms purchases fueled by skyrocketing oil revenues in the 1970s have turned the country into the "world's largest military parking lot"<sup>10</sup> and offered it an offensive option used consistently against neighbors and other regional actors.

The finding of petroaggression notwithstanding, efforts to explain it or, not less important, to account for variations within it have been scarce. For the most part, existing studies have focused on empirical confirmation of petroaggression along the petrostate–nonpetrostate divide, employing various measures of oil availability and conflict and paying less attention to developing refined theoretical arguments. While this approach is valuable in that it has strengthened confidence in the purported empirical relationship, it has opened itself to charges of what John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have called "simplistic hypothesis testing," or the oft-seen scholarly preoccupation with "discovering

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<sup>9</sup> Fatality counts vary considerably by data source. The Battle Deaths Dataset compiled by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (<https://www.prio.org/Data/Armed-Conflict/Battle-Deaths/>) estimates them at over 600,000; the COW Project database (<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>), at more than twice that. For the war's financial toll, see Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran–Iraq Military Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *A tragedy of arms: military and security developments in the Maghreb* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 230.

well-verified empirical regularities" at the expense of theory building.<sup>11</sup> Induction also seems to have played at least some role in explanation, which is not uncommon in a line of research that is still in its infancy.

In light of these limitations, the primary purpose of this dissertation is to spell out and test theoretical propositions about variations in the conflict behavior of petrostates. While oil-abundant countries, as a group, may have been a bigger spoiler of international peace and stability, they have not been uniformly aggressive, either across space or over time. In the three decades from 1971 to 2001, for example, Iraq initiated over 6 times more MIDs than Venezuela and about 30 times more than oil-rich Algeria, and differences of similar magnitudes also transpire over successive decades within a single case.<sup>12</sup> If oil, a potential enhancer of state offensive capabilities, produces certain patterns of aggressive behavior, then, it appears that it does so alongside, and perhaps in interaction with, other explanatory factors, whose identification is yet to be made.

In carrying out this task, the dissertation looks both inside and outside the state. That the nature of domestic political institutions could shape a state's external behavior, including that associated with conflict, is not a novel idea. Still, as of now, no study has made a serious attempt to explore, either theoretically or empirically, how regime type—defined here as the "rules that identify the group from which leaders can come and who influences leadership choice and policy"<sup>13</sup>—could affect the conflict propensity of

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<sup>11</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Leaving theory behind: Why simplistic hypothesis testing is bad for International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 427–457, 427.

<sup>12</sup> Estimates are based on COW MID data.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 2 (2014): 313–331, 314.

petrostates. The argument advanced in the present work is that oil abundance and regime institutions—in particular those associated with personalist regimes—interact in ways which may explain, at least in part, petrostate belligerence and behavioral variations. Such interactions, it is argued, could determine how petroleum rents are absorbed domestically, the discretionary resources available to governments, the prospect for arms buildup, and the strength of decisional constraints imposed on leaders' foreign policy choices. Shifts in these factors could, in turn, increase or lower the prospect of petroaggression.

The regime typology used to investigate the domestic explanatory channel draws primarily on the work of Barbara Geddes et al.<sup>14</sup> and distinguishes between personalist, single-party, military, monarchic, and democratic regimes. This five-pronged typology is distinct from commonly used measures of democracy, such as Polity scores, which capture institutional characteristics (e.g., competitiveness of elections) that do not identify the group which selects leaders or determines policy. In the words of Geddes, "different kinds of authoritarianism differ from each other as much as they differ from democracy."<sup>15</sup> This insight is essential in the case of petrostates, many of which exhibit nondemocratic governance.<sup>16</sup> Attention to institutional differences among these states is, therefore, of obvious, but so far poorly recognized, importance for any theoretical or empirical investigation of petroaggression.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>15</sup> Geddes, "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 115–144, 121.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Ross, *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1.

An analysis focused solely on domestic factors, however, would be limited: such factors could inform an understanding of a petrostate government's incentives and internal capacity to choose a certain foreign policy path, but they reveal little about the external constraints that determine how easy or difficult it is to embark on that path. Previous work on petroaggression has primarily looked at internal conditions—domestic oil availability, measured in various ways, being the central one—to infer outward behavior. What remains to be done, then, is to cross analytical levels and examine how petrostate choices are shaped by exogenous conditions and actors. Even leading liberal scholars convinced of the explanatory primacy of domestic politics have conceded that such a perspective could illuminate foreign policy analysis, with Andrew Moravcsik embracing the view that "state behavior should be analyzed as a two-stage process of constrained social choice," where domestic preferences derived from liberal theory and exogenous factors derived from neorealist theory are considered on equal terms.<sup>17</sup>

This theoretical edict brings forth the second analytical dimension pursued here: a conceptual experiment in which petrostate regime-type attributes are kept constant and external environments are allowed to vary. Oil-rich states are strategic actors as any other states, and they consider external conditions—both in terms of opportunities and in terms of constraints—in choosing one or another course of action. These conditions can be examined within a system–subsystem framework, whereby attention is paid to the structural characteristics (the distribution of capabilities, or polarity) of the global international system and its impact on the regional subsystems within which petrostates exist and interact. This impact, which can vary both across space and over time, can be

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 513–553, 544.



conceptualized as an intrusion in, or penetration of, those subsystems by the global system's most powerful members, superpowers (the system's "poles"). Different types of penetration (types determined by the number of penetrating superpowers) can alter regional power relations, thus affecting the structural bounds imposed on petrostates foreign policy choices. During the era of bipolarity, for example, the two superpowers penetrated various regions in the periphery, often through surrogates, some of which oil rich, in order to expand their influence.<sup>18</sup> This penetration varied by region, compelling weaker states, including petrostates,<sup>19</sup> to accordingly readjust their foreign policy choices.

This kind of analysis naturally calls for attention to superpower strategic and economic interests, which, as alluded earlier, are tied to resource considerations and resource geography. It is reasonable to expect that, because of their importance as oil exporters, petrostates will enjoy greater protection from their most powerful peers, perhaps becoming more risk acceptant as a result. However, it is also reasonable to expect that, for the same reason, petrostates will be discouraged from foreign policy adventurism, which could disrupt oil markets and prices. The proposed system–subsystem framework allows for the identification of regional conditions under which such constraints will be relaxed. The focus on superpower subsystem penetration does not mean that the initiative is out of the hands of petrostates. Depending on the type of penetration, these actors could take advantage of their regional environments by shifting their external alignments in the advancement of aggressive foreign policy objectives.

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<sup>18</sup> Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 51.

<sup>19</sup> Most petrostates are lesser powers. For a detailed list, see Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 691–692.

While the dissertation's main contribution is to the study of petroaggression, its implications intersect with broader environmental security debates and extend beyond academia. Most research concerned with the conflict-inducing effects of oil, and natural resources more generally, has focused on civil war onset and duration. Besides developing strong theoretical arguments, this investigative niche has been heavy on empirics, testing—both qualitatively and quantitatively—various propositions about the oil–intrastate conflict linkage.<sup>20</sup> Surprising as it might be, academic work on the nexus between oil and interstate conflict has been comparatively scarce. As observed by Vally Koubi et al., "Only a few large-N studies examine the role resource scarcity or abundance may play in interstate conflicts and existing work of this nature concentrates on water resources."<sup>21</sup> Hence, the dissertation targets and enhances a largely neglected area of research, focusing on that area's newest and most wanting aspect, petroaggression, and offering both theory and preliminary evidence in support of its claims. By not dispensing with system-level analysis, it also reveals that abundance and scarcity theories of resource conflict are not incompatible. They can be reconciled in a broader framework, in which the security importance of oil is seen both in its cornucopian dimension (as domestic abundance) and in its scarcity dimension (as global scarcity).

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<sup>20</sup> For representative work in this area, see Paivi Lujala, "The Spoils of Nature: Armed Civil Conflict and Rebel Access to Natural Resources," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 1 (2010): 15–28; Michael Ross, "A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 265–300; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 2 (2004): 563–595; and James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.

<sup>21</sup> Vally Koubi, Gabriele Spilker, Tobias Bohmelt, and Thomas Bernauer, "Do natural resources matter for interstate and intrastate armed conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research* (2013): 1–13, 13.

In addition, the present work pays heed to the methodological advice to tackle "problems facing the real world."<sup>22</sup> Studying petroaggression is not an abstract or ahistorical endeavor; it addresses a tangible problem that has been a persistent feature of international security. Within this context, the dissertation's theoretical insights and empirical findings could inform policy. If, as argued here, certain characteristics of domestic politics make some petrostates more belligerent than others, then conflict prevention efforts should focus on removing the conditions that give rise to such characteristics. Likewise, if particular external conditions or superpower behaviors (e.g., arming or otherwise supporting revisionist oil-rich countries) contribute to petrostate aggression, identifying those conditions and behaviors can be used in both conflict prediction and conflict prevention.

### **1.3 Roadmap**

The dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature on oil and international conflict and identifies gaps in the ability of existing work on petroaggression to capture variations in petrostate conflict behavior. Chapter 3 builds upon this analysis and the conceptual framework sketched above, laying out the theoretical argument and arriving at testable propositions for each analytical dimension (i.e., domestic and systemic). Although the discussion contains a fair amount of deductive theorizing, it is not ahistorical and uses empirical examples and previous research to illustrate key points. Chapter 4 contains the quantitative part of the analysis, testing both

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 97. Gary King et al. echo the same methodological sentiment, suggesting that research topics should be "consequential for political, social, or economic life"; see Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.

dimensions of the theory. The analysis adopts a monadic research design, detailed early in the chapter, and uses a dataset on petrostates for the 1971–2001 period. Data on MID counts, the dependent variable in all regression models, are obtained from the COW Project database, whereas information on other variables, such as oil exports, regime type, and superpower regional penetration is pulled from various sources.

The dissertation then proceeds with the qualitative part of the empirical analysis. Chapter 5 presents a detailed case study—Libya from 1969 to 2005—examining the effects of changing external structural conditions (superpower regional penetration) on variations in petrostate conflict behavior over time. The focus is primarily on testing aspects of the theory's system-level dimension, which entails superpower–petrostate interactions (e.g., foreign policy alignment, diplomatic signaling) that are less susceptible to quantitative measurement and are best revealed in a process-tracing, historical method of analysis. Special attention is paid to the impact of the global and regional structural transformation that took place in the late 1980s. The case selection is made such that key domestic-level characteristics, notably petrostate status and regime type, do not change over time. Finally, chapter 6 wraps up the discussion by summarizing the study's key arguments and results. Given that the dissertation breaks ground into a relatively new field of research, areas for future work are also identified.

## **2 The conflict-inducing effects of oil: what we know and do not know**

### **2.1 Oil and interstate conflict: an assessment of the literature**

Surprisingly little academic effort has been expended on investigating the relationship between oil and interstate conflict.<sup>23</sup> This neglect extends even to realism, the paradigm that should have said most on the subject given oil's apparent importance for state economic and military power. Precursors of realism, such as naturalist and geopolitical theories, did examine how "variations in the physical environment shape political outcomes,"<sup>24</sup> but the theme received almost no attention in later writings with similar ontological roots. This omission is clearly noticeable in Hans Morgenthau's classical realism, a pillar of post-World War II international relations theory, and his treatment of power and imperialism. For Morgenthau, political power was a "psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised,"<sup>25</sup> a definition with intersubjective and nonmaterialistic overtones that has left limited room for resource considerations. Morgenthau also did not hesitate to underplay the economic rationale for imperialism. After granting some causal importance to gold and oil as motives for aggression in the Boer War of 1899–1902 and the Chaco War of 1932–35, he concluded that "during the entire period of mature capitalism, no war...was waged by major powers

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<sup>23</sup> Colgan, "Fueling the Fire: Pathways from Oil to War," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): 147–180, 147.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Deudney, "Bringing Nature Back In: Geopolitical Theory from the Greeks to the Global Era," in *Contested Grounds: Security and Conflict in the New Environmental Politics*, eds. Daniel Deudney and Richard Mathew (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 29–30.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, brief edition, revised by Kenneth Thompson (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 30.

exclusively or even predominantly for economic objectives"; rather, imperialism was driven by "the existence of weak states and empty spaces."<sup>26</sup>

Although later realist theorists—in particular those promoting the offensive and defensive variants of structural realism<sup>27</sup>—have rejected Morgenthau's notion of "power as control"<sup>28</sup> and elevated the importance of material capabilities in the study of international politics, they have also been mostly mum on the role of oil or other natural resources in security affairs. A passing mention of petroleum as a valuable prize for great power conquest does appear in the work of Mearsheimer, but the idea receives no further theoretical or empirical treatment.<sup>29</sup> Petroleum's potential role in the buildup of offensive capabilities—and, hence, in outward aggression—has also remained largely unrecognized.<sup>30</sup> For the most part, what we know about the security implications of oil has come from sociology, ecology, and the "fringes" of political science, in particular from the relatively recent environmental security program, which has tied resources and environmental factors to an expanded notion of national security.<sup>31</sup> But even in that

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 61, 67.

<sup>27</sup> See John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001); and Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979).

<sup>28</sup> The concept of "power as control" is commonly associated with the work of Robert Dahl ("The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 202–203) and dismissed by the neorealist school. For a critique of that concept, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> A.F.K. Organski has offered a brief reflection on the importance of mineral resources for state military power: "Resources are essential for the use of force. From the great flint industries of prehistoric times to the present, man has relied on minerals for fashioning weapons.... A lack of oil was one of Hitler's greatest handicaps." See Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 138.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Nils Gleditsch, "Environmental Change, Security and Conflict," in *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007); and Jessica Mathews, "Redefining Security," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 2 (1989): 162–177.

literature, growing as it might be, only a small fraction of studies have examined the linkage between oil and interstate conflict.<sup>32</sup> This has given much creative leeway to contemporary scholars looking into that relationship, with some entertaining as many as eight causal mechanisms responsible for it and alluding to the existence of more.<sup>33</sup>

Searching for structure at a lower level of complexity, however, one can discern two prevailing approaches to the study of the destabilization effects of oil in interstate context: one drawing inferences from the perspective of *resource scarcity* and the other from the vantage point of *resource abundance*.<sup>34</sup> Each is discussed and assessed in turn.

### ***2.1.1 From scarcity to resource wars***

The scarcity approach has been, by far, the dominant one. It underpins much of the literature on "resource wars"—a broader category of conflict in which struggle over oil has figured prominently—and owes much theoretical debt to the naturalist philosophy of Thomas Malthus, who, as early as 1798, argued that the future of humanity would be held hostage by demographic and resource pressures. In questioning the "perfectibility of man" and predicting social discord in various parts of the world in the face of rising

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, that literature has increasingly focused on environmental cooperation among nations, emphasizing the incentives for peaceful management of natural resources. See, for example, Ken Conca, "Environmental Cooperation and International Peace," in *Environmental Conflict*, eds. Paul Diehl and Nils Gleditsch (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); and Eric Neumayer, "Do Democracies Exhibit Stronger Environmental Commitment? A Cross-Country Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 2 (2003): 139–164.

<sup>33</sup> These causal pathways, proposed by Colgan ("Fueling the Fire," 152–153), are classified in terms of ownership and market structure, producer politics, and consumer access concerns. For a different set of mechanisms, see Charles L. Glaser, "How Oil Influences U.S. National Security," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): 116–117.

<sup>34</sup> For a similar framing of the relevant literature, see Sanjeev Khagram and Saleem Ali, "Environment and Security," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 31 (2006): 395–411.

resource pressures, Malthus famously wrote that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man."<sup>35</sup>

This dire verdict, while proven wrong by subsequent technological and commercial developments, reemerged in academic and policy debates in the late 1960s, giving fodder to neo-Malthusian arguments linking population growth to violent resource competition. In a seminal essay written in 1968, during a decade that saw rising demographic pressures, ecologist Garret Hardin lamented that the problem of overpopulation had no technical solution; if anything, it required a change in human morality.<sup>36</sup> Hardin also framed the scarcity thesis in a game-theoretical perspective, arguing that collective action problems in the management of shared resources would make resource overexploitation and competition an inescapable reality. This concern was echoed in the work of Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, who, in two pioneering books published in 1968 and 1973, saw demographic pressures as harbingers of global conflict, famine, and even thermonuclear war.<sup>37</sup> Following suit in 1975 was the duo of Nazli Choucri and Robert North, whose influential lateral pressure theory posited that states experiencing high population stress and growing resource needs would see incentives for outward expansion—including one involving military force—toward areas and countries that could meet those needs.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population," Library of Economics and Liberty, 1789, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Malthus/malPop.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243–1248.

<sup>37</sup> Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (Ballantine Books, 1968); and Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, *Human Ecology: Problems and Solutions* (San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1973).

<sup>38</sup> See Nazli Choucri and Robert North, *Nations in Conflict: National Growth and International Violence* (San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1975). In elaborating lateral pressure theory, Choucri



Although these early neo-Malthusian accounts did not focus specifically on petroleum, they spelled out the basic intuition behind much of the literature on resource wars, including that concerned with blood-oil relationships. In 1982, oil was singled out in the work of acclaimed sociologist Johan Galtung, who wrote that "environmental deterioration may lead to war... 'normal' economic activity will sharpen the struggle for scarce resources, oil being one example."<sup>39</sup> A few years later, Arthur Westing et al. established a more rigorous research agenda, arguing that actual or perceived global shortages of various renewable and nonrenewable resources—shortages caused by population growth, rising standards of living in the developed world, and economic growth in developing countries—could cause, or at least contribute to, conflict among nations.<sup>40</sup> As part of this large-scale effort came a rare systematic attempt to present brief case studies that lend some empirical credence to scarcity arguments drawing a causal linkage between oil and interstate conflict. Among the cases offered were France's war with Algeria (1956–62), which was seen as a French attempt to retain colonial control over Algeria's oil, and China's war with Vietnam (1974), which was presented as one fought over the presumed petroleum deposits of the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

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and North wrote, "In a growing population there will be an increasing demand for basic resources...if national capabilities cannot be attained at reasonable cost within national boundaries, they may be sought beyond...[v]irtually any mode in which lateral pressure is expressed...may contribute to international conflict and violence" (15–17).

<sup>39</sup> Johan Galtung, "Why Does the Environment Deteriorate and What Can be Done About It," NGO Symposium on Environment and the Future, 1982. See also Galtung, *Environment, Development and Military Activity* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Westing, ed. *Global Resources and International Conflict: Environmental Factors in Strategic Policy and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Following in the footsteps of Westing et al., a series of more recent resource war investigations have focused almost exclusively on petroleum to trace scarcity–interstate conflict linkages.<sup>41</sup> Notably, a widely cited body of work by Michael Klare, the chief proponent of the blood-oil thesis, has claimed that oil's national security importance, declining availability, and unique geography—three factors seen as forming a "strategic triangle"—create conditions of resource dependence conducive to interstate war.<sup>42</sup> According to Klare, "each [factor] is sufficient in its own right to raise the specter of bloodshed, but it is the combination of all three that produces the highest risk of war."<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, among the regions identified as most likely to face this blood-oil predicament is the oil-rich Middle East, an "epicenter of...disorder" in which "intervention by outside powers—especially the United States—is an ever present possibility."<sup>44</sup> As global oil stocks dwindle and states in need of petroleum approach the "edge of desperation," Klare also expects this conflict dynamic to intensify in other areas, including Central and East Asia and parts of Africa and Latin America.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Water is another resource that has motivated many resource war investigations. Since this literature is peripheral to the purposes of this dissertation, it is not discussed here. For a representative account of how water scarcity can lead to interstate conflict, see Petter Gleick, "Water and Conflict: Fresh Water Resources and International Security," *International Security* 18 (1993): 79–112. For empirical tests that question the scientific merits of such work, see Shira Yoffe, Aaron T. Wolf, and Mark Giordano, "Conflict and Cooperation over International Freshwater Resources: Indicators of Basins at Risk," *Journal of the American water Resources Association* 39, no. 5 (2003): 1109–1125; and Gleditsch et al., "Conflicts over Shared Rivers: Resource Scarcity or Fuzzy Boundaries?" *Political Geography* 25, no. 4 (2006): 361–382.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004); and *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Klare, *Resource Wars*, 49.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 45, 51.

<sup>45</sup> Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet*.

Arguments similar to those of Klare have come in various shapes. Some have seen a heightened risk of resource wars along the North–South axis. Simon Dalby, for example, has argued that the North, which consumes a disproportionately larger share of petroleum and is most dependent on it, is bound to use military force against oil-surplus states because "it has become accustomed to the idea that access to these resources is its right."<sup>46</sup> Susanne Peters has made similar predictions, arguing that the unequal distribution of petroleum between developed and developing nations, along with an anticipated "oil supply crisis," would lead to a new era of resource wars between North and South.<sup>47</sup> Other arguments have focused on specific geographical areas. The Caspian Sea basin, for instance, has become one focal point of recent investigation, with authors pointing to U.S., Russian, and Chinese competitive behaviors in the area (e.g., stationing of troops on the territory of local states and providing them with aid) as heightening military tensions.<sup>48</sup> Still other accounts have seen oil conflict as a product of rent-seeking.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Mary Kaldor et al. have highlighted the incentives for resource capture

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<sup>46</sup> Simon Dalby, "Threats from the South: Geopolitics, Equity, and 'Environmental Security,'" in *Contested Grounds: Security and Conflict in the New Environmental Politics*, eds. Daniel Deudney and Richard Mathew (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>47</sup> Susanne Peters, "Coercive Western Energy Security Strategies: 'Resource Wars' as a New Threat to Global Security," *Geopolitics* 9, no. 1 (2004): 187–212.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Mehdi Amineh and Henk Houweling, "Global Energy Security and Its Geopolitical Impediments—The Case of the Caspian Region," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6, no. 1 (2007): 365–388; and Travis Sharp, "Resource Conflict in the Twenty-First Century," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 19, no. 3 (2007): 223–230. Glaser ("How Oil Influences U.S. National Security") has focused on a different region, suggesting that "the probability of oil-driven conflict has increased in Northeast Asia" (142).

<sup>49</sup> Sometimes a distinction is made between greed- and scarcity-based oil conflict (see Colgan, "Fueling the Fire," 154–155; and Emily Meierding, "Dismantling the Oil Wars Myth," *Security Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016): 258–288). While this distinction may be useful in some cases, it is one of analytical choice. Greed conflicts presuppose an extremely high value of the resource that is to be seized—a value typically measured with price and considered in relation to other resources. But that value is high precisely because the resource is scarce, either in actuality or in perception.

presented to international and domestic actors by the size of oil rents, which have grossly exceeded those obtained from either labor or capital and which are unlikely to subside because of oil's "depletability."<sup>50</sup>

What can be seen in all these accounts is the gradual broadening of the concept of scarcity. Whereas the neo-Malthusian arguments of the 1960s and 1970s saw scarcity mainly as an indirect result of population growth, later works, starting with those of Galtung and Westing et al., have added other, also indirect, indicators: economic activity taxing available resource stocks, unique features of petroleum geography, import dependence of one state or a group of states on another state or group, oil prices (with higher prices indicating greater scarcity), and institutionally determined variations in actors' ability to access resources.<sup>51</sup> While the concept of scarcity has become more multifaceted—in terms of how scarcity is measured, who experiences it, and at what level of analysis it is observed—theory linking it to conflict has not. Causal expectations have often been stated without precision, forcing scholars to infer them from general narratives.<sup>52</sup> Klare's concept of scarcity, for example, implies at least two blood-oil predictions: a monadic one in which oil scarcity at the global level makes petrostates more frequent targets of external aggression and a dyadic one in which domestic scarcity, viewed in terms of resource dependence, makes oil-importing states more likely aggressors against oil suppliers.

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<sup>50</sup> Mary Kaldor, Terry Karl, and Yahia Said, eds. *Oil Wars* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 11–26.

<sup>51</sup> This evolution has mimicked a conception of scarcity found in the more expansive literature on domestic resource conflict, which has adopted Thomas Homer-Dixon's tripartite distinction among demand-induced, supply-induced, and structural scarcity. See Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), 48.

<sup>52</sup> See Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 3 (1998): 381–400, 395.

These kinds of blood-oil predictions are rarely tested. This is partly due to the habit of those making them to seek empirical validation in some future scarcity condition—typically, an anticipated "peak" in global oil output.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, critics have questioned the scientific value of such work, mocking its tendency to use "the future as evidence."<sup>54</sup> Concerns of similar nature have extended to other areas. Inattention to political and economic variables has been one issue, with some scholars pointing to international trade, human social and technological ingenuity, and democracy as factors that could mitigate the competitive pressures implied by domestic or global resource scarcity.<sup>55</sup> Occasionally, the very notion of scarcity has been assaulted, with cornucopian theorists claiming that the prices of oil and other fuel minerals, while showing volatility, have not exhibited a consistent upward trend over the decades.<sup>56</sup>

The evidence for blood-oil predictions, when offered, has been mixed. A handful of historical cases, some already mentioned, have been regurgitated by scholars over the years.<sup>57</sup> While oil has certainly played some role in them, its causal importance relative to

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet*, 14; and Peters, "Coercive Western Energy Security Strategies," 193.

<sup>54</sup> See Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment," 393.

<sup>55</sup> See Deudney, "Environmental Security: A Critique," in *Contested Grounds: Security and Conflict in the New Environmental Politics*, eds. Daniel Deudney and Richard Mathew (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 205–207; and Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment," 389. Scarcity theorists have responded to the critics by pointing to ingenuity gaps and market failures as impediments to scarcity mitigation; see, for example, Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Ingenuity Gap* (Vintage Books, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> See Bjorn Lomborg, "Resource Constraints or Abundance?" in *Environmental Conflict*, eds. Paul Diehl and Nils Gleditsch (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001); and Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). The cornucopian critique should be taken with caution, however, because it adopts a concept of scarcity much narrower than that proposed in many scarcity arguments.

<sup>57</sup> The most frequently cited cases are Japan's attack of the Dutch East Indies (1941), Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (1990), the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932–35), and the two U.S. interventions against Iraq (1991 and 2003).

that of other, nonresource factors has been difficult to ascertain.<sup>58</sup> In quantitative tests, resource war mechanisms have struggled to demonstrate strong empirical patterns. On the support side, a study by Francesco Caselli et al. has found that contiguous dyads in which one country has oil are more likely to experience conflict, with the arrow of dispute initiation pointing from the oil-less state to the oil-rich state.<sup>59</sup> However, this finding holds only if petroleum deposits are located close to the border, raising questions about the potential confounding influence of border disputes unrelated to oil.<sup>60</sup> Scholars also have suggested that results showing petrostates as more frequent MID defenders may be artifacts of "bad neighborhood" effects in the Middle East.<sup>61</sup>

Existing empirical work has increasingly converged on the view that, while resource wars do occur occasionally, their frequency has been exaggerated. A major statistical test of lateral pressure theory, for example, has revealed that countries experiencing high population pressures—and, by implication, growing resource needs—are more likely to become involved in interstate disputes, although not as conflict initiators (as the theory would predict) but as targets of aggression.<sup>62</sup> Both dyadic and monadic tests have challenged blood-oil accounts that put petrostates on the defensive, with some scholars finding no evidence that petrostates are more frequent dispute targets<sup>63</sup> and others finding

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<sup>58</sup> Cases have often been mentioned in passing, as anecdotal examples rather than detailed case studies assessing competing causal pathways.

<sup>59</sup> Francesco Caselli, Massimo Morelli, and Dominic Rohner, "The Geography of Interstate Resource Wars," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2015): 267–315.

<sup>60</sup> Meierding ("Dismantling the Oil Wars Myth") has questioned Caselli et al.'s work on the grounds that it does not include measures of oil value (e.g., price or reservoir size).

<sup>61</sup> See Colgan, "Fueling the Fire," 155–156.

<sup>62</sup> Jaroslav Tir and Paul Diehl, "Demographic Pressure and Interstate Conflict: Linking Population Growth and Density to Military Disputes and Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 3 (1998): 319–339.

<sup>63</sup> De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy."

limited evidence for small oil-rich countries but not for large ones.<sup>64</sup> The assertion that oil-dependent great powers would concentrate their military interventions in oil suppliers has run into similar problems. One empirical study examining the conflict behaviors of the United States, Great Britain, and France has reported that "oil-supplying countries did not experience interventions [from the three powers] more frequently than other suppliers,"<sup>65</sup> and another investigation has offered mixed evidence for the purported relationship.<sup>66</sup>

### ***2.1.2 From abundance to petroaggression***

The lack of systematic empirical support for blood-oil predictions likely has contributed to recent interest in the second main perspective of interstate oil conflict, which has seen domestic oil abundance as a fuel for outward aggression. (In fact, it appears that efforts to test the former have led scholars to empirical confirmation of the latter.) Although studies on petroaggression are still small in number, virtually all of them have relied on statistical tests and evidence, following the methodological recipes of mainstream social science research. What is more, their empirical findings have been remarkably consistent in corroborating the view that petrostates are pervasive spoilers of international peace. Thus, one major statistical investigation has concluded that "oil exporters appear to flout global norms of non-aggression, more often using force against other states"<sup>67</sup>; another has

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<sup>64</sup> Strüver and Wegenast, "*Ex oleo bellare?*"

<sup>65</sup> Mats Hammarström, "Military Conflict and Mineral Supplies: Results Relevant to Wider Resource Issues," in *Conflict and the Environment*, ed. Nils Gleditsch (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 127.

<sup>66</sup> Georg Strüver, "Too Many Resources or Too Few? What Drives International Conflict?" GIGA Working Paper 147 (German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2010), 24. Strüver cautions that the significance of his results may have been affected by a lack of data.

<sup>67</sup> De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy," 1.

reported that "large absolute amounts of petroleum are conducive to MID initiation"<sup>68</sup>; yet a third has made the observation that "the link between oil and conflict is driven primarily by petrostates that are aggressive in international conflicts."<sup>69</sup>

While being rich on empirics, available work on petroaggression has been relatively poor on theory. To date, no consensus exists on how domestic oil abundance translates into more belligerent external behavior and, with almost no exception, explanatory mechanisms have been sketched with a broad brush. Three such mechanisms, or propositions, have appeared most consistently in relevant studies. For convenience of exposition, these can be named "militarization," "strategic oil," and "revolutionary government."

Rarely discussed in detail, the militarization proposition is the most intuitive. As mentioned earlier, oil is a potential power asset that could be used either directly, as a material input in military operations, or indirectly, through exports that could finance arms purchases and large standing armies. In both cases, oil can bolster a state's military capabilities and present petrostate governments with offensive opportunities that are otherwise unavailable. Reflecting along similar lines, Georg Strüver and Tim Wegenast have written that "[c]entralized resources may make oil-rich countries more capable of engaging in militarized disputes."<sup>70</sup> That oil wealth is correlated with greater military spending has been confirmed empirically: statistical tests conducted by Michael Ross and

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<sup>68</sup> Strüver and Wegenast, "*Ex oleo bellare?*" 18.

<sup>69</sup> Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 662.

<sup>70</sup> Georg Strüver and Tim Wegenast, "The Hard Power of Natural Resources: Oil and the Outbreak of Militarized Interstate Disputes," *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2016): 1–21, 4.



Joseph Wright et al. demonstrate that the relationship is strong and significant.<sup>71</sup>

Interestingly, oil's importance for hard power has been acknowledged even by scarcity theorists, with Klare observing that "since...the beginning of the twentieth century, petroleum has been viewed as essential for success in war"<sup>72</sup> and Thomas Homer-Dixon, a prolific writer on resource scarcity and domestic conflict, arguing that oil and other fossil fuels are easily transformed into state power assets.<sup>73</sup> What has set the work of these scholars apart, however, is that they have typically seen oil's implications for power as a petrostate liability (i.e., as something that puts these states on the defensive) rather than a petrostate offensive asset.

The concept of power has also loomed large in the strategic oil proposition, but this time in a mechanism that highlights the potential economic leverage of petrostates. In 1975, in laying out the so-called "oil weapon" thesis in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis, Hanns Maull argued that petroleum-exporting nations could use embargoes and other manipulations of oil supply, such as closures of pipelines and transit chokepoints, to influence the behavior of oil-importing states.<sup>74</sup> In so doing, Maull introduced the concept of "oil power," defined as "the power which stems from the dependence of consumer nations on oil."<sup>75</sup> Maull's idea has reappeared in contemporary work on

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<sup>71</sup> Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 350; and Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz, and Barbara Geddes, "Oil and Autocratic Regime Survival," *British Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 2 (2015): 302–303.

<sup>72</sup> Klare, *Resource Wars*, 29.

<sup>73</sup> Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*, 138.

<sup>74</sup> Hanns Maull, "Oil and Influence: The Oil Weapon Examined," Adelphi Paper 117 (1975), in *The Evolution of Strategic Thought: Classic Adelphi Papers* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), 328–382. The oil-weapon thesis is not discussed in detail because it refers to economic, rather than military, coercion.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

petroaggression, with Indra De Soysa et al.—the originators of the strategic oil proposition—asserting that the international community's external dependence on imported oil gives petrostates a freer hand in threatening or using military force abroad, especially against states that have no oil.<sup>76</sup> From this perspective, the greater prospect for conflict initiation is seen as a consequence of a "moral hazard" problem (assured by petrostates' unique status as oil suppliers), which "encourages oil exporting nations to pursue revisionist policy objectives."<sup>77</sup>

In a notable departure from the militarization and strategic oil propositions, the revolutionary government thesis has afforded greater importance to domestic politics. The thesis, associated with the work of Jeff Colgan, has offered a more complex (but still cursory) explanation of petroaggression, building upon the idea that revolutions could give rise to leaders with more aggressive foreign policy agenda.<sup>78</sup> According to Colgan, while revolutionary leadership can increase the frequency of conflict initiation even in the absence of oil, it is when such leadership sits on oil wealth that international peace is most threatened: "When the state leader has aggressive, risk-acceptant preferences, as is likely under a revolutionary government," writes Colgan, "the political autonomy provided by oil makes it more likely that the leader will decide to launch an international conflict."<sup>79</sup> What stands out in this exposition is its reliance on the assumption that "revolutionary leaders" (an ambiguous term revisited later) share certain psychological

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<sup>76</sup> De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>78</sup> See Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments"; and Colgan, *Petro-Aggression: When Oil Causes War* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>79</sup> Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 662. See also Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*, 5.

traits—namely, tendencies toward outward aggression and risk-taking—that are less common among other elites.

Colgan's account is not the only attempt to implicate domestic politics in petroaggression. Occasionally, authors have looked for answers in the "resource curse" literature, much of which has found that, besides suffering slower economic growth because of "Dutch Disease" effects,<sup>80</sup> rentier states tend to exhibit higher rates of authoritarian governance and civil war.<sup>81</sup> Both findings could have implications for interstate conflict, albeit through mechanisms identified in the broader international relations literature. Studies on the democratic peace, for example, have suggested that nondemocratic states are more likely to use military force in their external dealings, with some scholars claiming that this relationship holds not only dyadically but also monadically.<sup>82</sup> Recent investigations

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<sup>80</sup> For a detailed economic account of the resource curse, see Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner, "The Curse of Natural Resources," *European Economic Review* 45 (2001): 827–838. See also Richard M. Auty, *Resource-Based Industrialization: Sowing the Oil in Eight Developing Countries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Auty, *Resource Abundance and Economic Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Alan Gelb and Associates, *Oil Windfalls: Blessing or Curse?* (New York: Published for the World Bank by Oxford University Press, 1988); Sachs and Warner, "Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth," Working Paper No. 5398 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1995); and Sachs and Warner, "The big push, natural resource booms and growth," *Journal of Development Economics* 59 (1999): 43–76.

<sup>81</sup> For oil's effects on democracy, see Silje Aslaksen, "Oil and Democracy: More than a Cross-country Correlation?" *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (2010): 421–431; Nathan Jensen and Leonard Wantchekon, "Resource Wealth and Political Regimes in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 7 (2004): 816–841; Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" and *The Oil Curse*; and Kevin Tsui, "More Oil, Less Democracy: Evidence from World-wide Oil Discoveries," *Economic Journal* 121, no. 551 (2011): 89–115. For oil's effects on domestic conflict, see Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War"; De Soysa, "Ecoviolence: Shrinking Pie or Honey Pot?" *Global Environmental Politics* 2, no. 4 (2002): 1–36; Macartan Humphreys, "Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution: Uncovering the Mechanisms," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (2005): 508–537; Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War"; and Ross, "A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War" and *The Oil Curse*.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 50. For more

looking into the geographical spread of civil war also have argued that internal turmoil could diffuse to interstate conflict through mechanisms of intervention (i.e., use of military threats and force by external states supporting rebels in the war-torn country), externalization (i.e., retaliatory military response by the state experiencing civil war against external meddlers), and spillover (i.e., militarized disputes arising from cross-border migration).<sup>83</sup> To account for these possibilities, statistical tests of petroaggression have sometimes, but not always, controlled for civil war and democracy.

Empirical insights taken from studies on the democratic peace and domestic conflict are not necessarily universal givens, and should be used with caution in theoretical synthesis. The democratic peace literature, despite its long tradition and influence, has been challenged repeatedly over the years, on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Critics have argued that it has neglected the effects of the Cold War,<sup>84</sup> economic development,<sup>85</sup> and territorial disputes,<sup>86</sup> among other factors. The link between oil and internal conflict has been qualified as well, with recent work finding that a petrostate's susceptibility to domestic political challenges is contingent on its level of oil dependence,

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sources on the democratic peace and a short, lucid discussion of the major debates in the literature, see Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–6.

<sup>83</sup> Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Idean Salehyan, and Kenneth Schultz, "Fighting at Home, Fighting Abroad: How Civil Wars Lead to International Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 4 (2008): 479–506. See also Kenneth Schultz, "The Enforcement Problem in Coercive Bargaining: Interstate Conflict Over Rebel Support in Civil War," *International Organization* 64, no. 2 (2010): 281–312; and Idean Salehyan, "The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (2008): 787–801.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Common Interests or Common Politics?," *Journal of Politics* 59, no. 2 (1997): 393–417.

<sup>85</sup> Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–191.

<sup>86</sup> Douglas Gibler, "Bordering on Peace: Democracy, Territorial Issues, and Conflict," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2007): 509–532.

democratization, and ethnic fractionalization.<sup>87</sup> In addition, while studies on civil-war diffusion have implied greater MID involvement of the state experiencing internal conflict, questions remain about the directionality of that involvement. If externalization is the dominant mechanism of diffusion, then war-torn countries should be more frequent dispute initiators; conversely, if intervention has the upper hand, such countries should be more frequent dispute targets. Although a recent statistical study has reported that civil war increases both types of involvement at about the same rate,<sup>88</sup> that study needs further corroboration, especially since it challenges previous arguments emphasizing external opportunism<sup>89</sup> and diversionary war<sup>90</sup> in conflict internationalization and does not account for the presence of oil.

Although it remains unclear which explanation of petroaggression is most true to reality, the empirical finding about the presence of such phenomenon stands. Irrespective of which study one looks at, it does appear that, in the aggregate, petrostates belong to a more belligerent group of actors, whose foreign policy choices favor coercion over accommodation. But what accounts for spatial and temporal variations in the behavior of those states? None of the major explanations of petroaggression is well equipped to answer this question. This is due to limitations in existing arguments, the identification of which could point to possible venues for theoretical refinement.

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<sup>87</sup> Matthias Basedau and Thomas Richter, "Why do some oil exporters experience civil war but others do not?: investigating the conditional effects of oil," *European Political Science Review* 6, no. 4 (2014): 549–574; and Tim Wegenast and Thomas Richter, "Ethnic fractionalization, natural resources and armed conflict," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31, no. 4 (2013): 432–457.

<sup>88</sup> Gleditsch et al., "Fighting at Home, Fighting Abroad," 495.

<sup>89</sup> Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>90</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

## 2.2 Gaps in extant petroaggression theory: the problem of variation

The idea that oil income can support a state's military apparatus and external aggression is compelling. It is aptly captured in the words of Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, the first Iranian president after the Islamic Revolution of 1979: "To make war, arms must be purchased, and for that, oil must be sold."<sup>91</sup> Yet, in its bare form, the militarization proposition is not a complete theoretical account; it does not explain, at least not fully, why some oil exporters arm themselves significantly more than others, nor does it say why petrostate decisions and ability to acquire arms vary considerably over time. During the 1970s, for example, the total dollar value of Libya's arms imports (about \$20 billion) was about 20 times that of Venezuela and, in the 1990s, it collapsed to a negligible level, to roughly \$19 million.<sup>92</sup> Variations of such magnitudes cannot be accounted for by temporal changes or cross-country differences in oil income, and must be due to other factors.

Such factors could be located both inside and outside the state. The process of militarization presupposes a permissive context in which one party—a buyer—is willing and able to expend resources for the purchase of arms, and another party—a seller—has no reservations to enter the transaction. If one of these requirements is not met—and this could occur because of internal or external political conditions—there is no bargain.

Domestic incentives and resources for militarization may not be present and, even if they are, the supply of arms and military equipment could be denied. The situation in which

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<sup>91</sup> Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the Revolution & Secret Deals with the U.S.* (Washington: Brassey's, 1991), 44.

<sup>92</sup> Estimates (in 1990 constant dollars) are based on data from the Arms Transfers Database of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/armstransfers>.

Iran found itself in late 1979 is a case in point. After the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in November of that year, the United States and other Western powers stopped supplying military spare parts to Iran, handicapping its air force and combat readiness at a time of rising tensions with Baghdad.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Washington froze about \$12 billion of Iranian assets and embargoed all imports of Iranian oil, limiting Tehran's funds for large-scale military operations.<sup>94</sup> Historical examples of this kind—and there are many—indicate that the militarization mechanism does not operate at all times and at all places.

Similar limitations transpire in the strategic oil proposition. Although the notion that an oil-dependent international community could be disinclined to resist petrostates' external revisionism appears plausible, it is not convincing as a blanket statement (which is how it is usually presented). First, the relevant actors need be clearly identified: not all oil importers have a say or influence on what petrostates do or do not do. Neither are states equally dependent on oil imports; some have adequate domestic supplies,<sup>95</sup> and others have diversified import sources, which makes them less vulnerable to potential supply disruptions. Import dependence and diversification could also change over time, and the experience of the United States is a telling example of this variation. After the 1973 oil crisis, the country took active steps to improve its energy security on two fronts. One effort zeroed in on boosting domestic petroleum supply, a goal accomplished with the starting of the strategic petroleum reserve in 1975 and the completion of the trans-Alaska

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<sup>93</sup> Shahram Chubin, *Security in the Persian Gulf: The Role of Outside Powers* (Totowa, NJ: Published for the International Institute for Strategic Studies by Allenheld Osmun and Co., 1982), 20–21.

<sup>94</sup> Patrick Clawson, "U.S. Sanctions," *The Iran Primer* (United States Institute of Peace, 2010, updated August 2015), <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/us-sanctions>.

<sup>95</sup> A state having adequate domestic supplies is not necessarily a petrostate. The designation, as adopted here, applies to countries whose oil exports exceed 10 percent of gross domestic product in a given year.

pipeline in 1977. Another focused on import diversification, which was achieved through a hemispheric energy policy that included, and still includes, the country's northern and southern neighbors, as well as other oil exporters in Latin America.<sup>96</sup>

The international clout attributed to petrostates because of their status as oil exporters has also been exaggerated. Trade is not a one-way street. While oil importers certainly desire to maintain their ability to buy petroleum, oil exporters similarly want to maintain their ability to sell it. This condition creates reciprocal sensitivities and vulnerabilities,<sup>97</sup> and it is not surprising that even Maull, the early believer in the economic prowess of petrostates, has admitted that, for the most part, attempts by these states to use the "oil weapon" have been short lived and of limited effectiveness.<sup>98</sup> In fact, because major oil importers tend to have bigger and more diversified economies (and, hence, greater resilience to external economic shocks), the use of the oil weapon may have hurt the users more than the targets.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the Iranian experience just recounted demonstrates that a great power whose interests are at stake would not hesitate to punish a major oil supplier, even if that supplier is a large regional state with significant

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<sup>96</sup> Vlado Vivoda, "Diversification of oil import sources and energy security: A key strategy or an elusive objective?" *Energy Policy* 37, no. 11 (2009): 4615–4623, especially 4618.

<sup>97</sup> This reciprocal relationship is what Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye have called "complex interdependence," defined as "mutual dependence." The sensitivities and vulnerabilities, as well as the costs, associated with it need not be symmetric. See Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Longman, 2001), 7–11.

<sup>98</sup> See Maull, "Oil and Influence." Maull argues that the 1957 and 1967 Arab embargoes were utter failures, but suggests that the 1973 embargo was politically and economically effective. For more recent accounts questioning the latter view, see Roy Licklider, *Political Power and the Arab Oil Weapon: The Experience of Five Industrial Nations* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); and Fiona Venn, *The Oil Crisis* (Routledge, 2002), 21–22.

<sup>99</sup> This scenario appears to have played out during the 1967 oil embargo, with a Saudi oil minister at the time stating that, besides failing to achieve its goals, the embargo "hurt the Arabs more than anyone else" (quoted in Maull, "Oil and Influence," 329).



population and military capabilities. Therefore, a theoretical account capable of explaining change in petrostate behavior should look at petroaggression not only in economic but also in geopolitical terms.

Proponents of strategic oil also insist that "oil-importing countries have intense incentives to maintain stability across established supply networks,"<sup>100</sup> a claim that raises questions about the proposition's theoretical completeness and ability to account for diverging outcomes. If external petroleum consumers indeed desire stability, an assumption challenged by some,<sup>101</sup> it is not clear why would they tolerate petrostate military adventurism that could result in domestic or, worse, regional turmoil. De Soysa et al.'s finding that oil-poor states are more frequent targets of oil exporters does not answer this question. The initiation of international conflict, irrespective of target type, could engender an unpredictable sequence of events<sup>102</sup> and, as strategic oil theorists themselves observe, "even *a hint of instability* [emphasis added] creates volatility in prices on the world market."<sup>103</sup> Third-party consumers may close their eyes for gain, but they also have strong incentives to prevent potentially costly petrostate gambles. If they fail to do that, one should be able to explain why this is so. This limitation becomes even more apparent in light of the proposition's inability to account for instances of aggression of petrostates

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<sup>100</sup> De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy," 2.

<sup>101</sup> See Alexander Arbatov, "Oil as a factor in strategic policy and action: past and present," in *Global Resources and International Conflict: Environmental Factors in Strategic Policy and Action*, ed. Arthur Westing (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29.

<sup>102</sup> Once initiated, military conflict could hinder rational decisionmaking and trigger escalatory mechanisms that are difficult to control. Contagion is also possible, as was the case during the second (more intensive) phase of the Tanker War, when Saudi Arabia (1984) and the United States (1987) were drawn into direct military engagements with Iran. See Helen Metz, "The Tanker War, 1984–87," in *Iraq: A Country Study* (Library of Congress, 1988).

<sup>103</sup> De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy," 9.

against other petrostates. Paradoxically for strategic oil, some of the most unambiguous and deadly cases of petroaggression—those associated with wars initiated by Iraq—involve major oil-exporting targets (Iran and Kuwait).

Like its counterparts, the revolutionary government thesis has its own significant shortcomings. Although work published by Colgan has claimed that revolutionary petrostates exhibit more belligerent behaviors,<sup>104</sup> more fine-grained differences (political or over time) remain unexamined, and the concept of "revolutionary government" is ambiguous, at best. One major limitation is related to temporal variations in the foreign policy choices of petrostate leaders, and the case of Iraq is a fitting illustration of it. In Colgan's analysis, that petrostate is classified as having revolutionary leadership from the Baath Party overthrow of the Arif government in 1968 all the way to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003—a period of 35 years. During this lengthy time span, Iraq's penchant for external aggression was not uniform, to say the least. The total number of MIDs initiated by the country in the 1980s increased almost fourfold from the level seen in the previous decade and then shrank by about the same factor in the 1990s.<sup>105</sup> None of the variables offered in Colgan's work can account for these nontrivial shifts, and they are not unique to Iraq.<sup>106</sup>

The validity of Colgan's revolutionary measure is also suspect. Defining and operationalizing revolution in a meaningful way is notoriously difficult, and whatever

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<sup>104</sup> See Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments"; and Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*.

<sup>105</sup> Estimates are based on COW MID data.

<sup>106</sup> Colgan's account is domestic by design. As a result, potential sources of variation outside the state are not factored into theory. As observed by Walt, however, "[o]ne cannot understand the international impact of revolution by looking solely at the revolutionary state; one must also consider the external environment in which the revolution occurred." See Walt, *Revolution and War*, 43.

attempts have been made to this end have struggled to arrive at the same conclusions. Colgan defines revolutionary government as one which assumes power through "irregular transition" (constituted by either violence or widespread popular demonstrations) and which transforms the "organization of society, including its social, economic, and political institutions and practices."<sup>107</sup> It is doubtful that many of the cases informed by this broad definition and identified by Colgan as revolutionary—cases that include petrostates—would qualify as such on the basis of previous theoretical and empirical work on the subject. Definitional discrepancies and imprecisions emerge along multiple dimensions, including whether or not social change occurs through violence, what type and level of popular mobilization is observed, whether and how much institutional transformation is involved, and when and how fast these processes unfold.

Most scholars studying revolutions have set the bar quite high on one or more of these dimensions, greatly restricting the universe of relevant cases. Theda Skocpol, for example, has emphasized violence, class-based cleavages, and high degree of popular participation as defining features of revolutions,<sup>108</sup> and all of these criteria have been relaxed in Colgan's operationalization. Not surprisingly, Skocpol has identified less than 10 revolutions in her empirical work.<sup>109</sup> Samuel Huntington has suggested that a revolution is a "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change" driven by an "explosion" in popular participation, and ruled out coups, insurrections, revolts, wars of

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<sup>107</sup> Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*, 62–63.

<sup>108</sup> Theda Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization," *World Politics* 40, no. 2 (1988): 147–168.

<sup>109</sup> For the most part, Skocpol has focused on the mass revolutions of France, Russia, and China. See Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

independence, and rebellions as revolutionary events.<sup>110</sup> Reflecting upon Huntington's view, Charles Tilly has commented that "depending on how generously one interpreted the words 'rapid' and 'fundamental,' it would be easy to argue that no revolution has ever occurred, and hard to argue that the number of true cases exceeds half-dozen."<sup>111</sup> In the work of other authorities on the subject, the signature of revolutionary change has been the incidence of violence, with Zeev Maoz contending that nonviolent transformations are evolutionary, whether or not they alter domestic political structures.<sup>112</sup> In another prominent study, Walt has been reluctant to present more than 10 cases of "unambiguous" revolutions, stating that "[s]uccessful revolutions are rare."<sup>113</sup>

These points underscore the risks associated with grouping diverse cases under a single category that is defined ambiguously or overly broadly. On the important dimension of violence, for instance, peaceful political transformations, such as those that took place in a number of Eastern European countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s, would most certainly not qualify as revolutionary (in Colgan's work, they do), and the same is true for elite changes, such as coups d'état, many of which have occurred without much violence. Colgan claims that he is "catholic about the process (violent or non-violent),"<sup>114</sup> but this is problematic for his argument, which is built on the assumption that revolutionary

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<sup>110</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 264, 266.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, CRSO Working Paper 156 (University of Michigan, March 1977), 7-7. Tilly makes a distinction between a revolutionary situation (process) and a revolutionary outcome (polity displacement), suggesting that the latter is rare. Both Huntington and Colgan define revolutions in terms of outcomes.

<sup>112</sup> Zeev Maoz, *Domestic Sources of Global Change* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 90-91.

<sup>113</sup> Walt, *Revolution and War*, 22.

<sup>114</sup> Colgan, "Measuring Revolution," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 29, no. 4 (2012): 444-467.

leaders become "*habituated* [emphasis added] to resolving political conflict by force" in the process of rising to power.<sup>115</sup> Questions also arise with respect to social revolutions in the Third World, whose processes and outcomes have been deeply penetrated by great power influence,<sup>116</sup> and one has to make a compelling argument that such cases are comparable to, say, those of the Occident.

The precision with which a concept is defined also speaks to the validity of the analyses using it. Walt and Mearsheimer have warned that "valid hypothesis tests depend on having measures that correspond to the underlying concepts being studied,"<sup>117</sup> and Colgan's revolutionary government measure is not transparent in this regard, not least because it makes no distinction between "leaders" and "governments."<sup>118</sup> If, on the one hand, the measure's purpose is to capture violent dispositions unique to political leaders, which appears to be Colgan's aim,<sup>119</sup> one cannot be agnostic with respect to process, which could vary significantly across cases.<sup>120</sup> If, on the other hand, the measure's purpose is to capture domestic institutional characteristics that could affect how states arrive at different foreign policy decisions, one cannot be inattentive to the types of institutional structures that emerge after polity displacement or the question whether decisions are made by individuals or collectivities. Although Colgan's specification

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<sup>115</sup> Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 666.

<sup>116</sup> For a lucid discussion of such historical cases, see Skocpol, "Social Revolutions," 158–163.

<sup>117</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, "Leaving theory behind," 440.

<sup>118</sup> Colgan states that the terms "'governments' and 'leaders' are used interchangeably" (*Petro-aggression*, 62).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–24.

<sup>120</sup> Nor should causal inferences associated with that measure be freely applied from one level to another: even if some political leaders are predisposed to use military force to challenge the domestic status quo, it is by no means obvious that they would do so internationally.

claims to measure "radical" change in the internal "organization of society," it contains no information about the timing or speed of that change or the specific type of polity that sets in after it.

What is pooled under the revolutionary category also may alter expectations about the nature and timing of external state behavior. According to Maoz, nonviolent (evolutionary) domestic changes are unlikely to result in outward military revisionism and may even reduce it,<sup>121</sup> a prediction consistent with the experience of Eastern European countries (coded as revolutionary by Colgan) in the early 1990s. By contrast, violent (revolutionary) transformations, which put pressure on elites to mobilize popular support through scapegoating, are likely to lead to "drastically increased conflict behavior" in the initial period following the change and, as time goes by, yield to "the 'normal' conflict involvement pattern."<sup>122</sup> Walt—who also views revolutions as violent, but highly state-weakening, events—has taken a more qualified position, arguing that the immediate postrevolutionary period may put revolutionary states mostly on the defensive, because third parties could see those states' "weakness as an opportunity to improve their relative positions."<sup>123</sup> What these examples illustrate is that, even in scholarly accounts with moderately restrictive conceptions of revolutionary change, conflict predictions come with a high dose of analytic uncertainty, and the more encompassing the conceptions, the greater the difficulty in determining what they measure or what in them is causally responsible for observed outcomes.

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<sup>121</sup> Maoz, *Domestic Sources of Global Change*, 86.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 86, 93.

<sup>123</sup> Walt, *Revolution and War*, 32.

### **3 Theory and hypotheses**

Identifying the conditions under which petrostates are more or less likely to initiate interstate conflict requires an account that is neither confined to a single level of analysis nor inattentive to within-level factors that could significantly affect that likelihood. As argued in the previous chapter, all major explanations of petroaggression are fully or partially deficient with respect to one or both of these dimensions. For that reason, the theoretical approach adopted here seeks to uncover changing patterns of petroaggression by paying closer attention to (1) unique domestic institutional attributes of oil exporters and (2) spatial and temporal variations in the external environments of those actors. This approach also bridges the scarcity–abundance dichotomy laid out in the literature assessment. Although oil scarcity and abundance are often seen as engendering competing conflict mechanisms, they both have potential implications for how petrostates behave externally. Thus, scarcity at the global level, mediated by system-level political variables, could affect the way in which the most powerful members of the international system view and interact with oil exporters. Likewise, domestic abundance, mediated by internal political variables, could condition petrostates’ perceptions about the range of coercive and accommodative options they have in engaging with their external environments.

#### **3.1 The domestic dimension**

A growing number of scholars have voiced the concern that existing resource conflict studies focus too much on the resource and neglect domestic institutional sources of

variation. According to Koubi et al., causal arguments linking resources to conflict are "for the most part underspecified" because they do not examine "the role of [domestic] institutions in mediating the effect of resource scarcity or abundance."<sup>124</sup> In a separate assessment of the literature, Nils Gleditsch has reached a similar conclusion, observing that "most work on environmental conflict does not discuss how regime type may influence such conflict."<sup>125</sup>

Investigations of petroaggression have not escaped this lingering problem. The militarization proposition is agnostic with respect to domestic institutional characteristics, and the strategic-oil proposition derives its causal logic from a system-level viewpoint. As a result, neither of these perspectives recognizes domestic institutions as potential sources of variation in petrostate behavior. The revolutionary government thesis is only marginally better in this regard. As mentioned earlier, its key measure is of dubious validity and does not capture the specific types of institutional arrangements that take shape after domestic political transitions. Although monadic tests of petroaggression have used controls based on Polity scores, they have not found compelling evidence that these variables significantly affect MID initiation.<sup>126</sup> This result has led some authors to conclude that "it seems time to abandon the general debates over the democracy–

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<sup>124</sup> Koubi et al., "Do natural resources matter for interstate and intrastate armed conflict?" 12.

<sup>125</sup> Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature," 389.

<sup>126</sup> See Strüver and Wegenast, "*Ex oleo bellare?*" 18; and Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 681. Results from dyadic analyses are consistent with previous work on the democratic peace, indicating that pairs of two democracies are significantly less likely to experience MID onset (see, for example, Strüver and Wegenast, "The Hard Power of Natural Resources," 16).



autocracy dichotomy...and to instead concentrate on more specific institutional or regime characteristics as possible causes of international violence."<sup>127</sup>

Heeding to these insights, this section adopts a more refined regime-type breakdown to identify salient domestic institutional characteristics that could influence petrostates' propensity to initiate conflict. The breakdown relies on the work of Geddes et al.<sup>128</sup> and differentiates among personalist, single-party, military, monarchic, and democratic regimes. This typology is similar to that used in previous studies of autocratic conflict behavior, which is desirable for purposes of comparability. Unlike these studies, however, the present argument looks at the interaction between oil and domestic institutions in foreign-policy formation, a resource dimension not considered in extant research. The analysis suggests that petrostates with personalist institutions may be significantly more likely to initiate militarized disputes than petrostates of other regime types.

### ***3.1.1 Beyond the democracy–autocracy dichotomy***

Peace and conflict accounts grounded in domestic politics have typically adopted an institutional perspective that sees states as either democratic or autocratic. This first-order distinction has served well the democratic peace literature, which has found that, compared with autocracies, democratic states are more peaceful toward each other

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<sup>127</sup> Strüver and Wegenast, "*Ex oleo bellare?*," 18. In their more recent work ("The Hard Power of Natural Resources"), the authors employ a measure of per capita oil production as a proxy for "weak state–society linkages," but do not find this channel to have a pronounced effect on the conflict behavior of oil-rich states.

<sup>128</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions."

(dyadic democratic peace) and/or in general (monadic democratic peace).<sup>129</sup> Although definitions of democracy are by no means uniform, many of them have identified universal suffrage, multiparty competitive elections, legislative checks on the executive, independent judiciary, rule of law, free press, and civil liberties as characteristic features of this type of polity.<sup>130</sup> It is these traits—purportedly absent in autocracies—that liberal scholars have seen as making democratic governments comparatively more pacific, either through political accountability mechanisms (institutional constraints placed on elected executives who can be voted out of office), normative mechanisms (shared culture and rules of peaceful dispute resolution), or both.<sup>131</sup>

For many investigations, however, the democracy–autocracy dichotomy is not optimal. Relegating autocracies to a residual category antithetical to the pure democratic type sidelines the fact that the institutional setup of nondemocratic regimes may vary in nontrivial ways. It is highly unlikely, for example, that, all else equal, the foreign-policy

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<sup>129</sup> Representative studies include Kenneth Benoit, "Democracies Really Are More Pacific (in General)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 4 (1996): 636–657; Stuart Bremer, "Democracy and Militarized Interstate Conflict, 1816–1965," *International Interactions* 18, no. 3 (1993): 231–249; Zeev Maoz, "The Controversy over the Democratic Peace," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (1997): 162–198; James Lee Ray, *Democracy and International Conflict* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995); R. J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*; and Kenneth Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>130</sup> See, for example, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 73, 488–489 (footnote 15); and Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, 44.

<sup>131</sup> For accounts emphasizing normative mechanisms, see William Dixon, "Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 1 (1994): 1–7; and Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (1986): 1151–1170. More recent work on the democratic peace has favored institutional accountability channels; see, for example, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999): 791–808; and Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

choices of a despot and a monarch would be identical: these individuals rely on the support of domestic groups of different identities, interests, and sizes and operate within governing arrangements with different rules for making decisions. Continuous measures of democracy, such as Polity scores, are not equipped to capture these types of institutional characteristics, and, while they say something about the "degree of democracy and repressiveness," they do not constitute regime classifications themselves.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, different autocratic regimes may receive relatively high Polity scores, and these scores could vary significantly both across nondemocratic states and over time within those states.<sup>133</sup>

Grouping nondemocracies into a single, homogenous category is ill-advised for another reason. Despite successive waves of democratization, more than 40 percent of all states in the international system remain autocratic.<sup>134</sup> This percentage is much higher among oil states, which are 50 percent more likely to exhibit some type of nondemocratic governance.<sup>135</sup> In the petrostate sample used for this dissertation, only about 20 percent of state-years are coded as democratic. The higher incidence of autocracy among petrostates may be associated with oil—for example, through a mechanism in which oil increases government tenure—but this need not be the only, or even the most important, channel. A country's failure to democratize could be due to, among other things,

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<sup>132</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 319.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 319. The Polity scores of personalist and military regimes tend to be higher than those of single-party and monarchic regimes.

<sup>134</sup> Milan W. Svoblik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Ross, *The Oil Curse*, 64.

<sup>135</sup> Ross, *The Oil Curse*, 1.

geographical neighborhood effects,<sup>136</sup> Islamic culture,<sup>137</sup> and colonial history,<sup>138</sup> all factors pertinent to the oil-rich regions of the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. Whatever the case, these figures suggest that a simple democracy–autocracy classification could mask nontrivial institutional features with important implications for petrostate behavior. This may be one of the reasons why Polity scores often fail to rise to statistical significance in monadic tests of petroaggression.

It is imperative, then, that patterns of petrostate belligerence be examined through a typology that has the ability to distinguish among different forms of autocratic governance. Geddes et al.'s classification, while developed to shed light on regime breakdowns and transitions, is useful for that purpose. It identifies four distinct types of autocratic regimes—personalist (despotic), single party, military, and monarchic—on the basis of "whether control over policy, leadership selection, and the security apparatus" is held by, respectively, a single leader, a dominant ruling party, the military institution, or a royal family.<sup>139</sup> The choice of classification criterion is naturally suitable for the study of autocratic conflict behavior. Threatening or using military force depends on who makes foreign policy decisions, who commands the coercive apparatus of the state, and how political power is distributed within a ruling coalition. Therefore, knowing the

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<sup>136</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>137</sup> Stephen M. Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism," *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002): 4–37; and Manus Midlarsky, "Democracy and Islam: Implications for Civilizational Conflict and the Democratic Peace," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1998): 485–511.

<sup>138</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared, "Income and Democracy," *American Economic Review* 98, no. 3 (2008): 808–842.

<sup>139</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 318.

composition and identities of autocratic elites could inform an analysis of their conflict propensity.

Geddes et al.'s typology also permits an investigation that accommodates certain aspects of Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s selectorate theory.<sup>140</sup> Selectorate theory posits that government policy is influenced by the size of two domestic groups that keep leaders accountable: the winning coalition (the group that maintains leaders in power) and the selectorate (the larger group with a say on leadership selection).<sup>141</sup> Although this classification does not capture substantive characteristics of domestic groups and, hence, is not a regime typology itself, its conception of a winning coalition is similar to the leadership group identified by Geddes et al.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, substantive insights about the identity and interests of that group can be supplemented with instrumental insights about the size of the group. This approach could be useful in the study of foreign-policy formation in conditions of domestic oil abundance, because the identity and the size of a ruling coalition both have potential implications for the allocation of resource rents among domestic constituencies.<sup>143</sup> While coalition size might be the same across

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<sup>140</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

<sup>142</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 315.

<sup>143</sup> A complete reliance on selectorate theory for the study of autocratic conflict behavior would be misplaced. One reason is the theory's inattention to the identities of key domestic groups. Another is the difficulty in determining the size of the selectorate. As Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow have rhetorically asked, "Which individuals in authoritarian regimes, apart from members of the winning coalition, actually have a say in the selection of leaders?"; see Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship: Institutions and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 5. Some scholars have also questioned selectorate theory's assumptions about the loyalty of members of small winning coalitions and the public-good character of war outcomes; see, for example, Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 326–347, especially 327–328; and Alexandre Debs and H. E.

different autocratic regimes (in which case attention to group identity would be of paramount importance), it can be expected that, more often than not, that size will be the smallest in personalist regimes.<sup>144</sup> By definition, the size of the winning coalition in a democracy is larger than that in any autocratic subtype, because democracies have multiparty systems with competitive elections.<sup>145</sup>

### ***3.1.2 Domestic institutions, personalism, and oil***

Conflict research based on Geddes et al.'s regime typology, which first appeared in 1999,<sup>146</sup> is relatively recent and still inconclusive. Early efforts examined the possibility that a phenomenon similar to the dyadic democratic peace exists among pairs of autocratic regimes, with some scholars presenting affirmative evidence for such a relationship.<sup>147</sup> In addition, a handful of later studies, mostly by the same authors, have indicated that personalist regimes tend to initiate disputes at higher rates than do military or single-party regimes, with the latter seen as the most peaceful after democracies.<sup>148</sup> To date, there is no agreement on what accounts for these results. Mark Peceny and

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Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010): 430–445, especially 431.

<sup>144</sup> Mark Peceny and Christopher K. Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," *International Politics* 41 (2004): 565–581, especially 574.

<sup>145</sup> As noted by Bueno de Mesquita et al., "In democracies the winning coalition is the group of voters who elect the leader" (*The Logic of Political Survival*, 7–8).

<sup>146</sup> See Geddes, "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?" Geddes original classification did not include monarchic regimes, and most existing studies of autocratic conflict behavior exclude monarchy from empirical tests.

<sup>147</sup> Mark Peceny, Caroline C. Beer, and Shannon Sanchez-Terry, "Dictatorial Peace?" *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002): 15–26. Peceny et al. have found that dyads composed of two personalist regimes and two single-party regimes are more peaceful than mixed pairs.

<sup>148</sup> Mark Peceny and Caroline C. Beer, "Peaceful Parties and Peaceful Personalists," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 339–342; Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, "Identifying the Culprit: Democracy, Dictatorship, and Dispute Initiation," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 333–337; and Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes."

Christopher Butler have entertained an explanation based on selectorate theory, arguing that regimes with larger winning coalitions—and more constrained leadership—choose to fight wars they are certain to win and, therefore, tend to initiate fewer of them.<sup>149</sup> This approach has been questioned in recent work by Jessica Weeks,<sup>150</sup> who has claimed that personalist leaders may be more belligerent because of their "grand international ambitions" and lower "threat of domestic punishment."<sup>151</sup> Weeks also has suggested that elite groups composed of military officers would be particularly conflict prone, as they are more likely "to form ominous views of the status quo, and to view military force as effective and routine."<sup>152</sup>

Some scholars have discounted the role of personalism. According to Brian Lai and Dan Slater, what matters in conflict initiation is not how "regimes *make* decisions (personalized vs. collective procedures), but how they *enforce* them (party vs. military institutions)."<sup>153</sup> In this view, governments with greater domestic insecurity and lower legitimacy—traits seen as most common among military regimes and indicative of those regimes' reduced "infrastructural power"<sup>154</sup>—are more likely to use diversionary force as a means to creating "rally around the flag" effects. In contrast to Weeks' argument, Lai and Slater's account is institutional and does not imply that military elites share a "cult of

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<sup>149</sup> Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 41.

<sup>150</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 327–328.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 335. See also Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>152</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 333.

<sup>153</sup> Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 1 (2006): 113–126, especially 113–114.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 114. Lai and Slater define "infrastructural power" as "the capacity to enforce the leadership's decisions throughout national territory," arguing that military regimes have less such capacity because they lack well-developed party institutions.

the offensive."<sup>155</sup> Other scholars have turned the "infrastructural power" perspective on its head, putting the claimed peacefulness of single-party regimes under greater scrutiny. Using reciprocal models to link diversionary motives to conflict initiation, Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet Kisangani have argued that, because single-party regimes have fewer means to buy the loyalty of their key constituents, they should have greater incentives to use diversionary force as a way to solidify and enhance domestic support.<sup>156</sup>

Despite failing to agree on causal mechanisms, these and similar investigations indicate that regime type could have important implications for state conflict behavior. But is that the case for petrostates? No previous study has examined this question through a typology such as that of Geddes et al., and it is reasonable to expect that the conflict-inducing effects of oil would be mediated differently by different regime institutions, becoming manifestly stronger in some regimes and less so in others. As argued below, the inclusion of a resource component in regime-based analysis of dispute initiation presents grounds for making a stronger case for the purported elevated belligerence of personalist regimes. The analysis suggests that petrostates exhibiting personalism would initiate disputes at higher rates than petrostates with other governing arrangements because of two related mechanisms: one working through the heterogeneous effects of regime institutions on the domestic diffusion and allocation of oil rents, and one operating through the heterogeneous effects of oil income on the ex ante decisional

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>156</sup> Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots? Comparing Autocracies' Propensities to Use and to Benefit from Military Force," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 2 (2010): 477–493, 481. According to Pickering and Kisangani, diversionary conflict is best studied through reciprocal models, because these models reveal whether or not the external threat or use of force generates domestic political and economic benefits for leaders.



constraints and ex post accountability experienced by leaders. Whereas the former mechanism can affect the discretionary resources available to ruling elites, the latter speaks to the ease with which leaders can overcome decisional impediments to foreign policy revisionism.

#### *Discretionary resources*

Key to the first mechanism is the idea that political institutions could determine how income from oil exports is distributed among domestic groups. If the institutional architecture of a petrostate creates conditions for resource predation and rent-seeking behaviors, a greater portion of that income will end up in the hands of the ruling elite, as private benefit. Conversely, if the institutional setup favors redistributive policies, oil income will be spread more widely, with a larger portion of it channeled into public goods provision. Therefore, political institutions could have an intervening effect on income allocation and, ultimately, on a government's leeway to spend money on discretionary pursuits, including foreign-policy revisionism. Bueno de Mesquita et al., in discussing government fiscal policy choices and management of tax revenues, have suggested that "the resources at a leader's disposal are endogenous to the institutional configuration of the state."<sup>157</sup> While this is not entirely true for petrostates, whose natural riches are a geographical given, it is certainly the case that those states' institutions can "endogenize" the process by which financial inflows from oil exports are channeled domestically.

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<sup>157</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, "Testing Novel Implications from the Selectorate Theory of War," *World Politics* 56, no. 3 (2004): 363–388, 365.

One way to identify which regime institutions favor redistribution and which elite rent appropriation is to draw upon insights from selectorate theory. If political leaders' primary goal is to stay in office—a minimalist assumption commonly made in political incentives analysis—they would distribute oil income in a manner compatible with that goal. Such compatibility would exist when leaders choose income distribution that maximizes their domestic power and, at the same time, is neither overly generous nor inadequate to secure the loyalty of key supporters. The discretionary amount subject to leader maximization is the difference between the financial inflows from the sale of petroleum and the outlays required to buy domestic political support. For a given level of oil income, then, lowering outlays would increase a leader's disposable resources and chances for political survival. As selectorate theory suggests, however, the ability of leaders to manipulate expenditures depends on the size of the winning coalition: the smaller the coalition, the larger the amount leaders can withhold for discretionary use; the larger the coalition, the smaller that amount.<sup>158</sup>

Taking this logic a step further, one could conjecture that elite income appropriation would occur more frequently in petrostates with personalist institutions. As noted earlier, coalition size can be mapped to the regime types proposed by Geddes et al., with that size being the smallest in personalist regimes and the largest in democracies.<sup>159</sup> Because

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<sup>158</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, 163–164. Similar conclusions have been drawn by other scholars; see, for example, Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Assessment," *American Economic Review* 91, no. 5 (2001): 1369–1401, 1376; and William A. Niskanen, "Autocratic, Democratic, and Optimal Government," *Economic Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (1997): 464–479.

<sup>159</sup> As indicated by Peceny and Butler, Geddes et al.'s classification provides "a better approximation of the relative size of winning coalitions in authoritarian regimes," because Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s measure is "closely associated with democratic regimes" ("The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 573).

personalists rely on the support of a small group of elite insiders, they will be able to spend the least on maintaining that support, in the form of private benefits, maximizing their discretionary capital. As coalition size increases, and the value of providing private benefits declines (because of a growing number of beneficiaries), more oil revenue will be channeled into public goods provision and out of the control of the ruling coalition.<sup>160</sup> While similar redistributive processes of heterogeneous income allocation by regime type could occur in the absence of oil, they would likely hold greater importance, and be stronger, in the case of petrostates, whose oil abundance creates disincentives for the development of alternative sources of state revenue, such as taxation.<sup>161</sup>

These insights can be derived even without the formalism of selectorate theory. Recent research focusing on economic outcomes in oil-rich countries has shown that the quality of political institutions—quality gauged through subjective (expert) assessments of the effectiveness of internal governance processes and bureaucratic structures<sup>162</sup>—could affect the flow of resource rents in the domestic economy.<sup>163</sup> Politics with bad

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<sup>160</sup> Consistent with this argument, Frantz and Ezrow ("The Politics of Dictatorship," 96) have found that, compared with personalist regimes, single-party and military regimes have a reduced capacity to control government spending in response to exogenous price shocks.

<sup>161</sup> As noted by Jacques Delacroix, oil abundance has a retarding effect on a state's extractive capacity, creating a situation where "the bulk of the internal activities of the state are concerned with distribution"; see Delacroix, "The Distributive State in the World System," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 15, no. 3 (1980): 3–20, 18. See also Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); and Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>162</sup> The most widely used institutional-quality measures, now published by Political Risk Services (a commercial risk-rating agency) and the World Bank, were originally proposed by Stephen Knack and Phillip Keefer, "Institutions and Economic Performance: Cross-Country Tests Using Alternative Institutional Measures," *Economics and Politics* 7, no. 3 (1995): 207–227. Ross (*The Oil Curse*, 210–212) has found that institutional quality is not harmed by oil income.

<sup>163</sup> The present argument makes no claims about the relationship between regime type and economic growth. While a democracy may redistribute oil income more equitably, that does not mean that such

institutions, in which corruption, weak rule of law, and disregard for citizen and property rights are pervasive, have been found to "invite political rent appropriation" and "rent grabbing" by ruling elites.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, these qualities are often cited as characteristic of personalist regimes. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, for example, have equated "personal rule" with "kleptocracy," showing how Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic (1966–78) and Mobutu Sese Seko of the Congo (1965–97) managed to use "divide-and-rule" strategies, along with military coercion, to seize billions of dollars of state revenue, much of it from natural resources.<sup>165</sup> Peceny et al. have observed that personalist regimes are based on a "clientelistic patronage network" bound by "graft and corruption,"<sup>166</sup> and Geddes has noted that the main incentive for participation in a personalist government is "access to rents and illicit profit opportunities."<sup>167</sup>

This line of reasoning is closely linked to the problem of transparency. As pointed out by Michael Ross, citizens in oil-exporting countries know that their governments receive oil

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allocation would facilitate faster output growth. In fact, Ross (*The Oil Curse*, 199) has found that oil-rich democracies do not exhibit significantly higher growth rates than oil-rich autocracies.

<sup>164</sup> See Halvor Mehlum, Karl Moene, and Ragnar Torvik, "Cursed by Resources or Institutions," *The World Economy* 29, no. 8 (2006): 1117–1131, especially 1121. Consistent with earlier insights deduced from selectorate theory, Mehlum et al. have noted that, in states with poor institutions, "the return to grabbers depends negatively on their number" (1122). See also James Robinson, Ragnar Torvik, and Thierry Verdier, "Political Foundations of the Resource Curse," *Journal of Development Economics* 79, no. 2 (2006): 447–468; and Anne D. Boschini, Jan Pettersson, and Jesper Roine, "Resource Curse or Not: A Question of Appropriability," *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 109, no. 3 (2007): 593–617.

<sup>165</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, "Kleptocracy and Divide-and-Rule: A Model of Personal Rule," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 2, no. 2 (2004): 162–192. According to Acemoglu and Robinson, divide-and-rule strategies involve bribing "politically pivotal groups" as a means to eliminating political challengers (164). The authors report that Mobutu managed to appropriate up to 20 percent of the state budget in the 1970s and that Trujillo's family amassed wealth equal to roughly 100 percent of the Dominican Republic's economic output.

<sup>166</sup> Peceny et al., "Dictatorial Peace?" 18.

<sup>167</sup> Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 61.

revenues, but they may not know the size and uses of those revenues.<sup>168</sup> When such knowledge is nonexistent or limited, domestic constituents have no grounds to demand income redistribution, thus surrendering discretionary control over oil receipts to their rulers. While judgments about how budgetary transparency varies across different regime arrangements are difficult to make, it stands to reason that the extremely closed nature, and small coalition size, of personalist regimes would create informational opaqueness that is more difficult to achieve in other types of governance systems.<sup>169</sup> In single-party regimes, many of which are ideologically committed, leaders are likely to provide information to party members,<sup>170</sup> and party bureaucracies are more likely to be involved in the budgetary process. The same may hold for military and monarchic regimes, in which leaders may be compelled to share information with, respectively, members of the military or the aristocracy. Clearly, concealment is least likely in democracies, in which voters receive information from both government and independent sources and can extract concessions for greater public goods provision.<sup>171</sup> Informed civil action through trade unions and labor parties could also increase calls for welfare spending and consumption and, thus, reduce executive discretionary control over oil revenue.

But if leaders in personalist regimes have a greater ability to amass oil wealth and secretly monopolize its allocation, what does this mean for their propensity to initiate

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<sup>168</sup> Ross, *The Oil Curse*, 70.

<sup>169</sup> Measuring transparency with a government's record of releasing economic data, B. Peter Rosendorff and James R. Vreeland have found that transparency is positively associated with winning coalition size, a relationship consistent with the argument developed here. See Rosendorff and Vreeland, "Democracy and Data Dissemination: The Effect of Political Regime on Transparency," 2006 (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>170</sup> See Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 569; and Peceny et al., "Dictatorial Peace?" 17.

<sup>171</sup> See Rosendorff and Vreeland, "Democracy and Data Dissemination." The authors report that democracies are more transparent than autocracies.

militarized disputes? One possibility is that such discretionary resource could be used for offensive purposes; another, discussed in the next section, is that it could lower the decisional constraints imposed on political leaders. Conflict involves significant financial costs, and the greater a government's flexibility to allocate oil rents away from social spending and productive activity, the greater its actual or perceived ability to cover these costs. The rents offered by petroleum exports are unparalleled by those of any other resource, and some of this additional financial capability is likely to provide personalists with relatively more opportunities to pursue revisionist foreign policy objectives. In addition, oil money could be used to finance friendly regimes or meddle in the internal affairs of neighbors, and this type of indirect involvement could increase the prospect for adversarial, and potentially direct, interstate interactions. Under the personal rule of Muammar Qaddafi, for example, Libya provided financial support to various substate actors, both in the country's immediate neighborhood and beyond, and these activities contributed to recurring tensions and conflict with other states.

Greater discretionary control over oil income could also affect the prospect for arms buildup. While personalists may use their countries' natural wealth to maintain lavish lifestyles, they also have incentives to develop strong coercive capabilities. Weeks has observed that personalist institutions select leaders with greater desire for international goods,<sup>172</sup> and such outward-oriented ambition cannot be pursued without hard power. When personalists enjoy monopolistic control over oil revenue, they have the means to enhance their offensive capabilities and, thus, broaden their portfolio of foreign policy options. The concentration of financial capital in the hands of a single individual is also a

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<sup>172</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 334.

honey pot for external arms suppliers, typically great powers, who compete for well-financed clients free to enter contractual arrangements. Indeed, the procurement efforts of despotic rulers have been impressive. Qaddafi's massive arms purchases of the 1970s, made possible by the leader's exclusive control over Libya's National Oil Corporation, are one notorious example.<sup>173</sup> Saddam Hussein's decades-long weaving of a global web of front companies tasked with arms procurement is another, again achieved through the appropriation of tens of billions of oil dollars, this time from the Iraqi oil chest.<sup>174</sup>

But personal ambition need not be the only incentive for such large-scale arms acquisitions. Objective factors, both internal and external to the state, could be equally, if not more, important. Domestically, personalists consolidate power through successive power grabs,<sup>175</sup> and physical elimination of challenger groups and severe punishment for dissent are common instruments for such consolidation.<sup>176</sup> Lacking broad-based institutional structures that could legitimize their rule, despots rely heavily on force to achieve and maintain social control. Internationally, these leaders also face legitimate security concerns. Geddes has noted that some of the most potent threats to personalists stem from external sources,<sup>177</sup> and Peceny and Butler have reported that, compared with other regime types, personalist regimes are more frequent dispute targets.<sup>178</sup> If these

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<sup>173</sup> See, for example, Cordesman, *A tragedy of arms*.

<sup>174</sup> Kenneth Timmerman, *The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991). See also "On Saddam's Money Trail," *Newsweek*, April 7, 1991; and "Treasury Designates Front Companies, Corrupt Officials Controlled by Saddam Hussein's Regime," *Press Center* (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2004).

<sup>175</sup> Milan W. Svolik, "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (2009): 477–494.

<sup>176</sup> Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship*, 22–25.

<sup>177</sup> Geddes, "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?"

<sup>178</sup> Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 565.

observations are correct, the channeling of discretionary oil wealth into arms buildup could be a rational response to elite insecurity. In the case of Iraq, for example, Hussein had to hedge against both internal and external security threats, from Kurdish separatism (backed by Washington and Tehran) in northern Iraq, to Shia uprisings and coup attempts, to long-standing territorial disagreements with Iran over the Shatt al-Arab.

Whether endogenously or exogenously motivated, the arms buildup afforded by oil rents could create a more permissive context for conflict initiation: as geographical contiguity opens more channels for negative interstate interactions, so does an enhanced coercive capacity present more opportunities for its own use. This is not to suggest, however, that military opportunism, especially one involving the actual use of force, would pay off. Conflict outcomes depend on many factors, including soldiers' morale, individual initiative, and warfighting skill.<sup>179</sup> In personalist regimes, these very qualities may be undermined by the dictator's incentive to suppress potential challenges emanating from the military establishment. As pointed out by Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow, personalists "control military promotions, promote their cronies, and eliminate individuals who they deem to be disloyal."<sup>180</sup> While these measures of power consolidation could increase a leader's control over the arms forces, they could also reduce the internal cohesion and warfighting proficiency of those forces. Therefore, the

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<sup>179</sup> See, for example, Stephen Biddle and Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 4 (2004): 525–546; Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*; and David Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992): 24–37.

<sup>180</sup> Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship*, 24. See also Peceny et al., "Dictatorial Peace?" 18.



question of conflict initiation should be treated separately from that of conflict outcomes.<sup>181</sup>

### *Decisional constraints*

The foregoing analysis is theoretically minimalist, in the sense that it does not explicitly address how regime-based income allocation could influence the decisional constraints imposed on petrostate leaders' foreign policy choices. Superimposing the former onto the latter is a logical next step of investigation. Decisional constraints are unique to the institutional setup of the state, and depend on the composition and internal power structure of a governing arrangement. Scholars studying conflict behavior have distinguished between ex ante constraints, or institutional barriers to foreign policy implementation, and ex post accountability, or the degree to which leaders can suffer costs or be punished for failed or poorly crafted policies.<sup>182</sup> Both types of constraints can influence executive decisionmaking, but accountability mechanisms have generally been seen as more important.<sup>183</sup> Although previous research has looked at decisional constraints to investigate dispute initiation across Geddes et al.'s regime types, it has not considered the potential impact of oil income on the strength of these constraints.

Before considering this impact, it is useful to examine how decisional constraints could vary on the basis of institutional characteristics alone. A handful of earlier studies, some already identified, have suggested that personalist regimes may be less constrained than

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<sup>181</sup> This insight is consistent with Dan Reiter and Allan Stam's observation that "[w]hile domestic political institutions...are not the most important determinants of victory...they are among the most powerful predictors of conflict initiation" ("Identifying the culprit," 336).

<sup>182</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 328.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. For more comprehensive accounts of political accountability mechanisms, see sources in notes 82 and 131.

both democracies and other autocracies,<sup>184</sup> an expectation largely in line with conventional arguments found in the democratic peace literature. According to these accounts, external restraint is less likely in personalist regimes, because they lack strong institutions and domestic audiences that could veto executive decisions or sanction leaders who adopt unwise foreign policies.<sup>185</sup> Policy choices are largely at the discretion of the ruler, and the ruler is not formally or otherwise compelled to seek popular consent or consult with others in making them. In democracies, restraint is seen as considerably more likely, because legislatures, courts, and opposition parties can block the implementation of risky foreign policies and elections can empower voters to punish (remove from office) executives whose military initiatives fail to deliver.

Although single-party, military, and monarchic regimes are less institutionalized than democracies, they also have formal institutions and organized domestic audiences that could impose ex ante or ex post decisional constraints on leaders. In monarchies, these constraints stem from the aristocracy, which could derive veto or punitive power from the "quality of lineage" or, in systems that are not purely hereditary, from unequal access to means of coercion.<sup>186</sup> In single-party and military regimes, rulers formulate foreign policy within collegial institutional settings, such as party committees or military councils, which have established rules for power sharing and consultation.<sup>187</sup> In addition, institutional membership allows ruling elites to collectively bargain with the dictator and

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<sup>184</sup> See, for example, Mark Peceny and Caroline Beer, "Peaceful Parties and Puzzling Personalists," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 339–342, 340; Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 569; and Reiter and Stam, "Identifying the culprit," 336.

<sup>185</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 330.

<sup>186</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, 51–52.

<sup>187</sup> As noted by Geddes, in such systems, "everyone's cooperation is needed in order to achieve the desired end, and no one can achieve it alone" (*Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 59).

influence foreign policy decisions.<sup>188</sup> In the event of a major foreign policy failure, such membership could also reduce barriers to elite coordination and allow military officers or high-ranking party functionaries to depose an incompetent leader.<sup>189</sup>

While this picture is broadly consistent with the regime characterizations proposed by Geddes et al., it tends to underplay the decisional constraints faced by personalists. One confounding issue is related to the empirical observation that these leaders' historical record on the battlefield has been less successful than that of both democracies and other autocracies. Personalist regimes have not won a single war since 1945, lost 12, and drew in 4.<sup>190</sup> By comparison, over the same period, single-party regimes have prevailed in five wars (lost one and drew in eight) and democracies have won most of their contests.<sup>191</sup> Why would personalists initiate conflicts with historically poor odds for success? One possibility is that their tenure is comparatively less sensitive to unfavorable war outcomes, and a recent study of this relationship has provided some support for this claim.<sup>192</sup> Still, the rational basis for implementing costly policies with consistently negative returns is not obvious. As noted by Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson, "[d]efeat in war almost always alters the losers freedom of action by some measure,

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<sup>188</sup> Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship*, 21.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Reiter and Stam, "Identifying the Culprit," 334.

<sup>191</sup> Peceny and Beer, "Peaceful Parties and Puzzling Personalists," 340.

<sup>192</sup> See Sarah E. Croco and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "War Outcomes and Leader Tenure," *World Politics* 68, no. 4 (2016): 577–607. Croco and Weeks find that defeat in war increases personalists' hazard of losing office by 10 percentage points (from 13 percent in peacetime to 23 percent in the 2-year period after defeat), but that this effect is not significant.

reducing the nation's autonomy over its own foreign policy or depriving the vanquished state of sovereignty over some portion of its citizens, territory, or national product."<sup>193</sup>

The conditional effect of war outcomes on personalist tenure also may have been underestimated. The number of wars initiated by despotic regimes is small, and wars are historically rare events even at higher levels of regime aggregation. In addition, empirical work focusing on the domestic effects of autocratic military interventions (as opposed to wars) has found that personalists' external use of force generates elite unrest both contemporaneously with the dispatch of forces and as a military intervention progresses.<sup>194</sup> This effect, which is either absent or weaker in single-party and military regimes, suggests that the key constituents in personalist regimes may be more willing to stand up against their rulers than is commonly assumed. Even if such challenges are less likely to result in leader ouster than commensurate challenges in other regimes, they certainly do not benefit personalists' domestic standing. To this end, Pickering and Kisangani have observed that the "domestic positions [of personalists] are made significantly worse by the use of force abroad since it generates substantial unrest within their core constituency."<sup>195</sup>

A second analytical difficulty arises with regards to the severity of punishment after leader ouster. In democracies, that severity is arguably the lowest, given that most democratic leaders who are voted out of office in the wake of foreign policy debacles can

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<sup>193</sup> Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Types and Political Accountability," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 4 (1995): 841–855, 842.

<sup>194</sup> Pickering and Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots?" 488.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

transition to a quiet and profitable retirement, albeit one marked by disgrace.<sup>196</sup> By comparison, the post-ouster fates of autocratic rulers are both harsher and heterogeneous across nondemocratic regime subtypes. Geddes et al. have reported that, after removal from power, 69 percent of personalists face "exile, imprisonment, or death," a figure that goes down to a significantly lower 37 percent for leaders in single-party regimes and to estimates between these two extremes for rulers in monarchic and military regimes.<sup>197</sup> These percentages likely reflect institutional differences across autocracies. Although leaders in nonpersonalist autocratic regimes have fewer pathways to a painless exit than their democratic counterparts, they may still manage to avoid the harshest of punishment, either by rejoining the lower ranks of the institutions through which they have risen to power or by negotiating a peaceful transition that shields them from prosecution.<sup>198</sup>

The comparatively bleaker fate of deposed personalists has normally been discounted in research on conflict onset. Weeks, for example, has argued that, because of the low probability of ouster in despotic regimes, the fears generated by the prospect of severe punishment are "unlikely to overwhelm."<sup>199</sup> While this dismissal of personalists' sensitivity to costs may prove inconsequential in empirical tests, its theoretical justification is debatable. A rational, forward-looking leader contemplating the initiation of conflict is likely to assess the risk of such action on the basis of, on the one hand, the probability of ouster and, on the other, the severity of punishment, conditional on ouster.

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<sup>196</sup> Debs and Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," 433. See also Giacomo Chiozza and Goemans, "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still *Ex Post* Inefficient?" *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (2004): 609–614; and Michael C. Desch, "Democracy and Victory: Why Regime Type Hardly Matters," *International Security* 27, no. 2 (2002): 5–47, especially 24.

<sup>197</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 321.

<sup>198</sup> Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 63.

<sup>199</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 330.

While in personalist regimes that risk corresponds to a low probability but high consequence event, in other regimes it reflects a comparatively higher probability but lower consequence event. Therefore, the overall level of risk across cases, though unsusceptible to precise quantification, is qualitatively similar. This insight implies analytical indeterminism that cannot be easily sorted out without consideration of other factors.<sup>200</sup>

A less ambiguous picture could emerge in a constraints-based analysis that takes into account resource effects. Because petrostates differ in institutional setup, the impact of oil income on their leaders' decisional constraints—and, hence, those leaders' propensity to initiate disputes—would not be uniform. The mechanism of heterogeneous income allocation laid out in the previous section implies that, given their greater discretionary control over oil revenue, personalists may find it relatively easier to overcome decisional barriers to accepting foreign policy risks. Oil wealth could affect how these leaders assess the costs of threatening or using military force, as well as their perceived ability to manipulate these costs, get around domestic voices of dissent, and prevail over adversaries. In petrostates of other regime types, the decisional effects of oil are more likely to be subdued, both because of comparatively weaker mechanisms of elite rent appropriation (and less discretionary oil funds at executive disposal) and because of audience identity and compositional characteristics less conducive to such effects.

Although leaders in personalist regimes do not face strong, organized domestic audiences, they still rely on the support of a small, informal group of elite insiders. As

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<sup>200</sup> This problem has been raised in broader debates in the democratic peace and democratic victory literatures. See, for example, Desch, "Democracy and Victory," 24; and Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 14–15.

suggested earlier, this group's main motivation for participation in government is access to pecuniary and other material rewards. As long as these benefits continue to flow, the group's loyalty is secured; when they are threatened or insufficient—as may be the case during costly conflicts or after lost ones—elite unrest is more likely to ensue.<sup>201</sup> The high value personalist insiders place on the provision of private benefits is an important audience characteristic, because it increases their sensitivity to material inducements. Discretionary oil wealth thus emerges as a powerful tool at the disposal of leaders in petrostates with personalist institutions, as it makes it easier for them to co-opt insider support for confrontational policies.<sup>202</sup> In the event of elite unrest, personalists could also employ divide-and-rule strategies (selective bribing) to disrupt coordination among challengers or use their oil-financed coercive apparatus to purge disloyal members of the elite.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, by lowering personalists' vulnerability to costs and ouster, the additional resources offered by oil create conditions less conducive to foreign policy restraint.

Similar constraint-reducing effects could occur in nonpersonalist petrostates, but they are likely to be weaker. Having less discretionary control over oil income, and facing more veto points from ruling coalition members shielded by unifying domestic institutions,

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<sup>201</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al. have argued that elite defection in small coalition systems is unlikely because of the so-called loyalty norm, which is driven by the "risk of exclusion from a challenger's long-term winning coalition" (*The Logic of Political Survival*, 66). A more conservative account, however, would recognize the prospect for elite unrest, especially since such unrest has been shown to correlate with personalists' use of military force (see note 194).

<sup>202</sup> The high rents offered by oil, coupled with the small number of elite insiders in personalist regimes, make it unlikely that oil money (licitly or illicitly obtained) would dry up even during a protracted, costly conflict.

<sup>203</sup> According to Acemoglu and Robinson ("Kleptocracy and Divide-and-Rule"), divide-and-rule strategies are more likely to succeed in despotic regimes with natural resource wealth.

executives in such regimes would have a reduced ability to co-opt or coerce elite support (either *en masse* or as part of a divide-and-rule strategy) for external aggression.

Decisionmaking in larger coalition systems requires greater coordination and cooperation, and, given those systems' tendency to favor broader distribution of benefits, collective action problems over controversial foreign policies are more likely to persist. Not less important, however, are the identity characteristics of nonpersonalist civilian and military audiences. Geddes has observed that these audiences participate in office for reasons more diverse than those of members of personalists' inner circle.<sup>204</sup> Although access to oil rents could be one such reason, other motivations—including political ideology, institutional allegiance (as one could expect, for instance, from a career military officer), or the opportunity to influence policy—may be just as important. This insight implies that ruling coalition members in nonpersonalist petrostates may be less inclined to trade *ex ante* policy support or *ex post* loyalty in exchange for material rewards.<sup>205</sup>

While government elites pose the greatest domestic threat to autocratic leaders,<sup>206</sup> popular challenges from below—i.e., from poor, disenfranchised segments of the population—remain a possibility, particularly in times of crisis.<sup>207</sup> Costly conflicts, or conflicts gone badly, could have two effects: one weakening the repressive apparatus of

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<sup>204</sup> Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 59.

<sup>205</sup> Another implication of this argument is that oil resources could have differential effects on executive decisional constraints and accountability—and, hence, conflict initiation—even in the absence of cross-regime heterogeneity in income allocation. Hence, the former mechanism can operate independently from the latter, and is likely reinforced by it.

<sup>206</sup> Historically, about two-thirds of autocratic regime transitions have been caused by coups staged by elite insiders. See Wright et al., "Oil and Autocratic Regime Survival," 27; and Svobik, "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics," 478.

<sup>207</sup> Daren Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, "A Theory of Political Transitions," *The American Economic Review* 91, no. 4 (2001): 938–975, 939. See also Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships," *Economics and Politics* 18, no. 1 (2006): 1–26.



incumbents and one damaging the domestic economy.<sup>208</sup> If these effects are strong, they can increase the likelihood of popular uprising, both by opening windows of opportunity for potential challenger groups and by making economic grievances more acute. Whether this type of violent threat would materialize or succeed, however, depends partly on the resources available to leaders. In personalist petrostates, government resilience to rebellion should be comparatively greater, because despotic rulers' discretionary access to oil funds allows them to selectively redistribute rents (to buy off the most threatening domestic factions and intensify the collective action problem among them) and to more quickly recover military assets (and loyalties) and repress segments of the population that do indeed rebel.<sup>209</sup> Perhaps the most vivid testament of this resilience was Saddam Hussein's impressive ability to withstand and crush popular uprisings during the late 1980s and early 1990s, periods that followed two wars (both initiated by Hussein) that devastated oil-rich Iraq.

It is important to stress that the ex post aspects of the preceding argument concern leaders' perceptions about possible outcomes, not actual outcomes. Prior to conflict initiation, leaders do not know with certainty whether their military actions would succeed or fail, how costly a conflict would be, or whether they would be punished severely. In this sense, all decisional constraints are ex ante constraints: they are probabilistic assessments (about outcomes) influenced by mediating factors (in this case, institutional characteristics and oil resources). The central role of human perception in

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<sup>208</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 332.

<sup>209</sup> In line with this argument, Ross (*The Oil Curse*) has noted that "when autocrats are better financed and *directly control* [emphasis added] the distribution of benefits to the military, they are more likely to retain the backing of the arms forces and extinguish any rebellions" (71).

this process points to another, psychological channel with potentially important effect on the strength of decisional constraints: leaders' beliefs about their odds to prevail in conflict. If such perceptions are elevated, they would, by implication, make executives less sensitive to costs, as such costs would be seen as less likely in the first place.

Previous research, starting with the early work of Geoffrey Blainey, has, in fact, shown that the presence of inflated optimism about the prospect for winning can contribute to conflict initiation.<sup>210</sup> Such condition tends to manifest in "aggressive and risky military planning" and "hawkish and provocative policies," which increase the likelihood of bargaining failure.<sup>211</sup>

Overconfidence could arise as a result of both unmotivated and motivated biases.<sup>212</sup> The former, which are independent of preferences and interests, typically take the form of "bounded rationality," or a heuristic cognitive frame that could make leaders less attentive to conflicting information and more prone to misjudging the capabilities of adversaries (and their own).<sup>213</sup> Motivated biases, on the other hand, are purposive and driven by

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<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Geoffrey A. Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Dominic D. P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Jack S. Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics* 36 (1983): 76–99; and Steven Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>211</sup> Dominic D. P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, "The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 7–40, 7. Some scholars have shown that the "inflated optimism" paradigm is compatible with rational choice explanations of conflict; see, for example, Branislav L. Slantchev and Ahmer Tarar, "Mutual Optimism as a Rationalist Explanation of War," *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 1 (2011): 135–148.

<sup>212</sup> For a more detailed discussion of motivated and unmotivated biases, see Jack S. Levy, "Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, eds. Leonie Huddie, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 301–333, especially 310 and 314.

<sup>213</sup> Some scholars have found that personalists' conflict decisions are prone to "errors in judgment"; see Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship*, 71.

leaders' emotional needs. Political psychologists have found that most adult individuals, particularly men, have the tendency to exaggerate their intellectual and physical abilities, a disposition conducive to "illusion of control" and a sense of invulnerability.<sup>214</sup> This tendency is usually stronger when decisionmakers are in "implemental mindsets," that is, when they focus on carrying out a policy and resist further deliberation and cognitive updating with new information.<sup>215</sup> Motivated biases also strengthen perceptions of overconfidence by promoting policy choices based on "wishful thinking" rather than objective assessment of the situation; as observed by Jack Levy, "the desirability of an outcome often influences the perceived likelihood that it would occur."<sup>216</sup>

It is reasonable to expect that these biases—and, therefore, foreign policy judgments less sensitive to costs and ex post accountability—would occur more frequently among leaders in personalist petrostates. Psychological mechanisms of choice under conditions of risk are stronger at the individual level,<sup>217</sup> and decisionmaking in despotic regimes is, indeed, largely at the discretion of a single ruler whose beliefs are rarely second-guessed by elite insiders.<sup>218</sup> Moreover, personalist institutions may select leaders with greater risk tolerance and greater desire for international goods,<sup>219</sup> establishing even more fertile

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<sup>214</sup> Johnson and Tierney, "The Rubicon Theory of War," 18.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Levy, "Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 310–311.

<sup>217</sup> Levy has commented that, because theories of risk attitudes are "developed for individual decision making and tested on individuals..., we cannot automatically assume that these concepts and hypotheses apply equally well at the collective level"; see Levy, "Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 87–112, 102.

<sup>218</sup> As noted by Peceny and Butler ("The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," 569), personalist regimes are "the least efficient calculators because the leader usually surrounds himself with sycophants who tell him what he wants to hear."

<sup>219</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men."

grounds for the emergence of both unmotivated and motivated biases. Discretionary oil wealth, along with the coercive capacity afforded by it, would only amplify these attitudes, by increasing a personalist ruler's confidence in his or her ability to intimidate neighbors, conduct military operations, and absorb the costs of conflict. By comparison, in nonpersonalist regimes, collective decisionmaking in formal civilian or military institutions, coupled with reduced executive control over oil funds, would tend to suppress biases of overconfidence.<sup>220</sup> More deliberation in decision processes and greater preference diversity among elite constituents would also minimize the odds that implemental mindsets and motivated biases would take root.

Illustrative evidence in support of this argument is not hard to find. As noted earlier, one of the empirical puzzles associated with the foreign policy choices of personalists is their tendency to initiate conflicts with consistently poor outcomes, and the presence of inflated optimism is one probable contributor to such self-defeating behaviors.<sup>221</sup> This interpretation is consistent with recent work by Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney, who have written that "expecting a lot and gaining little [from conflict] implies

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<sup>220</sup> See Andrew Farkas, "Evolutionary Models in Foreign Policy Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 40 (1996): 343–361. According to Farkas, "there are institutional processes that lead aggregate decisions to be more rational than decisions made by individuals" (358).

<sup>221</sup> Overconfidence could also operate alongside decisional effects predicted by prospect theory, which posits that decisionmakers are more sensitive to negative asset changes than to asset levels. By implication, if leaders find themselves in a position of continued losses—as might be the case in a protracted series of unsuccessful military operations—they could, in an effort to recover those losses, become more willing to accept foreign policy risks. In petrostates with personalist institutions, oil-fueled overconfidence could increase a leader's propensity to engage in such risk-acceptant, cost-recovery military efforts. For a foundational exposition of prospect theory, see Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979): 263–292. For a general discussion of the theory's implications for international security, see Levy, "Prospect Theory"; and Levy, "Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making."

overconfidence."<sup>222</sup> Despots in petrostates appear particularly prone to this condition. Under the leadership of Qaddafi and Hussein, for example, Libya and Iraq initiated very costly, ultimately unsuccessful, conflicts, which brought no tangible payoffs to either country. Hussein's belief in the strength of his armed forces remained upbeat even shortly before the U.S. launch of Operation Desert Storm (January 1991), when, in October 1990, he instructed his generals in Kuwait to "stay motionless under the ground [during the anticipated U.S. air raids] just a little time.... On the ground, the Americans will not be able to put forces as strong as you are."<sup>223</sup> In the case of Libya, Qaddafi's diplomatic provocations and military aggression continued well into the second half of the 1980s, and their scope and intensity were grossly outsized for a country with a population of just four million.

#### *A note on diversion*

A potential objection to the argument presented so far could come from accounts focusing on diversionary incentives as a driver of autocratic conflict behavior. As discussed previously, a major study by Lai and Slater has seen military regimes as the most likely users of diversionary force, whereas another by Pickering and Kisangani has predicted the same for single-party regimes.<sup>224</sup> In the former case, the prospect for diversion has been linked to reduced levels of government security and legitimacy, or infrastructural power, under the assumption that this condition is both more common among military regimes and sufficient to drive external aggression. In the latter, which

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<sup>222</sup> Johnson and Tierney, "The Rubicon Theory of War," 9.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in Faleh A. Jabar, "Why the Uprisings Failed" (Washington, DC: Middle East Research and Information Project, 1992), <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer176/why-uprisings-failed>.

<sup>224</sup> Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive"; and Pickering and Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots?"

has tied diversionary motives to winning coalition size, autocrats in larger coalitions have been thought to have greater incentives to divert, because of their more limited discretionary funds for political survival.

Neither of these accounts, however, has made a persuasive empirical or theoretical case. Lai and Slater's statistical tests have grouped personalist and military regimes in a single category, thus sidelining institutional differences between these two types of autocracy and casting doubt on the validity of their results. Using more fine-grained regime data, recent replications of the authors' work have found no support for the infrastructural power perspective.<sup>225</sup> Pickering and Kisangani's regression analyses provide additional reasons for skepticism, some of which extend to their own theoretical predictions. The authors' results indicate that the external use of force creates substantial mass unrest in military regimes and cedes no political benefits to leaders in single-party regimes. Therefore, reciprocal models, considered essential to ascertaining the presence of diversionary motives,<sup>226</sup> imply that the causal mechanisms offered in comparative accounts based on diversionary war logic are, at best, exaggerated or, at worst, unfounded.

These empirical issues likely reflect gaps in theory.<sup>227</sup> In Lai and Slater's framework, decisional process and constraints, central to the present argument, have been given no causal importance. This approach is questionable because the decision to initiate conflict is the product of individual judgments, group deliberations, and bargaining routines that

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<sup>225</sup> Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 342, especially footnote 50.

<sup>226</sup> Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 259–288.

<sup>227</sup> For a general critique of diversionary war theory, see *ibid.*

are not identical across different institutional arrangements. In addition, it is not clear whether military governments enjoy less legitimacy than other regimes or that military leaders are particularly fond of threatening or using external force; indeed, a number of scholars have asserted quite the opposite.<sup>228</sup> Although Pickering and Kisangani have adopted a more nuanced research design based on reciprocal models, they have been unable to demonstrate an unambiguous relationship between conflict payoffs and diversionary motives. This setback points to the plausibility of an explanatory channel in which the excess, rather than the lack, of discretionary resources contributes to dispute initiation—precisely the theoretical niche tapped here.

### 3.2 External sources of variation

The theory laid out so far suggests that, all else equal, institutional differences across petrostates—in particular those along the personalist–nonpersonalist fault line—could explain differences in those states' conflict behavior. Implicit in this account is a conceptual experiment whereby domestic attributes of actors are allowed to vary, whereas external environments—understood broadly as exogenous structures that constrain strategic choice—are assumed invariant and independent of actor characteristics.<sup>229</sup> It is clear, however, that the international circumstances in which

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<sup>228</sup> Weeks, for example, has argued that civilian governments may be equally, if not more, prone to crises of legitimacy ("Strongmen and Straw Men," 342). For accounts questioning the view that military leaders are more disposed to using force than civilian leaders, see Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Feaver, *American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>229</sup> This approach is similar to conceptual experiments proposed in David Lake and Robert Powell, "International Relations: A Strategic-Choice Approach," in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, eds. David Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Lake and Powell note

petrostates find themselves could differ over time and across space, and when they do, different petrostate behaviors may ensue. That this is the case is attested by earlier empirical examples showing that, even in the absence of domestic institutional variation, the propensity of petrostates to initiate disputes has varied both temporally and spatially. To account for these patterns, it is important to abstract from petrostates' regime-type attributes and to identify exogenous conditions that could make petroaggression more or less likely—an approach informed by David Lake and Robert Powell's observation that "changes in the environment may explain why the behavior of different groups of similar actors change."<sup>230</sup>

There is another reason why this conceptual experiment is needed. Petrostates, by virtue of their unique geography and place in the global economy,<sup>231</sup> are of special interest to the international community, particularly its most powerful members. Therefore, one could reasonably expect that their foreign policy choices will be affected by factors located at the international level. One possibility, recognized by the strategic-oil proposition, is that oil exporters will enjoy greater protection from powerful oil importers, with the implication that the former's military behavior will be less constrained externally. As argued at length in the previous chapter, however, strategic oil is an account concerned with differences between petrostates and nonpetrostates; it cannot, by design, explain why protection sometimes breaks down and why some petrostates are

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that, in order to distinguish between the causal role of actors' attributes and that of their environments, one should conduct two conceptual experiments: the first "varies the properties of the actors...while holding the environment in which they interact constant," whereas the second "varies the environment while holding the attributes of the actors constant" (11–12).

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>231</sup> For a discussion of oil's economic, strategic, and geographic characteristics, see Klare, *Resource Wars*, 27–50.



more belligerent than others. Moreover, the proposition fails to acknowledge that it is precisely petrostates' unique economic status that also creates strong incentives for external powers to constrain those states' freedom of action (see section 2.2). For petroaggression to occur, then, there must be environmental conditions under which these constraints are relaxed.

The purpose of this section is to identify these conditions. The chosen analytical approach is a system–subsystem one, focusing on the overall international system's structural properties, understood in relative power terms (polarity), and its interaction with the regional subsystems within which petrostates exist and make foreign policy choices. Consistent with this realist framework,<sup>232</sup> special attention is given to the most powerful members of the global system—superpowers (the system's "poles")—and their intrusion, or penetration, in subordinate systems containing petrostates. It is argued that, depending on the number of penetrating superpowers and, in some specifications, local structural conditions, regional subsystems could be more or less competitive, over time and across geography, thereby altering the structural bounds—and, thus, the external constraints and opportunities—that condition petrostate conflict behavior.

### ***3.2.1 The relevant environments***

One can distinguish between two environments, or systems, in which states, including petrostates, exist and interact: a global, or dominant, system; and regional, or subordinate,

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<sup>232</sup> Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective," in *Regionalism in World Politics*, eds. Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 47.

subsystems.<sup>233</sup> Delineating the former is uncontroversial because, naturally, it represents the entire globe, with all its constituent nation-states; there can be no system larger than the whole.<sup>234</sup> What constitutes a regional subsystem—or a "region"<sup>235</sup>—is less settled, however. Some scholars have opted not to define it, instead using proper geographical names suitable to their analysis. Others have offered more formal, though sometimes contested, definitions. David Lake and Patrick Morgan, for example, have used the term "regional security complex," first coined by Barry Buzan,<sup>236</sup> defining it as "a set of states continually affected by one or more security externalities that emanate from a distinct geographical area."<sup>237</sup> As observed by Buzan and Ole Waever, however, this definition is unsatisfactory because, by focusing on security externalities, it implies "unimaginable multiplication of issues (and thereby security complexes)."<sup>238</sup> It is more sensible, the

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<sup>233</sup> As noted by Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel, there are three arenas of international politics: "the globe, the region, and the nation-state," which can be represented as "the dominant, the subordinate, and the internal" systems; see Cantori and Spiegel, *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 2–3. System–subsystem approaches rose to prominence between the late 1950s and mid-1970s. For foundational contributions to the literature, see Michael Haas, "International Subsystems," *American Political Science Review* 64, no. 1 (1970): 98–123; William Zartman, "Africa as a Subordinate State System in International Relations," *International Organization* 21, no. 3 (1967): 545–564; Michael Brecher, "International Relations and Asian Studies: The Subordinate State System of Southern Asia," *World Politics* 15, no. 2 (1963): 213–235; and Leonard Binder, "The Middle East as a Subordinate International System," *World Politics* 10, no. 3 (1958): 408–429.

<sup>234</sup> Treating states as exogenous to the international system is a theoretical fallacy discussed in Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 54.

<sup>235</sup> In this dissertation, the terms "region," "subordinate system," "regional subsystem," "regional security complex," and the like are used interchangeably. This flexible usage, adopted for convenience, is common in the literature on regional security.

<sup>236</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

<sup>237</sup> David Lake and Patrick Morgan, "The New Regionalism in Security Affairs," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, eds. David Lake and Patrick Morgan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>238</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 81.

authors suggest, to see regional complexes as geographically delineated "clusters of close security interdependence."<sup>239</sup>

Despite definitional disagreements of this kind, most conceptualizations of regional subsystems share some key similarities. These are prominently laid out in William Thompson's early, yet still authoritative work on the subject.<sup>240</sup> In it, Thompson identified 21 different attributes used by scholars to define regional subsystems. Looking for points of convergence, he isolated three common attributes: a regular interaction between two or more states, general geographical proximity between those states, and internal and external recognition of the region as a distinct "theatre of operation."<sup>241</sup> The first two criteria appear most consistently in the literature on regionalism and, as observed by Thompson himself, "proximity and regular interaction come closest to supplying the necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the concept of regional subsystem."<sup>242</sup> Therefore, the latter conceptualization, which is similar to that proposed

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>240</sup> William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1973): 89–117.

<sup>241</sup> A similar observation appears in Bruce M. Russett, *International Regions and the International System* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), where Russett writes that "[t]here is no consensus on what constitute the characteristics of an international subsystem, though geographical contiguity, interaction, and belonging to a distinctive community are frequently offered" (7).

<sup>242</sup> Thompson, "The regional subsystem," 96.

by Buzan and Waever, as well as others,<sup>243</sup> is the preferred theoretical construct adopted here.<sup>244</sup>

But why pay attention to petrostates' regional environments? The most basic reason is that the region represents the immediate context of interstate military interaction. Security interdependence tends to cluster geographically, an insight often linked to Kenneth Boulding's notion of the loss-of-strength gradient, which suggests that the ability of states to project hard power dissipates with distance.<sup>245</sup> As noted by Buzan, "threats, particularly political and military ones, are most strongly felt when they are at close range."<sup>246</sup> It makes little sense to think of, say, Iraq (a petrostate) as a military threat to Argentina, or Venezuela (also a petrostate) as a menace to Syria. The distances—and the physical barriers—separating the countries in those pairs are such that, given their capabilities, not much security interaction could be expected, even if one were desired. Moreover, geography affects not only states' "opportunity" to engage militarily with one another, but also their "willingness" to do so.<sup>247</sup> States that are physically proximate tend

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<sup>243</sup> See, for example, Douglass Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 59–60, 69; and Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 276–277.

<sup>244</sup> The concept allows for different empirical operationalizations. The specific regions used in the quantitative analysis are presented in chapters 4 and 5. They are based on classifications proposed in Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*; and Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*.

<sup>245</sup> See Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 78–79. Boulding argued that, because of distance's discounting effect on power, states exert most of their influence in geographically limited areas, or "zones of viability."

<sup>246</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991), 188.

<sup>247</sup> See, for example, Harvey Starr, "Territory, Proximity, and Spatiality: The Geography of International Conflict," *International Studies Review* 7 (2005): 387–406; Paul F. Diehl, "Geography and War: A Review and Assessment of the Empirical Literature," *International Interactions* 17, no. 1 (1991): 11–27; Benjamin A. Most and Harvey Starr, *Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics* (Columbia: University of South

to see each other as more important and the issues at stake in their relations as more salient.<sup>248</sup> When the use of force is facilitated by distance, it may become the preferred policy choice in resolving common issues of interstate contention, such as territorial disagreements (including those over natural resources) or negative cross-border externalities.

Bifurcating the external environment into regional and global also serves the central analytical objective pursued here, namely, explaining variation in petrostate conflict behavior. Most states normally considered petrostates—and all included in the sample for this dissertation (see next chapter)—are lesser powers located in what Buzan and Waever have called "standard" regions, or geographical areas without great powers.<sup>249</sup> Consequently, for reasons already discussed, the security interactions of those states will be locked into regional clusters of limited military viability, which are, in turn, embedded into the global system. To the extent that one can identify characteristics of these environments that are pertinent to petrostate conflict initiation—a task tackled in the next section—the system–subsystem framework permits an investigation whereby the "spatiality" of petroaggression can be revealed. Even without statistical analysis and formal delineation of regional subsystems, anecdotal evidence suggests that spatial differences in petrostate belligerence do indeed exist; oil exporters clustered in the

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Carolina Press, 1989), 23; and Harvey Starr, "Opportunity and Willingness as Ordering Concepts in the Study of War," *International Interactions* 4 (1978): 363–378.

<sup>248</sup> Starr, "Territory, Proximity, and Spatiality," 391. Starr writes that "proximity makes states (or other units) that are close to one another 'relevant' to one another through some combination of both opportunity and willingness."

<sup>249</sup> Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 55.

Middle East, for example, seem to have outdone their counterparts in South America or Sub-Saharan Africa on that count.

What makes the system–subsystem perspective particularly valuable, however, is that it presents a venue for examining the interaction between the global and regional levels, with a focus on their most relevant structural traits and actors. A key part of this interactivity is what Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel have termed the "intrusive system," which "consists of the politically significant participation of external powers in the international relations of the subordinate system."<sup>250</sup> Neither a purely global nor a purely regional perspective can account for this dimension, and sidelining one or the other could be a significant theoretical omission, because the two levels do not necessarily operate in parallel. Accounting for the intrusive system could also help one capture temporal variations in local environmental conditions, since a structural change in the global system is likely to be transmitted to the regional level.

### ***3.2.2 Structural bounds, superpower penetration, and regional orders***

To be analytically useful, the proposed system–subsystem framework should specify system-level properties, both regional and global, that could affect, either directly or indirectly, the conflict behavior of petrostates. In neorealist terms, these properties can be described as "structural," in the sense that they represent "a set of constraining conditions," external to actors, that shape foreign policy choices "by rewarding some behaviors and punishing others."<sup>251</sup> In international security, the strongest constraint on

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<sup>250</sup> Cantori and Spiegel, *The International Politics of Regions*, 25. By "politically significant involvement," the authors mean involvement that could produce an "alteration in the balance of power in the region" (26).

<sup>251</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 73–74.

state action is arguably that imposed by relative power. This follows from the observation that, as an exercise of strength, the use or threat of military force can be countered in kind, and its perceived prospect for success or failure is contingent upon the capabilities of others. Therefore, calculations about relative power dictate the range of likely conflict behaviors in a system and the competitiveness of that system.

As observed by Kenneth Waltz, while power is a state-level attribute, its distribution among states is a structural characteristic.<sup>252</sup> Typically, the distribution of capabilities is conceived in terms of "polarity," a notion reflecting the number of power centers, or "poles," in a given system. At the global level, polarity is determined by the most powerful states dominating world politics—countries often referred to as great powers and, since World War II, superpowers.<sup>253</sup> A shift in polarity (that is, a change in the number of poles) signifies a major structural transformation in the international system and the level of competition within it. For the period of analysis used in this dissertation (1971–2001), one such transformation took place—from a highly competitive bipolar system during the Cold War to a less competitive unipolar system after it.<sup>254</sup> In that transformation, one of the poles, the Soviet Union, imploded and fell from superpower status, abjuring its external security commitments in various parts of the world and withdrawing from its hegemonic competition with the United States (the other pole).

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>253</sup> In this dissertation, the terms "great power" and "superpower" are used interchangeably; see Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and World Politics: A Theory and Its Implications* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 5, especially footnote 2.

<sup>254</sup> Michael Mastanduno and Ethan B. Kapstein, "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War," in *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War*, eds. Michael Mastanduno and Ethan B. Kapstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

In principle, the concept of polarity can also be applied to the regional level. This possibility is of interest because the region is the proximate environment in which petrostates interact, and knowledge about its structural makeup could aid understanding about the security nature of that interaction. If different regional subsystems exhibit different configurations of power, it may be that the conflict behaviors of their members would differ as well. In discussing the structure and functioning of regional security complexes, for example, Lake and Morgan have suggested that regions could vary "not in terms of the variables [that describe them], but in the values attached to those variables...one region might be bipolar in structure, another unipolar, a third multipolar."<sup>255</sup> In a similar vein, Buzan has written that "in analyzing a security complex in terms of its distribution of power, the logic is the same as that for analyzing the polarity of the system as a whole."<sup>256</sup>

Security analyses based on regional polarity, however, are of dubious validity, a problem recognized even by the scholars who have entertained them. The reason is that the region is an "open" system embedded into a larger, "closed" one, and, hence, is not insulated from external influence and global structural impacts.<sup>257</sup> Superpowers can provide local actors with military, economic, and political support—a condition often termed

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<sup>255</sup> Lake and Morgan, "The New Regionalism in Security Affairs," 9. See also Lake, "Regional Security Complexes: A Systems Approach," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, eds. David Lake and Patrick Morgan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>256</sup> Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 211.

<sup>257</sup> This issue has compelled scholars to second-guess their own accounts. Buzan (*People, States, and Fear*), for example, has noted that, since regional polarity is "easily upset and distorted" by external forces, it "has never proved very useful" and is a "much less reliable guide to security relations in the periphery than...at the centre" (188–189). Making a similar point, Lake ("Regional Security Complexes") has observed that analyses based on regional polarity are "very tentative" and "problematic" (60).



penetration or interference<sup>258</sup>—profoundly distorting the power configuration among them and changing the structural backdrop against which foreign policy choices are made. This dynamic is aptly illustrated by power relations in the Middle East during the Cold War. The general consensus about the local configuration of power in that region, which has the highest concentration of petrostates anywhere in the world, is that it is multipolar.<sup>259</sup> During the Cold War, however, the Middle East was divided into two competing camps, each backed by one of the superpowers,<sup>260</sup> replicating the bipolar character of the global system. The confounding influence of superpower penetration was also felt in the power standing of states in particular dyads. U.S. withdrawal of support for Iran in 1979, for example, significantly improved the relative position of Iraq, a much weaker regional state, and undoubtedly played a major—and perhaps even decisive—role in the onset of the Iran–Iraq War.<sup>261</sup>

These considerations suggest that superpower penetration is an essential structural feature of regional subsystems.<sup>262</sup> For the present investigation, it is also of primary interest

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<sup>258</sup> See, for example, Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, 50–51; and Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 46.

<sup>259</sup> See, for example, Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 37; and contributions in Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders*.

<sup>260</sup> The two camps were those of "radical" states, supported by the Soviet Union, and "moderate" states, backed by the United States. Although the membership of each camp changed somewhat over time, the bipolar configuration remained largely intact until the end of the Cold War in 1989. See Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>261</sup> The historical evidence also suggests that the United States played a nontrivial role in sanctioning Iraqi aggression. See, for example, Hiro, *The Longest War*, 71; and Said Aburish, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 194–195.

<sup>262</sup> Counting penetration as a structural variable does not violate the Waltzian warning against reduction. Although it implies something about superpower interest, it is exogenously imposed on the regional subsystem and its constituent units. As noted by Waltz (*Theory of International Politics*), definitions of structure should be "free of the attributes and interactions of units...so we can distinguish between variables at the level of the units and variables at the level of the system" (79). Buzan and Waever (*Regions and*

because, as argued earlier, the most powerful members of the international system are likely to have an impact on what petrostates do or do not do in their immediate neighborhoods. Therefore, it is logical to ask what penetrative qualities would weaken or amplify the constraints placed on petrostate behavior. There are two plausible ways to theorize about this question: one that sees penetration as independent of regional power structures and one that sees it as mediated by them.

### *Penetration imposed*

A strong globalist perspective of superpower penetration would suggest that the latter occurs independently of the indigenous power relations of the region. Having global interests and an overwhelming preponderance in military and economic capabilities, superpowers can impose themselves on the periphery irrespective of the wishes of local states. As noted by Douglas Lemke, "it has been conventional wisdom that the strong do as they will while the weak suffer as they must."<sup>263</sup> When penetration does occur, it will override the power distribution of the local subsystem, engendering a specific "regional order."<sup>264</sup> In principle, two such orders can be distinguished: "balance of power," in which power is distributed more equally among system units, and "hegemonic," in which

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*Powers*) have argued that regional structures should also be defined in terms of their "patterns of amity and enmity" (50). Expanding the notion of structure in this way, however, has two major disadvantages. First, by focusing on idiosyncratic regional characteristics, it precludes the development of a general theory that could be applied in cross-regional comparisons. Second, by assuming that regional structures are shaped by state attributes and interactions, it cannot isolate the causal effect of either.

<sup>263</sup> Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, 50.

<sup>264</sup> In this dissertation, the concept of "regional order" is defined narrowly in terms of relative power. However, the broader literature on regional security, in particular that influenced by constructivism and liberal theory, has proposed other conceptualizations (security concerts, pluralistic security communities, etc.). See, for example, Patrick Morgan, "Regional Security Complexes and Regional Orders," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, eds. David Lake and Patrick Morgan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

power is heavily concentrated in a single system member.<sup>265</sup> Since intrusive superpowers are active participants in the security relations of penetrated regions, they can be treated as power centers in those regions.<sup>266</sup> Therefore, the number of penetrating superpowers would determine the regional order in which local states, including petrostates, interact.

By definition, the number of penetrating superpowers cannot exceed the number of poles in the global system. For the time span considered here, two logical possibilities emerge: (1) bipolar or unipolar penetration during the period of global bipolarity and (2) unipolar penetration during the period of global unipolarity. In cases with bipolar penetration, the local configuration of power will be restructured in bipolar terms, with the regional order assuming a balance-of-power character.<sup>267</sup> In this scenario, local states will coalesce around the two extraregional powers, readjusting their foreign policies to the parameters set by those powers. Likewise, in cases with unipolar penetration, the local configuration of power will be restructured in unipolar terms, with the regional order assuming a

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<sup>265</sup> The term "balance of power" has different meanings. The one adopted here is descriptive, denoting an equal, or roughly equal, distribution of power among two or more system units. It does, however, has a behavioral implication, namely, that power equality creates conditions for competitive behaviors that are not expected in systems with lopsided power distributions. For an overview of the various meanings of the term, see Ernst B. Haas, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," *World Politics* 5, no. 4 (1953): 442–447.

<sup>266</sup> Scholars have debated whether or not external great powers should be counted as part of the regional subsystems they penetrate. (See, for example, Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 80.) The present argument sides with Lake's assessment that the issue is one of semantics rather than substance; see Lake, "Regional Hierarchy: Authority and Local International Order," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 35–58, 35.

<sup>267</sup> This framework can be extended to multipolar global systems, which allow for multipolar penetration. Regions penetrated by more than two superpowers could also be expected to assume a balance-of-power character.

hegemonic character. Here, local states, being dwarfed by a much stronger state, would eschew balancing and heed to the preferences of the unipole.<sup>268</sup>

Variations in the type of order produced by penetration can be expected to affect the security competitiveness of a region and, by implication, the conflict propensity of petrostates (and other lesser powers) located in that region. Balance-of-power orders are likely to be particularly conflict prone, because equal power distributions tend to breed more intense security competition than lopsided power distributions.<sup>269</sup> When two superpowers penetrate a region, they would vie for regional influence by forming opposing networks of local clients, dramatically increasing the power level of the subsystem.<sup>270</sup> Under such competitive conditions, these intrusive powers will have reduced incentives to constrain oil-rich states harboring aggressive designs, as this could cost them potentially valuable regional allies. They could also see significant benefit in

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<sup>268</sup> For a compelling perspective on how unipolarity restricts the choices and behavior of lesser powers, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>269</sup> This argument sides with the broad group of "hegemonic stability" theories, such as power transition theory, which contend that power parities drive competitive behaviors and system instability by elevating each side's belief that it could prevail in a military confrontation. The idea is famously articulated by A.F.K. Organski, who has written that "nations are reluctant to fight unless they believe they have a good chance of winning, but this is true for both sides only when the two are fairly evenly matched, or at least when they believe they are...a preponderance of power, on the other hand, increases the chances for peace, for the greatly stronger side need not fight at all to get what it wants, while the weaker side would be plainly foolish to attempt to battle for what it wants"; see Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 294. See also Blainey, *The Causes of War*; A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980); Jacek Kugler and Douglass Lemke, "The Power Transition Research Program" in *Handbook of War Studies II*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000); and Stuart Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 2 (1992): 309–341. For hegemonic stability theory, see Arthur Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28, no. 3 (1976): 317–347.

<sup>270</sup> As noted by Buzan and Waever (*Regions and Powers*), superpower penetration in the Middle East during the Cold War "raised the overall level of military capability in the region" (200).

sanctioning, or even encouraging, petrostate revisionism. A superpower would likely deem petroaggression—and the economic disturbances it might produce—acceptable insofar it does not affect its core hegemonial objectives or is directed against the interests and allies of the opposing superpower. Petrostates' oil money could also be an asset in such proxy competition, allowing superpowers to conserve their own resources and, at the same time, realize economic gains through the sale of arms and military equipment.<sup>271</sup>

For their part, petrostates in regions with bipolar penetration will enjoy greater room to maneuver. If a petrostate has revisionist objectives that do not align with those of a superpower patron, it can seek a recourse to a competing superpower. Depending on the issues at stake, the superpower facing defection may or may not sanction the aggressive dispositions of a client. If it does, petroaggression is likely to proceed with its overt support or tacit inaction; if it does not, the prospect for defection will increase, opening pathways to conflict initiation backed by the opposing side. Although this so-called double option can be exploited by all regional states,<sup>272</sup> petrostates are in a particularly favorable position to do so. One of the primary means through which a penetrating superpower can constrain the behavior of a local client is by manipulating its military supply.<sup>273</sup> However, having access to oil rents and being able to borrow money against future oil income, petrostates may find it easier to shift to a new supplier and to reduce

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<sup>271</sup> After the oil crisis of the early 1970s, oil-rich states became the primary drivers of superpower arms transfers. See, for example, contributions in Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg, eds. *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988).

<sup>272</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 23.

<sup>273</sup> For a historical discussion of how the superpowers used arms transfers to influence the conflict behavior of Third World clients, including oil exporters, during the Cold War, see Stephanie G. Neuman, "Arms, Aid, and the Superpowers," *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 5 (1988): 1044–1066.

their dependence on an old one. Superpowers are also more likely to prefer clients of economic value. Starting in the early 1970s, the United States, facing negative trade balances, and the Soviet Union, hit by a hard-currency crunch, scaled back the use of grants (military aid) in their arms dealings in the Third World.<sup>274</sup> This shift made cash buyers, such as petrostates, more valuable clients in contested regions, enhancing their opportunities for strategic realignment.<sup>275</sup>

Balance-of-power regional orders could also push otherwise nonrevisionist petrostates into more belligerent military postures. Although a penetrating superpower would afford some level of protection to a petrostate client, the presence of a regional competitor of roughly equal strength would render such protection more precarious. Indeed, states of greater value as clients for one side would most certainly be seen as states of greater value as targets by the other side. Therefore, bipolar penetration would increase the density of indigenous military threats faced by petrostates, elevating their actual or perceived insecurity. A petrostate operating in such threat environment is more likely to relate negatively with neighbors of unlike superpower alignment and, when proximate military threats arise, opt for preemptive tactics against potential challengers. Contrary to claims made by some scholars, bipolar penetration could also serve as a multiplier of issues of local contention: superpowers can export their competing ideological views to penetrated regions or even foster the creation and sustenance of new political entities in

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<sup>274</sup> See, for example, Efraim Karsh, *The Cautious Bear: Soviet Military Engagement in Middle East Wars in the Post-1967 Era* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 7; and Steven L. Spiegel, "U.S. arms transfer and arms control policies," in Spiegel, Heller, and Goldberg, eds. *The Soviet-American Competition*, 35.

<sup>275</sup> Libya and Iraq provide illustrative examples of this type of petrostate realignment, with the former shifting from U.S. to Soviet alignment in the mid-1970s and the latter shifting from Soviet to U.S. alignment in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

those regions.<sup>276</sup> Such intrusive inputs are likely to breed negative security externalities, creating new threats and focal points around which hostile relations could form.

All of these pathways to instability will be attenuated in the case of unipolar penetration. Absent regional competition with another superpower, the unipole will have no strategic incentives to sanction or encourage petroaggression. Protection of friendly oil-rich states will be less likely to break down, reducing the security concerns of those with status-quo preferences. At the same time, the constraints imposed on petrostate foreign policy choices will be stronger. As the sole manager of the subsystem, the unipole has interest in establishing a stable hegemonic order, whereby local oil economies can function without unwarranted security disruptions. Although some regional petrostates, particularly those previously aligned with another superpower, may be unsatisfied with this order, their options for revision will be severely curtailed. Being at a large power disadvantage (individually or collectively) and lacking a recourse to a competing superpower (the double option), these states will be in no position to counterbalance or otherwise rival the unipole. As argued by Birthe Hansen, under such circumstances, lesser powers would either "flock" to the polar power (i.e., follow it) or "free ride" (i.e., take no action and seek relative gains).<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> In discussing processes of regional securitization, Buzan and Waeber (*Regions and Powers*) have argued that local patterns of amity and enmity are "not imported from the system level, but generated internally in the region" (47). That this claim is dubious, if not downright false, can be shown in many different ways, but perhaps the most obvious one is a recourse to historical events in the Middle East shortly after World War II, in particular the creation of Israel in 1948 and the overthrow of Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953. These developments, both pushed for and orchestrated by the United States (with a subordinate role of the United Kingdom), produced some of the most intractable, still lingering, focal points of regional contention.

<sup>277</sup> See Hansen, *Unipolarity and World Politics*, 19. The limited strategic choices of lesser powers located in unipolar systems are nicely laid out by William Wohlforth: "The only options available to second-tier

One may ask what would occur if there is no penetration. The present theoretical specification (a strong view of penetration) assumes that penetrative interest exists in both bipolar and unipolar global structures. This assumption is not unreasonable given that either structural condition creates incentives for penetration: in the former case, these incentives stem from superpower rivalry at the global level; in the latter, they arise from the fact that the global unipole, unconstrained by an equally matched opponent, is free to fill power voids in oil-rich areas and establish political and economic order of its own liking. Despite these incentives, penetration may still not occur if a superpower has insufficient capability to meaningfully penetrate a region. In such cases, regional polarity, being unaffected by the intrusive system, could be a guide to analysis. Two important qualifications should be made, however. First, balance-of-power orders based on local bipolarity will exhibit significantly lower power levels than balance-of-power orders based on bipolar penetration.<sup>278</sup> Second, in the absence of strategic backing by competing superpower patrons, local states would see their costs of conflict increase.<sup>279</sup> For these reasons, it could still be expected that, in comparative terms, bipolar penetration—the key variable of interest here—would create conditions most conducive to petroaggression.

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states are to bandwagon with the polar power (either explicitly or implicitly) or, at least, to take no action that could incur its focused enmity. As long as their preferences are oriented around the power and preferences of the sole pole, second-tier states are less likely to engage in conflict-prone rivalries for security or prestige. Once the sole pole takes sides, there can be little doubt about which party would prevail. Moreover, the unipolar leader has the capability to be much more interventionist than earlier system leaders"; see Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): 5–41, 25. See also Brooks and Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance*; and contributions in Mastanduno and Kapstein, *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War*.

<sup>278</sup> Subsystems with lower levels of power can be expected to be less revisionist. See Binder, "The Middle East as a Subordinate International System," 414–415.

<sup>279</sup> Making a similar point, Benjamin Miller has observed that strategic backing by great powers (e.g., arms resupply, diplomatic assistance, regime support) reduces the "costs and risks" for regional clients contemplating military aggression, increasing the likelihood of regional instability and conflict. See Miller, "When and How Regions Become Peaceful," *International Studies Review* 7 (2005): 229–267, 238.



### *Penetration invited*

While superpower penetration can be viewed as occurring independently from local power relations, it is also possible that it is mediated by them. Lake has argued that a region's autonomy from external interference is a function of its polarity, suggesting that unipolar regional systems, which are stabilized by one dominant local state, will be more autonomous than those with a greater number of poles.<sup>280</sup> Although the theoretical basis for this claim is not fully developed, it rests on the idea that different regional power distributions exhibit different propensities to "invite" external meddling from the global system. Invitation may or may not involve an intentional act. In one form, it could be purposeful, as would be the case when local states seek military support from external powers. In another form, it could be an agency-free structural pull, whereby local power structures engender behaviors with negative security externalities that transcend regional boundaries and activate the intrusive system.

This perspective allows one to probabilistically gauge superpower penetration (or lack thereof) on the basis of regional and global power distributions. Table 3-1 presents a two-by-two matrix that shows the type of expected penetration for a given polar combination, along with the regional order (in parentheses) corresponding to that type. (Again, the possible number of penetrating superpowers is constrained by the polarity of the global system.) Regions with bipolar and multipolar configurations of power, which create conditions for competitive balancing behaviors, are shown as likely penetrated (cells I and II), for two reasons. First, because these regions are open systems, local states located in them can balance not only intraregionally but also extraregionally, inviting superpower

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<sup>280</sup> Lake, "Regional Security Complexes," 60; and Lake, "Regional Hierarchy," 36.

participation in the local balance of power. Second, because regional power parity is conducive to more intense military competition, it is likely to breed more negative security externalities, increasing the likelihood of superpower regional involvement. Neither of these forms of invitation is expected to operate in unipolar regions (cells III and IV). Having only one power center, these regions are less likely to see balancing behaviors and more likely to exhibit hegemonic management. To the extent that negative security externalities arise, they will be managed by the local unipole and be less likely to affect extraregional powers.<sup>281</sup>

**Table 3-1. Penetration and regional orders based on local and global power distributions**

| <b>Regional power distribution</b>                       | <b>Global power distribution</b>                     |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <b>Bipolar</b>                                       | <b>Unipolar</b>                                 |
| Bipolar/multipolar                                       | (I) Bipolar penetration likely<br>(balance of power) | (II) Unipolar penetration likely<br>(hegemonic) |
| Unipolar   | (III) Penetration unlikely<br>(hegemonic)            | (IV) Penetration unlikely<br>(hegemonic)        |
| Note: Expected regional orders are shown in parentheses. |  |   |

While table 3-1 problematizes the question of penetration with an indigenous structural component, it does not change the basic expectations laid out in the previous section. Regions with bipolar penetration (cell I) are still expected to be most competitive and, for reasons already discussed, most likely to create conditions for petroaggression. It should be noted, however, that the designations in the table are only probabilistic: the autonomy

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<sup>281</sup> As noted by Lake ("Regional Security Complexes"), "unipolar regional security systems...will most easily manage negative security externalities and produce positive security externalities; the single pole is likely to reap a large absolute gain from managing the externality, and is most likely to form an effective *k*-group" (60–61).

of unipolar regions is not guaranteed, nor is the penetration of regions with more than one pole assured.

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

This section distills the key propositions advanced in sections 3.1 and 3.2, setting the stage for the empirical analyses presented in the next two chapters. The theory offered in section 3.1 was built upon the idea that while oil income can contribute to petroaggression, its effects would be mediated by domestic political institutions. In particular, it was argued that, among petrostates of different regime types, those with personalist institutions would be more conflict prone than those of other institutional makeup, all else equal. This prediction was attributed to the unique compositional and identity characteristics of ruling elites in personalist regimes—characteristics including small winning coalition size, poor institutional quality, concentration of decisionmaking power in a single individual, elite loyalty based on material rewards, and leadership with a greater desire for rent-seeking and international goods and recognition. These institutional features were posited as factors that could influence how oil income is distributed domestically—a determinant of the discretionary resources under leadership control—and how such discretionary wealth could affect leaders' actual or perceived costs of threatening or using military force. In sum, the theory laid out in section 3.1 yielded the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Petrostates with personalist regime institutions are more likely to initiate interstate conflict than petrostates with no such institutions.*

Section 3.2 looked at the problem of variation from a different perspective, abstracting away from petrostate domestic institutional attributes (a necessary conceptual experiment) and focusing on the external environments in which petrostates exist and make strategic choices. These environments were analyzed within a system–subsystem framework, whereby special attention was paid to global and regional power structures and the penetration of superpowers in subordinate systems containing petrostates. This theoretical exercise was motivated by, among other things, the fact that petrostates operate in zones of limited military viability, the recognition that their economic importance as oil exporters creates unique constraints and opportunities for external action, and the expectation that these constraints and opportunities would be influenced by the global system's strongest of states. It was argued that petrostate regions penetrated by two (or more) superpowers would create conditions more conducive to petroaggression. Bipolar penetration was posited as likely to increase the power level and threat density of regional security relations, reduce superpower incentives to constrain oil-rich states, present those states with more options for strategic realignment and militarization, and reduce their costs of threatening or using military force. In short, the argument converged on the following proposition:

*Hypothesis 2: Petrostates located in regional subsystems with bipolar superpower penetration (balance-of-power orders) are more likely to initiate interstate conflict than petrostates located in subsystems with unipolar or no penetration.*

## 4 Quantitative analysis

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are predictive statements about the mediating effects of, respectively, internal regime characteristics and exogenous structural conditions on the conflict behavior of petrostates. Neither of these hypotheses implies anything about the specific targets of petrostate military aggression or the security interactions within particular pairs of states—instead, the focus is on individual countries. For that reason, the research design adopted here is monadic, positing the state-year as the unit of analysis.<sup>282</sup> The monadic design, although chosen on the basis of theory, also presents some methodological advantages, such as minimizing missing-data problems, common in dyadic research, and increasing the frequency of conflict observations.<sup>283</sup>

The study period used in all regressions runs from 1971 to 2001, with the ending year reflecting data-collection limitations. The starting year was chosen for three reasons. First, in 1971, Great Britain terminated its Persian Gulf Residency, lifting its colonial footprint from an area flush with oil resources.<sup>284</sup> Because of this development, three new political entities—Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (a merger of six Gulf sheikhdoms)—entered the international scene as independent oil-exporting countries unencumbered by British political and economic control. Second, the early 1970s marked the beginning of a new oil age, a time when a massive wave of oil-industry

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<sup>282</sup> A monadic perspective suggests that "countries can in principle fight any other country"; see Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, 93.

<sup>283</sup> Monadic and dyadic research designs both have advantages and disadvantages. For a concise discussion of this topic, see Patrick J. McDonald, "Capitalism, Commitment, and Peace," in *Assessing the Capitalist Peace*, eds. Gerald Schneider and Nils Peters Gleditsch (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 51–52.

<sup>284</sup> For a historical account of the end of *Pax Britannica* in the Gulf region, see R. P. Owen, "The British Withdrawal from the Persian Gulf," *The World Today* 28, no. 2 (1972): 75–81.

nationalizations swept the developing world, giving national governments greater control over their indigenous petroleum wealth and putting upward pressure on oil prices.<sup>285</sup> In the aftermath of the oil crisis of 1973, the price of petroleum nearly quadrupled, sharply increasing the cash inflows to the coffers of oil-exporting countries.<sup>286</sup> Third, quality data on oil income—the basis for determining petrostate status—are not available for the pre-1970s period. Therefore, extending the empirical analysis to earlier decades would be ill advised, as it could compromise the inferences drawn from statistical results.<sup>287</sup>

## **4.1 Petrostate sample and regional classification**

### **4.1.1 Sample**

There is no universal definition of a petrostate, and no definition is perfect or appropriate for addressing all research questions. The present analysis uses a petrostate sample constructed in a two-step process. The first step aimed to identify countries whose annual revenue from oil exports accounted for at least 10 percent of gross domestic product

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<sup>285</sup> Before 1971, control over oil production in most developing countries was largely in the hands of foreign oil companies. With the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Country's "Declaratory Statement of Petroleum Policy in Member Countries" of 1968, "the ground was prepared on the exporters' side for the nationalization and participation movement of the 1970s in which many of today's NOCs [national oil companies] were created"; see Valérie Marcel, *Oil Titans: National Oil Companies in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>286</sup> Oil's price performance after the early 1970s was markedly different from that in earlier periods. At no point since 1973 did the price index for oil converge with that for metals and other minerals. (Even during the oil-price dip of the late 1990s, the oil index was about 3 times higher than the broad index for metals and minerals.) See Roberto F. Aguilera and Marian Radetzki, *The Price of Oil* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11–13.

<sup>287</sup> As noted by Walt and Mearsheimer ("Leaving theory behind"), in their desire to obtain a greater number of observations, scholars have often erred by including "cases for which the data are poor instead of analyzing a smaller number of cases where the data are more reliable" (442). Expressing a similar sentiment, Russett and Oneal (*Triangulating Peace*) pose a rhetorical question: "Is it better to use flawed information in a precise statistical test, or not to make a test at all?" (308).

(GDP).<sup>288</sup> The 10-percent threshold is commonly used in the literature on petroaggression and represents a suitable indicator for a state's economic dependence on the oil sector.<sup>289</sup> Scholars have sometimes generated continuous measures of oil abundance, including metrics based on oil production and reserves (often expressed in per capita terms or relative to GDP).<sup>290</sup> However, methodological and theoretical considerations render such measures less useful for the present investigation. Measures of oil reserves do not provide information about a country's oil income and, as argued in the theoretical chapter, that income is integral to the decisional mechanisms hypothesized to affect petrostate conflict behavior. Furthermore, continuous measures fall short of unambiguously ascertaining petrostate status, because they are constructed under the assumption that "a state that has a higher value [on the continuous measure] is 'more of a petrostate' than a state that has a lower value, and it is not always clear that this assumption is warranted."<sup>291</sup>

The second step in constructing the sample was to ascertain that the countries included in it meet or exceed the 10-percent threshold for at least 80 percent of the years in the 1971–2001 period. While arbitrary, this condition was imposed to ensure that petrostate status was maintained consistently for an extended period of time. Initially, the sample was constructed under a more demanding condition whereby states were required to meet the

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<sup>288</sup> Data for this metric are from Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," and available at <https://sites.google.com/site/jeffcolgan/data>.

<sup>289</sup> See, for example, Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*; and De Soysa, Gartzke, and Lie, "Blood, Oil, and Strategy."

<sup>290</sup> See, for example, Strüver and Wegenast, "The Hard Power of Natural Resources."

<sup>291</sup> Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*, 48–49. Sachs and Warner ("The Curse of Natural Resources," 830) also warn that per capita measures are problematic because they do not capture a resource's importance in the economy.

threshold for all years in the study period.<sup>292</sup> It was judged, however, that relaxing this criterion would be methodologically beneficial, both by increasing the size of the sample (and, thus, the number of state-year observations) and by widening the sample's geographical scope. Moreover, a brief retreat from the oil-exports threshold was deemed unlikely to cast much doubt about a country's petrostate status, especially since oil income is not necessarily spent in the year obtained. By contrast, there were some cases in which a country's oil export met the 10-percent threshold for only a few years in the three decades under analysis. Including such marginal cases would have been theoretically and empirically indefensible, because the goal here is to capture oil income as a persistent backdrop against which foreign policy decisions are made.

This identification strategy yielded a sample of 16 petrostates.<sup>293</sup> These countries are listed in table 4-1, along with the years, between 1971 and 2001, in which they met or exceeded the 10-percent oil-exports cutoff. Most of these states (except for Congo, Oman, and Trinidad) have been long-standing members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which was established in September 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. Thirteen of the countries met the oil-exports threshold for each year in the study period, and three states did so for well over

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<sup>292</sup> Regression results for this truncated sample were consistent with those for the full sample.

<sup>293</sup> Bahrain and Brunei are excluded due to their small populations and poor data quality; see Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," 676.



80 percent of the years in the period.<sup>294</sup> In two cases (Ecuador and Trinidad), a 1-year break occurred in 1998, likely because of the oil-price crisis of that year.<sup>295</sup>

**Table 4-1. Petrostate sample, 1971–2001**

| Country  | Years meeting oil-exports cutoff <sup>(1)</sup> |
|--|---|
| Algeria  | 1971–2001                                       |
| Angola   | 1975–2001                                       |
| Congo  | 1973–2001                                       |
| Ecuador  | 1973–86, 1988–97, 1999–2001                     |
| Gabon  | 1971–2001                                       |
| Iran   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Iraq   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Kuwait   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Libya  | 1971–2001                                       |
| Nigeria  | 1971–2001                                       |
| Oman   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Qatar  | 1971–2001                                       |
| Saudi Arabia   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Trinidad and Tobago  | 1972–97, 1999–2001                              |
| United Arab Emirates   | 1971–2001                                       |
| Venezuela  | 1971–2001                                       |
| <sup>(1)</sup> Oil exports equal to or greater than 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).<br>Note: Data for the oil-exports-to-GDP metric are from Colgan, "Oil and Revolutionary Governments," and available at <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/jeffdcogan/data">https://sites.google.com/site/jeffdcogan/data</a> . Bahrain and Brunei are excluded due to their small populations and poor data quality. Data for Angola start in 1975 because the country gained independence from Portuguese colonial rule in that year. |   |

<sup>294</sup> The period for Angola starts in 1975 because this is the year in which the country gained independence from Portugal.

<sup>295</sup> For the causes and price dynamics of the crisis, see Robert Mabro, *The Oil Price Crisis of 1998* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 1998).

#### 4.1.2 *Regions*

Testing hypothesis 2, which purports a causal linkage between superpower penetration and petrogression, requires the identification of regional subsystems, subject to penetration, that contain petrostates. It has been common practice for scholars to equate regions with continents or to employ regional taxonomies found in general-use data compilations, such as the Correlates of War (COW) Project database. While convenient, these approaches are not particularly persuasive, not only because they are adopted with a blind eye to theory but also because they produce overly broad subsystem delineations. Viewing the "Western Hemisphere" as one region,<sup>296</sup> for example, sidelines the obvious geographical boundaries and asymmetric security relations that separate South from North America.<sup>297</sup> Likewise, treating "Africa" as a single region neglects the fact that the vast expanse of the Sahara, roughly the size of the United States, serves as a natural buffer between the countries of the Maghreb and the rest of the continent, or that the sparsely populated, mostly weak sub-Saharan states have no capacity to form a monolithic area of security interaction.<sup>298</sup>

While Thompson's notion of regions as clusters of states linked by proximity and regular interaction (see section 3.2.1) can go a long way toward avoiding such conceptual issues,

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<sup>296</sup> The "Western Hemisphere" is coded as a distinct region in the COW Project database.

<sup>297</sup> As noted by Buzan and Waever (*Regions and Powers*), "South America has some spillover security effects in North America, but most issues that upset Canada will be of minor relevance to Brazil and vice versa" (263). See also David R. Mares, "Regional Conflict Management in Latin America: Power Complemented by Diplomacy," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, eds. David Lake and Patrick Morgan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 197.

<sup>298</sup> The weakness of the Sub-Saharan African state is described at length in Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a discussion of how such state weakness limits security interaction, see Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*.

it is open to different operationalizations. The principal regional classification adopted in the quantitative analysis is borrowed from recent empirical work by Lemke, who combines Thompson's two criteria to draw subsystem boundaries on the basis of states' ability to interact militarily with one another.<sup>299</sup> Using a modified version of Bueno de Mesquita's formula of Boulding's loss-of-strength gradient, Lemke calculates each state's area of military reach, or "relevant neighborhood," and then delineates regional subsystems by identifying local clusters of countries whose neighborhoods overlap.<sup>300</sup> Factors with implications for force projection, such as natural barriers (mountains, jungles, seas, etc.), are also taken into account. Generally, Lemke's approach tends to produce smaller regions than those normally found in other datasets.<sup>301</sup> The regions pertinent to the present analysis are listed in table 4-2, along with the petrostates located in them.

**Table 4-2. Petrostate regions**

| Region  | Petrostate membership                                   |
|---|---|
| Arabian Peninsula   | Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates |
| Northern Rim  | Iran, Iraq  |
| Maghreb   | Algeria, Libya  |
| Gulf of Guinea  | Nigeria   |
| South Atlantic Coast  | Angola, Congo, Gabon                                    |
| Northern Tier   | Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago <sup>(1)</sup> , Venezuela |
| <sup>(1)</sup> Added due to close proximity to Northern Tier.<br>Note: Regions are based on a classification presented in Lemke, "Dimensions of Hard Power," and Lemke, <i>Regions of War and Peace</i> . |   |

<sup>299</sup> See Douglas Lemke, "Dimensions of Hard Power: Regional Leadership and Material Capabilities" (paper prepared for the first Regional Powers Network conference at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, Germany, September 15–16, 2008); and Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*.

<sup>300</sup> For further methodological detail, see Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, chapter 4.

<sup>301</sup> See Lemke, "Dimensions of Hard Power."

Lemke's classification offers two main advantages. First, it comes with corresponding determinations for great power "interference" in regional subsystems, which can be used to measure superpower penetration in petrostate regions. (See section 4.3.2.) Second, it is developed specifically for the study of interstate conflict, as opposed to other topics of general interest, and relies on classification criteria that are objective and measurable. Alternative operationalizations of regions informed by Thompson's definitional standard are also possible on the basis of observed security interaction rather than interaction opportunity, and Buzan and Waever's delineation of regional security complexes is perhaps the most systematic recent effort in this direction.<sup>302</sup> However, the authors' classification, like that of others,<sup>303</sup> is derived from case study work that relies on qualitative judgments, making regional delineations idiosyncratic and less useful in quantitative tests. Despite these considerations, four of Buzan and Waever's regional complexes with petrostate membership—Middle Eastern, West African, South African, and South American—were used in addition to Lemke's regions in models adopting a weak view of penetration (i.e., penetration through invitation; see section 3.2.2).

#### **4.2 Dependent variable: militarized disputes**

The dependent variable employed in the statistical analysis is the count of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) initiated by a petrostate in a given year. A militarized dispute—the most widely used measure of conflict involvement in the security literature—is defined as "a set of interactions between and among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of force" that "must be

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<sup>302</sup> Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*.

<sup>303</sup> See, for example, contributions in Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders*.

explicit, overt, nonaccidental, and government sanctioned."<sup>304</sup> In its most severe form, war, a MID is recorded as a military confrontation resulting in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths.<sup>305</sup> All dispute data are from the most recent version (v. 4.01) of the COW Project database.<sup>306</sup>

Because the hypothesized relationships are concerned with conflict initiation—as opposed to any type of conflict involvement—the dependent variable captures only disputes in which a petrostate was the first to threaten, display, or use military force. The COW Project database allows for this type of identification by coding the dispute initiator as "Side A."<sup>307</sup> For example, the database indicates that, in 1995, Ecuador was involved in two militarized disputes, but initiated only one of them. While the initiating side may include more than one state, it is always composed of parties involved from the outset (start date) of the dispute, rather than joiners (i.e., states that enter the dispute at a later point in its lifecycle). The Side-A indicator is the most widely used measure of conflict initiation and is the one adopted here. Occasionally, scholars have employed a different metric, reported in more recent versions of the MID dataset, that indicates whether a disputant was "revisionist," or "dissatisfied with the status quo prior to the onset of a

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<sup>304</sup> Charles Gochman and Zeev Maoz, "Militarized Interstate Disputes: Procedures, Patterns, and Insights," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (1984): 585–615, 586. See also Daniel Jones, Stuart Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (1996): 163–213.

<sup>305</sup> Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816–1980* (Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc., 1982).

<sup>306</sup> Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane, "The MID 4 Data Set: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 2 (2015): 222–242. The MID 4.01 dataset is available at <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs>.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. See also Michael R. Kenwick, Matthew Lane, Benjamin Ostick, and Glenn Palmer, "Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data, Version 4.0" (The Pennsylvania State University, Correlates of War Project, December 13, 2013).

militarized interstate dispute."<sup>308</sup> Using this metric as an indicator of initiation, however, is controversial, because the revisionist state is not necessarily the initiating state, that is, the party that took the first militarized action. Moreover, ascertaining revisionist intent is by no means straightforward, and relying on disputants' observable behaviors, such as the issuance of military threats or demonstrations of force, is arguably the more reliable empirical strategy.<sup>309</sup>

One potential concern related to using militarized disputes as an operational extension of the general concept of interstate conflict is that they span a wide range of hostile actions initiated by states, from mere military threats to a full-scale war. Looking at this broad spectrum of violent behaviors, however, is not a disadvantage. Wars are extremely rare events, and focusing only on them would limit one's ability to reveal systematic patterns in conflict behavior, especially in analyses, such as the present one, that look at a subset of international system members and a relatively limited time frame. Very few military conflicts reach the 1,000 lethality cutoff that would qualify them as wars, and those that do and are initiated by petrostates in the sample (during the period of analysis) number only six.<sup>310</sup> Besides yielding methodological benefits, broadening the concept of conflict to militarized hostilities short of war also offers theoretical advantages, because the causal mechanisms of conflict initiation—and those of escalation—are similar across different forms of military aggression. As observed by Bruce Russett and John Oneal,

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<sup>308</sup> For a detailed explanation of the "revisionist" variable, see Jones, Bremer, and Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes," 178. For a study that uses it as an indicator of conflict initiation, see Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*.

<sup>309</sup> The revisionist measure was used in robustness tests and did not materially alter the results.

<sup>310</sup> These wars were initiated by Angola (1998), Iraq (1990, 1980, 1973), Libya (1979), and Saudi Arabia (1973).

"most wars begin with some threat or more limited use of violence" and "the influences and constraints that affect the occurrence of wars do not appear to differ much from those that are relevant to militarized disputes in general."<sup>311</sup>

To add nuance to the results, however, the analysis does employ a variant of the all-inclusive dependent variable. The COW Project database categorizes militarized disputes by their level of hostility, with the levels being—in ascending order, by severity—"threat to use force," "display of force," "use of force," and "war."<sup>312</sup> The former two levels, while representing hostile militarized actions, do not involve any combat and do not extend beyond demonstrative applications of force, such as naval maneuvers close to the territory of an adversary. The latter two, by contrast, do involve actual military standoffs or engagements (blockades, clashes of regular armed forces, declarations of war, etc.), marking notably higher points on the conflict escalation ladder.<sup>313</sup> A count variable combining petrostate dispute initiations for only these two levels was constructed as a way to reveal whether the hypothesized relationships operate at higher levels of military hostility. It could be that, for one or another reason, these relationships hold for cases involving "cheap talk" but not for those involving costly military action.

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<sup>311</sup> Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, 94.

<sup>312</sup> See Jones, Bremer, and Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes"; and Kenwick et al., "Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data," 3.

<sup>313</sup> See Jones, Bremer, and Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes," especially "Table 3. Definitions of Uses of Force," 173.

### 4.3 Independent variables

#### 4.3.1 *Personalism*

The principal predictor variable in hypothesis 1 is whether or not a petrostate is governed by a personalist regime. As argued in the theoretical discussion, personalism and oil could be a dangerous mix, increasing the likelihood of conflict initiation above that for other regime type–oil combinations. To measure this form of autocracy, the statistical analysis employs a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 for each year in which a petrostate exhibited personalism and 0 otherwise. Overall, about 13 percent of all state-years in the data are coded as personalist. In some model specifications, a breakdown of the nonpersonalist ("zero") category is also presented, using additional dummies for single-party, military, and monarchic autocratic regimes, as well as democracy (used as a reference category). Since the theory makes no definitive predictive claims about the relationship between various nonpersonalist regimes and petrostate belligerence, this breakdown is included only for exploratory purposes.

All regime data, except those for Trinidad and Qatar,<sup>314</sup> are from the latest version (v. 1.02) of Geddes et al.'s Autocratic Regimes Data Set.<sup>315</sup> Improving upon its predecessors,

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<sup>314</sup> Geddes et al. exclude Trinidad and Qatar from their dataset because of minimum-population restrictions. Qatar has maintained monarchial rule since it gained independence from Great Britain in 1971 and was coded accordingly. Regime determinations for Trinidad were derived from Polity IV scores ([www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html](http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html)), which indicate that the petrostate was a "consolidated democracy" in each year of the study period. Because Geddes et al.'s distinction between democracies and autocracies is based on minimal requirements for electoral competitiveness—a characteristic captured in Polity data—there is no reason to suspect issues with coding consistency. Dropping Trinidad and Qatar from the sample did not materially change the results.

<sup>315</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions." The latest version of the dataset is available at <http://dictators.la.psu.edu/>.



this dataset differentiates between democratic and autocratic regimes,<sup>316</sup> assigning states to the latter category if one of the following three conditions is met: executive power is gained through means other than competitive (democratic) elections, the executive is elected democratically but limits competitive elections after assuming office, or the military establishment bans one or more popular parties from electoral participation.<sup>317</sup> As long as the institutional rules and the leadership group associated with one of these conditions persist, a state retains its autocratic coding. Autocracies are further subdivided into the aforementioned four autocratic subtypes, on the basis of the identity of the elite group that selects leaders and makes policy. Personalist regimes, which are of primary interest here, are defined as those in which "control over policy, leadership selection, and the security apparatus is in the hands of...a narrower group [narrower than that of other regimes] centered around an individual dictator."<sup>318</sup>

Geddes et al.'s regime data are suitable for the present investigation. Most other datasets that attempt to classify autocratic regimes come short of achieving the same level of data quality and country-year coverage. Critically, they typically do not identify personalist

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<sup>316</sup> Geddes's original data, which appeared in 1999, excluded democracies and monarchies; see Geddes, "What do we know about democratization."

<sup>317</sup> Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 317.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 318. While Geddes et al.'s dataset also codes hybrid regimes (party–personal–military, personal–military, etc.), these are collapsible into four categories (personalist regimes, party-based regimes, military regimes, and monarchical regimes). (See Geddes et al., "Autocratic Regimes Code Book, version 1.02," <http://dictators.la.psu.edu/>.) Iraq, a personal–party hybrid during 1971–79, was coded as party based for the period 1971–75 and personalist for the period after 1975. While some scholars have used personalist coding for the entire period (see, for example, Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men"), it was not until the mid-1970s that the country's political institutions became decisively personalized. At that time, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Iraq's president, was stricken by illness and turned over real political power to his deputy, Saddam Hussein. Hussein quickly made himself commander of the armed forces (1976); installed relatives and loyal protégés in key security, intelligence, and government positions; and began to treat the cabinet and party institutions as rubber stamps. See Mark Lewis, "Historical Setting," in *Iraq: A Country Study*, ed. Helen Metz (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1988), 59.

forms of authoritarian governance and instead subcategorize autocracies as civilian, military, and, in some cases, monarchic.<sup>319</sup> Moreover, in operationalizing and coding regimes, Geddes et al. break from common practice and take into account not only formal but also informal institutions, thus capturing the identity characteristics (and, hence, interests) of leadership groups.<sup>320</sup> This data feature is conceptually important, because much of the theory offered in the previous chapter emphasizes the role of such characteristics in the relationship between oil income, personalism, and conflict initiation.

#### **4.3.2 *Superpower penetration***

Measuring superpower penetration in regional subsystems presents various challenges. One obvious difficulty stems from the myriad of ways in which penetration could manifest itself. A superpower can influence regional security relations by establishing troop presence on the territory of regional clients, providing those clients with arms and military equipment, or even engaging directly in combat operations against local actors, either on its own behalf or that of a protégé. But penetration could also assume more subtle, though still important, forms, such as intelligence sharing, electronic warfare support, political and economic backing, participation in operational planning, or the provision of military training and advising services. Clearly, all of these intrusive inputs could be of varying scale and overtness—and, hence, more or less difficult to observe—

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<sup>319</sup> For examples of popular datasets in this category, see José Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Democracy and dictatorship revisited," *Public Choice* 143 (2010): 67–101; and Arthur S. Banks, *Cross-national Time-Series Data Archive* (Jerusalem: Databanks International, 2007), <http://www.cntsdata.com/>.

<sup>320</sup> Highlighting the importance of informal institutions, identities, and interests, Geddes et al. ("Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions") write that regimes are "basic formal and informal rules that determine what interests are represented in the authoritarian leadership group....[t]hese interests in turn influence the dictatorship's policy choices" (314).

and many are not susceptible to quantitative measurement.<sup>321</sup> Even those prone to quantification are of limited use, because no systematic, quality data on most of them exist, and the collection of such data, if at all possible, would be a daunting task that is beyond the scope of this investigation.<sup>322</sup> While penetration has been discussed in previous research on regional security, this has been done as part of case study work, in the context of specific regions.<sup>323</sup>

To overcome these challenges, the present analysis adopts two indirect ways to measure superpower penetration. The first reflects the strong view of penetration (see section 3.2.2) and relies on Lemke's determinations of great power interference in minor power regions.<sup>324</sup> These determinations, which are similar to those used to draw regional boundaries but relax the requirement for mutual reachability, are based on calculations about a state's ability, or lack thereof, to "overcome the tyranny of distance" and move more than 50 percent of its power to a local subsystem.<sup>325</sup> Using Lemke's reporting, a dichotomous independent variable was constructed to capture, for each country-year, whether or not a petrostate was located in a region with bipolar superpower penetration. As predicted by hypothesis 2, such petrostate residence is likely to increase the chances

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<sup>321</sup> As noted by Lemke (*Regions of War and Peace*), "data quality varies dramatically from great power to great power (some being better able, or more motivated, to hide their [regional] interference) as well as from region to region" (147).

<sup>322</sup> David Lake's efforts to collect data on great power military personnel stationed in subordinate states (an indicator of what he calls "security hierarchy") are illustrative of such data-collection difficulties. While Lake manages to compile troop figures for the United States, he identifies gaps and discrepancies in existing data sources and notes that similar data for other countries are not available; see Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>323</sup> See, for example, case studies in Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*; and Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders*.

<sup>324</sup> See Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, especially chapter 6. The author is grateful to Professor Lemke for his sharing of data and responding to questions.

<sup>325</sup> See *ibid.*, 147–148.

for petroaggression. Coding for this binary covariate was based on the information presented in table 4-3. For example, the table shows that, for the 1971–89 period, penetration in the Northern Rim of the Middle East is best characterized as bipolar, because both the United States and the Soviet Union had the ability to move a significant portion of their military resources to that subsystem. By contrast, for the same period, penetration in the South Atlantic Coast of Sub-Saharan Africa is best characterized as unipolar, because the Soviet Union had limited ability to project power there. By theoretical construction, bipolar superpower penetration is possible only during the period of global bipolarity; in a unipolar global system, penetration is the prerogative of only one superpower.<sup>326</sup>

**Table 4-3. Superpower penetration, by petrostate region**

| Region   | Penetration                  |                 |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|
|  | 1971–89                      | 1990–2001       |
| Arabian Peninsula  | Unipolar (U.S.)              | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| Northern Rim   | Bipolar (U.S., Soviet Union) | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| Maghreb  | Bipolar (U.S., Soviet Union) | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| Gulf of Guinea   | Bipolar (U.S., Soviet Union) | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| South Atlantic Coast   | Unipolar (U.S.)              | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| Northern Tier  | Bipolar (U.S., Soviet Union) | Unipolar (U.S.) |
| Note: Superpower penetration is derived from interference determinations reported in Lemke, <i>Regions of War and Peace</i> , 148–151. |                              |                 |

<sup>326</sup> Because Lemke's calculations are limited to the Cold War period, determinations for U.S. penetration for 1990–2001 represent extrapolations. Since U.S. military power has not contracted post 1990, there is no reason to suspect that the United States has experienced any decline in its ability to transport military resources to previously reachable petrostate regions. Indeed, as noted by Russett and Oneal (*Triangulating Peace*, 186), the share of U.S. power (among major powers) increased sharply after the end of the Cold War, reaching 29 percent in 1992.

The second approach to measuring superpower penetration was informed by the penetration-through-invitation theoretical perspective presented in section 3.2.2. Because this perspective suggests that penetration is mediated (made more or less likely) by local power structures, the approach required the measurement of regional polarity. Absent previous quantitative efforts in this direction, polarity was obtained with the use of a simple procedure for calculating annual power differentials among all states residing in a petrostate region.<sup>327</sup> If, in a given year, the strongest state in a region was found to be at least 50 percent stronger than the next strongest state, the region was identified as unipolar in that year.<sup>328</sup> If that condition was not met, the same comparison was repeated for the second and third strongest states, and so on, to determine whether the region was bipolar or multipolar. Once these determinations were made, the two-by-two matrix presented in table 3-1 was consulted to identify regions with expected bipolar superpower penetration. This information was then used to code, on a country-year basis, an indicator variable capturing whether or not a petrostate fell within a region of that type. The coding was implemented for both Lemke's and Buzan and Waever's regions identified earlier.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> It is common practice for scholars to identify polarity of regional subsystems on the basis of expert judgment, without offering much in the way of objective criteria for such identification. Buzan and Waever (*Regions and Powers*), for example, state that "polarity is defined wholly by regional powers" and, without further ado, identify South Asia as bipolar, the Middle East as multipolar, and so on (55). The purpose of the procedure adopted here is to make such determinations quantitative and more objective.

<sup>328</sup> These calculations were performed with the use of annual figures for GDP, whose correlation with the COW Project composite capability index is greater than 0.9.

<sup>329</sup> Because models using a penetration measure based on Buzan and Waever's regions produced results very similar to those using Lemke's regional classification, they are not reported in regression tables.

#### 4.4 Control variables

Given the complexity of international politics, it would be surprising if a petrostate's decision to initiate conflict is influenced only by personalist institutions and superpower penetration. To account for the effects of other potentially important factors, the statistical analysis includes a series of control variables. Realists have argued that wealthier and more populous states have a greater ability to engage in conflict.<sup>330</sup> To address this concern, the analysis employs two logged measures—population size and GDP per capita—as proxies for such ability.<sup>331</sup> In addition, adherents to Kantian liberalism have asserted that trade openness and economic interdependence make states more pacific, both by increasing their vulnerability to commercial disruption and by triggering Deutschian processes of transnational socialization.<sup>332</sup> Since some evidence for this claim has been provided in monadic context,<sup>333</sup> the analysis includes a variable for trade openness constructed as the ratio of a country's total trade (exports plus imports) to GDP.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> In expounding on offensive realism, for example, Mearsheimer (*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*) writes that population and wealth "are the main building blocks of military power" (43).

<sup>331</sup> Population data are from the COW Project database, and GDP per capita data are from Colgan, *Petro-Aggression* (<https://sites.google.com/site/jeffdcogan/data>). Colgan's measure is based on Penn World Tables data used by Fearon and Laitin ("Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War") and, for missing values, on information from the World Bank's World Development Indicators.

<sup>332</sup> Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, 129–130. See also Erik Gartzke and Quan Li, "War, Peace, and the Invisible Hand: Positive Political Externalities of Economic Globalization," *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 561–586; Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace"; and Margit Bussmann, "Foreign Direct Investment and Militarized International Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 143–153.

<sup>333</sup> See Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*; and Mark Souva and Brandon Prins, "The Liberal Peace Revisited: The Role of Democracy, Dependency, and Development in Militarized Dispute Initiation, 1950–1999," *International Interactions* 32, no. 2 (2006): 183–200.

<sup>334</sup> Data for this measure are from Strüver and Wegenast, "The Hard Power of Natural Resources."

Besides these standard controls, two additional variables, often sidelined in extant research, are included. The first is a binary measure indicating whether or not a petrostate was a challenger in a territorial dispute in a given year.<sup>335</sup> Territorial disputes, which involve a "disagreement between states over where their common homeland or colonial borders should be fixed,"<sup>336</sup> have long been singled out as a potent driver of crises and wars—purportedly even more potent than other common sources of interstate contention, such as economics or ideology.<sup>337</sup> They have also been a persistent feature of the political landscapes of Africa, the Middle East, and South America, all areas with a high concentration of petrostates.<sup>338</sup> Instead of accounting for territorial disputes, monadic tests in conflict research have typically controlled for the number of contiguous borders a state has with other states. However, it is not clear whether any observed correlation between this measure and conflict is due to a simple border count (a proxy for interaction opportunity) or the fact that a number of shared borders are disputed.<sup>339</sup>

The statistical analysis also controls for civil war, using an indicator variable that equals 1 for each country-year marred by an ongoing civil war and 0 otherwise.<sup>340</sup> As reported

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<sup>335</sup> Data for this measure are from Paul Huth's Territorial Disputes dataset and obtained directly from the author.

<sup>336</sup> Paul Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 19.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 9. For a recent overview of the key arguments and findings in the literature on territorial conflict, see Dominic D. P. Johnson and Monica Duffy Toft, "Grounds for War: The Evolution of Territorial Conflict," *International Security* 38, no. 3 (2014): 7–38.

<sup>338</sup> Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, chapter 3.

<sup>339</sup> The author owes this insight to feedback received from Professor Huth during discussions for this work.

<sup>340</sup> The civil war variable is from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). (See Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand, "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 5 (2002): 615–637.) The regressions were also run with two alternative measures of civil war: the "civwar" variable from the Center for Systemic Peace (<http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>) and the "war" variable (ongoing civil war in country year)

in chapter 2, previous research has suggested that internal political turmoil can increase the likelihood of conflict initiation through processes of externalization and spillover. While this variable is often excluded from statistical tests, it is potentially important, because a number of empirical studies concerned with the domestic political manifestations of the resource curse have shown that, contra scarcity arguments, oil richness (and resource abundance more generally) is positively and significantly associated with domestic violence.<sup>341</sup> It should be noted, however, that civil war could reduce a state's external belligerence by weakening its coercive apparatus and by shifting its leaders' attention to domestic affairs. Therefore, while the need to control for civil war is present, the effect of that variable on dispute initiation is theoretically ambiguous.

Lastly, all statistical tests account for temporal dependence in the time series. The problem with temporal dependence arises because the occurrence of conflict in one year may not be independent of the occurrence of conflict in previous years; in such cases, statistical assumptions about temporal independence of conflict observations would be violated.<sup>342</sup> To control for this possibility, all regression estimations include a control

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from Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War"

(<https://web.stanford.edu/group/ethnic/publicdata/publicdata.html>). The use of these variables indicated even stronger effects of personalism and penetration. It also suggested significant effects of civil war on petrostate conflict initiation, a result not obtained in regressions using the PRIO measure.

<sup>341</sup> These findings are typically justified with the argument that resources increase the value of the state as a target of rebel groups and provide those groups with a source of financing. For a review and critique of various claims advanced in the relevant literature, see Ross, "A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War."

<sup>342</sup> Nathaniel Beck, Jonathan N. Katz, and Richard Tucker, "Taking Time Seriously: Time-Series-Cross-Section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable," *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (1998): 1260–1288.



variable (with cubic splines) representing the number of years that have passed since the last militarized dispute.<sup>343</sup>

## 4.5 Results

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are tested using a negative binomial regression. This method was chosen because the dependent variable in both hypotheses is a count measure of the number of petrostate dispute initiations in a given year. While Poisson regression is an alternative method for analyzing causal relationships with count outcomes, it does not correct for overdispersion in the dependent variable, and signs of such overdispersion are present in the data.<sup>344</sup> The equation of the principal negative binomial model to be tested takes the form

$$\begin{aligned} \log(\text{MID count}_i) = & b_0 + b_1(\text{personalist regime}_{1i}) + b_2(\text{superpower penetration}_{2i}) + \\ & b_3(\text{territorial dispute challenger}_{3i}) + b_4(\text{trade openness}_{4i}) + b_5(\text{population}_{5i}) + \\ & b_6(\text{GDP per capita}_{6i}) + b_7(\text{civil war}_{7i}) + b_8(\text{peace years}_{8i}) + e_i, \end{aligned}$$

where  $b_0$  is the constant,  $b_1$  through  $b_7$  are the estimated coefficients, right-hand-side parenthetical covariates are the predictors described earlier, and  $e_i$  is the error term.

Table 4-4 shows the effects of the independent variables on petrostate dispute initiation. Model 1 includes only the control covariates, providing some expected and some unexpected results. Both the population and GDP variables have positive and highly

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<sup>343</sup> This variable, along with its cubic splines (with three knots), is included in all models but not reported in regression tables.

<sup>344</sup> Summary statistics indicate that the variance of the dependent variable is greater than the mean, and such difference violates Poisson assumptions about mean–variance equality. Negative binomial models add a parameter that accounts for overdispersion.

significant coefficients, lending support to realist claims that states with greater capacity to initiate conflict are indeed more likely to do so. The estimates for other controls, however, defy expectations. The signs of the territorial dispute and trade openness coefficients are the opposite of what one might expect, although the coefficient for territorial disputes is not significant and that for trade openness barely rises to significance (and drops from significance in subsequent models).<sup>345</sup> While the coefficient for civil war is positive, consistent with arguments claiming a linkage between domestic conflict and dispute initiation, it does not reach significance. As noted earlier, it may be that governments of petrostates embroiled in civil war have reasons to shift their attention and resources to dealing with domestic political troubles and to temper their aggressive designs.<sup>346</sup>

Models 2 and 3 introduce the two key independent variables: personalism and superpower penetration. Because the analysis uses two alternative measures of penetration, model 3 is estimated twice—once with the "penetration imposed" measure (model 3.1) and once with the "penetration invited" measure (model 3.2). Adding the covariate for personlism (model 2) provides support for hypothesis 1. The variable's coefficient is both positive and highly significant, indicating that personalist petrostates initiate disputes at higher rates than nonpersonalist petrostates. This result is unchanged in model 3, which adds the two covariates for superpower penetration. Consistent with

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<sup>345</sup> Replacing the territorial dispute variable with a control for border counts and rerunning the models produces similar results.

<sup>346</sup> As noted earlier, however, the significance of the civil war variable depends on the data source used. Models run with data from the Center for Systemic Peace and Fearon and Laitin ("Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War") indicate significant impacts of civil war. The effects of other predictors in these models remain materially unchanged, except for the indicator for single-party regimes, which drops from significance in models breaking up the nonpersonalist category.

theory, the coefficients of these predictors move in the expected direction and are both significant, suggesting that petrostates in regions with bipolar penetration are more conflict prone than petrostates in regions with unipolar or no penetration. It is noteworthy that the effect of penetration is present regardless of how penetration is measured, increasing confidence in the results. The estimates obtained for the control variables are in line with those reported for model 1. While the measure for trade openness changes sign in model 3, it is not significant.

**Table 4-4. Negative binomial regression analysis of petrostate dispute initiation, any MID**

| Variable                          | (1)<br>Control<br>variables | (2)<br>Plus<br>personalist<br>regime | (3)<br>Plus superpower penetration |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                   |                             |                                      | (3.1)<br>Penetration<br>imposed    | (3.2)<br>Penetration<br>invited |
| Personalist regime                | —                           | 1.398***<br>(.288)                   | 1.142***<br>(.285)                 | 1.204***<br>(.273)              |
| Penetration imposed               | —                           | —                                    | .714***<br>(.223)                  | —                               |
| Penetration invited               | —                           | —                                    | —                                  | .851***<br>(.208)               |
| Territorial dispute<br>challenger | -0.280<br>(.222)            | -.443*<br>(.216)                     | -.345<br>(.211)                    | -.353<br>(.207)                 |
| Trade openness                    | .009*<br>(.004)             | .0001<br>(.004)                      | -.002<br>(.004)                    | -.002<br>(.004)                 |
| Population (log)                  | .817***<br>(.113)           | .843***<br>(.115)                    | .738***<br>(.118)                  | .779***<br>(.113)               |
| GDP per capita<br>(log)           | .467**<br>(.162)            | .610***<br>(.202)                    | .590***<br>(.170)                  | .625***<br>(.166)               |
| Civil war                         | .091<br>(.408)              | .255<br>(.406)                       | .271<br>(.409)                     | .091<br>(.397)                  |
| Constant                          | -12.142***<br>(2.172)       | -13.585***<br>(2.252)                | -12.742***<br>(2.286)              | -13.473***<br>(2.207)           |
| N                                 | 465                         | 465                                  | 465                                | 465                             |

|   |          |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Log-likelihood  | -327.675 | -315.797 | -311.031 | -308.165 |
| <p>*<math>p &lt; .05</math>; **<math>p &lt; .01</math>; ***<math>p &lt; .001</math></p> <p>Note: Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. All models include a temporal control (not shown) with cubic splines with three knots. All models are significant at <math>p &lt; .0001</math>.</p> |          |          |          |          |

The results reported in table 4-4 lend credence to hypotheses 1 and 2, indicating that personalism and bipolar penetration have independent effects on petroaggression. But do they hold when the dependent variable is restricted to disputes exhibiting higher levels of hostility? It is possible that personalist leaders are all talk and no action, or that, fearing escalation, superpowers penetrating petrostate regions pressure their clients to refrain from more costly forms of military aggression. In both cases, the variational relationships revealed so far may be suppressed. To examine this possibility, the models from table 4-4 are replicated in table 4-5, this time using the dependent variable capturing only the count of dispute initiations involving "use of force" and "war" (see section 4.1.3). As can be seen from the table, the results are similar to those reported earlier. The coefficients on the personalist and penetration variables in model 3 are all positive and highly significant, and the control covariates behave as noted previously. Overall, the estimates in table 4-5 suggest that the hypothesized relationships operate at higher levels of military hostility.

**Table 4-5. Negative binomial regression analysis of petrostate dispute initiation, use-of-force MIDs**

| Variable            | (1)<br>Control<br>variables | (2)<br>Plus<br>personalist<br>regime | (3)<br>Plus superpower penetration |                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                     |                             |                                      | (3.1)<br>Penetration<br>imposed    | (3.2)<br>Penetration<br>invited |
| Personalist regime  | —                           | 1.565***<br>(.352)                   | 1.289***<br>(.347)                 | 1.368***<br>(.332)              |
| Penetration imposed | —                           | —                                    | .843**<br>(.271)                   | —                               |

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Penetration invited   | —                     | —                     | —                     | 1.026***<br>(.256)    |
| Territorial dispute challenger  | -.252<br>(.277)       | -.511<br>(.269)       | -.404<br>(.259)       | .677<br>(.540)        |
| Trade openness  | .010*<br>(.005)       | -.0003<br>(.005)      | -.002<br>(.005)       | -.415<br>(.100)       |
| Population (log)  | .965***<br>(.147)     | 1.002***<br>(.150)    | .883***<br>(.152)     | .924***<br>(.144)     |
| GDP per capita (log)  | .311<br>(.202)        | .454*<br>(.204)       | .430*<br>(.206)       | .466*<br>(.199)       |
| Civil war   | .255<br>(.480)        | .483<br>(.478)        | .532<br>(.482)        | .302<br>(.458)        |
| Constant  | -12.579***<br>(2.667) | -14.121***<br>(2.736) | -13.192***<br>(2.765) | -13.958***<br>(2.646) |
| N   | 465                   | 465                   | 465                   | 465                   |
| Log-likelihood  | -260.760              | -250.879              | -246.449              | -243.662              |
| <p>*<math>p &lt; .05</math>; **<math>p &lt; .01</math>; ***<math>p &lt; .001</math></p> <p>Note: Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. All models include a temporal control (not shown) with cubic splines with three knots. All models are significant at <math>p &lt; .0001</math>.</p> |                       |                       |                       |                       |

Although the results presented in tables 4-4 and 4-5 are in line with the theoretical arguments developed in chapter 3, it is useful to examine the substantive effects of the principal independent variables. Table 4-6 reports incidence rate ratios (IRRs) for the personalist and penetration covariates, using model 3 from tables 4-4 and 4-5 as a base. These estimates, which are the exponentiated regression coefficients from the model equation, reveal sizable and significant impacts on petrostate conflict initiation. Depending on how penetration is measured (model 3.1 or model 3.2), personalist petrostates exhibit odds of dispute initiation (of any type) that are 3.1–3.3 times those of nonpersonalist petrostates. Likewise, petrostates located in regions with bipolar penetration have odds that are 2.0–2.3 times those of petrostates with no such residence.

Restricting the analysis to use-of-force disputes (bottom panel of table 4-6) produces similar results.

**Table 4-6. Substantive effects: incidence rate ratios (IRRs) of principal predictors (model 3), any MID and use-of-force MIDs**

| Variable  | IRR                 |                     |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
|   | Model 3.1           | Model 3.2           |
| <b>Any MID</b>  |                     |                     |
| Personalist regime  | 3.133***<br>(.893)  | 3.333***<br>(.910)  |
| Penetration imposed   | 2.043***<br>(.457)  | —                   |
| Penetration invited   | —                   | 2.342***<br>(.488)  |
| <b>Use-of-force MIDs</b>  |                     |                     |
| Personalist regime  | 3.628***<br>(1.257) | 3.928***<br>(1.302) |
| Penetration imposed   | 2.324**<br>(.631)   | —                   |
| Penetration invited   | —                   | 2.791***<br>(.713)  |
| ** $p < .01$ ; *** $p < .001$<br>Note: IRRs are based on models 3.1 and 3.2 in table 4-4 (any MID) and table 4-5 (use-of-force MIDs). |                     |                     |

To add further intuition to the substantive interpretation of regression estimates, table 4-7 reports the marginal impacts of the principal predictors while holding all other covariates at their means. These impacts reflect the increase in the number of dispute initiations when a predictor experiences a change in value. As shown in the table (top panel, any MID), moving from value 1 to value 2 on the personalist variable (i.e., moving from a nonpersonalist petrostate to a personalist petrostate) leads to an increase of 0.311 in the average number of annual dispute initiations. To put this figure into perspective, it

represents a 71.8-percent rise from the mean number of dispute initiations (0.433). A similar examination for superpower penetration reveals that moving from value 1 (unipolar or no penetration) to value 2 (bipolar penetration) on that variable results in an increase of 0.137 (model 3.1) or 0.167 (model 3.2) in the number of dispute initiations. Thus, depending on how penetration is measured, these figures represent, respectively, a 31.6-percent rise and a 38.6-percent rise from the mean number of initiations.

Notable substantive impacts are also evident in the estimates for use-of-force disputes (bottom panel of table 4-7). Although these estimates are smaller than those for the all-inclusive dependent variable, they are still considerable given that the mean number of use-of-force disputes is also smaller (0.339). Thus, a value change in, say, the personalist covariate corresponds to an increase of 0.185 in the number of use-of-force dispute initiations—a 54.6-rise from the mean number of such initiations. Over a 10-year period, a petrostate led by a personalist regime would initiate roughly two more use-of-force disputes than a petrostate with no such leadership.

**Table 4-7. Marginal effects of principal predictors on the incidence of petrostate dispute initiation (model 3), any MID and use-of-force MIDs**

| Variable            | Value 1 | Value 2 | Change in number of MID initiations moving from value 1 to value 2 of the independent variable |           |
|---------------------|---------|---------|--|-----------|
|                     |         |         | Model 3.1  | Model 3.2 |
| Any MID             |         |         |  |           |
| Personalist regime  | 0       | 1       | 0.311  | 0.341     |
| Penetration imposed | 0       | 1       | 0.137  | —         |
| Penetration invited | 0       | 1       | —  | 0.168     |
| Use-of-force MIDs   |         |         |  |           |

|   |   |   |       |       |
|---|---|---|-------|-------|
| Personalist regime  | 0 | 1 | 0.185 | 0.211 |
| Penetration imposed   | 0 | 1 | 0.083 | —     |
| Penetration invited   | 0 | 1 | —     | 0.107 |
| Note: Change in the number of MIDs is obtained by subtracting the predicted number of MID initiations for value 1 of a given covariate from the predicted number of MID initiations for value 2 of that covariate. Calculations are performed by holding all other predictors at their means. Estimates are based on models 3.1 and 3.2 in table 4-4 (any MID) and table 4-5 (use-of-force MIDs). |   |   |       |       |

Lastly, to add nuance to the analysis, table 4-8 shows results from a negative binomial model including a breakdown of the nonpersonalist category. Unlike previous models, this breakdown presents regime estimates in relation to democracy, the excluded (reference) group. In line with expectations, the table indicates that personalist petrostates initiate disputes at significantly higher rates than democratic petrostates—a result holding for both variants of the count dependent variable. Exponentiating the regression coefficients of the personalist covariate also indicates that the difference is sizable across model specifications: the odds of personalist petrostates initiating disputes are about 5 times those of their democratic counterparts, all else equal. The coefficient for party-based autocratic petrostates is also significant, but of smaller magnitude. Perhaps surprisingly, neither military nor monarchic petrostates exhibit odds of dispute initiation different from those of democratic petrostates. The result for military regimes is of special note, because it runs counter to arguments alleging an offensive bias among military elites. A further look into the identity of these elites and their foreign policy behavior in conditions of oil dependence is thus warranted.

The estimates for other covariates are consistent with those presented earlier. The coefficients for superpower penetration are positive and significant, and their magnitude



is similar to that noted for previous models. The control variables also perform as described earlier.

**Table 4-8. Negative binomial regression analysis of petrostate dispute initiation, with nonpersonalist regime breakdown referenced to democracy**

| Variable                       | Any MID               |                       | Use-of-force MID      |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                | Penetration imposed   | Penetration invited   | Penetration imposed   | Penetration invited   |
| Personalist                    | 1.706***<br>(.381)    | 1.742***<br>(.365)    | 1.657***<br>(.448)    | 1.676***<br>(.440)    |
| Party                          | 1.329***<br>(.419)    | 1.212**<br>(.353)     | 1.190*<br>(.516)      | 1.042*<br>(.515)      |
| Military                       | -.573<br>(.585)       | -.343<br>(.594)       | -1.086<br>(.724)      | -0.848<br>(.727)      |
| Monarchy                       | .405<br>(.399)        | .357<br>(.391)        | .037<br>(.486)        | -.017<br>(.477)       |
| Penetration imposed            | .648**<br>(.236)      | —                     | .697*<br>(.282)       | —                     |
| Penetration invited            | —                     | .671**<br>(.228)      | —                     | .758**<br>(.276)      |
| Territorial dispute challenger | .311<br>(.273)        | .216<br>(.271)        | .333<br>(.350)        | 0.220<br>(.347)       |
| Trade openness                 | -.001<br>(.004)       | -.001<br>(.004)       | -.002<br>(.005)       | -.002<br>(.005)       |
| Population (log)               | .710***<br>(.118)     | .756***<br>(.113)     | .851***<br>(.155)     | .897***<br>(.149)     |
| GDP per capita (log)           | .578**<br>(.198)      | .643***<br>(.197)     | .425<br>(.237)        | .484*<br>(.233)       |
| Civil war                      | .093<br>(.401)        | -.013<br>(.394)       | .325<br>(.462)        | .200<br>(.450)        |
| Constant                       | -13.345***<br>(2.326) | -14.234***<br>(2.278) | -13.640***<br>(2.753) | -14.459***<br>(2.670) |
| N                              | 465                   | 465                   | 465                   | 465                   |
| Log-likelihood                 | -302.443              | -301.948              | -239.268              | -238.638              |

$*p < .05$ ;  $**p < .01$ ;  $***p < .001$

Note: Democracy is the reference (base) category. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. All models include a temporal control (not shown) with cubic splines with three knots. All models are significant at  $p < .0001$ .

Overall, the statistical results obtained from the monadic analysis provide strong support for the variational propositions advanced in hypotheses 1 and 2. Irrespective of model specification, the regression coefficients of the key predictors behave as expected, are significant, and reveal sizable substantive impacts on petrostate conflict initiation.

Personalist petrostates in the sample are overwhelmingly more conflict prone than nonpersonalist petrostates, a result consistent with some recent reporting in the broader literature on personalism and dispute initiation. Likewise, petrostates conducting foreign policy in regional environments characterized by bipolar superpower penetration appear to initiate conflict at elevated rates. Given that this result persists for two alternative measures of penetration (and two different regional classifications), confidence in its empirical validity is relatively high. Future research should verify and refine these preliminary findings with the use of other measurement techniques and alternative statistical methods.

## 5 Case study analysis: Libya (1969–2005)

Using a detailed case study, this chapter provides an additional test of hypothesis 2, illustrating its underlying causal mechanisms. One advantage of the case study method over statistical testing is its focus on explanation rather than simple confirmation. As pointed out by Stephen Van Evera, "Overall, large-*n* methods tell us more about whether hypotheses hold than why they hold. Case studies say more about why they hold."<sup>347</sup> Even scholars skeptical of the use of case studies as a basis for drawing valid causal inferences have recognized that such studies can result in "more focused and relevant description" during theory testing and should be viewed as complementary to, rather than competitive with, quantitative approaches.<sup>348</sup> This advantage is particularly relevant in the case of hypothesis 2. In proposing that petrostate conflict behavior is influenced by structural bounds engendered by superpower penetration in regional security systems, this hypothesis suggests causal processes of petrostate–superpower interaction (see sections 3.2.2 and 3.3) that naturally call for a more descriptive approach to testing.

Another advantage of the case study method, and one that makes it suitable for assessing hypothesis 2, is its avoidance of measurement limitations intrinsic to statistical analysis.<sup>349</sup> The complexity of international politics presents considerable challenges to the operationalization and measurement of complex concepts, and research on resource conflict is not immune to these types of methodological problems. There is much controversy, for instance, about the way scholars measure even basic variables, such as

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<sup>347</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 55.

<sup>348</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 45.

<sup>349</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of these issues, see Mearsheimer and Walt, "Leaving theory behind."

oil scarcity and abundance. The quantitative handling of more abstract concepts, such as superpower penetration or petroaggression, presents even bigger challenges. The case study method allows for a more nuanced and flexible treatment of such concepts. For example, in examining penetration, one can focus not only on quantitative indicators but also on more subtle aspects of superpower interference in regional security affairs (see section 4.1.3). Likewise, in uncovering instances of petroaggression, one can look at a broader set of petrostate hostile behaviors (e.g., subversive activities in other states, support for international terrorism), extending the concept of conflict beyond militarized disputes.<sup>350</sup>

Given these insights, the empirical approach adopted here combines congruence and process-tracing methods of analysis,<sup>351</sup> where case selection is made with the aim of reasonably illustrating the hypothesized relationships. This type of selection has two notable advantages.<sup>352</sup> On the one hand, by focusing on specific combinations of independent and dependent variables, it emphasizes the importance of the causal process. To that end, Gary Goertz has argued that the approach is not what some call selection on the dependent variable, but rather an attempt to "see the causal mechanism in action."<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> This flexibility is an advantage, not a drawback. Data-quality problems plague even the most widely used datasets on interstate conflict, namely, the MID dataset and the International Crisis Behavior dataset. For example, Mearsheimer and Walt (see *ibid.*, 441) have laid bare significant data problems in these datasets, such as the inclusion of "crises where no explicit threats were made" or "threatening actions unauthorized by national leaders."

<sup>351</sup> In process tracing, "the investigator explores the chain of events of the decision-making process by which initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes"; see Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 64.

<sup>352</sup> See Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2004).

<sup>353</sup> Gary Goertz, "Case Studies, Causal Mechanisms, and Selecting Cases" (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, August 2012), 13. See also Goertz, "Multimethod Research," *Security Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 3–24.

On the other hand, this type of selection is particularly valuable when the causal mechanism suggests a "sequence of events for more than one value of the independent variable."<sup>354</sup> Hypothesis 2 is a prime candidate for such exploratory exercise. It allows one to examine the temporal connection between different foreign policy options contemplated by a petrostate (e.g., initiate conflict or stay put), the mediating influence of penetrating superpowers (given prevailing structural conditions), and resulting conflict outcomes.

Consistent with this approach, the case selected for study is Libya from 1969 to 2005. Three main criteria are imposed on case study selection: oil availability, uniformity in regime type (and leadership), and variation on the penetration (independent) and conflict (dependent) variables that underpin hypothesis 2. Focusing on a state with substantial oil wealth is important, because it eliminates ambiguity with respect to petrostate status. As noted in section 4.1.1, there is an ongoing debate about the advantages and disadvantages of using alternative measures of oil availability in ascertaining such status. In the case of Libya, however, the question is unambiguous: the state has consistently ranked in the top echelon of countries with large oil reserves and production,<sup>355</sup> and its oil exports revenues unequivocally put it in the petrostate category for the entire study period (see table 4-1). Further, choosing a state with substantial oil endowments is theoretically advantageous,

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<sup>354</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1173.

<sup>355</sup> See, for example, *BP Statistical Review of World Energy—underpinning data, 1965–2016* (British Petroleum, amended June 23, 2017), <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy/downloads.html>.

because it highlights both that state's strategic and economic importance to superpowers and its ability to finance a military buildup.

The second criterion for case selection—uniformity in regime type—is a methodological necessity. If regime type were to vary, one would be unable to determine whether conflict outcomes were causally influenced by that variation or by superpower penetration. By keeping regime type constant—that is, by controlling for it—one could eliminate its potentially confounding influence. Indeed, Libya is a perfect case allowing for this type of controlling procedure. It not only maintained a personalist regime type throughout the period of analysis, but also had the same ruler at the helm of power.<sup>356</sup> Qaddafi, the longest serving leader in the Arab world, sustained his despotic control over Libya for a total of 42 consecutive years (1969–2011) and was the sole decider of the country's foreign policy over that period. It should also be stressed that the within-case character of the proposed analysis provides a natural control for other, unobserved variables. This control mechanism is made possible by the "uniform background conditions of the case,"<sup>357</sup> such as culture and historical experience.

Selecting a case with variation on the independent and dependent variables (third criterion) adds another methodological benefit by allowing for both longitudinal (congruence) analysis and process tracing. During the period of interest, Libya fell in a region that saw a marked shift in superpower penetration (resulting from a global structural change in 1989) and, thus, changing structural conditions. Moreover, as discussed in greater detail later in the chapter, it exhibited a significant shift in its conflict

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<sup>356</sup> In principle, a single autocratic regime could have multiple autocratic rulers. See Geddes et al., "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions," 316.

<sup>357</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 52.

behavior over time. These variations permit a congruence testing procedure, whereby the goal is to check for congruence (or incongruence) between the predicted and observed values of the independent and dependent variables.<sup>358</sup> In addition, this type of analysis allows for revealing the "causal chains" by which the independent variable causes the dependent variable—the paramount advantage of the case study method. Hypothesis 2 suggests that bipolar penetration would give rise to phenomena such as militarization and realignment (double option), elevating the prospect for petroaggression. Therefore, a process-tracing approach to testing would seek evidence for such phenomena, ascertaining their presence in the "sequence and structure of [historical] events."<sup>359</sup>

Lastly, it is worth noting that the petrostate selected for study is a difficult case for the theory. Qualitative methodologists have insisted that researchers should choose cases that are more likely to falsify the argument being assessed, and Libya presents one such case. Qaddafi is frequently described as one of the most unruly and unpredictable personalist leaders in modern history. If this description is any close to the truth, it would suggest Libyan external behavior that is less responsive to structural conditions and superpower influence. Therefore, if one is able to demonstrate that these conditions and influence had, in fact, a systematic impact on Libyan foreign policy, such demonstration would constitute a strong test for the theory.

## **5.1 General patterns**

Qaddafi's Libya is a textbook example of a petrostate with notoriously aggressive foreign policy. Its belligerent behaviors, fueled by oil income, spanned a wide range of activities,

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 65.

including diplomatic coercion, financial and military support for rebel groups (or incumbent governments), involvement in international terrorism, and direct military engagements with other states. Many of these activities also appear to have conformed to a pattern of tactical escalation, whereby diplomatic efforts aiming to establish Libyan influence in a foreign country were followed by more nefarious subversive actions and, in some cases, outright military intervention.<sup>360</sup> Under Qaddafi's leadership, Libya ventured into a series of costly and lengthy conflicts with its southern neighbor, Chad, and a brief war with Egypt in the east. Its military also intervened on the side of Idi Amin in Uganda and even provoked minor incidents with U.S. naval forces in the Gulf of Sirte. Besides these engagements, Libya sponsored or took part in numerous coup attempts, national liberation movements, assassination plots, and acts of terrorism.

In trying to explain these behaviors, scholars have typically delved into the internal politics of the Libyan state, in particular its autocratic character and the psychological traits and ideological convictions of its leader. Alison Pargeter, for example, has highlighted Qaddafi's outsized international ambitions as the main driver of his external revisionism, writing that "Libya was always going to be too small for Qaddafi," who sought to conduct foreign policy that "befitted a leader of world class calibre."<sup>361</sup> Others, such as Ronald Bruce St John and René Lemarchand, have seen ideology as the linchpin of Libyan foreign exploits, emphasizing Qaddafi's deep, and allegedly stable, beliefs in

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<sup>360</sup> René Lemarchand, "Beyond the Mad Dog Syndrome," in *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, ed. Lemarchand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 8.

<sup>361</sup> Alison Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 118.



anti-imperialism and Arab nationalism.<sup>362</sup> The autocratic, personalist character of Libyan domestic politics has also been put forth as a powerful force in foreign policy formation and conduct, with George Joffe observing that "the neo-patrimonial system dominated by Qaddafi" enabled him to execute "radical alterations, even reversals, of Libyan foreign policy without exciting resistance within its institutions."<sup>363</sup>

Many of these accounts are consistent with the theory laid out in section 3.1: personalist institutions were hypothesized to select leaders with greater desire for international goods and, when coupled with oil income, to impose fewer constraints on their foreign policy. However, these accounts reach a natural limit when it comes to explaining variations in conflict behavior in conditions of uniform regime type and leadership. The number, scope, and intensity of Qaddafi's foreign adventures changed considerably over time, and, as shown below, these changes followed a clear pattern. Explanations emphasizing ideology as the foundation of Libyan foreign policy also face inconvenient paradoxes, such as Qaddafi's support of Ethiopia (predominantly Christian) against Numeiry's Sudan (largely Muslim) or, more strikingly, his backing of Iran (Persian) against Iraq (Arab) through most of the 1980s. Libya's efforts in the 1990s to appease the United States (and its European allies) and to distance itself from the Palestinian question have been a puzzle of its own right, with some observers seeing them as an indication that Qaddafi's "ideological commitments were nothing more than rhetoric."<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> See, for example, Ronald Bruce St John, *Qaddafi's World Design: Libyan Foreign Policy 1969–1987* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 19; and Lemarchand, "Beyond the Mad Dog Syndrome," 3.

<sup>363</sup> George Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah? Foreign Policy in Libya," in *Libya since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*, ed. Dirk Vandewalle (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 201.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 192. See also John P. Entelis, "Libya and Its North African Policy," in *Libya since 1969*, 173.

While these puzzles cannot be explained convincingly with an inward-looking theory, they can be accounted for with the outward-looking one underpinning hypothesis 2. Most students of Libyan foreign policy have either brushed aside or deemphasized the external realities (constraints and opportunities) faced by Qaddafi during his long tenure. If the theory presented in section 3.2 is correct, however, one should expect the structural layer of superpower regional interference to operate strongly over the period of analysis. Specifically, confirmative evidence for the theory would include observations of (1) increasing or high external aggression in conditions of bipolar penetration and (2) decreasing or low external aggression in conditions of unipolar penetration. Table 5-1 provides a high-level overview of the key variables, by period, showing both the expected and observed values of the dependent variable.

**Table 5-1. Mapping of key variables, Libya, 1969–2005**

| Variable                                    | 1969–89                       |                                   | 1990–2005               |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | 1969–73                       | 1974–89                           |                         |
| Superpower penetration                      | Bipolar                       | Bipolar                           | Unipolar                |
| External aggression<br>Expected<br>Observed | High<br>Moderate (increasing) | High<br>High (peaking mid-period) | Low<br>Low (decreasing) |

The table provides support for the theory, suggesting that, rather than being erratic, the foreign policy behavior of Libya was based on strategic opportunism. Most of Qaddafi's hostile activities, being they diplomatic, military, subversive, or terrorism related, were concentrated in the 1969–89 period of bipolar superpower penetration. Within that period, one can also discern two subperiods: a brief initial stretch of about 4 years (1969–73) during which Libya's foreign policy was becoming increasingly revisionist and a

longer, 15-year span (1974–89) of more intense external belligerence. This behavioral evolution is not surprising and, as detailed later, reflects the causal processes expected to operate in conditions of bipolarity, in particular those related to militarization and superpower realignment (see section 3.2.2). In contrast to the 1969–89 period, the post-1989 years saw a sharp decline in Libya's destabilization efforts. In terms of militarized dispute initiation, for example, the country's foreign policy adventurism came to a standstill, with no major dispute initiated after 1989.<sup>365</sup> This reversal is consistent with the prediction that petrostate conflict behavior would respond to the structural constraints imposed by unipolarity.

Given that few lasting changes in international politics occur overnight, the years separating the periods in table 5-1 should not be construed as signifying instantaneous shifts in variable values. Rather, they are demarcation points around which a transitional process spanning a few months to a few years tends to gravitate. For example, Libya's foreign policy became increasingly conflict oriented before the midpoint of the 1970s, and Qaddafi started to temper his aggressive ambitions a year or two before the end of the bipolar period (especially after his 1987 defeat in the Toyota War with Chad). Nonetheless, demarcating the periods is useful both in revealing important causal chains and in guiding the historical narrative.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. The next two sections provide accounts of, respectively, superpower penetration in the Middle East and North Africa (hereafter referred to simply as the Middle East) and salient features of the history of

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<sup>365</sup> Libya initiated 18 militarized disputes between 1969 and 1989 and only 2 disputes between 1990 and 2005. These figures represent a tenfold drop in the average annual number of dispute initiations (from about 1 dispute per year in 1969–89 to about 0.1 dispute per year in 1990–2005).

modern Libya during the rule of King Idris al-Sanusi (1951–69). This discussion provides context for understanding the external environment in which Qaddafi had to formulate and conduct his foreign policy, the hegemonic rivalry and local interests of the superpowers, and the legacy of the Sanusi monarchy in terms of its economic and security relations with those powers. The chapter then proceeds with a section examining, by period, how the implications of the theory underpinning hypothesis 2 played out during Qaddafi's tenure. In unpacking key historical developments, the analysis is guided by questions such as the following: Did the bipolar structural condition of 1969–89 allow Libya to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy agenda, and, if so, how? What did the transition to unipolarity in the late 1980s mean for Libya's strategic choices? Were these structural realities a meaningful influence on conflict patterns or, conversely, a backdrop of no discernible consequence?

## **5.2 Regional penetration**

Libya, a Maghreb country, is part of the larger Middle East, a region extending from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east.<sup>366</sup> While countries in the Horn of Africa, such as Sudan, and in the central lowlands of the Sahara, such as Chad, are typically not counted as part of the region, they are often discussed as "peripheral state actors" closely tied to it, both because of significant security interdependence and because some of them (Sudan,

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<sup>366</sup> The precise boundaries of the Middle East are disputed. Experts on the subject contend that North Africa (the Maghreb), the Levant (the Mashreq), the Gulf (the Khalij), and the non-Arab Israel, Turkey, Iran, and Cyprus are all part of it. See Bassam Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East, 1967–91: Regional Dynamic and the Superpowers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 59; and Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 187.

Somalia, and Djibouti) are members of the Arab League.<sup>367</sup> Although Libya's conflict interactions involved actors both inside and outside the Middle East, it was security dynamics and focal issues of contention found in that region that most strongly influenced the country's foreign policy. Moreover, these issues, among which are Arab nationalism and anti-Zionism, were tied, both dialectically and historically, to the intrusive system and the interests and competitive behaviors of the global powers. Therefore, to provide context for understanding Libya's foreign policy during the period of interest, it is important to shed light on the history and overall patterns of regional great power interference.

During the Cold War, the Middle East was heavily penetrated by the two superpowers and, as pointed out by some observers, became a "secondary external battlefield" after Europe.<sup>368</sup> In the late 1980s, responding to a global structural shift, this bipolar penetration gave way to a unipolar one, with the Soviet Union retracting from its regional involvement and the United States retaining, and even expanding, its own. Unlike Europe, an area subjected to superpower "overlay,"<sup>369</sup> the Middle East saw penetration dominated by informal and entente-like arrangements rather than formal, "hard"

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<sup>367</sup> See Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East*, 59; and Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 188, 231. According to Buzan and Waever (*Regions and Powers*, 232), most of these countries reside in "unstructured" areas (as opposed to coherent security complexes) because of their weakness and "premodern" state of development. It could be argued that the links of those countries to states in the Middle East are stronger than the links to other neighbors.

<sup>368</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 23. See also Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 197; and David J. Pervin, "Building Order in Arab-Israeli Relations: From Balance to Concert?" in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, eds. David Lake and Patrick Morgan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 275.

<sup>369</sup> The difference between overlay and penetration is that, in an overlay, external powers "dominate a region so heavily that the local pattern of security relations ceases to operate" (Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 61).

alliances.<sup>370</sup> In the bipolar period, this condition created more opportunities for realignment, although the division between camps tended to be symmetrical and increasingly stable after the mid-1960s.<sup>371</sup> In penetrating the region, the superpowers adopted a wide range of intrusive techniques, including "soft" defense agreements, stationing of troops and advisors on client soil, arms transfers, military and intelligence support for local protégés, economic and diplomatic backing, and, at times of crisis and high-stakes security developments, direct military intervention (often demonstrative).

### ***5.2.1 Colonial legacies, structural realities, and superpower interests***

Before the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers in the wake of World War II, the Middle East was subjected to two great power rivalries, both fueled by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and gaining momentum in the late 19th century. In the northern (Central Asian) part of the region, Russia and Great Britain competed for control over Iran, Turkestan, the eastern Caucasus, and Afghanistan (a "buffer" country sometimes counted as part of the Middle East).<sup>372</sup> This competition, often referred to as the Great Game, eventually led to the partition of Iran and Afghanistan in the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, with Russia gaining hold of northern Iran.<sup>373</sup> In the rest of the region, including the Maghreb, a second rivalry raged among the colonial powers of the European state system, with Great Britain and France, and to a lesser extent Germany and Italy, emerging as the main contenders for influence in the Mediterranean and Red

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<sup>370</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 43.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>372</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 14.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 15.

Sea areas.<sup>374</sup> By the beginning of World War I, Great Britain had solidified its foothold in the Persian Gulf and Egypt, France in Algeria and Morocco, and Italy in Libya. After the end of the war, Britain and France, both victors posed to divvy up the spoils from the defeated Ottoman Empire, took administrative control over the territories of the Fertile Crescent as part of the postwar mandate system established by the League of Nations.<sup>375</sup>

These regional struggles and arrangements saw little involvement from the United States and, after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, from the newly formed Soviet Union.

During the interwar period, both countries were preoccupied with internal problems.<sup>376</sup>

The United States embarked on a path of international isolation and, in the 1930s, had to battle the economic malaise brought about by the Great Depression. For its part, the Soviet Union, torn by domestic political struggles in the immediate postrevolutionary years, tried to normalize relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan,<sup>377</sup> and later, under Joseph Stalin, suffered through that ruler's brutal policies of power consolidation and agricultural collectivization. As a result, for most of the first half of the 20th century, neither country had its sights set on external expansion.

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 9. See also Remy Leveau, "France's Arab Policy," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 4.

<sup>375</sup> Under the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which initiated the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain was awarded mandates over Iraq and Palestine, and France over Syria and Lebanon.

<sup>376</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 18.

<sup>377</sup> After the 1917 revolution, in a reversal from the Tsarist policy of expansion, the Soviet Union reduced its presence in northern Iran and signed a treaty of friendship with Turkey in 1921. See Alvin Z. Rubenstein, "The Middle East in Russia's Strategic Prism," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 78–79.

This condition was not to last, however. At the end of World War II, the dramatic improvement in the relative power positions of the United States and the Soviet Union, both on the winning side of the conflict, secured them superpower status, transforming the international system from a multipolar to a bipolar one. At the same time, the old great powers of the European continent, severely weakened by the war, reevaluated their external commitments and started a gradual process of decolonization. Partitioned under the designs of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Middle East saw the emergence of new sovereign states, including Israel in 1948,<sup>378</sup> a country whose existence was to have the most lasting impact on Arab politics. Great Britain lost its mandate over Palestine, and France over Syria and Lebanon. The resultant power void, together with the emerging global structural and ideological conflict between the superpowers, set the stage for U.S. and Soviet penetration of the region. Although Great Britain and France, now firmly in the Western camp led by the United States, retained some regional influence for a time (particularly in North Africa), that influence was bound to decline precipitously or be channeled into the U.S. bipolar rivalry with the Soviet Union.

Both superpowers had strong, albeit slightly different, interests in penetrating the Middle East. One shared incentive was the global hegemonic competition, which took the form of a zero-sum struggle whereby the regional expansion of one side was seen as a loss by the other. But the superpowers also had more focused interests specific to the region. The United States' primary objective was to secure petroleum supplies for itself and its European allies, protect the assets of U.S. oil companies operating on petrostate soil, and

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<sup>378</sup> As noted by Hansen (*Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 22), this partitioning was designed to reduce the regional influence of the European colonial powers.



gain economically from arms sales and petrodollar recycling. The importance of oil in the U.S. strategic approach to the region became apparent as early as 1950, when President Harry Truman gave the first security assurance to Saudi Arabia, announcing that "no threat to your kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern of the United States."<sup>379</sup> While oil also figured prominently in the geopolitical calculus of the Soviet Union, both as a source of hard currency and a commodity needed by Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, that superpower had additional security interests in penetrating the Middle East. Key among these were the region's close proximity and strategic waterways, which allowed Soviet access to warm-water ports beyond the Black Sea littoral.<sup>380</sup>

### ***5.2.2 From early struggles to lasting penetration***

During the first postwar decade, the superpower struggle for regional influence focused on the "northern tier" area of the Middle East. Aiming to solidify and expand its position along its southern periphery, the Soviet Union refused to lift its occupation of northern Iran in 1946, while encouraging Azeri and Kurdish separatism and obstructing the formation of a central government in Tehran.<sup>381</sup> It also adopted a more threatening

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<sup>379</sup> Quoted in Dore Gold, "Toward the Carter Doctrine: The Evolution of American Power Projection Policies in the Middle East," in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), 115. The United States started to position itself in Saudi Arabia in 1944, opening a consulate in Dhahran and sending military engineers to build an airport there. See Herman Frederick Eiltz, "Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 221.

<sup>380</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 34.

<sup>381</sup> Rubenstein, "The Middle East in Russia's Strategic Prism," 80. In 1941, Great Britain and the Soviet Union jointly occupied Iran, agreeing to withdraw within 6 months of the conclusion of an armistice with the Axis powers.

posture toward Turkey, requesting the return of Kars and Ardahan and seeking base rights in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.<sup>382</sup> Besides these efforts, the Soviet Union sought to encourage communist subversion in northern tier countries, although this initial strategy lacked focus and, perhaps coming too early, did not resonate strongly with its targets, whose historical experience with Russia was anything but benign.<sup>383</sup>

With Great Britain no longer capable to respond to these developments,<sup>384</sup> the United States inserted itself into the region. It promptly backed Turkey and Iran, offering them economic, diplomatic, and military support.<sup>385</sup> These efforts became part of the 1947 Truman Doctrine, which aimed to block Soviet expansion in the northern tier (Turkey and Iran) and southeastern Europe (Greece). Under pressure from the United States and the U.N. Security Council, Stalin withdrew from northern Iran and was denied territorial concessions and base rights by Turkey. In 1952, Turkey (along with Greece) joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), becoming one of the staunchest U.S. clients in the region. With Dwight Eisenhower assuming the U.S. presidency in 1953, the American penetration strategy accelerated, further containing the Soviet Union and gaining greater access to oil resources. In August of that year, the Eisenhower administration, jointly with the British government, orchestrated a successful coup against Iranian Prime Minister Muhammad Mosaddeq, solidifying the pro-U.S. monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and averting the nationalization of the

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<sup>382</sup> See *ibid.* The Soviet Union also refused to renew its 1921 friendship agreement with Turkey.

<sup>383</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 135.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> William B. Quandt, "America and the Middle East: A Fifty-Year Overview," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 61.

Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.<sup>386</sup> In the next two years, Eisenhower, again with British assistance, went on to create the Baghdad Pact, an anti-Soviet defense body joined by Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Great Britain.<sup>387</sup>

In light of these developments, efforts by the Soviet Union to position itself in the region did not see much success during the first postwar decade. The one notable exception was Syria, with which Moscow had established close political and military bonds as early as 1946. However, things were about to change, and from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s Soviet regional penetration, now steered by Nikita Khrushchev, expanded both in depth and geographical reach. Unlike Stalin's expansionist strategy, which focused on the northern tier, Khrushchev's was bolder and more astute. It took a turn to pragmatism, deemphasizing the spread of communism as a primary foreign policy objective and ramping up military and economic support for existing and prospective clients.<sup>388</sup> In addition, despite some courting of Israel in the immediate postwar years, Moscow started to tilt toward the Arab states in the conflict over Palestine. As pointed out by Alan Taylor, the new expansionist strategy was to "win them over through military and

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<sup>386</sup> Until the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran was a major pillar of U.S. penetration in the Middle East. Its economic and military development depended heavily on U.S. aid, and it hosted American intelligence facilities on its soil. In addition, U.S. oil companies were given a stake in Iranian oil. See Quandt, "America and the Middle East," 62.

<sup>387</sup> While the United States spearheaded the creation of the Baghdad Pact, it did not formally join it. However, in 1957, it assumed an observer status and became a member of the pact's military committee. See Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 35.

<sup>388</sup> See Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy Since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 20; and Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 136.

economic aid and expressions of sympathy with their problems and [nationalist] aspirations."<sup>389</sup>

This strategic shift paid off, allowing the Soviet Union to firmly penetrate the region and increase its influence. With Syria already in its camp, Moscow bypassed the northern tier in 1955, winning over Egypt, a formidable, centrally located regional power. Vexed by the formation of the Baghdad Pact in the previous year, Egypt's nationalist leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, turned to the Soviet Union for help with weapons and the construction of the Aswan Dam, effectively inviting "the Russians to participate in the politics of the Middle East."<sup>390</sup> Besides securing this major headway, which established a "patron–client relationship" with Egypt through a now famous arms deal,<sup>391</sup> Moscow managed to make additional advances, consolidating and expanding its position in the region and weakening that of the United States. In 1958, General Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy in Iraq and, in the following year, withdrew from the Baghdad Pact and moved to the Soviet orbit, receiving arms and aid in return.<sup>392</sup> In late 1962, the United States and Great Britain also faced challenges in Yemen, where a

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<sup>389</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 136.

<sup>390</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 17. Between 1958 and 1961, Syria and Egypt briefly joined in the Soviet-backed United Arab Republic.

<sup>391</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 136.

<sup>392</sup> Courtney Hunt, *The History of Iraq* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 76. The developments in Iraq, threatening regional contagion, also forced the United States and Great Britain to send troops to Lebanon and Jordan. See Quandt, "America and the Middle East," 63.

republican coup backed by Egypt and the Soviet Union deposed the imam and triggered the Yemeni civil war.<sup>393</sup>

In the early 1960s, Soviet penetration expanded apace, albeit in less depth, to the Maghreb, an area of the Middle East that, by that time, was mostly under the influence of the United States and its Western subordinates (Great Britain and France). After the end of the Algerian war of independence with France (1962), Moscow established close ties with the pro-Soviet regime of Ahmed Ben-Bella, who adopted sweeping socialist reforms and allowed Algerian communists to participate in government.<sup>394</sup> To court its new client, the Soviet Union poured large amounts of economic and military aid into Algeria, and even decorated Ben-Bella as a "hero of the Soviet Union."<sup>395</sup> Not less important than this regional breakthrough was the increasing Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean, particularly toward the end of the Khrushchev era. Guided by his global strategy of expansion, the Soviet leader pushed for the development of intercontinental ballistic missile capability and a "blue water fleet" composed of light surface vessels and submarines.<sup>396</sup> By 1964, about 40 Soviet submarines had been equipped with nuclear missiles, and Soviet naval units started regular out-of-area operations in the Mediterranean.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, "Britain and the Middle East after 1945," in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 39.

<sup>394</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 20.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> See Rubenstein, "The Middle East in Russia's Strategic Prism," 82–83; and Karsh, *The Cautious Bear*, 16.

<sup>397</sup> Karsh, *The Cautious Bear*, 16–17.

One would be amiss not to recognize the importance of the Suez crisis of 1956 in allowing the Soviet entry into the Middle East and in establishing a lasting condition of regional bipolar penetration. In October 1956, a few months after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal (in response to an Israeli incursion in Gaza), Great Britain and France, joining in a secret military operation with Israel, attacked Egypt in a push for a regime change. Washington, uninformed about the plot, was quick to respond, with Eisenhower stopping and condemning the attack and, a year later, announcing his doctrine of offering U.S. assistance to any nation threatened by international communism.<sup>398</sup> The crisis had significance for two reasons. First, it ended any illusions on the part of Great Britain and France, both heavily dependent on U.S. support for their economic and defense needs, that they had retained any independent clout in the region. After 1956, British and French influence, to the extent that it still existed, was subordinated to the prerogatives of U.S. foreign and security policy.<sup>399</sup> Second, the crisis created a power vacuum that allowed the Soviet Union to solidify its local position and emerge as a friend of the Arab cause. With the pronouncement of the Eisenhower doctrine in 1957, the global superpower struggle was brought firmly to the regional level.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Eisenhower's response was not intended as a gesture to the Egyptian leader (indeed, Washington shared London's view of Nasser as a threat to Western interests) but rather as a statement by the United States that it would not tolerate dissent and independent regional policy by Britain and France (see Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East*, 93). Thus, Washington's goal was to "discipline" subordinates and signal that their future behaviors should fall in line with its own.

<sup>399</sup> After 1956, Britain "lost its importance as an independent state actor in the Middle East" (Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East*, 93); France, while trying "to present a voice distinct from the American discourse,...could not ignore reality" (Leveau, "France's Arab Policy," 11). As noted by Buzan and Waever, the Suez crisis reduced both countries to "marginal players" in the region (*Regions and Powers*, 197).

<sup>400</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 36.

### 5.2.3 *Polarization and structural transformation*

While the Khrushchev and Eisenhower's era saw both superpowers solidify their positions in the Middle East, the two and a half decades that followed the mid-1960s evidenced a dramatic polarization of the bipolar condition—a condition Qaddafi was about to face in 1969. Assuming power in late 1964, Leonid Brezhnev, the new Soviet leader, not only continued the expansionist policies of his predecessor but also brought them to a new, more confrontational level. Realizing that further advancement into Europe was not possible, Brezhnev directed Soviet resources to the Middle East, ramping up military and economic aid for Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria.<sup>401</sup> Clearly a student of Khrushchev's pragmatism, the new leader also deemphasized ideology as a vanguard of penetration, relying instead on a clientelistic network based on relationships of dependence. Adding to this strategy of "muscular" expansion was a massive effort to shore up and deploy a full-fledged blue-water navy in the Mediterranean, a capability intended to counter the introduction of U.S. Polaris submarines in the area and to increase Soviet influence in the Maghreb.<sup>402</sup> In subsequent years, Moscow used this capability both "to signal diplomatic interest to the other superpower and to demonstrate political support for the local client."<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 25–26.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 26. See also Karsh, *The Cautious Bear*, 17.

<sup>403</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Soviet Military Power in the Middle East; or, Whatever Became of Power Projection?" in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), 163.

The quality of superpower penetration also became increasingly tied to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Although the United States moved closer to Israel in the early 1960s,<sup>404</sup> the "special relationship" between the two countries deepened markedly during and after the Six-Day War of June 1967, in which Israel defeated the Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.<sup>405</sup> A few weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, the administration of Lyndon Johnson authorized the shipment of weapons and ammunition to Israel, facilitating the latter's invasion of Egypt.<sup>406</sup> Also implicit in the crisis, Moscow passed false intelligence to Cairo about an imminent Israeli attack, compelling Nasser to expel U.N. forces from the border with Israel and to amass troops in the area.<sup>407</sup> Striking preemptively, Israel achieved a swift victory, capturing the Sinai, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. Both superpowers supported their clients during the conflict, and both had something to lose and something to gain from it. For the United States, backing Israel meant alienating the radical Arab camp, but also regional expansion and a blow to Nasser's prestige. For Moscow, the war's outcome was a credibility setback, but also an opportunity to increase the dependence of key Arab clients on Soviet military support.<sup>408</sup>

In the aftermath of the war, and especially since the pronouncement of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, the superpower competition in the Middle East became increasingly

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<sup>404</sup> In 1962, John F. Kennedy authorized the first U.S. arms shipment to Israel, publically referring to the Jewish state as an "ally" of the United States. U.S. support to Israel increased significantly under the administration of Lyndon Johnson. See Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 74.

<sup>405</sup> Although Iraq, a Soviet ally at the time, also fought on the Arab side (sending tanks to the Jordanian–Israeli border), it was not one of the principal belligerents.

<sup>406</sup> The United States also provided intelligence support to Israel during the conflict. See *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>407</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 34.

<sup>408</sup> As observed by Steven L. Spiegel, the 1967 war "increased the dependence of key Arab states on Moscow and of Israel on the United States." See Spiegel, "Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East: A Profile," in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), 7.



reliant on local surrogates.<sup>409</sup> During the 1970s, Washington and Moscow focused on deepening and expanding their proxy networks, heightening regional tensions in the process. The United States increased its military support for Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel (the three "pillars" of U.S. regional penetration) and strengthened (often secretly) its political cooperation with the sheikhdoms in the Gulf and with Morocco and Tunisia in the Maghreb.<sup>410</sup> The Soviet Union, under pressure to restore its credibility as a superpower patron after the humiliating events of the late 1960s, engaged in a massive arms resupply of Egypt and Syria, both of which had broken diplomatic relations with Washington during the Six-Day War.<sup>411</sup> In the following decade and a half, Moscow also embarked on a more assertive regional policy, concluding treaties of friendship and cooperation with Egypt (1971), Iraq (1972), Ethiopia (1978), South Yemen (1979), and Syria (1980) and expanding its influence (including access to naval facilities) in the Red Sea littoral and North Africa.<sup>412</sup> In the late 1970s, and particularly after 1979 (which marked the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the fall of the Shah in Iran), Washington

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<sup>409</sup> The Nixon Doctrine, initially announced to justify U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, sought to recruit "regional influentials" to serve as surrogates for American power" (Quandt, "America and the Middle East," 66).

<sup>410</sup> Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 115–119.

<sup>411</sup> Spiegel, "Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East," 7.

<sup>412</sup> After the Six-Day War, Nasser granted Soviet access to Egyptian naval facilities in Alexandria and Port Said. Although Moscow lost Egypt as a client in the early 1970s, it managed to compensate for that loss by establishing close ties with South Yemen (since 1968), Somalia (until 1974), and Ethiopia (after 1975). In the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union used naval anchorages close to the territory of regional clients. It also increased its involvement in the western periphery of the Maghreb, backing Polisario in its conflict with Morocco over the Western Sahara. See Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*, 145–146; Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 39, 41, 44, 95–96; and Karsh, *The Cautious Bear*, 44–45.

countered Moscow's expansionism with the Carter and Reagan doctrines, which led to the creation of the U.S. Central Command.<sup>413</sup>

As the superpowers deepened their penetration of the Middle East, the region became increasingly divided, with local states sorting themselves into pro-U.S. (moderate) and pro-Soviet (radical) camps.<sup>414</sup> Not surprisingly, this bipolarization was bound to see some defections and realignments (see section 3.2.2): Egypt, with Anwar Sadat assuming power in late 1970, distanced itself from Moscow and moved to the U.S. orbit after the 1973 Arab–Israeli War; Iraq followed suit after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and particularly in the early 1980s, when Washington openly sided with Baghdad in the Iran–Iraq War; and Libya, taking the opposite course, joined the Soviet camp in the mid-1970s. In trying to manage their surrogate networks and maintain parity, the superpowers also ramped up arms transfers to the region, elevating its power level. Between 1968–72 and 1983–85, the share of U.S. military deliveries to the Middle East rose from about 10 percent to about 45 percent of total (global) U.S. deliveries.<sup>415</sup> The Soviet Union was similarly caught up in the arms race: during the 1970s, its military transfers to the region

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<sup>413</sup> The Carter Doctrine (1980), which committed U.S. forces to the defense of American oil interests in the Persian Gulf, led to the establishment of the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). The Reagan Doctrine, also designed to counter Soviet expansion in the Middle East, transformed the RDF into a separate unified combatant command. For a detailed discussion of the Carter and Reagan doctrines, see Gold, "Toward the Carter Doctrine"; and Sanford Lakoff, "The 'Reagan Doctrine' and U.S. Policy in the Middle East," in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988).

<sup>414</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 22.

<sup>415</sup> Robert E. Harkavy and Stephanie G. Neuman, "U.S. Arms Transfer and Arms Control Policies: The Middle East," in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), table 2-6.

exceeded (both quantitatively and qualitatively) those to Warsaw Pact countries.<sup>416</sup> Given the oil-price revolution of the 1970s and the superpowers' growing insistence on cash deals, it is not surprising that petrostates topped the ranks of the local clientele. However, in arming the Middle East, the superpowers were guided not only by commercial but also by geopolitical motivations, providing military assistance to friends and withholding it from foes.<sup>417</sup>

The heightened bipolar condition continued until the mid-1980s, started to subside in the second half of the decade, and gave way to a unipolar one after 1989. Many factors were responsible for this transformation, and while some are detailed later in the chapter, they are of no central importance to the present discussion. It is clear, however, that the Soviet withdrawal from the global superpower rivalry of the Cold War had a profound structural impact on the regional level.<sup>418</sup> In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union ceased its political, economic, and military support for former clients in the Middle East (including its bastion, Syria) and, in 1989, pulled out of Afghanistan, signaling the end of its involvement in the region.<sup>419</sup> Rather than reciprocating the Soviet move, the United States retained and even expanded its regional footprint, quickly replacing the bipolar

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<sup>416</sup> Karsh, *The Cautious Bear*, 33. See also Abraham S. Becker, "A Note on Soviet Arms Transfers to the Middle East," in *The Soviet–American Competition in the Middle East*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel, Mark Heller, and Jacob Goldberg (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988).

<sup>417</sup> See Harkavy and Neuman, "U.S. Arms Transfer and Arms Control Policies," 35; and Becker, "A Note on Soviet Arms Transfers to the Middle East," 56.

<sup>418</sup> As noted by Hansen, "1989 not only affected Middle Eastern international politics, but it did so to a substantial degree because the internal variables are held to be subject to the structural impact. Moreover, this particular area was bound to be transformed, because it occupied a high position on the great power agenda during bipolarity" (*Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 11).

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 46. See also Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 202; and Pervin, "Building Order in Arab–Israeli Relations: From Balance to Concert?" 280–281.

rivalry with U.S. dominance.<sup>420</sup> With its core economic interests in the region still intact, Washington went on to reassure its traditional allies in the 1990s, contain revisionist powers by means of economic and military coercion, and launch diplomatic initiatives in an effort to deescalate the Arab–Israeli conflict.<sup>421</sup> As observed by Buzan and Waever, after 1989, "global intervention took a unipolar form, with a dominant United States using its influence to dampen the interstate (but not intra-state) conflictual security dynamics" in the region.<sup>422</sup>

### **5.3 The Sanusi monarchy: a prelude to Qaddafi's rule**

The modern Libyan state existed for less than 18 years before it entered the era of Qaddafi. In 1951, after nearly a decade of French and British administration (Italian colonial rule ended in 1943), Libya was granted independence by the United Nations, incorporating the provinces of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan. Unlike its neighbors Tunisia and Algeria, which had to pay dearly for their freedom, the new country was an artificial creation of the great powers, particularly the United States, which had an overwhelming majority in the U.N. General Assembly. While France, Britain, and Italy presented plans for separate trusteeships over the three provinces, the Truman administration was quick to reject them, pushing instead for full political sovereignty.<sup>423</sup> The U.S. approach, not unlike that adopted by the superpowers in other parts of the region, had two goals. One was to weaken the influence of the European

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<sup>420</sup> Miller, "When and How Regions Become Peaceful," 231, 238.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 239–240; and Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 201–202.

<sup>422</sup> Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 202.

<sup>423</sup> Jonathan Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1986), 20–21.

powers and compel them to fall in line with the course set by Washington.<sup>424</sup> The second was to limit future political meddling by Moscow, which had veto power in the U.N. Security Council.<sup>425</sup> These objectives were clearly articulated by Henry Villard, the first U.S. chief of mission to Libya, who stated that "as an independent entity, Libya could freely enter into treaties or arrangements with Western powers looking toward the defense of the Mediterranean and North Africa."<sup>426</sup>

Shaped by the new realities of superpower politics, Libya emerged as a hereditary monarchy, the United Kingdom of Libya, brandishing a federal constitution and a parliamentary form of government, with King Idris al-Sanusi serving as a head of state.<sup>427</sup> The new country faced significant difficulties, both political and economic. Politically, the main challenge was to forge national unity, a task complicated by the fact that the three provinces of the new kingdom had sharply divergent historical experiences and attachments, with Cyrenaica having close ties to Egypt, Tripolitania to Tunisia, and the Fezzan to Sudan and Chad.<sup>428</sup> In addition, all three provinces, each striving to advance its own interests, aimed to maintain high degree of tribal and administrative autonomy, making federal governance easy on paper but difficult in practice.<sup>429</sup> Adding to these political problems, which persisted even during the rule of Qaddafi, was the

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<sup>424</sup> The Soviet Union also objected to European designs that would have maintained the local influence of the old great powers, and this is why it supported the 1949 U.N. resolution for Libyan independence. While Moscow did veto Libya's membership in the United Nations in 1951 (likely because of the country's tilt toward the United States), it reversed its position in 1955 as part of a "package deal" with Washington. See Mary-Jane Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>425</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 21.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>427</sup> John Wright, *A History of Libya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 174.

<sup>428</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 24–26.

<sup>429</sup> During the monarchy, the capital of Libya alternated between Tripoli and Benghazi.

abject economic condition of the country. In 1950, Libya was the poorest state in the Arab world, with an average annual income per capita estimated at just \$35.<sup>430</sup> The kingdom also suffered from large trade and public finance deficits, decrepit infrastructure, and high mortality and illiteracy rates. As pointed out by John Wright, these realities were "the hallmarks of a country in the greatest need of outside help."<sup>431</sup>

Help did come, albeit at the cost of King Idris surrendering part of his country's sovereignty to the United States and its Western allies. In July 1953, Libya concluded a 20-year treaty of friendship and alliance with Great Britain, which obtained access to airstrips and military facilities in the vicinity of Tripoli and at al-Adem near Tobruk.<sup>432</sup> A year later, the monarchy signed a similar treaty with the United States, allowing U.S. forces to keep the Wheelus airbase near Tripoli (U.S. troops had been stationed in Libya even before the 1954 treaty was negotiated) and to develop communications infrastructure in the area.<sup>433</sup> Although France also signed a security agreement with Libya in 1955, the terms of that agreement were not as favorable as those obtained by the United States and Britain.<sup>434</sup> In exchange for the monarchy's opening to the Western camp, all three countries pledged financial and other economic aid. The lion's share of that assistance came from the United States. In addition to large shipments of wheat, American aid to Libya included financial support estimated at \$64 million between 1953

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<sup>430</sup> Wright, *A History of Libya*, 174.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> David Blundy and Andrew Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 41.

<sup>433</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 32.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

and 1956 and \$112 million between 1956 and 1960.<sup>435</sup> In the 1950s, these levels of economic assistance were staggering, making the kingdom "the largest per capita recipient of U.S. aid in the world."<sup>436</sup>

The American largesse was strategically placed. Although Libya had no resources of value at the time, its location offered major advantages in the emerging superpower rivalry. The kingdom provided the shortest crossings to Sub-Saharan Africa, convenient bases for naval power projection in the central Mediterranean, and easy access to Egypt, Sudan, and the Suez Canal.<sup>437</sup> While oil was not discovered until 1959, Washington recognized Libya's hydrocarbon potential early on, starting exploration activities in the mid-1950s. The Libyan Petroleum Law of 1955, allegedly drafted by U.S. and British advisors,<sup>438</sup> established a unique system of granting a large number, limited-size concessions to both "majors" (global oil multinationals) and "independents" (smaller firms new to the industry).<sup>439</sup> Because these concessions were assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, U.S. oil companies, which dominated world production, had an advantage in penetrating the Libyan market.<sup>440</sup> After 1959, when Esso (a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey) first discovered commercially viable quantities of petroleum

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<sup>435</sup> Ethan D. Chorin, "The Future of the U.S.–Libyan Commercial Relationship," in *Libya since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*, ed. Dirk Vandewalle (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 157.

<sup>436</sup> Ronald Bruce St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 116.

<sup>437</sup> Wright, *A History of Libya*, 185; and Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 23.

<sup>438</sup> See Richard B. Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 77; and Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 29.

<sup>439</sup> The majors were Standard Oil of New Jersey (later Exxon), Royal Dutch-Shell, Texaco, Mobil, British Petroleum, Chevron, Gulf, and Compagnie France des Petroles. The independents were Amerada, Bunker Hunt, Continental, Marathon, and Texas-Gulf. There has been a common misconception that the 1955 Petroleum Law favored independents over majors. In fact, 31 of the 51 concessions awarded within a year of the law's passage were granted to majors. See Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 30.

<sup>440</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 29.

in the Sirte basin, the kingdom's oil industry started to develop quickly. In the wake of more discoveries and infrastructure development (mostly by U.S. companies) in the first half of the 1960s, Libya emerged as a full-fledged petrostate and a major player in the global oil market. By 1967, 2 years before Qaddafi's ascend, it supplied a third of the oil destined to Western Europe.<sup>441</sup>

The newly found wealth helped Libya overcome some of its early economic difficulties, reducing its dependence on foreign aid. While encouraging corruption and not optimally managed, the windfall of oil revenues allowed for considerable investment in agriculture, infrastructure, and welfare, improving the lot of many Libyans.<sup>442</sup> At the same time, a mixture of political and economic factors in the 1960s led to growing U.S. and British dissatisfaction with the monarchy.<sup>443</sup> One major concern was King Idris's inability to effectively rule his country and to create a sense of national unity.<sup>444</sup> Often described as a "reluctant monarch," Idris rarely left Cyrenaica, distanced himself from the daily pressures of politics, and, on a few occasions, even threatened to resign.<sup>445</sup> This detachment was certainly posing risks to U.S. economic interests, which required an

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>442</sup> In 1958, even before Esso's oil breakthrough, the Libyan government made a decision to set aside 70 percent of its future oil income for economic and social development. See St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 130; and Wright, *A History of Libya*, 193–195.

<sup>443</sup> Some cracks in the relationship were evident as early as 1957, when Charles B. Martell, deputy director of U.S. naval intelligence, observed "a gradual deterioration of U.S.–Libyan relations under the weak and ineffectual Abdul Majid Kubar [Libyan Prime Minister who succeeded bin Halim]" (quoted in Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 42).

<sup>444</sup> As noted by Blundy and Lycett, "The United States was anxious about the weakness of the King and the threat this posed to its strategic and, increasingly, economic interests in Libya" (*Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 50).

<sup>445</sup> See, for example, Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 38; Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 73; and St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 131.



orderly domestic environment conducive to contracting and investment. In 1960, when the Libyan oil industry was still in its infancy, a report by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development stated that "economic development demands unity of purpose and action" and that the discovery of oil could "help to weld the three provinces together and to create a new sense of national unity."<sup>446</sup> Despite this veiled warning, a 1962 secret memorandum to President John F. Kennedy described a "sheer financial chaos in Libya."<sup>447</sup>

Although the federal formula was abolished in 1963, giving way to a unitary state,<sup>448</sup> the centralization of power in the hands of the king and the royal diwan failed to assuage U.S. concerns. The monarchy came short of achieving national unity, made unwelcome amendments to the pricing mechanism of the 1955 Petroleum Law,<sup>449</sup> and showed inability to deal effectively with anti-Western sentiments boiling up in Libya and the region. In January 1964, in response to Israeli plans to divert waters from the Jordan River, student demonstrations broke out in the streets of Benghazi.<sup>450</sup> When the Cyrenaica Defense Force was dispatched to contain the protest, it killed a number of students, provoking further turmoil and strengthening the hand of Arab nationalists. In the following month, Nasser escalated the crisis, calling for the closure of U.S. and

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<sup>446</sup> Quoted in Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 64.

<sup>447</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 50.

<sup>448</sup> The country's name was changed from the United Kingdom of Libya to the Kingdom of Libya.

<sup>449</sup> The 1955 Petroleum Law provided for a flexible pricing mechanism, whereby majors and independents were not required to publish a posted price and could pay royalties to the state on the basis of their oil revenue. During the 1960s, the monarchy adopted a number of legislative amendments aimed to limit this flexibility, although their effect was limited by countervailing provisions secured by the oil companies. For an in-depth discussion of these developments, see Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 30–36.

<sup>450</sup> The student demonstrations erupted when King Idris failed to attend an Arab summit in Cairo, where Arab leaders sought to find a coordinated response to the crisis with Israel. See Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 45.

British military bases in Libya and falsely claiming that these bases had been used against Egypt during the 1956 Suez episode.<sup>451</sup> Caving under domestic and external pressure, and with King Idris threatening to resign, the Libyan government publically announced that it had no plans to renew its 20-year security agreements with the United States and Great Britain. It also asked Washington and London to enter into negotiations for setting the conditions (including timetables) under which their bases would be terminated.<sup>452</sup>

After the events of the mid-1960s, the monarchy saw its domestic position significantly weakened. Although King Idris retained some support among loyal tribal groups, he was unable to stem the wave of Arab nationalism, and his inaptitude in governing the country and in defending Western interests eroded the trust of his foreign benefactors. By 1966, Britain withdrew most of its forces stationed in Libya (largely because of their declined strategic value), retaining small contingents at Tobruk and other locations in Cyrenaica.<sup>453</sup> At about the same time, the United States started negotiations for the future status of its military bases, continuing to maintain presence at the Wheelus airfield.<sup>454</sup> The situation became increasingly heated in 1967, when King Idris's weak response to the Six-Day War triggered anti-Israeli and anti-American riots in Tripoli and Benghazi. In an effort to deescalate the crisis, the Libyan government renewed its calls for terminating the U.S. and British bases and, a year later, established the Libyan General Petroleum Corporation, seeking to tighten its grip on the oil industry.<sup>455</sup> Perhaps coming

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<sup>451</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 129.

<sup>452</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 37.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 129–130; and Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 60.

too late, however, these efforts failed to stave off domestic discontent, while further alienating Washington and London. In fairness to the king, he was dealt a difficult hand: he had to balance conflicting interests, and he proved unfit for the task.

#### **5.4 Libya's foreign policy, 1969–2005**

Qaddafi did not craft foreign policy in a vacuum; he did so in the context of changing external conditions and, initially, the legacy of his predecessor. Section 5.2 traced the historical evolution of great power penetration in Libya's regional environment, shedding light on its structural characteristics and the local issues that became tied to it. The discussion painted a picture of early colonial rivalries, gradual and uneven superpower penetration in the wake of World War II, intense and symmetric bipolarization during the 1970s and most of the 1980s, and a shift to unipolarity after 1989. Section 5.3 went on to review the short formative history of monarchical rule that preceded Qaddafi's rise to power. Special attention was paid to salient aspects of King Idris's relationship with the United States, the first superpower to establish close commercial and security ties to Libya. The discussion that follows completes the analysis, providing further empirical illustration of the general patterns described in section 5.1.

##### ***5.4.1 Navigating the bipolar condition (1969–89)***

The long despotic rule of Qaddafi began in a bloodless coup executed by a small group of junior military officers on September 1, 1969, at a time when the ailing King Idris was seeking medical treatment in Turkey. The group, calling itself Free Unionist Officers, faced no resistance from the Cyrenaica Defense Force, quickly establishing control of the

royal palace and key military locations in Tripoli and Benghazi.<sup>456</sup> Despite their security agreements with the monarchy, neither the United States nor Great Britain made any effort to assist it, a decision undoubtedly influenced by their dissatisfaction with King Idris during the 1960s (see section 5.3). About a week after the coup, which came as no surprise to domestic and foreign observers, Qaddafi was announced as the chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the new (10-member) ruling body in charge of what was now called the Libyan Arab Republic. Although the RCC formed a new cabinet in the first months of its existence, attracting civilians in the process, Qaddafi made it abundantly clear who was the locus of power. As noted by Pargeter, he quickly "promoted himself to the rank of colonel and made himself commander of the armed forces."<sup>457</sup> In addition, he subjected all cabinet decisions to the veto of the RCC, which he controlled as a chairman.<sup>458</sup> While the new leader altered some of Libya's domestic institutions in subsequent years, he did so in a way that never relaxed his personalist grip on political power.

There has been much debate about what drove Qaddafi's foreign policy during his tenure.<sup>459</sup> As noted earlier, part of his external outlook was ideologically based. A student of Nasser, Qaddafi believed in, or presented himself as a believer in, pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism.<sup>460</sup> Closely related to this revisionist attitude were anti-imperialism, a reaction to a long history of colonial humiliation, and anti-Zionism, an outward

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<sup>456</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 79; and Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 49.

<sup>457</sup> Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 70.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid. See also St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 134.

<sup>459</sup> For recent scholarly contributions to this debate, see Vandewalle, ed. *Libya since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*.

<sup>460</sup> See, for example, St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 24–25.

expression of the Arab refusal to accept the post-World War II fate of Palestine. But ideology was not the only source of Qaddafi's foreign activism. Since his ascend to power, the young leader perceived Egypt and Sudan as major military threats to Libya, particularly after both countries started to receive heavy-handed support from the United States.<sup>461</sup> Thus, security concerns were at least partly responsible for his hostile policies in the region and for his adventures in Chad, Libya's "soft underbelly."<sup>462</sup> Adding to this mix of foreign policy drivers were Qaddafi's despotic traits—a disposition to violence and an inflated view of Libya's role in the world. Qaddafi demonstrated extreme cruelty as early as his formative years as an army cadet,<sup>463</sup> and consistently held grand visions of a Libyan-dominated Saharan empire.<sup>464</sup>

While all of these factors point to a leader set for external revisionism, they are partial determinants of actual behavior. Motives interact with opportunity structures, and, as argued in the theory chapter, these structures are shaped by the penetrative quality of the intrusive system. It is not surprising, then, that some observers have seen Qaddafi's foreign policy as "a policy of opportunity, conducted on the basis of rather constant principles."<sup>465</sup> For the most part, this characterization is correct. On the one hand, Qaddafi had to operate within certain parameters imposed from without and, when

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<sup>461</sup> Mary-Jane Deeb, "The Primacy of Libya's National Interest," in *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, ed. Lemarchand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 32.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid. See also Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah? Foreign Policy in Libya," 194.

<sup>463</sup> Qaddafi was trained at the British Military Mission in Benghazi. During his time there, he was responsible for the killing of a fellow cadet and the mistreatment of many others. According to Colonel Ted Lough, the head of the academy, Qaddafi was "inherently cruel." See Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 46; and Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 66.

<sup>464</sup> See, for example, Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 186; and Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 335. Qaddafi referred to himself as "King of Kings" as recently as 2008 (see *ibid.*).

<sup>465</sup> William I. Zartman and A. G. Kluge, "Qaddafi's Foreign Policy," *American-Arab Affairs* 6 (Fall 1983): 183.

possible, create opportunities within those parameters. At the same time, pragmatic considerations led to the occasional suppression and, after 1989, even compromise of foreign policy principles, either in rhetoric or in deed. During the bipolar period, Qaddafi was a master manipulator of the superpower regional competition. Rather than being erratic, he dealt with the superpowers systematically, maximizing his leverage and freedom of action. This relationship developed in two distinct periods: one of "conciliation" with the United States (1969–73) and one of alignment with the Soviet Union (1974–89).

#### *U.S. conciliation*

Qaddafi assumed power at a time of intense regional bipolarization (see section 5.2.3), taking control of a country still on good terms with the United States and with no meaningful ties to the Soviet Union. Instead of seeking immediate divorce from Washington, he treaded carefully, choosing a conciliatory strategy based on pragmatism. In his very first message to the Libyan people and the world (Communiqué One), Qaddafi stated that he took "pleasure in assuring all our friends that they need have no fears either for their property or for their safety...our enterprise is in no sense directed against any state whatever."<sup>466</sup> That this message was directed toward the United States and Great Britain is beyond reasonable doubt. From its inception, the RCC gave special treatment and access to diplomats from these two countries and was "especially solicitous" toward American officials.<sup>467</sup> This accommodative behavior, which continued for a few years, was driven by practical imperatives. Qaddafi had no interest in an early

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<sup>466</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 59–60.

<sup>467</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 140.

confrontation with a superpower that could threaten his political survival and foreign policy designs, and he was well aware that, at the time, the Libyan oil industry, whose income was central to the sustenance of his regime, depended heavily on U.S. production capacity, technology, and expertise.<sup>468</sup>

It is true that, early on, Qaddafi asked Washington and London to evacuate their military bases and opened talks with the oil companies for increasing the posted price of oil (these talks culminated in the so-called Tripoli Agreement of 1971). Contrary to widespread belief, however, neither of these actions presented significant harm to U.S. interests and, in fact, both likely enhanced them. By the late 1960s, Great Britain had mostly completed its withdrawal from Libya, and the United States was in negotiations to do the same (see section 5.3). For both Washington and London, the military bases, whose 20-year leases were about to expire anyway, had lost their strategic value, particularly in the presence of U.S. Polaris submarines in the Mediterranean.<sup>469</sup> In addition, closing the bases was a low-cost way to placate nationalist voices, which were the main driver of domestic instability during the monarchy. With respect to Qaddafi's push for higher oil prices, the picture was similar. While higher prices were detrimental to independents, whose operations were confined to Libya, they were beneficial to the large, geographically diversified majors, which sought to maintain market dominance and found backing by the U.S. government

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<sup>468</sup> Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 134; and Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 79.

<sup>469</sup> P. Edward Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 19. Between October and December 1969, U.S. and British negotiators agreed to close their bases in a matter of hours, with a "minimum of fuss." Qaddafi also gave assurances that he would not grant base rights to other powers. See Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 77–78.

during price negotiations.<sup>470</sup> Moreover, an increase in oil prices served Washington's strategic and commercial interests. Strategically, it provided a revenue boost to oil-rich U.S. regional surrogates (Iran and Saudi Arabia) at a time of Soviet assertiveness in the region.<sup>471</sup> Commercially, it fueled the U.S. military-industrial complex by propping up American arms sales during a period of rising trade deficits.<sup>472</sup>

To minimize potential frictions with Washington, Qaddafi often engaged in behaviors that emphasized his differences with the Soviet Union and deemphasized those with the United States. As noted by Jonathan Bearman, in the first few years of the new regime, "Libyan strategy frequently converged with, or worked to the advantage of, United States' objectives."<sup>473</sup> While Qaddafi's rhetoric was critical of imperialism of all stripes, its early manifestations had a discernible anticommunist and anti-Soviet tilt. As late as September 1973, Qaddafi publically stated that "the biggest threat facing man nowadays is the communist theory"<sup>474</sup> and, a month later, announced that "the Soviet Union remains the main enemy of the Arab world."<sup>475</sup> This hostility against Moscow had both foreign and domestic dimensions. Domestically, Qaddafi continued capitalist policies of development and spoke of socialism in general terms, as "social justice."<sup>476</sup> He also cracked down on

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<sup>470</sup> At the time, independents were eroding the position of majors, especially in the European market. The United States, with its large domestic production, did not seem particularly troubled by the prospect for higher oil prices. In fact, senior U.S. State Department officials were open to price increases considerably higher than those proposed by Qaddafi. See Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 81–89; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 30–31.

<sup>471</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 31.

<sup>472</sup> Spiegel, "U.S. arms transfer and arms control policies," 35.

<sup>473</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 104.

<sup>474</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 105.

<sup>475</sup> Quoted in Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 107.

<sup>476</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 51.



Marxist groups and sympathizers and purged members of the Baath Socialist Party.<sup>477</sup> In the foreign arena, Qaddafi took a number of diplomatic initiatives that pleased the Nixon administration. In 1971, he prevented a communist coup against President Numeiry of Sudan, capturing its leaders and turning them over to Khartoum for execution. In addition, he condemned the Soviet treaties of friendship and cooperation with Egypt (1971) and Iraq (1972), encouraged the unification of North and South Yemen (contra Soviet interests in the radical south), and took the side of pro-U.S. Pakistan in its 1971 war with India.<sup>478</sup>

Although this early strategy did not produce a full-fledged U.S.-Libyan alliance (some of Qaddafi's revisionist objectives did not allow for that), it managed to foster a relationship of mutual tolerance. Exploiting the bipolar condition, Qaddafi confounded Washington about Tripoli's loyalties and relaxed the external restraints on Libyan foreign and domestic policy. For its part, the United States had strong reasons to accommodate the new regime, if only as a temporary marriage of convenience. With Egypt still in the Soviet camp in the early 1970s and with Moscow set on a regional offensive, Washington had no interest to deliver Libya in the hands of its main rival. In addition, it had significant economic stakes in the country. Besides a large number of American workers employed on Libyan soil, these stakes included U.S. oil assets estimated at \$1.5 billion, the highest U.S. private investment in Africa.<sup>479</sup> That these interests guided Washington's early approach to Qaddafi is beyond question. According to a 1981 interview with David

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<sup>477</sup> John K. Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982), 86; and Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 117.

<sup>478</sup> Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 85–86; and Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 105.

<sup>479</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 56.

Newsom, the last U.S. ambassador to Libya under the monarchy (1964–69), the main U.S. priorities after the coup were the "protection of the large American community in Libya," the "preservation of the pro-Western orientation of the government to the extent possible," and the "prevention of the domination of Libya by an adversary power."<sup>480</sup>

While some observers have claimed that the United States actively helped Qaddafi in his bloodless rise to power, their evidence is mostly circumstantial.<sup>481</sup> It is clear, however, that, even if Washington was not complicit in the coup, it did nothing to reverse it or to confront the new regime in its first years in power. In fact, it did just the opposite. After the coup, it promptly recognized the new Libyan government and bluntly dismissed calls for help by royal emissaries dispatched by King Idris, instead preferring to deal with the officers of the RCC.<sup>482</sup> Both the U.S. Secretary of State, William Rogers, and Newsom's successor as a U.S. ambassador to Libya, Joseph Palmer, believed that Qaddafi was a "malleable" Arab nationalist with a "natural" anti-Soviet and anticommunist orientation.<sup>483</sup> Two years after the coup, an assessment by the U.S. embassy in Tripoli concluded that the new leader was "close to being the indispensable man" in Libya and that, should he be removed from power, "a period of instability in all likelihood would

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<sup>480</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 23.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 20. The circumstantial evidence should not to be dismissed offhand. As noted by Wright (*A History of Libya*, 182), the U.S. and British military bases were "*conspicuously* [emphasis added] inactive during and after the swift military coup of 1 September 1969." In addition, according to Libyan Prime Minister Hamid Bakoush, who resigned in 1968, Washington knew about the plot (directly from Bakoush) and, with at least two other groups plotting against Idris, assisted young Qaddafi in order to avoid an overtake by senior (and more difficult to control) army officers. See Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 53–55.

<sup>482</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 56.

<sup>483</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 70; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 4–5.

ensue."<sup>484</sup> Consistent with these attitudes, Washington protected Qaddafi until 1973, closing its eyes for policies it disliked and blocking plots against him in at least two, and probably more, occasions.<sup>485</sup> Critically, it also agreed to continue Western arms supplies to the new regime, proceeding with U.S. deliveries of F-5 fighter jets and troop transports.<sup>486</sup> In addition, Britain supplied ships, France Mirage aircraft, and Italy armored personnel vehicles (manufactured under U.S. license).<sup>487</sup>

### *Soviet alignment*

The period of U.S.–Libyan conciliation ended in 1974, with Qaddafi taking advantage of the double option and moving closer to the Soviet Union. Both Tripoli and Washington had reasons for the breakup, recognizing the growing incompatibility between their regional objectives. For Qaddafi, one major concern was Sadat's deepening ties with the United States, especially after the 1973 Arab–Israeli War. This development, which came at a time of worsening Egypt–Libya relations, was perceived as a threat to Libya and to Libyan interests in Chad, a potential launch pad for Egyptian military attack.<sup>488</sup> In addition, Washington's push for Arab–Israeli peace, in particular Henry Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy of 1973–75,<sup>489</sup> isolated Qaddafi and ran counter to his anti-Zionist

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<sup>484</sup> Quoted in St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 140–141.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 141. See also Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 80–100; Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 23; and Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, *The Hilton Assignment* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974).

<sup>486</sup> See, for example, Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 57; and Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 70, 182.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 108; and "The Primacy of Libya's National Interest," 33–34.

<sup>489</sup> Kissinger's diplomacy led to two Egyptian–Israeli disengagement agreements (January 1974 and September 1975), both condemned by Qaddafi.

designs and pan-Arab unification efforts, while increasing Israeli and Egyptian influence in the region.<sup>490</sup> These issues led to Libyan behaviors that alarmed the United States. One warning sign came as early as late 1973, when Qaddafi claimed territorial ownership of the entire Gulf of Sirte, a claim Washington quickly disputed.<sup>491</sup> It was developments in 1974, however, that dissolved the relationship. In May 1974, Qaddafi sent his right-hand man, Prime Minister Abdessalam Jalloud, on a diplomatic and arms procurement mission to Moscow and, later that year, displayed Soviet SAM-3 missiles during a military parade in Tripoli. The Gerald Ford administration, which now had Egypt on its side, responded in due course, blocking U.S. deliveries of C-130 Hercules aircraft and strategic equipment to Libya in 1975, while increasing its military and economic commitment to Cairo.<sup>492</sup>

Ignoring Qaddafi's anti-Soviet and anticommunist tilt during the early 1970s, Moscow ceased the opportunity to bring a new client to its protective fold. It did so for both economic and strategic reasons, taking into account the competitive pressures of regional bipolarity. As a prospective arms buyer and commercial partner, Libya was a valuable source of hard currency, which was always in short supply in Soviet coffers.<sup>493</sup> This benefit was only about to grow, as Qaddafi's oil-company nationalizations and exploration and production-sharing agreements (EPSAs) of 1974 (another factor responsible for the U.S.–Libyan estrangement) strengthened his grip over the Libyan oil

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<sup>490</sup> Deeb, "The Primacy of Libya's National Interest," 34; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 58.

<sup>491</sup> Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns*, 69.

<sup>492</sup> Yehudit Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 14; Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*, 142; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 5.

<sup>493</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 75; and *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 180.

industry at a time of rising oil prices. In addition, Tripoli was in position to offer preferentially priced, high-quality oil to Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, and Jalloud's extensive touring of the region in the mid-1970s was a testament to that. But Moscow's goals in courting Qaddafi went far beyond mercenary aims. The loss of Egypt in 1973 and of Sudan in 1971 weakened the Soviet position in the Red Sea area, and winning over Libya was a way to compensate for that loss and to secure a base that could be used both for subversion against Cairo and for power projection into Africa.<sup>494</sup> Moreover, Qaddafi's nationalist credentials and growing anti-American fervor converged with Soviet interests in reducing U.S. regional influence and in sabotaging Washington's efforts for Arab–Israeli peace.

Although Qaddafi's militarization efforts were already underway during the period of U.S. conciliation, Moscow's opening to Tripoli brought them to a new quantitative and qualitative level. Besides producing major trade and technical agreements, Jalloud's pivotal trip to the Soviet Union in 1974 secured an arms deal estimated at \$1.2 billion, the largest single purchase of any country to date.<sup>495</sup> In May 1975, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin visited Libya to reciprocate Qaddafi's outreach, and the two countries concluded an even more ambitious arms agreement—a "multi-million-dollar addition" to what was negotiated a year earlier.<sup>496</sup> From that point on, up until the end of the bipolar period, the Soviet–Libyan military relationship deepened on multiple fronts. Between 1974 and

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<sup>494</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 82–83.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 84; and Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 235.

<sup>496</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 75.

1989, Libya spent at least \$23 billion on Soviet arms<sup>497</sup> and, by the early 1980s, already had "the highest ratio of military equipment to manpower in the world."<sup>498</sup> A large portion of Soviet deliveries involved advanced offensive systems, some of which had not yet been introduced in Warsaw Pact countries. Examples of such systems include T-62 and T-72 main battle tanks, MIG-21 and MIG-23 fighter aircraft, TU-22 supersonic bombers, SAM-5 missiles (with deliveries starting in late 1985), and Foxtrot-class submarines.<sup>499</sup>

In addition to absorbing impressive quantities of military hardware, Libya became host of a large number of Soviet military advisors and general contractors. Qaddafi lacked sufficient manpower to maintain and operate all of the sophisticated equipment sent to him, and he depended on external support for a variety of military and nonmilitary infrastructure projects. Soviet military advisors in Libya numbered 2,000 in the fall of 1975,<sup>500</sup> over 6,000 in the early 1980s,<sup>501</sup> and about 2,300 at the close of the Cold War.<sup>502</sup> These figures go into the tens of thousands if one counts Eastern European contractors in the civilian sector.<sup>503</sup> During the late 1970s and early 1980s, such contractors started to

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<sup>497</sup> This estimate (in 1990 constant dollars) is based on data from the Arms Transfers Database of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/armstransfers>. Other sources suggest higher figures: about \$20 billion between 1976 and 1983 (Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns*, 81; and Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 96) and about \$4 billion between 1983 and 1987 (Cordesman, *A tragedy of arms*, 32).

<sup>498</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 181.

<sup>499</sup> See, for example, Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 235; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 62.

<sup>500</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 84.

<sup>501</sup> Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns*, 81.

<sup>502</sup> Cordesman, *A tragedy of arms*, 32.

<sup>503</sup> Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns*, 81.

play an increasing role in the Libyan oil industry and in other vital areas of the country's economy. Qaddafi also received support for the construction of various military and strategic infrastructure. For example, the Soviet Union installed radar installations for intelligence collection, and Bulgaria, with Moscow's blessing, built a "Maginot Line" of antitank fortifications along the Libyan border with Egypt.<sup>504</sup> During the second half of the 1970s, the Soviet Union also agreed to construct a 10-megawatt nuclear research facility and a 440-megawatt nuclear power plant on Libyan soil, presumably for civilian purposes.<sup>505</sup>

All this support boosted Qaddafi's self-confidence, fueling his foreign adventures (see next section) and helping him overcome U.S. pressure during the Carter and Reagan administrations. As could be expected, it also worked to close many of the ideological and foreign policy gaps that separated Tripoli and Moscow in the early period of U.S. conciliation. After 1974, Qaddafi tamed his anticommunist rhetoric and made a sharp domestic turn to the left. In April of that year, in a clear signal to Moscow, he announced that he "had given up his administrative and political responsibilities in order to 'devote all his time to popular organization and ideological action'."<sup>506</sup> From 1975 to 1979, he published *The Green Book*, a three-volume text advocating economic egalitarianism and

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<sup>504</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 108–109.

<sup>505</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 75–76. According to Fred Ikle, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the time, these activities served as a cover for Libya's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons capability (Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 67).

<sup>506</sup> As noted by P. Edward Haley (*Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 59), Qaddafi's announcement, which came exactly a day before a "quiet meeting" between Jalloud and Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, "was meant to signal a fundamental change in direction for Libya and was undoubtedly seen as such by the Kremlin."

"direct rule" by the masses through "people's congresses" and "people's committees."<sup>507</sup>

Although presented as a "third way" between capitalism and communism, Qaddafi's doctrine was for the most part an assault against Western parliamentary democracy and economic order. In 1977, he changed the name of the Libyan state to the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and embarked on a broad nationalization campaign, taking over private businesses and property.<sup>508</sup> It is improbable that this "rush to socialism" was only an internal affair, especially in light of Qaddafi's early focus on capitalist development and his reversal to economic liberalism in the late 1980s (see section 5.4.3).

To maintain Soviet support, Qaddafi also drew closer to the general foreign policy course set by the Kremlin. The joint communiqué at the close of Jalloud's 1974 visit to Moscow noted "the identity" of Soviet and Libyan positions on the "most important international problems," which, according to both sides, included U.S. regional offensive and support for Israel.<sup>509</sup> Between 1974 and 1975, Qaddafi recognized the communist regimes of North Korea and North Vietnam, closed ranks with Cuba, and signed a defense pact with pro-Soviet Algeria (the Hassi Messaoud Treaty of 1975), taking Algeria's side against Morocco in the dispute over the Western Sahara (a reversal from earlier support for

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<sup>507</sup> None of this aimed to limit Qaddafi's personalist power: "the political system remained one in which Qaddafi and a few close advisors made all important decisions on economic and political development" (St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 163). All foreign policy decisions were excluded from the competence of people's congresses, and the elections and activities of these bodies were controlled by "revolutionary committees" directed by Qaddafi. See Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 105; and Wright, *A History of Libya*, 208.

<sup>508</sup> For detailed description of these takeovers, see St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 171–173; Wright, *A History of Libya*, 208–209; and Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 106–108. Industries related to banking and oil were excluded from popular takeovers (Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 108).

<sup>509</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 59–60.



Rabat). Continuing this accommodation, Qaddafi visited Moscow for the first time in 1976, announcing that Libya's relationship with the superpower was "strategic."<sup>510</sup> After Sadat's peace trip to Jerusalem in November 1977, Tripoli spearheaded, with Soviet help, the creation of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, which opposed the opening to Israel and called for closer Arab ties with Moscow.<sup>511</sup> In the late 1970s, Qaddafi also failed to condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979),<sup>512</sup> and, in line with Soviet expansionist efforts in the Red Sea area, sided with pro-Soviet Ethiopia and South Yemen, eventually concluding defense treaties with both countries in 1981. By 1983, he had "adopted all major Soviet international positions,"<sup>513</sup> and, in April of that year, finally extracted Moscow's concession for an "agreement in principle" for a bilateral pact of friendship and cooperation.

#### **5.4.2 Conflict behavior (1969–89)**

The historical developments detailed in the previous section clearly illustrate the conflict-inducing phenomena expected to arise under bipolar penetration. As described in the theory chapter, these phenomena, all pertinent to the Libyan case, include reduced superpower incentives to constrain an oil-rich client, higher prospect for petrostate militarization, and more opportunities for strategic (constraint-reducing) realignment (see

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<sup>510</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 85. In subsequent years, Qaddafi even expressed a desire to join the Warsaw Pact. He did so in late 1978, after the signing of the Camp David Accords, and again in 1986, after the United States carried out bombing raids against Tripoli. (See St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 76, 79.)

<sup>511</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 76. Not coincidentally, all members of the front—Libya, Algeria, Syria, South Yemen, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization—were Soviet regional clients.

<sup>512</sup> Qaddafi not only did not criticize the invasion, legitimizing Soviet behavior, but also financed development projects in Afghanistan. See *ibid.*

<sup>513</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 313.

section 3.2.2). Indeed, during the brief phase of U.S.–Libyan conciliation, the United States, afraid to lose Libya to its superpower competitor and watchful of its oil interests in the country, made every effort to accommodate Qaddafi. It protected him against internal and external subversion, gave him the benefit of the doubt for policies it disliked, and, along with its Western allies, continued to supply him with arms and strategic equipment. During the phase of Soviet–Libyan alignment, Moscow embarked on a similar accommodative course, but went further, establishing deeper political ties with Tripoli and becoming, either directly or through Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, a vehicle for the total militarization of the Libyan state. In both cases, the hands of the superpowers were forced by the competitive pressures of bipolarity. In seeking to maintain and enhance their regional clientele and to draw economic benefits from Libya's oil wealth, they created a moral hazard problem, widening the bounds within which Qaddafi could operate and building up his offensive capabilities and self-confidence. For his part, Qaddafi was a skillful manipulator of the double option, choosing realignment when his foreign policy aims became more compatible with those of Moscow and opening new opportunities for external action.

It is not surprising, then, that the bulk of Qaddafi's conflict behaviors were concentrated in the 1969–89 period of bipolar penetration. The discussion below provides an overview of these behaviors, focusing on the most significant ones and placing them within the larger context of the superpower regional competition. Since Qaddafi's external aggression took many forms, it is broken down into two main categories.<sup>514</sup> The first

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<sup>514</sup> This breakdown borrows from one proposed by Colgan (*Petro-Aggression*, 136) but is more limited in scope. (Colgan includes Libya's militarization and covert nuclear program as a separate category of conflict.)

includes direct militarized engagements with other states, adopting a concept of conflict consistent with conventional uses of the term. The second category pools a broader set of behaviors, including aggressive diplomacy, subversive activities in other states (e.g., coups), and international terrorism.

### *Military engagements*

Between 1969 and 1989, Qaddafi used his armed forces on multiple occasions. In some cases, Libya played a secondary role as a conflict belligerent, as in the 1973 Arab–Israeli War, when Qaddafi deployed a small air force unit in support of Egypt and Syria, or in the 1982 Lebanon War, when he dispatched a troop contingent to prop up the PLO and the Syrian army in southern Lebanon. In other cases, Libya was the main conflict party, either as an initiator of hostilities or as an instigator of tensions that provoked an action by the other side. Overall, during the bipolar period, Libya was involved in four principal military engagements, including militarized disputes with Chad, Egypt, Tanzania (in support of Uganda's Idi Amin), and the United States. Of these engagements, the one with Chad was by far the most significant, not only in terms of number and duration of conflict episodes but also with respect to their intensity.

### Chad

Qaddafi's military adventures in Chad spanned almost the entire bipolar period. The reasons for this long spell of aggression are complex, and scholars still debate their relative importance. One major contributing factor was the status of the Aouzou Strip, a narrow but long stretch of desert in northern Chad that Libya disputed even during the

monarchy.<sup>515</sup> Qaddafi's tentative claim over the strip was based on a 1935 Franco–Italian treaty (the so-called Mussolini–Laval Accord), which, while assigning the strip to Libya, was never ratified by the French parliament.<sup>516</sup> The strip also hosted Muslim tribes with cultural ties to Cyrenaica and the Fezzan (southern Chad was mainly Christian) and was believed to hold substantial reserves of uranium and minerals, including oil. But Qaddafi's motives to intervene in Chad went beyond the Aouzou. Control of the country could serve both as a hedge against Egypt and Sudan (and other threats to the RCC emanating from the area) and as a staging grounds for subversion in those and other neighboring states.<sup>517</sup> This rationale became increasingly important during the phase of Soviet–Libyan alignment, when Cairo and Khartoum banded with Washington<sup>518</sup> and Moscow sought ways to counter that development and drive a wedge into central Africa. In addition, southward expansion into Chad was consistent with Qaddafi's territorial ambitions. Whether these ambitions included the creation of a full-fledged Saharan empire is still debated, but the fact remains that Qaddafi often described Chad as a "natural hinterland" belonging to Libya.<sup>519</sup>

The spell of Libyan aggression started in the early 1970s, during the period of U.S.–Libyan conciliation. Initially, Qaddafi increased support for the National Liberation Front of Chad (Frolinat), an insurgent group born in 1966 in reaction to Chadian President François Tombalbaye's political marginalization of Toubou Muslims in northern Chad.

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<sup>515</sup> King Idris briefly sent Libyan troops into Aouzou in 1954 and provided support to Chadian rebels in subsequent years. See Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 42–43.

<sup>516</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 203. France annexed Aouzou into Chad after World War II.

<sup>517</sup> Deeb, "The Primacy of Libya's National Interest," 33.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

<sup>519</sup> William J. Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," in *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, ed. Lemarchand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 63.

Although Frolinat received backing by King Idris in the late 1960s, Qaddafi's assistance was more militant, with Libya harboring scores of rebel fighters on its territory and transferring large amounts of weapons and reinforcements across the border. Gradually, Frolinat turned into a "semiregular army, often clad in Libyan uniforms," with Libyan support becoming "tantamount to a declaration of war against Tombalbaye."<sup>520</sup> Under pressure, and narrowly escaping a coup attempt in 1971, the Chadian president was forced to negotiate with Qaddafi, and, in 1972, the two leaders reached an agreement of "friendship." Ndjamena conceded to restore its diplomatic relations with Tripoli (broken in 1971) and to sever those with Israel, whereas Libya promised to cut its support for Frolinat (a promise it failed to keep).<sup>521</sup> In 1973, under the cover of the agreement, Qaddafi moved troops into Chad, seizing the Aouzou Strip. Although Tombalbaye protested the move and made a counterclaim to the Fezzan,<sup>522</sup> neither the United States nor France made any effort to reverse the occupation, and both countries continued to supply Libya with arms and equipment. However, Qaddafi did not push his luck, and, while he established permanent military presence in the strip, he did not proceed with its formal annexation.

The situation was about to escalate after 1974, when Libya realigned itself with the Soviet Union. In 1975, emboldened by his new powerful backer, Qaddafi officially annexed Aouzou into Libya's Murzuq district,<sup>523</sup> and, in the same year, Tombalbaye was assassinated and replaced by his chief of staff, General Felix Malloum. Malloum, staying

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<sup>520</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 158.

<sup>521</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," in *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, ed. Lemarchand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 114.

<sup>522</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 159.

<sup>523</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 187.

the course of his predecessor, opposed Qaddafi's annexation and tried to limit Libyan influence by seeking reconciliation with Muslims in the north. This effort, supported by Egypt and Sudan, both of which now received financial and military aid from the United States,<sup>524</sup> led to a schism in Frolinat, with its leaders forming two factions in 1977—the *Forces Armées Populaires* (FAP), headed by Goukouni Oueddei and loyal to Qaddafi, and the *Forces Armées du Nord* (FAN), led by Hissène Habré and more hostile to Libyan designs.<sup>525</sup> Concerned with the prospect of losing ground in Chad, Qaddafi expanded his military presence in the Aouzou, constructing a large military base there,<sup>526</sup> and ramped up arms supplies and training for the FAP.<sup>527</sup> Starting in 1977, FAP and Libyan forces, equipped with advanced Soviet weaponry, pushed southward and, by 1978, took control of the strategic town of Faya-Largeau. After similar incursions into central Chad in subsequent months, and with the FAP (and also the FAN) closing in on Ndjamena, Malloum's government resigned in 1979, giving way to the formation of the *Gouvernement d'Union Nationale de Transition* (GUNT), a transitional body headed by the unlikely duo of Oueddei, now pronounced Chad's president, and Habré, the new defense minister.

The rapprochement between Oueddei and Habré did not last, however. Soon after GUNT's creation, Habré was forced out of the pro-Libyan governing coalition, and FAP and FAN loyalists started to fight, plunging the country into a civil war.<sup>528</sup> Backed by

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<sup>524</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 159–160.

<sup>525</sup> Unlike Oueddei, Habré opposed Qaddafi's occupation of the Aouzou, seeing it as a form of Libyan "imperialism." See Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 116.

<sup>526</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 63.

<sup>527</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 116–117.

<sup>528</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 131.

Egypt and Sudan, Habré made progress on the battlefield, capturing Faya-Largeau in mid-1980 and making advances toward Ndjamen. It was at this point that Qaddafi sharply escalated his military involvement in Chad. In November, after raiding FAN positions around Faya and Ndjamen, he launched a massive invasion of the country, sending two infantry divisions (about 3,000–4,000 troops), along with T-55 tanks and TU-22 bombers, deep into Chadian territory.<sup>529</sup> The invasion was planned jointly with Soviet and East German advisors during the summer and fall of 1980, and Soviet pilots carried out combat missions alongside Libyan forces.<sup>530</sup> Grossly outpowered and taking heavy losses, FAN elements quickly disintegrated and, in mid-December, Libyan tanks and troops entered Ndjamen. Habré, wounded during the fighting, fled to Cameroon (and later to Sudan), trying to regroup remnants of his forces. In 1981, capitalizing on his decisive victory and leaving no doubt about his expansionist ambitions, Qaddafi announced (jointly with the GUNT) a Libya–Chad merger, an agreement allegedly forced on a reluctant Oueddei.<sup>531</sup>

Qaddafi's military success raised high-pitch alarms in the capitals of U.S.-aligned Libyan neighbors and Western-leaning members of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The bipolar condition was once again the frame of reference for these concerns, as the Libyan offensive occurred concurrently and in coordination with Soviet inroads into the Red Sea area (Ethiopia and South Yemen) and Afghanistan (see sections 5.2.3 and 5.4.1). In Cairo, the offensive against Chad was described as a Soviet effort to "encircle" Egypt

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<sup>529</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*; Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 64; and Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 201–202.

<sup>530</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 163.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*

and Sudan, and, in Khartoum, as a "direct Soviet intervention in the whole region."<sup>532</sup> After expressing similar concerns, the United States, along with France, dramatically increased its military and financial aid to Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco, while boosting its naval presence in the Mediterranean.<sup>533</sup> Partly because of this pressure, but mostly because of his desire to secure the OAU presidency in 1982,<sup>534</sup> Qaddafi played down the merger with Chad, withdrawing his troops (except those in the Aouzou) and allowing OAU peacekeepers to enter the country. Meanwhile, Washington was working actively to arm and train Habré's forces in Sudan, a covert operation carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency, which funneled an estimated \$10 million in equipment to the FAN.<sup>535</sup> In the spring of 1982, Habré returned to Chad and, unopposed by OAU peacekeepers, captured Ndjamena in June, overthrowing Oueddei and becoming the country's new president. Later in the year, in another blow to Qaddafi, the United States urged friendly African states to deny him the OAU chairmanship, which they did in due course.<sup>536</sup>

With his fortunes in decline, Qaddafi once again resorted to the military option. In June 1983, 2 months after Jalloud's visit to Moscow secured a Soviet arms resupply and a friendship agreement in principle, Libyan units, joined by Oueddei's forces,<sup>537</sup> pushed against Habré's army positions in Faya-Largeau. The assault, which included twice as many Libyan troops as those used in the 1980 invasion, dislodged the enemy and forced

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<sup>532</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 209–210.

<sup>533</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 211–213; and Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 164.

<sup>534</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 64.

<sup>535</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 118.

<sup>536</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 191.

<sup>537</sup> Oueddei found refuge in Libya after he lost power in 1981.



it into retreat.<sup>538</sup> Washington was quick to respond, increasing support for Habré's forces, as well as for neighboring surrogates, while putting diplomatic pressure on France to intervene.<sup>539</sup> The French government reluctantly complied, deploying 3,000 troops in an operation known as Manta (Stingray). These actions were sufficient to stop Qaddafi's advance, locking the conflict into a stalemate. In November 1984, the warring parties reached a ceasefire, with both Libya and France agreeing to withdraw their forces from Chad. While France pulled out its entire contingent, Libya withdrew only partially, leaving thousands of soldiers in the country's north.<sup>540</sup> During 1985, a year of subdued hostilities, Qaddafi dug in, building a major airbase at Ouadi Doum (northeastern Chad) and occupying key oases south of the Aouzou.<sup>541</sup> In October, he also made his last trip to Moscow, seeking more military support and a final signature on the friendship and cooperation treaty promised in 1983. While he obtained the former—including SAM-5 missiles, 2,000 military advisors, and diplomatic backing for his role in Chad—he failed to achieve the latter,<sup>542</sup> an early sign of Soviet backpedaling in the regional and global superpower competition.

The final stage of the conflict commenced in 1986. France redeployed its expeditionary force in February and, in a related move (discussed below), the United States carried out air strikes against Tripoli and Benghazi in April. American and French assistance to Habré also shot up, with both countries providing tens of millions of dollars in financial

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<sup>538</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 118. This time around, Qaddafi denied having troops in Chad.

<sup>539</sup> The United States airlifted several thousand troops from Zaire and sent AWACS aircraft to Egypt and Sudan to monitor Libyan military operations in Chad. See Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 318–320.

<sup>540</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 120–121.

<sup>541</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 65.

<sup>542</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 97–98.

assistance and military gear, including Toyota pickup trucks equipped with grenade launchers and antitank missiles. These developments, coupled with softening Soviet support, put Qaddafi on the defensive. In December, Habré, encouraged by Washington, initiated a major military push in northern Chad, crossing the sixteenth parallel. The Chadian offensive, now joined by Oueddei,<sup>543</sup> produced a series of battlefield successes that ultimately ended the conflict. In January 1987, Qaddafi suffered a major defeat at Fada, a Libyan military stronghold, and, in late March, lost Ouadi Doum, "the nerve center of Libyan occupation forces."<sup>544</sup> In the course of 3 months, about 4,000 Libyan soldiers were killed, and Chad's army captured over \$1 billion in military equipment.<sup>545</sup> By June, most of Qaddafi's troops had retreated to the Aouzou, and, in September, the two sides reached a ceasefire, ending a conflict episode that came to be known as the Toyota War. (In 1994, the International Court of Justice ruled against Libya in the dispute over the strip.)

### Egypt

In 1977, Libya fought a brief border war with Egypt. Although it is not entirely clear who took the first militarized action, it was Qaddafi's provocative behaviors that ignited the hostilities. After Nasser's death in 1970, Tripoli and Cairo gradually moved apart, with tensions heightening after 1973. The strengthening Soviet–Libyan military relationship, which led to Qaddafi's rapid arms buildup in the mid-1970s, was a major concern for Sadat, particularly because of its offensive character. In 1976, Libya constructed

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<sup>543</sup> The reasons for Oueddei's betrayal remain unclear, but harbingers of changing geopolitical conditions, in particular U.S. bolder moves against Qaddafi, likely played a decisive role in it.

<sup>544</sup> Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 121.

<sup>545</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 66.

fortifications along the border with Egypt, boosting its troop presence there, whereas the Soviet Union, in a move directly contributing to the conflict, built a radar installation designed to collect intelligence on Egyptian air defenses.<sup>546</sup> Qaddafi's 1977 military expansion into Chad and his activism in the Red Sea area, both backed by Moscow, aggravated the situation, multiplying Egypt's vulnerabilities. Besides these developments, Tripoli undertook active efforts to destabilize the regime in Cairo. Qaddafi harbored deep animosity against Sadat, repeatedly calling him "a friend of Zionism and imperialism."<sup>547</sup> In January 1977, after intense Libyan propaganda and support for opposition groups, Egypt was hit by widespread food riots, which were "the most serious antigovernment protests since the 1952 revolution in terms of mass participation, loss of life and property, means used to restore order, and challenge posed to Sadat's hold to power."<sup>548</sup> In June, aiming to block Sadat's peace overtures to Israel, Qaddafi sent thousands of Libyans in a march to Cairo, and, when the crowd was stopped at the border, Libyan artillery fired on Egyptian forces.<sup>549</sup>

The breaking point was reached in the following month. On July 16, Libyan troops attacked Egyptian positions along the border, and, on July 21, Egypt countered with a punitive raid, sending planes and armor into Cyrenaica.<sup>550</sup> In the 3 days of fighting that ensued, Egypt's military conducted airstrikes against Libyan radar installations (manned by Soviet advisors) and the al-Adem airfield, while also hitting some border villages.

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<sup>546</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 109. The radar installation was also used to monitor U.S. and NATO operations in the area.

<sup>547</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 105.

<sup>548</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 110.

<sup>549</sup> Colgan, *Petro-Aggression*, 138.

<sup>550</sup> Cordesman, *A tragedy of arms*, 191.

Libya used air force and surface-to-air missiles, claiming to have downed nine Egyptian planes, and artillery, shelling the border town of Sallum. Each side suffered casualties and equipment losses, although estimates of their magnitude are uncertain.<sup>551</sup> The fighting lasted until July 24, when Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), managed to broker a ceasefire. Both superpowers stood behind their respective clients during the conflict. The United States supplied combat intelligence to Egypt, while the Soviet Union jammed Egyptian radar systems and conducted reconnaissance flights from Libyan bases.<sup>552</sup> The destabilization effects of superpower involvement were evident both before and after the onset of hostilities. The bipolar condition increased the density of security threats faced by both sides, brought their power levels to an unstable point of parity, and led to more intense hostilities (see section 3.2.2). It also had an immediate contagion effect, with pro-Soviet Algeria making military threats against Egypt and with pro-U.S. Sudan backing Cairo.<sup>553</sup>

### Tanzania

Libya was involved in two conflict episodes with Tanzania (1972 and 1978–79), both resulting from Qaddafi's support for the brutal dictatorship of Uganda's Idi Amin. In January 1971, Amin, a virulent anticommunist at the time (just like his Libyan

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<sup>551</sup> Some sources report that each side lost about 50 troops, but others estimate Libyan losses at about 300, a number that includes Soviet advisors. (Jalloud admitted some 30 deaths.) In terms of equipment, Libya lost about 10 planes and 30 tanks. See *ibid.*; Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 110; and Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 60.

<sup>552</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 16, 85. After the conflict, Qaddafi "portrayed the Soviet Union as a 'sincere friend' that had fought 'by our side against imperialism, colonial exploitation, and racism'" (quoted in *ibid.*, 85).

<sup>553</sup> Like Libya and Algeria, which drew closer together with the signing of the Hassi Messaoud Treaty of 1975, Egypt and Sudan deepened their security ties by concluding a defense pact in 1976. Both agreements reflected the bipolar superpower alignments described in section 5.2.3.

counterpart), executed a military coup, overthrowing the regime of Milton Obote. The coup's success was largely due to assistance by Great Britain and Israel, both of which were alarmed by Obote's deepening ties with China and Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe.<sup>554</sup> After his removal from power, Obote found refuge in neighboring Tanzania and, in the course of a year, mobilized a force of Ugandan exiles (the so-called People's Army) with Tanzanian logistical and military support. Enraged by these developments, Amin requested British and Israeli help, including the canceling of Ugandan debt and the supply of warships for an attack on Tanzania.<sup>555</sup> After London and Jerusalem, now both having second thoughts, refused to meet these demands, Amin forged a closer relationship with Qaddafi, who offered oil, money, and military assistance, and severed diplomatic relations with Israel (March 1972).<sup>556</sup> In September 1972, when Obote's forces, backed by Tanzanian troops, launched small-scale incursions against Uganda, Libya sent troops and military equipment to Amin, repelling the attackers. Libya and Tanzania narrowly escaped a full-scale war, thanks to mediation by Somalia's Siad Barre.<sup>557</sup> Coming at a time of U.S.–Libyan conciliation, the episode saw no involvement from the United States, which had poor relations with Tanzania.

The second, more significant Libyan intervention occurred in early 1979. After Qaddafi's strategic realignment of the mid-1970s, the military relationship between Libya and Uganda strengthened, and so did that between Moscow and Kampala. In March 1977, at a time of growing Libyan hostility against Egypt and Sudan, Qaddafi announced that

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<sup>554</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 111.

<sup>555</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 145–146.

<sup>556</sup> Qaddafi's support for Amin was motivated both by the latter's distancing from Israel and by Uganda's geographically strategic position next to Sudan. See Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 85.

<sup>557</sup> Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 112.

"whoever declares war on President Amin, declares it on Libya."<sup>558</sup> In November, Amin boasted that Uganda hosted two Soviet squadrons of MIG-17 and MIG-21 planes, along with military advisors and, during the following 2 months, went on to sign trade and technical cooperation agreements with Tripoli and Moscow.<sup>559</sup> Emboldened by this support, and facing army unrest in the fall of 1978 (unrest blamed on Tanzania), Amin attacked his southern neighbor in October, seeking to crack down on Ugandan exiles operating across the border and to annex the Kagera salient west of Lake Victoria. In November, Tanzania counterattacked with regular and exile forces, and the fighting intensified. In March 1979, with Amin losing ground and the Ugandan army in disarray, Qaddafi presented Tanzania with an ultimatum, threatening war if the latter failed to withdraw its forces within 24 hours.<sup>560</sup> After Tanzania rejected the ultimatum, Libya attacked with 2,500 troops, tanks, and planes, hitting enemy targets on both Ugandan and Tanzanian soil. Despite achieving some initial success, the Libyans, who were outnumbered, suffered a series of subsequent defeats (and heavy losses), ultimately retreating to Kampala.<sup>561</sup> The capital fell on April 11, and the remnants of Qaddafi's forces, along with the now deposed Amin, were flown out of the country.

#### United States

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<sup>558</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 62.

<sup>559</sup> Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 101.

<sup>560</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 152.

<sup>561</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 62.

During the 1980s, Libya and the United States faced off in three military incidents, two of which were related to the dispute over the Gulf of Sirte.<sup>562</sup> While partly triggered by limited Libyan actions, these incidents also reflected the broader geopolitical frictions engendered by bipolar penetration. After Qaddafi exploited the double option in 1974, the U.S.–Libyan relationship entered a phase of precipitous decline. Vexed by Qaddafi's growing ties with Moscow, increasingly hostile behaviors (and rhetoric) against the United States and U.S. regional clients, and attempts to sabotage American efforts for Arab–Israeli peace, the Carter administration tried a number of countermeasures. In 1977, it put Libya on a list of "potential U.S. enemies,"<sup>563</sup> and, a year later, refused to sell it "dual use" equipment worth \$400 million,<sup>564</sup> continuing the exports ban previously introduced by Ford. Over the next 2 years, it also blacklisted Libya as a "sponsor of terrorism" (1979) and, after the sacking of the U.S. embassy in Tripoli in December 1979,<sup>565</sup> ended its diplomatic presence in the country (1980). Under Reagan, whose inauguration speech described Libya as a "base for Soviet subversion,"<sup>566</sup> these efforts went further, with Washington closing the Libyan embassy in 1981, embargoing the imports of Libyan oil in 1982, and freezing Libyan assets in the United States in early

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<sup>562</sup> Qaddafi's claim over the 275-mile-wide gulf contradicted the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, according to which states could not claim ownership of territory extending more than 24 nautical miles from their shores.

<sup>563</sup> Libya ranked fourth, after the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. See Wright, *A History of Libya*, 213.

<sup>564</sup> The equipment included 2 Boeing airliners and 400 heavy trucks. See Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 17.

<sup>565</sup> According to William E. Eagleton, the senior U.S. diplomat in the embassy at the time, the incident looked like "a planned military event" (quoted in St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 179). Qaddafi's support for the new Islamic regime in Iran also contributed to the crisis. See Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah?" 203.

<sup>566</sup> Quoted in Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 229.

1986.<sup>567</sup> While these actions heightened the tensions between Tripoli and Washington, Soviet support for Qaddafi—which remained strong from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s—either neutralized or circumscribed their deterrent effect.

It was against this backdrop that Libya and the United States resorted to the limited use of force. The first incident came in August 1981, when a small number of U.S. warships and aircraft entered international waters in the Gulf of Sirte. Although the maneuver was part of a larger military exercise involving 16 U.S. naval vessels (including 2 aircraft carriers), it clearly aimed to test Libyan and Soviet resolve. On August 19, two Libyan SU-22 fighters approached the task force, firing a missile against U.S. F-14 aircraft.

Undamaged, the F-14s returned fire, downing the Libyan jets.<sup>568</sup> Moscow responded immediately, stating that the incident "once again demonstrated the great threat which is presented by the constant presence of American naval and air forces...off Africa's eastern coastline" and citing it as a justification for the defense pact signed between Libya, Ethiopia, and South Yemen (all Soviet clients) on the same day.<sup>569</sup>

The next two incidents took place in early 1986. On March 25, Libyan ships and a ground-based SAM-5 missile site hosting Soviet advisors (Qaddafi acquired the SAM-5s a few months earlier) fired on U.S. planes and naval vessels maneuvering in the Gulf of Sirte.<sup>570</sup> The U.S. force struck back, sinking two Libyan patrol boats and inflicting damage on the missile site. Three weeks later, on April 15, in a raid launched in response

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<sup>567</sup> For a detailed list of measures taken by the Reagan administration, see Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 249.

<sup>568</sup> For detailed accounts of the engagement, see Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 275; and Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 60.

<sup>569</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 112–113.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 237; and St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 84.



to alleged Libyan involvement in a bombing of a Berlin discotheque earlier in the month,<sup>571</sup> Washington dispatched F-111 bombers from a base in Britain, hitting military infrastructure along the Libyan coast.<sup>572</sup> Although the attack apparently aimed to eliminate Qaddafi, targeting his compound in Tripoli, it failed to achieve that objective, instead killing one of his daughters. While the circumstances surrounding both incidents remain sketchy, it appears that Moscow had some foreknowledge of them, trying to warn Qaddafi.<sup>573</sup> It also made an effort to stage a strong diplomatic response, announcing, after the first incident, that it "condemns the aggressive U.S. actions in the most resolute manner and demands that they be stopped" and pledging, after the second, to "continue to fulfill the commitments it has made with respect to the further strengthening of Libya's defense capability."<sup>574</sup> However, by taking a limited diplomatic action, Moscow also signaled that its support for Libya was weakening, a development consistent with Mikhail Gorbachev's struggle in the superpower arms race and his early reevaluation of Soviet external commitments.

#### *Aggressive diplomacy, subversion, and terrorism*

As noted earlier, Qaddafi's outward aggression during the bipolar period was not limited to direct military action. It spanned a wide range of other activities, including aggressive

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<sup>571</sup> Libya's involvement in the bombing was uncertain, and it is likely that the United States used it as a pretext for the raid.

<sup>572</sup> Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 60.

<sup>573</sup> A few days before the April raid, the Soviet Union pulled out its ships from Tripoli Harbor and sent a delegation that "may have carried a message of caution from Gorbachev." (See Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 238.) Some sources also indicate that Moscow evacuated thousands of military advisors before the attack and gave a 1-hour warning to Qaddafi. (See Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 98.)

<sup>574</sup> Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*, 237, 239.

diplomacy, subversion against incumbent regimes, and international terrorism. In some cases, these activities, individually or in combination, were part of an escalatory process that culminated in an interstate military conflict, as illustrated by Libya's disputes with Chad, Egypt, and the United States. In other cases, they did not catalyze into such conflict but were nonetheless significant as sources of international tension and political instability in other countries.

In the realm of diplomacy, the main themes of Qaddafi's activism were anti-Zionism and Arab nationalism. Since his rise to power, the Libyan leader aimed to reduce Israel's influence in the Middle East and Africa. During the period of U.S. conciliation, this effort was carried out with less fanfare and more covertly, apparently not to overstrain the relationship with Washington.<sup>575</sup> In the 1960s, Israel, facing growing Arab hostility in its neighborhood, sought to increase its diplomatic presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, and, by 1970, the number of its diplomatic missions in the area exceeded that of all Arab states combined.<sup>576</sup> This development was a thorn in the eyes of Qaddafi, and, in his first few years in power, he devised a byzantine, yet effective, strategy to thwart it. The approach involved a series of steps whereby Tripoli would establish diplomatic ties with an African state (typically through some form of cooperative agreement), follow up with aid (oil, money, and military assistance) and, finally, taking advantage of the asymmetric

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<sup>575</sup> There is evidence that Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, was involved in one of the early anti-Qaddafi plots originating in Chad, but that the plot did not receive American approval. According to John Cooley, "this was one of the rare occasions when proud Mossad and the American CIA did not see eye to eye." See Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 96, 98–100.

<sup>576</sup> Ronald Bruce St John, "The Libyan Debacle in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, ed. Lemarchand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 126.

relationship, pressure the target government to sever diplomatic ties with Israel.<sup>577</sup>

Indeed, this model was precisely the one used to rupture Israel's relations with Uganda and Chad in 1972. As a result of similar Libyan tactics, by the end of 1973, close to 30 African states, including almost all OAU members, had broken diplomatic ties with Israel.<sup>578</sup>

Following Libya's realignment with the Soviet Union, Qaddafi's anti-Zionist diplomacy became more open and assertive. Although Moscow did not share the colonel's extreme view that the only solution to the Palestinian problem was the annihilation of Israel, it was supportive of his initiatives insofar they served Soviet interests in maintaining patronage among radical Arab states and in curtailing U.S. regional influence. Qaddafi's diplomatic offensive reached its apogee in the late 1970s, focusing on efforts to sabotage Egyptian and American progress toward unwinding the Arab–Israeli conflict. While the main platform for these efforts was the pro-Soviet Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, whose members broke diplomatic relations with Cairo after Sadat's 1977 trip to Jerusalem,<sup>579</sup> Qaddafi also demonstrated activism in other venues. In November 1978, at the Arab League summit in Baghdad, he condemned the Camp David Accords (concluded a month earlier) and called for harsh political and economic boycott of Egypt and the United States.<sup>580</sup> After Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in March 1979, making good on a promise made at Camp David, the Libyan leader toured the capitals of

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>579</sup> The Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries also broke diplomatic relations with Egypt, closing their consulates and cultural centers in the country. Backing the Steadfastness Front, Moscow alleged that Sadat's move was part of a U.S. plot aiming to divide the Arab world. See Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 75–76.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., 86–88.

moderate Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, seeking to mobilize their support against the agreement. Not gaining much traction, however, he also pursued a parallel, more aggressive diplomatic track, rallying radical PLO factions (relations with Fatah, which had moderated over the years, were severed at the end of 1979) in his advocacy for an armed opposition against Israel.<sup>581</sup>

While this anti-Zionist activism was significant in its own right, it was reflective of Qaddafi's larger despotic ambition to reshape the Arab world. Seeing himself as the legitimate heir of Nasser, the Libyan leader believed that his small nation was destined to be the "Prussia of the Middle East," the unifier of all Arabs in a land without Israel.<sup>582</sup> From his rise to power to the mid-1980s, and particularly during the period of U.S. conciliation, Qaddafi made a series of unification attempts: with Egypt and Sudan in 1969 (Tripoli Charter), with Egypt and Syria in 1972 (Benghazi Treaty), with Egypt in 1972, with Algeria in 1973 (Hassi Messaoud Accords), with Tunisia in 1974 (Djerba Treaty), with Chad in 1981 (Tripoli Communiqué), and with Morocco in 1984 (Oujda Treaty).<sup>583</sup> All of these initiatives faltered, not least because they were pursued impatiently and aggressively, through what John Entelis has called a "take it or leave it"

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<sup>581</sup> The radical PLO elements included the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Struggle Front, and Al-Saiqa. These groups gathered in Tripoli in December 1979 to reaffirm the importance of the armed struggle against Israel, and again in January 1983, to reject the peace plan charted by Yasser Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein after the 1982 Lebanon War. See St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 42–44.

<sup>582</sup> These were Qaddafi's words, spoken in 1971: "I envisage that this small people will play the role that Prussia played in the unification of Germany, and that the Libyan people will play this role in the unification of the Arab nation." Quoted in Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 121.

<sup>583</sup> Lemarchand, "Beyond the Mad Dog Syndrome," 7.

approach.<sup>584</sup> Qaddafi often demanded immediate and total union, without regard for his targets' concerns and reservations, and, when such sentiments were expressed, he resorted to blackmail and subversion. As early as mid-1970, at a meeting with Arab leaders in Tripoli, he threatened to incite popular revolt against those who reject unification, a threat that reportedly infuriated Nasser.<sup>585</sup> In September 1973, frustrated with Sadat's delaying tactics, he also sent 20,000 Libyans in a 1,500-mile march to Cairo (the so-called Green March) to demand immediate political union.<sup>586</sup> (The motorcade was stopped and turned back at the border with Egypt.)

By the time Qaddafi forged an alliance with Moscow, his push for Arab unity had all but peaked. Apparently, the Libyan leader had concluded that diplomacy, even if pursued aggressively, would not produce the outcomes sought. Since the debacle of 1967, Pan-Arabism had been on decline, and there was not much enthusiasm for political unions.<sup>587</sup> Qaddafi's arms twisting and activism also caused aversion among Arab leaders, many of whom believed that, at best, he lacked the qualities and charisma of Nasser, and, at worst, he was unstable and dangerous. The prospect for successful union also shrank as both Cairo and Khartoum moved closer to Washington, which no longer had incentives to tolerate Qaddafi's contentious policies.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> Entelis, "Libya and Its North African Policy," 178.

<sup>585</sup> Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 120.

<sup>586</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 75.

<sup>587</sup> Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, 121.

<sup>588</sup> Although Washington was not thrilled by Libya's early unification efforts, it was not particularly concerned with them either. At the time, Egypt's ties with the Soviet Union were still alive, Tripoli had no meaningful relations with Moscow, and, as noted by Blundy and Lycett (*Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 70), Qaddafi's agreements with Cairo and Khartoum "existed more on paper than in reality."

To compensate for setbacks on the diplomatic front, but also to pursue his larger revisionist agenda, Qaddafi frequently resorted to his favorite tools of foreign policy: subversion and terrorism. The gamut of subversive activities was wide, ranging from providing financial and military assistance to rebel groups, to training foreign insurgents, to plotting and supporting coup attempts and political assassinations. These initiatives followed a pattern similar to that of Libya's aggressive diplomacy, remaining more subdued (but picking up strength) in Qaddafi's first few years in power and becoming more overt and ambitious after 1973. Initially, in addition to propping up Frolinat in Chad, Qaddafi focused on providing money and arms to Fatah, PLO's moderate faction led by Arafat. This support, motivated by anti-Zionism, was reflective of the Libyan leader's early endorsement of groups involved in so-called wars of national liberation.<sup>589</sup> As Tripoli drew closer to Moscow in the mid-1970s and saw its oil income rise, its patronage of such and other groups grew apace. Qaddafi started to provide aid and training to radical PLO factions, pinning them against the less violent Fatah,<sup>590</sup> and to extend material help to faraway movements, such as the Irish Republican Army in Ireland and Islamists in the Philippines.<sup>591</sup> In line with Soviet interests, he also offered generous funding to various Marxist and left-leaning forces, including the Red Brigades in Italy, the Somali Salvation Front in Somalia, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 37.

<sup>590</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 94. Some radical Palestinian groups, such as Abu Nidal and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, established bases in Libya. See Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 132.

<sup>591</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 38.

<sup>592</sup> Jon B. Perdue, *The War of All the People: The Role of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 44; and Lemarchand, "Beyond the Mad Dog

As might be expected, the boldest subversive efforts concentrated on countries in Libya's immediate neighborhood, in particular pro-U.S. Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and, to a lesser extent, noncontiguous Morocco.<sup>593</sup> The superpower–client foreign policy unison was again on full display in these efforts, with both Tripoli and Moscow seeking redress: the former for being rejected in the push for Arab unity and the latter for being betrayed by Cairo and Khartoum's realignment with Washington. The two primary targets were, unsurprisingly, Sudan and Egypt. In 1975, 1976, and 1983, Qaddafi, working with the southern Sudanese opposition and enjoying full backing by the Kremlin, orchestrated three abortive coups against Numeiry, the first of which nearly succeeded.<sup>594</sup> Between mid-1974 and mid-1977, Tripoli launched various efforts to destabilize Sadat's government, sponsoring an armed attack against the Technical Military College in Cairo (July 1974), plotting with (and training) tribes in western Egypt for anti-regime action, and providing financial and logistical support for Islamic groups involved in political assassinations.<sup>595</sup> At about the same time, Libya's subversion also turned up the heat on Morocco and Tunisia. In 1975, joining forces with Algeria and the Soviet Union, Qaddafi started to supply weapons, vehicles, and food to Polisario, a rebel group formed in 1973 to fight Rabat over the Western Sahara.<sup>596</sup> In 1980, 6 years after the failed 1974 Djerba

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Syndrome," 8–9. In 1989, at the close of the bipolar period, the United States estimated that Qaddafi had supported about 30 rebel and terror groups since his rise to power. See Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 132.

<sup>593</sup> These were by no means the only proximate targets of Libyan subversion. Qaddafi also supported anti-regime elements in a number of Sub-Saharan African countries, including Burkina Fasso (1982–83), Gambia (1981), Niger (1976, 1982), Mali (1982), and Zaire (1976–86). See table 2 in Lemarchand, "Beyond the Mad Dog Syndrome," 9.

<sup>594</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 109.

<sup>595</sup> Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 96–98.

<sup>596</sup> Because of this coordinated support, by mid-1978, Morocco was on the defensive. In 1978, the United States increased its military aid to Rabat, providing electronic countermeasures against Soviet SAM-6

Treaty, he encouraged Tunisian dissidents trained by Soviet and Cuban advisors in Libyan camps to raid the Tunisian town of Gafsa, aiming to trigger an uprising against the pro-U.S. regime of Habib Bourguiba.<sup>597</sup> In all of these cases, the United States acted promptly, increasing military support for its clients.

Although much less is known about Libya's involvement in acts of terrorism, the evidence suggests that it was particularly active during the bipolar period. Early on, Qaddafi endorsed terrorism as an effective form of political violence, especially in the Palestinian struggle against Israel.<sup>598</sup> In 1972, after the so-called Munich massacre, in which 11 Israeli Olympic athletes were murdered by members of the Black September terrorist group, he flew the bodies of the assailants (all killed during the action) to Tripoli for a martyr's burial. A year later, he also allowed Palestinian and Japanese hijackers of a Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 to land in Libya.<sup>599</sup> Despite these and similar incidents, it appears that Qaddafi's early romance with terrorism was mostly symbolic,<sup>600</sup> a situation bound to change in subsequent years. During the second half of the 1970s, Libya increased its encouragement of Palestinian terrorist activities, eventually ending up on the U.S. State Department's list of states sponsors of terrorism (December 1979).<sup>601</sup>

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missiles and over \$230 million in arms. See Parker, *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns*, 112–113, 116–118.

<sup>597</sup> The United States and France were instrumental in repelling the attack. Washington increased its assistance on an "urgent basis" and dispatched ships from its 6th Fleet to patrol the Tunisian coast. France sent five naval vessels (including two submarines) and troop transports to carry Tunisian forces to Gafsa. See Haley, *Qaddafi and the United States since 1969*, 111–113.

<sup>598</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 178.

<sup>599</sup> Blundy and Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*, 78.

<sup>600</sup> Investigative work by Blundy and Lycett suggests that Qaddafi's early support for terrorism was less material than is commonly asserted. See *ibid.*, 77–80.

<sup>601</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 178–179.



The main terror events came during the 1980s. In March 1984, a Libyan TU-22 aircraft bombed a radio station in the Sudanese town of Omdurman, aiming to silence a broadcast critical of the regime in Tripoli. The abortive operation, allegedly planned by the Kremlin, incited immediate response from Washington, which dispatched two AWACS surveillance planes to Sudan.<sup>602</sup> Continuing with more sabotage, Libya mined chokepoints in the Suez Canal in July 1984, inflicting damage on variously flagged oil tankers,<sup>603</sup> and, in December 1985, sponsored deadly terrorist attacks on the Rome and Vienna airports, providing support to operatives of the Abu Nidal group, which was credited with the carnage.<sup>604</sup> The last, most significant spell of Libyan involvement in terrorism came toward the end of the decade. In December 1988, a Pan Am airliner operating a flight from London to New York was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland. A subsequent investigation of the wreckage implicated two Libyan agents in the event,<sup>605</sup> which resulted in the death of 243 passengers and 16 crew members. Less than a year later, in September 1989, a French UTA airliner flying from Ndjamena to Paris suffered a similar fate over Niger, again with alleged Libyan involvement.<sup>606</sup> The civilian death toll was at par with that of Lockerbie—156 passengers and 15 crew members. It is believed that both incidents were part of Qaddafi's retaliatory response to U.S. and French involvement in the war with Chad.

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<sup>602</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 95.

<sup>603</sup> The mines were traced back to a Libyan cargo ship. See Deeb, *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa*, 153.

<sup>604</sup> St John, *Qaddafi's World Design*, 46.

<sup>605</sup> Wright, *A History of Libya*, 214.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

#### 5.4.3 *Putting the brakes on: the bind of the unipole (1990–2005)*

The shift to unipolarity in the late 1980s was followed by a marked moderation in Libya's conflict behavior. During the 1990–2005 period, the country did not engage in any significant militarized disputes, distanced itself from the Palestinian issue, tamed its subversive activities, and eschewed terrorism as a tool of foreign policy. While Qaddafi maintained some of his ideological rhetoric, particularly with respect to the Arab–Israeli conflict, his voice exhibited "increasingly desperate tone and hackneyed quality."<sup>607</sup> None of this is surprising when viewed through the lens of the theory underpinning hypothesis 2. With the Soviet Union out of the regional scene, the superpower competition disappeared, the double option was no longer at the disposal of local states, and Libya lost its prolific arms supplier and powerful military and diplomatic backer. At the same time, the United States preserved and even enhanced its regional position, taking advantage of the power vacuum left by Soviet retrenchment. As articulated by the White House, its policy goals in the region during the 1990s were to contain revisionist states (mainly the petrostates of Iraq, Iran, and Libya), seek "a comprehensive breakthrough to Middle East peace," and maintain "the free flow of oil at reasonable prices."<sup>608</sup> In pursuing these objectives, Washington frequently resorted to economic and diplomatic coercion (sanctions), an approach to hegemonic management that profoundly affected Libyan foreign policy.

As noted in section 5.1, structural and behavioral changes rarely occur overnight.

Symptoms of Soviet pullback from the global and regional competition started to emerge

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<sup>607</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 139.

<sup>608</sup> Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, 91.

a few years before the close of the decade, and so did symptoms of Libyan moderation, particularly after the country's 1987 defeat in the war with Chad. In 1986, facing a stagnating economy and declining aggregate and relative capabilities, the Soviet Union, now under the leadership of Gorbachev, initiated domestic reforms toward economic and political liberalization (the so-called "perestroika" and "glasnost") and started to reevaluate its bilateral relations with the United States. Lagging behind in the arms race, Moscow sought early rapprochement with Washington, making concessions in the area of disarmament and ultimately capitulating in September 1989, when it agreed to decouple negotiations for strategic arms reductions from bargaining over the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.<sup>609</sup> In the late 1980s, preoccupied with the wave of upheavals in Eastern Europe and Soviet republics, it also began to reduce its commitments in the "periphery," including the Middle East. It softened its position on the Arab–Israeli conflict (improving relations with Israel), started to temper the ambitions of its local clients, and, in 1988–89, after a pivotal decision made in 1987, pulled out of Afghanistan, laying bare its regional retreat.

Qaddafi was not oblivious to the changing geopolitical environment. Early signs of Soviet withdrawal were evident not only at the global and regional levels, but also in Tripoli's bilateral relationship with Moscow. As noted earlier, Qaddafi's visit to the Soviet Union in late 1985 was less productive than expected, securing arms resupply, more advisors, and oil deals (albeit for amounts lower than requested), but failing to produce a final treaty of friendship and cooperation. The unprecedented U.S. air raid against Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986, coupled with Moscow's limited diplomatic

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<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 73–79.

response to it, must have served as another warning sign. After the raid, a large Libyan delegation led by Jalloud flew to Moscow, but failed to achieve any major breakthroughs in terms of new Soviet commitments. During the meeting, Soviet officials also raised the topic of terrorism, a taboo in previous diplomatic engagements.<sup>610</sup>

While these subtle developments did not turn Libya into a peaceful state—the bipolar condition survived until the end of the decade—they were a prelude to a shift in the country's behavior. In the late 1980s, fearing Soviet abandonment, Qaddafi showed signs of moderation, apparently aiming to mirror political and economic reforms in the Soviet Union and to issue conciliatory signals for U.S. consumption. In 1987, after the humiliating defeat in the Toyota War, he agreed to put the future fate of the Aouzou Strip in the hands of the International Court of Justice and, a year later, in a sharp reversal from the socialist tenets of *The Green Book*, took initial steps toward economic liberalization, or *infitah*. In September 1988, the ban on retail trade was abolished, as was the state monopoly over imports and exports, except for the oil sector, which remained under tight government control.<sup>611</sup> In the next few years, and particularly during the early 1990s, private shops reopened, professionals resumed private practices, and inefficient state enterprises saw staffing reductions and closures.<sup>612</sup> In 1989, Qaddafi joined with four other countries, including pro-U.S. Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania, in the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), a new organization aiming to foster regional economic cooperation. In a clear gesture to the West, he also embarked on EPSA III (first

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<sup>610</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 211.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>612</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 164.

announced in 1988), which offered more attractive conditions (in terms of cost sharing) for oil exploration in Libya.<sup>613</sup>

Early signs of moderation also transpired in the political arena. In 1988, Qaddafi publically criticized the violent excesses of his "revolutionary committees," whose primary purpose had been to squash anti-regime opposition at home and abroad. In March of that year, he participated in the televised destruction of Tripoli's central prison and a checkpoint on the border with Tunisia, releasing some political prisoners and announcing that Libyans are free to travel. These actions did not amount to much more than publicity stunts, however, as evidenced by Qaddafi's use of revolutionary committees in putting down domestic uprisings in the early 1990s and the creation of new security organizations for political repression.<sup>614</sup> What was more significant was the Libyan budging "charm offensive" with the United States.<sup>615</sup> In mid-1988, in conditions of growing U.S. diplomatic pressure and weakening Soviet support, Qaddafi announced the Great Green Charter on Human Rights, which, in sharp contrast to Libya's track record, called for an end to the arms race and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>616</sup> In 1989, he went on to join UN initiatives on human rights (without any tangible result) and, a year later, made efforts to gain diplomatic access to the new administration of George H. W. Bush, arranging for the release of three European

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<sup>613</sup> EPSA II, launched in 1979, was designed mainly to increase the role of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites in the Libyan oil industry. See St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 175.

<sup>614</sup> These organizations, created in the late 1980s and early 1990s, included the Revolutionary Guards, the People's Guard, and the Purification Committees. See Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 150–151.

<sup>615</sup> Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah? Foreign Policy in Libya," 203.

<sup>616</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 197–198.

hostages held by the Abu Nidal group.<sup>617</sup> In the early 1990s, the charm offensive was in full force, with Qaddafi announcing his new vision of Libya as "the Kuwait of the Mediterranean,"<sup>618</sup> inviting Chad and Sudan to join the AMU, and, in 1993, subserviently likening President Bill Clinton's election to a "star shining in the dark."<sup>619</sup>

All of this conciliatory signaling fell on deaf ears. The United States smelled blood and, in line with its emerging position as a regional hegemon, embarked on a course that would put Qaddafi on his knees. In 1989–90, Washington repeatedly accused Libya of producing chemical weapons at a plant at Rabta, about 40 miles south of Tripoli, and covertly threatened to bomb the facility.<sup>620</sup> Qaddafi flatly denied the allegations, claiming that the plant was designed to manufacture pharmaceutical items. In November 1991, continuing the pressure, the United States and Great Britain demanded that Libya hand over the two agents suspected in the Lockerbie sabotage. When Qaddafi refused, claiming innocence, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 731 (January 1992), threatening to slam him with multilateral sanctions in addition to the unilateral ones imposed by the United States in the 1980s.<sup>621</sup> After Qaddafi again protested, appealing for help to the Arab world and the International Court of Justice (to no avail), the Council passed Resolution 748 (March 1992), which banned air travel and arms sales to Libya, and Resolution 883 (November 1993), which froze Libyan overseas assets and banned the sale of oil equipment.<sup>622</sup> Although Tripoli made four different proposals for handing

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 198, 208.

<sup>618</sup> Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah? Foreign Policy in Libya," 203.

<sup>619</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 46.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>621</sup> The United States extended its unilateral sanctions concurrently with the adoption of Resolution 731.

<sup>622</sup> For a detailed description of the sanctions, see Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 186–187.

over the Lockerbie suspects between 1993 and 1994, none appeared satisfactory to Washington.<sup>623</sup> Continuing the squeeze, the U.S. Congress in 1996 passed the Iran–Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), imposing further restrictions on trade with Libya, along with penalties for foreign companies investing more than \$40 million in the country's oil sector or violating preexisting UN sanctions.<sup>624</sup>

The assortment of punitive regimes pushed for by the United States had a heavy impact on Libya's economy and military readiness. Although the unilateral U.S. sanctions during the 1980s were largely neutralized by Soviet support, they started to bite in the early 1990s and were reinforced by the series of U.S.-sponsored UN resolutions and the ILSA. Libya was about to experience the most difficult years since World War II, including a humanitarian crisis due to embargoed medical supplies and other goods. Between 1992 and 1999, the country's economy grew by less than 1 percent annually, and GDP per capita fell from more than \$7,000 to below \$6,000.<sup>625</sup> The productivity of the oil industry was hit as well, with oil exports revenues dropping by about 35 percent in the first half of the decade,<sup>626</sup> but still accounting for most of GDP. In 2000, Libya estimated that its economy had lost over \$33 billion because of the sanctions.<sup>627</sup> Similar impacts were observed in the country's military sector. By the late 1990s, the combined arms imports of all Maghreb countries were about 10 percent of what they were in the mid-1980s,<sup>628</sup> a

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<sup>623</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 46–48.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>625</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 156.

<sup>626</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 49. The decline in oil revenues was due mainly to sanctions, but also to a drop in oil prices.

<sup>627</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 198.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 3. This decline is in line with the theoretical expectation that, under unipolarity and hegemonic management, the power level of the subsystem will drop accordingly (see section 3.2.2).

development consistent with the disappearance of the bipolar condition. As might be expected, the most affected states were Libya and Algeria, both former Soviet clients. Libya imported a meager \$500 million in arms from 1991 to 1995, and nothing from 1995 to 1998.<sup>629</sup> Equally important was the loss of Soviet advisors, who not only participated in the planning of Qaddafi's foreign adventures but also maintained and operated military equipment. It has been estimated that Libyan forces were able to operate only 30–50 percent of that equipment.<sup>630</sup>

Strangled and isolated by these developments, Qaddafi was in no position to continue on the aggressive course pursued in the previous two decades. Although he criticized Arab states for their faithful observance of the punitive measures taken against his country, he himself started to adapt to the new realities of unipolarity. He diligently complied with the sanctions, except for sending a plane with pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996, and dispatching a diplomatic delegation to Niger and Nigeria in 1997—transgressions so minor they were not even deemed as deserving punishment.<sup>631</sup> After the International Court of Justice ruled against Libya in the Aouzou dispute in 1994, he accepted the decision with no objections.<sup>632</sup> Libya's ties with neighbors gradually improved, both inside and outside the AMU. Most notable was the warming of relations with Egypt, which not only supplied Libya with basic necessities, such as food, but also partnered with it in joint efforts to end the civil war in Sudan.<sup>633</sup> As part of this moderation, Qaddafi also distanced himself from radical Islamic and Palestinian groups, while cutting

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>631</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 50–52.

<sup>632</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 182.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.



support for insurgencies in the Middle East and Africa. In April 1999, after years of quiet diplomacy to find a compromise solution to the Lockerbie standoff, he finally handed over the two Libyan suspects for trial in the Netherlands. (The trial ended in 2001, acquitting one of the suspects.)

While the extradition led to the temporary suspension of multilateral UN sanctions (those were permanently lifted in September 2003), Washington chose to keep the pressure, maintaining its unilateral sanctions regime. Apparently, its end game was to tame Qaddafi to the point of submission, particularly on the issues of Israel, terrorism, unconventional weapons, and access to Libyan oil. If so, it obtained all four. By the close of the decade, the Libyan leader had lost all interest in the Palestinian issue, even failing to attend an October 2000 Arab summit conference in Cairo to address a major Palestinian uprising in the previous month (the so-called Second Intifada).<sup>634</sup>

Subsequently, during the Arab League summits in Amman (2001) and Beirut (2002), he went on to endorse a two-state solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict, abandoning his longstanding opposition to the existence of Israel.<sup>635</sup> After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, he became an "enthusiastic recruit to the war on terror,"<sup>636</sup> providing intelligence to the United States and Great Britain and describing the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan as an "act of self-defense."<sup>637</sup> Two years later, in late 2003, he also took "full responsibility" for the Lockerbie disaster, agreeing to disburse some \$2.7 billion in compensation to the families of the victims killed in the crash, and announced Libya's decision to be free of

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<sup>634</sup> Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 134.

<sup>635</sup> See *ibid.*, 135; and Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 181.

<sup>636</sup> St John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 243.

<sup>637</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 180.

banned weapons, opening his military facilities and arms stockpiles for international inspection.<sup>638</sup>

In the face of this docility, Washington eventually ran out of reasons to sanction Libya. U.S. oil companies also became increasingly eager to reenter the country's oil industry. In 1999, when the multilateral sanctions were lifted, rumors started to circulate that Libya had developed plans for EPSA IV, which was to offer even more attractive conditions for onshore and offshore drilling.<sup>639</sup> In the early 2000s, oil executives ranked Libya as "the top exploration spot anywhere in the world,"<sup>640</sup> and both Tripoli and American "big oil" groups increased lobbying for sanctions relief.<sup>641</sup> These developments, coupled with Qaddafi's capitulation on virtually every major issue of U.S. foreign policy concern, were apparently sufficient for Washington to end its "squeeze" strategy. In 2004, after years of backchannel U.S.–Libyan diplomacy that started under Clinton, the administration of George W. Bush suspended U.S. economic sanctions and agreed to Libyan membership in the World Trade Organization. In January 2005, Tripoli announced the winners of 15 oil exploration licenses, unsurprisingly granting 11 of those to U.S. oil companies.<sup>642</sup> Later in the year, Washington resumed diplomatic and military relations with Libya and removed it from its list of states sponsoring terrorism.<sup>643</sup> In a statement that must have

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<sup>638</sup> Despite Qaddafi's demonstrated interest in obtaining weapons of mass destruction, it remains unclear if Libya actually possessed such weapons or the technology capable of producing them. See Wright, *A History of Libya*, 223.

<sup>639</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 161.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>641</sup> See, for example, Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*, 63; and Joffe, "Prodigal or Pariah? Foreign Policy in Libya," 205.

<sup>642</sup> Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 189.

<sup>643</sup> Wright, *A History of Libya*, 224.

been humiliating for Qaddafi, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that these steps were taken "in recognition of Libya's continued commitment to the renunciation of terrorism and the excellent cooperation it has provided the United States and other members of the international community in response to common global threats faced by the civilized world."<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 225.

## 6 Conclusion

This study began with a sampling of scholarly pronouncements about the conflict experiences of petrostates. It turns out that, when one weeds out the anecdotal from the growing body of relevant literature, an intriguing empirical finding comes to fore: rather than being more frequent targets of external aggression, oil exporters appear to be more frequent initiators of militarized disputes. (See chapters 1 and 2.) Despite accumulating considerable statistical evidence for this regularity, existing research has been poor on theory, particularly with respect to accounting for variations in the conflict behavior of petrostates. As illustrated by historical examples presented throughout the text, such variations have been wide and observable both across space and over time. The aim of this study was to address this gap—a modest undertaking given the larger, ongoing scarcity and cornucopian debates about oil's implications for international security. The effort involved developing detailed theoretical arguments—and corresponding variational propositions—about why some petrostates may be more belligerent than others and why petrostate conflict propensity may differ over time within a single case. This was accomplished through two conceptual experiments: one heeding to the internal political organization of petrostates and the other to structural features of their external environments. Although theory-building was the primary goal of the study, empirical evidence providing preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships was also offered.

## 6.1 Summary

Looking inside the state, the first conceptual experiment ceased on theorizing about the interaction of oil income and regime institutions, suggesting that, all else equal, the conflict-inducing effects of oil would be most explosive in petrostates exhibiting despotic rule. The focus on despotism was motivated by the unique compositional and identity characteristics of this regime type: the high concentration of decisionmaking power in a single individual, the small size and institutional weakness of the group maintaining that individual in office, the emphasis despots place on violence as a method of social control, and the greater propensity of personalist elites to engage in kleptocracy and seek international goods and recognition. Although some of these qualities have been highlighted in previous research, this has been done either without attention to resource considerations or in studies unconcerned with conflict behavior. The theory developed in chapter 3 aimed to close this gap, suggesting that regime institutions could determine how oil income is channeled domestically. Because of their small winning-coalition size, budgetary opaqueness, and affinity to rent seeking, personalist regimes could be expected to have a comparatively firmer grip on discretionary oil wealth—control that could not only prop up their capacity for offense, but also lower the ex ante and ex post constraints imposed on their foreign policy choices. Oil income could reduce personalists' actual or perceived costs of using or threatening military force, strengthen their ability to resist political challenges from above and below (through divide-and-rule strategies), and foment biases of overconfidence (operating at the individual level).

While theoretically plausible, this argument left some puzzles unanswered. As recognized in chapter 3, a domestic-politics perspective is unable to explain why petrostates of the

same regime type have exhibited markedly different conflict behaviors in different periods or localities. To answer this question, a second conceptual experiment was needed—one that abstracts from petrostates' internal attributes and looks more closely at the structural bounds (constraints and opportunities) present in their external environments. These environments, and their effects on petrostate conflict behavior, were analyzed within a system–subsystem neorealist framework, whereby the focus was on the global system's strongest of states, superpowers, and their penetration of regional subsystems containing petrostates. It was argued that regions penetrated by two superpowers (bipolar penetration) would see more competitive balance-of-power orders, increasing the prospect for petrogression. Under such conditions, superpowers would have reduced incentives to constrain oil-rich clients, greater incentives to arm them (lowering their costs of using or threatening military force), and reduced ability to prevent petrostate strategic (constraint-reducing) realignment (double option). Penetration was analyzed in two alternative ways: one that sees it as occurring independently of regional power relations (penetration imposed) and one that sees it as mediated by them (penetration invited).

The hypotheses derived from the two conceptual experiments found strong support in the empirical assessments presented in chapters 4 and 5. Consistent with theory, the monadic tests showed that petrostates led by personalists are particularly potent conflict initiators. Their odds of initiating militarized disputes were found to be more than 3 times those of nonpersonalist petrostates, a result that persisted even when the outcome variable was restricted to use-of-force disputes. The effect of personalism was also evident in statistical models breaking up the nonpersonalist category, with despotic petrostates

exhibiting odds of dispute initiation about 5 times those of their democratic counterparts. An interesting result of these tests was that neither military nor monarchic petrostates were found to initiate disputes at rates significantly different from those of democracies. One possible reason for this result could be the relatively small sample size used in the analysis. It is also possible, however, that these regimes exhibit identity characteristics that inhibit conflict initiation. As suggested in chapter 3, monarchs face the veto power of the aristocracy, and may be more open to pluralistic decisionmaking as a way to maintain domestic legitimacy. For their part, military leaders could be more conservative in the use of force, not least because such use directly threatens the institution they represent.

Like personalism, superpower penetration was shown to be a strong and significant predictor of petrostate conflict initiation. Petrostates located in regions penetrated by two superpowers were found to initiate disputes at rates more than twice those of petrostates located in regions with unipolar or no penetration. This estimate held consistently for two alternative operationalizations and measurements of penetration, increasing confidence in the results. The Libyan case study presented in chapter 5 provided further evidence for the hypothesized relationship. The detailed congruence and process-tracing analysis showed that, despite maintaining the same regime type (and leadership) throughout the study period, Libya exhibited a marked longitudinal shift in its conflict behavior. This shift was traced to a structural change in the country's regional environment: most of Libya's hostile behaviors were concentrated in the period of bipolar penetration (1969–89) and subsided after the shift to unipolarity (1990–2005). In addition to confirming this pattern, the historical analysis illustrated the causal chains responsible for it. During the bipolar period, the superpower regional competition allowed Libya to militarize on a

massive scale (with superpower help) and to exploit the double option, opening more pathways to conflict initiation. These pathways closed after 1989, with the United States using its newly attained dominant position to block Libyan foreign policy revisionism.

## **6.2 Research and policy implications**

Although narrowly focused on explaining patterns of petroaggression, the foregoing arguments have broader theoretical and research implications. The domestic politics perspective highlights the need for resource-conflict studies to incorporate regime variables in their theory-building and theory-testing efforts. Comprehensive assessments of the environmental security literature have singled out inattention to such variables as one of the main obstacles to progress in the field.<sup>645</sup> While some resource-conflict investigations, including those concerned with petroaggression, have occasionally controlled for democracy, this has been done with the use of Polity scores, which are inadequate indicators of regime type. This is surprising because regime variables have been employed in research linking resources (mainly oil) to various phenomena with potential implications for conflict initiation. As noted in chapter 3, scholars have already demonstrated systematic relationships between personal rule and rent seeking, between ruling-coalition size and budgetary transparency, and between oil income and regime tenure. What the present study does is to weave such insights into a theory that accounts for within-group patterns of conflict initiation.

These same considerations have mirror-image implications for the broader literature on autocratic conflict behavior. Since the early 2000s, that literature has recognized that

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<sup>645</sup> See, for example, Koubi et al., "Do natural resources matter for interstate and intrastate armed conflict?" 12; and Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature," 389.



nondemocratic countries are not a monolithic category, either in terms of institutional characteristics or in terms of foreign policy choices. Seizing on personalism, several recent studies have found that despotic regimes are more prone to international violence than both democracies and other autocracies.<sup>646</sup> However, these studies have advanced cursory explanations for their findings. As noted in the theory chapter, they have played down the bleak post-ouster fates of personalists, the prospect for elite unrest in those rulers' inner circle, and their poor performance on the battlefield—factors with potentially conflict-restraining effects. The domestic politics argument offered here could inform a more complete and defensible theory. Most obviously, it adds a resource component to theoretical analysis, recognizing, on the one hand, that regime institutions could determine how resource income is allocated domestically and, on the other, that the effects of that income on leaders' decisional constraints and accountability would be conditional on regime type. Although the focus here is on oil, nothing precludes careful generalizations to other resources and other nontax sources of state revenue.<sup>647</sup>

The domestic politics perspective also highlights a critical distinction between personalist and nonpersonalist regimes: whereas in the former case foreign policy decisions are made by individuals surrounded by sycophants, in the latter they are made by collectivities.

This distinction, seldom ceased upon in the study of despotic conflict behavior, is important, because decisionmaking under conditions of risk differs markedly between the individual and group levels. Applying insights from empirical research in political

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<sup>646</sup> See, for example, Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes"; Reiter and Stam, "Identifying the Culprit: Democracy, Dictatorship, and Dispute Initiation"; and Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men."

<sup>647</sup> Such generalizations should be made carefully because the rents obtained from oil are considerably higher than those obtained from other natural resources.

psychology suggests that personalists' conflict decisions would be more prone to unmotivated and motivated biases—the drivers of "wishful thinking" and inflated optimism (overconfidence)<sup>648</sup>—increasing the prospect for conflict initiation through errors of judgment. While these biases would operate independently of resource income, they are likely to be amplified by it, as political leaders would discount the perceived costs of aggression by that exogenous factor. As discussed earlier, the historical persistence of personalists, including those in petrostates, to initiate conflicts with negative returns is indicative for the presence of overconfidence. Therefore, future research on autocratic conflict behavior should heed more closely to psychological mechanisms of risk-attitude formation at the individual level.

Broader theoretical insights could also be derived from the system-level dimension of the theory. Since the mid-1970s, system–subsystem approaches to the study of international security have been on decline, partly because of increasing scholarly attention to domestic determinants of state behavior and partly because of neorealism's preoccupation with the global level. Structural realist theories, being they globally or regionally oriented, have also fallen out of favor, particularly after the end of the Cold War. These developments, however, have arguably hampered theoretical progress. Explanations of conflict behavior that are grounded solely in domestic politics neglect the fact that the security preferences of states are bounded by external power structures, which determine the constraints and opportunities for foreign policy action. Likewise, structural theories focused solely on the global level sideline the experiences of lesser powers and cannot account for patterns of security interactions within and across geographical regions.

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<sup>648</sup> See, for example, Levy, "Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making."

Following in the footsteps of the "environmental possibilism" tradition,<sup>649</sup> the present study and its findings suggest that a system–subsystem perspective could be a valuable analytical tool in addressing specific empirical puzzles about the conflict experiences of states.

The perspective's value is especially evident in research on oil conflict. Petroleum is a "structurally" scarce nonrenewable resource—that is, it is highly unequally distributed across countries and geographical areas.<sup>650</sup> Its wide economic and military applications, along with the high rents obtained from it, also make it a vital ingredient of power and, hence, a natural focal point of interest for the international system's strongest of states. The system–subsystem perspective allows for examining the interaction between the global and regional levels, with a focus on their most relevant structural traits and actors. Although this approach was used to explain patterns of petroaggression, it could also inform future research on scarcity (blood-oil) conflict. For example, it may be that direct superpower intervention in oil-rich countries would occur more frequently in conditions of unipolar penetration, whereby the unipole, unconstrained by an equally matched opponent, enjoys greater freedom of action.<sup>651</sup> Conversely, it could be that the security interactions of oil-rich countries in regions contested by two or more great powers would be dominated by proxy-conflict dynamics as opposed to direct great power intervention.

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<sup>649</sup> Starr, "Territory, Proximity, and Spatiality," 390.

<sup>650</sup> The concept of "structural" scarcity, introduced by Homer-Dixon in his work on domestic resource conflict (*Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*), refers to unequal distribution of resources and can be extended to the international level. For discussion of the unique geography of oil distribution, see Klare, *Resource Wars*, 44–46.

<sup>651</sup> U.S. military interventions in the Middle East post 1989 provide anecdotal support for this proposition.

While such hypotheses certainly require more careful argumentation, they illustrate the types of questions that could be addressed through the framework proposed here.

In addition to having broader implications for theory, the present study opens specific venues for future empirical work. One such venue is the refinement and enhancement of key concepts and measures. For example, data on autocratic regime type differ by source, and are continually reevaluated and updated. Although Geddes et al.'s regime typology has been used extensively, recent studies have noted that it tends to undercount the incidence of personalism.<sup>652</sup> The concept of superpower penetration and that of a regional subsystem are also open to alternative operationalizations. The empirical assessments presented in chapters 4 and 5 offer such alternatives, but they are by no means exhaustive. Constructing quantitative measures is particularly challenging, both because of a lack of readily available data and because such measures are only partial representations of their underlying concepts (a validity concern).<sup>653</sup> Rethinking how one conceptualizes conflict (the dependent variable) should also be within the sight of researchers. While the statistical tests presented in chapter 4 used data on militarized interstate disputes, the Libyan case study showed that the concept of conflict could be extended to other forms of aggressive behaviors, such as subversive activities abroad and state-sponsored terrorism. Although quantitative measures for such behaviors are not available, there is no compelling rationale for excluding them from descriptive analyses,

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<sup>652</sup> See, for example, Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 336.

<sup>653</sup> Lake's indicators of regional hierarchy ("Regional Hierarchy"), based on Buzan and Waever's regions (*Regions and Powers*), could be a starting point for developing alternative, continuous measures of penetration. So far, such indicators are available only for the United States, but future data collection efforts could extend them to other great powers.

especially in the case of petrostates, which can use their oil wealth to meddle in the internal affairs of other countries.

Future empirical work could also make use of larger samples and more case studies. The sample size used here is relatively small, and expanding it could be pursued both longitudinally, by extending the period of analysis, and by using lower oil-income-to-GDP thresholds or alternative measures of oil availability for determining petrostate status (which would increase the number of countries counted as petrostates). To produce meaningful tests, however, such efforts should use quality data, a challenge for some countries and periods, and be guided by theory, not the desire to serve a statistical purpose.<sup>654</sup> If, for example, oil income is an important factor in theoretical explanation, as it is here, then one's identification strategy should focus on that characteristic and ensure that it is a persistent feature of a country's economy. Likewise, if an investigator's goal is to study patterns of blood-oil conflict, whereby oil-rich states are posited as targets of aggression, then the use of alternative measures, such as oil reserves, could be appropriate. One should keep in mind, however, that most quantitative work in political science relies on significant simplifications and methodological decisions that are inherently arbitrary and would not satisfy everyone. Therefore, future testing efforts should make use of more case studies, which allow for more complete and relevant descriptions of key concepts and causal mechanisms (see chapter 5).

While the dissertation makes no normative or prescriptive claims, its theory and findings could also be used to inform policy. If oil exporters led by despotic rulers indeed pose

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<sup>654</sup> As noted by Walt and Mearsheimer, eschewing theory and operating under "the assumption that truth lies in the data and what matters most is empirical verification" amounts to simplistic hypothesis testing that cannot be trusted ("Leaving theory behind," 438).

major risks to peace—and, by implication, to the health of the global economy—then the international community (the United Nations, individual states, regional organizations) should take both preventive and mitigating measures to counter those risks. Clearly, the most productive policy action would be one that blocks the emergence of personalist institutions in the first place. As noted in chapters 3 and 5, despots consolidate domestic power in successive power grabs and are most vulnerable in the initial period after regime transitions. Therefore, international policy action supporting moderate ruling factions should take place as early as possible, before such factions have been eliminated or marginalized as a political force. In the case of petrostates with established despotic institutions, third parties should pursue policies that raise personalists' costs of aggression. One such effort could focus on empowering broad-based opposition groups that could stage political challenges against the regime and increase its perceived insecurity (and ex post accountability). Most importantly, however, policy action should target the resources available to political leaders. As illustrated by the Libyan case study, diplomatic and economic sanctions (oil and arms embargoes, freezing of foreign assets, travel bans) could be especially effective in inducing foreign policy restraint, particularly if pursued multilaterally.

It should be recognized, however, that policy action has its limits. The system-level dimension of the theory, along with the evidence presented in its support, suggests that petroaggression is partly due to structural conditions that induce great power competitive behaviors and regional meddling. During the Cold War, for example, the two superpowers provided arms, incumbent protection, diplomatic cover, and other types of assistance to some of the most aggressive oil exporters, Libya and Iraq, eyeing to benefit

from their oil wealth while allowing them, sometimes through active encouragement, to initiate costly military conflicts, such as those against Chad and Iran. Paradoxically, then, policy action that might have constrained revisionist petrostates was forestalled by the very actors on which its adoption and success depended the most. Since the early 1990s, U.S. dominance in oil-rich regions, in particular the Middle East, has constrained minor powers, including oil exporters, producing what Benjamin Miller has called "cold peace."<sup>655</sup> As the relative power of the United States continues to decline and new global and regional structural conditions take shape, however, a reversal to more intense interstate conflict dynamics is likely to obtain. If the strongest states in international politics have a preference for peace, then, they should resist succumbing to the types of self-serving behaviors that have sown instability in the past.

#### *A note on limitations*

Every study has limitations, and the present one is no exception. To understand these limitations, it is important to stress what the study does and does not attempt to answer. As stated in earlier chapters, the primary focus here was to develop and test theoretical arguments about within-group variations in the conflict behavior of petrostates. In that framework, petrostate status (attested by the share of oil exports revenue in a country's economic output) was not a variable but what scholars typically refer to as background (or initial) condition. That condition has already been confirmed to be associated with more aggressive state behavior (see chapter 2), purportedly because of some combination of militarization and strategic-oil mechanisms. Thus, the added explanatory layer introduced here sought to account for variations in conflict outcomes on the basis of

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<sup>655</sup> Miller, "When and How Regions Become Peaceful," 232.

variable interaction terms, namely, regime institutions and superpower penetration. These independent variables were hypothesized to mediate the conflict-inducing effects of oil income (the background condition) through opportunity and/or constraints-based causal channels. At the same time, no sweeping claims were made with respect to variations in outcomes across the petrostate–nonpetrostate divide.

Despite this more modest scope, the theory developed in chapter 3 suggests that the foregoing variational propositions likely operate within a larger population of states. The domestic theoretical dimension provides logical grounds for the expectation that petrostates governed by despotic rulers would be more conflict prone not only than nonpersonalist petrostates (a relationship confirmed in chapter 4) but also than nonoil states of any regime type. This follows, in part, from the excess discretionary resource available to leaders in personalist petrostates—a resource that is either more limited or lacking in other cases. Coupled with the compositional and identity traits of personalism (small winning coalition size, outsized international ambition, etc.), this excess resource could be expected to move despotic petrostates to the top of the overall conflict-initiation ladder. Indeed, the Libyan case study, while focused primarily on testing hypothesis 2, provides some preliminary support for this theoretical extension, contrasting Qaddafi's conflict behavior both with that of his predecessor and with that of proximate states that fall outside of the personalist and petrostate categories.

Broader predictive claims can also be inferred from the system-level dimension of the theory. As noted in chapter 3, bipolar (or multipolar) penetration would be expected to create more competitive balance-of-power regional orders, increasing the conflict propensity of all subsystem members. It also implies, however, that this conflict



propensity would be more pronounced among local petrostates, which can use their oil income to more easily overcome constraints imposed by penetrating superpowers. One channel identified as working in that direction was the double option, which, while available to all regional states, was seen as more salient in the case of petrostates, whose oil income could serve as a potent foreign policy tool in any effort toward achieving strategic realignment or extracting concessions from incumbent great power patrons. From the perspective of penetrating superpowers, petrostates' oil wealth was also seen as an indirect offensive asset (absent in nonoil states) that could fuel a proxy competition through the sale of arms (militarization) and petrodollar recycling. As detailed in the discussion of bipolar penetration in the Middle East, both the United States and the Soviet Union took advantage of this opportunity, intensifying the conflict dynamics of the subsystem (see chapter 5).

These broader propositions spanning the petrostate–nonpetrostate divide are certainly in want of further elaboration and empirical confirmation. Historical examples and previous research cited extensively in the theory and case-study chapters provide some preliminary indication for the propositions' real-world plausibility. Yet, readers should keep in mind that these broader hypotheses are not tested directly in the present study, whose primary aim was theoretical development. Research on petroaggression is still in its infancy, and the conceptual building blocks and empirical answers offered herein leave ample room for future work that could confirm, strengthen, or weaken them. Theoretical efforts that cross the petrostate–nonpetrostate divide should be especially attentive to resource curse effects, which are known to have both economic and domestic political implications (see chapter 2). Overcoming data collection limitations, which were one reason for the more

modest empirical approach chosen for this project, should be the highest priority of researchers. As noted earlier, developing global regional classifications, quantitative measures of great power penetration, and other data that cover all states in the international system are formidable challenges that would require extensive primary research. It is the author's hope that this task will be taken up in future efforts.

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