British Colonial Policies in the Arab Region: Sowing the Seeds of Contemporary Middle Eastern Security Sectors?

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Arab security sectors across the Middle East today appear to share a number of generally negative characteristics, including the use of coercion and of the military to control internal dissent, the exclusion of particular ethnic or religious groups from the highest ranks of the security services, allegiance to the state as opposed to the citizen, and pervasive corruption in the judicial and policing systems. These common characteristics are frequently attributed to the role played by the colonial powers during their formation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter explores some of the strategies pursued by the British in four of its Arab territories: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Oman and assesses their effects and long-term influences.

In the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, Britain was responsible for creating or reforming a number of security sectors within its colonies, protectorates and mandates. Britain’s ambitions for the military, police and intelligence services in its various territories were diverse, depending on its regional strategic goals, financial considerations, and the pre-existing socio-political context of each country. In the Arab region, the prevailing rationale behind British rule or military occupation in the nineteenth century was to safeguard maritime access to India. Subsequently, during the First World War, parts of the crumbling Ottoman Empire acquired a new significance on account of their geo-strategic positions or resources. After 1919, commercial interests in the region were renewed by the promise of oil. At the same time, the newly formed League of Nations began to outline the rights and responsibilities of nation states, obligating Britain to prepare the security forces of its mandated territories for eventual self-rule. Nevertheless, despite the decline of the Empire, the granting of independence to Arab states, and the growing influence of new powers in the region, Britain continued to

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promote its own military agenda across the Middle East during the Second World War and beyond. This had long-term effects on the development of the armed forces and intelligence services in its former territories. This paper is divided into three sections: the first introducing Britain’s role and objectives in the development of the security services in each country, the second looking in greater detail at the strategies it used to achieve those aims, and the third considering the legacy of British involvement in the subsequent development of those services.

SECTION ONE: CONTEXTUALIZING BRITISH INVOLVEMENT

Britain’s interests in developing the security sectors in her Arab territories were linked to the nature of her control over each. Table No. 1 below summarises Britain’s relationships with each of the four territories:

Table No. 1: Britain and Armed Forces in Four Arab Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of British Dominion</th>
<th>Period of British control</th>
<th>Created or Developed Modern Armed Forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>‘Veiled’ Protectorate</td>
<td>1882-1914 (Egypt remained formally under Ottoman suzerainty) 1914-1922 (strong British influence remained until 1952)</td>
<td>Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protectorate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Mandate</td>
<td>1921 -1932 (strong influence remained until 1958)</td>
<td>Created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Mandate</td>
<td>1920 -1946 (and influence remains)</td>
<td>Created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>Officially none – part of informal Empire</td>
<td>1891-1970 (and influence remains)</td>
<td>Created</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of these countries were ever British colonies per se, and the mandates in Iraq and Jordan were established in a climate of decolonisation, with the expectation that they would become self-governing within a given period.

1. Egypt
   a. Background: Britain was not the first European power to exercise military control over modern Egypt. Napoleon Bonaparte’s short-lived expedition in 1798 failed to achieve colonial ambitions, but severely weakened the ruling Mamluk power base and created a vacuum filled by Muhammad ‘Ali in 1805. The French retained significant cultural influence and economic ties in Egypt after their military withdrawal, and in the 1820s Muhammad ‘Ali employed a number of French veteran officers of the Napoleonic wars in his military academies. In 1825 an official French military mission was
introduced [McGregor 2006: 79].

After the British military takeover in 1882, the British operated a ‘veiled protectorate system’ whereby its administrators occupied key positions in the Egyptian government. At the beginning of World War One, Britain declared a full protectorate over Egypt replacing the anti-British khedive with his uncle. Egypt gained independence in 1922 after mass popular uprisings orchestrated by the nationalist Wafd delegation. Nonetheless, Britain maintained control of the Suez and strongly influenced governance until 1952. In July 1952, King Farouk was deposed and the Free Officers movement took over. Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser subsequently emerged as ruler of the new republic. Britain was forced to withdraw from the Suez in 1956.

b. British Objectives: Over the seventy year 1882 - 1956 period, British objectives in Egypt shifted. The initial stimulus for intervention was a military takeover staged by an Arab-Egyptian Colonel Ahmed ‘Urabi, designed to wrest power from the Turco-Circassian khedive. Britain moved to protect her privileged rights to the Suez Canal, which provided access to India. A second area of interest was Egypt’s cotton production, which by 1914 made up 92% of Egyptian exports. [Mitchell 1988: 16]. Territorially, Egypt became important in its own right during World War One. Again, the Suez was vital as a transportation hub, and the Allies used Egypt as a staging post for attacking the Ottoman Empire. Egypt remained strategically important during World War Two and from 1940-1942 British forces repelled Axis Powers offensives on Egypt. During the war, Britain periodically employed the Egyptian Air Force alongside the RAF, and made occasional use of the Egyptian Army [McGregor 2006: 232].

c. Britain’s Role in the Security Services: Nineteenth century Egypt differed markedly in terms of socio-economic and military development from other Ottoman Arab provinces that subsequently came under British control. The Egypt that British forces took over was an Ottoman province in little more than name and had been autonomously ruled for centuries by successive Mamluk dynasties and then the Albanian commander Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, under whom a huge modern army had been created and new legislation and policing systems developed. Britain was therefore presented with an already developed security infrastructure in Egypt, although during its occupation it did introduce reforms to the organisation of the army and police and in 1886 created a new police intelligence service, the Special Division in Cairo [Tollefson 1957: 38].

2. Iraq

a. Background: Iraq – formerly Mesopotamia – came gradually under British military control during World War One as British forces wrested power from the Ottoman army.
It was declared a British mandate by the League of Nations at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, frustrating the aspirations of Arabs who had supported Britain in the Arab Revolt in the hope of winning independence. Iraq’s borders took little account of ethnic cohesion. Faced with an immediate anti-colonial revolt by predominantly Kurdish and Shi’ite regions, Britain offered Faisal bin al-Hussain the throne of Iraq in 1921 after his expulsion by the French from Damascus. Iraq gained independence in 1932, but Britain retained control over many areas of Iraqi defence by means of a 1930 bilateral treaty. In 1941, four anti-British army generals allied with the Axis powers briefly took over the Iraqi government, but were overthrown by British Forces who subsequently imposed martial law, internment without trial, press censorship and a ban on political parties. Following World War Two British influence in the region steadily diminished. An attempt in 1948 to renegotiate British involvement in Iraq amid growing public hostility towards Britain was repudiated. Finally, in 1958, the Hashemite Monarchy was overthrown in a military coup, leading abruptly to the demise of direct British influence in the country.

b. **British Objectives:** Britain’s regional interests in Iraq concerned the protection of the route to India and to the Persian – and later Iraqi – oilfields, and of several strategic air stations situated there by defending Iraq against invasions, and maintaining internal peace and security as cheaply as possible [Sluglett 2007: 182]. Britain also had at least a nominal duty to prepare Iraq for self-government, in accordance with one of Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and the establishment of Iraq’s armed forces was a central aspect of the nation-building process.

c. **Britain’s Role in the Security Services:** When British forces first entered Basra in 1914 they found the Turkish Ottoman police gone and deployed British and Indian military police patrols. When they reached Baghdad they recruited local headmen to police smaller towns, and irregular district police for patrolling the outlying areas. In addition to the Iraqi Army, created in 1921, and the Royal Air Force detachment that Britain dedicated to Iraq’s defence, Britain had frequent recourse to a predominantly Assyrian force known as the Iraq Levies. Britain’s ambition for the Iraqi army to retain a purely internal role sparked ongoing friction between British and Iraqi administrators and British fears relating to the emergence of an overly-powerful military elite were realized when a military coup d’état toppled the Hashemite monarchy in 1958.

3. **Jordan**

a. **Background:** Transjordan, like Iraq, was created in the aftermath of World War One as a British Mandate along with Palestine, though in practice the two territories were administered separately. Britain excluded
Jordan from the area deemed eligible for the creation of a Jewish national home, as it was entitled to do under the terms of the Mandate. In late 1920, ‘Abdullah, brother to King Faysal of Syria, laid claim to the territory and was installed by the British as the founder of a Hashemite Emirate. The population of Transjordan was overwhelmingly Sunni, with a small Christian population. The inhabitants of northern Jordan shared trading and cultural links with Syria, while those in southern Jordan had close ties with the Arabian peninsula. Many tribes throughout the region rejected central authority.

Transjordan was declared independent in 1923, but the Mandate apparatus continued to regulate financial and military affairs until 1946 when Jordan became a Kingdom, and British influence in the security sector remained until 1956.

b. British Objectives: In terms of natural resources, Transjordan was an unpromising territory, which Arab nationalists regarded as little more than an arid wasteland, but it did provide land routes accessing the more critical territory of Iraq. In 1934, the Iraqi Petroleum Company’s Mosul-Haifa pipeline was opened. It ran through Transjordan to the British Mandate of Palestine, and thus accorded Transjordan greater importance. Nonetheless, Jordan was viewed by British politicians more as a buffer-zone to Palestine than a valuable territory in its own right [Wilson 1987: 71]. In this respect, Britain was genuinely interested in developing an efficient Jordanian security service which could suppress internal tribal dissent and repel foreign invasions.

c. Britain’s Role in the Security Services: Britain created the Jordanian security forces from scratch. In 1920, a small collection of policemen remained from the Ottoman era and from Faysal’s brief reign in Syria [Vatikiotis 1967: 57]. Britain dedicated a Royal Air Force squadron and an Armoured Car Company to Jordan to assist in defence, and in 1921, ‘Abdullah brought in around 200 infantrymen and created a localized gendarmerie (darak), a battalion of reserve gendarmes, an infantry battalion and a camel troop who formed his private guard. But the new state’s armed forces did not take real shape until 1923 when a British officer, Captain Peake, merged the police and the military into what became known as the Arab Legion. The Legion’s role in defending Transjordan’s borders was supplanted when the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force (TJFF) was created in 1926, commanded by the British High Command in Palestine, not King ‘Abdullah. However, the TJFF struggled to subdue tribal disturbances and in 1931, John Bagot Glubb created the Arab Legion’s Desert Patrol. The Desert Mechanized Force was created soon after.

The TJFF and the Arab Legion were both used externally during World War Two – but the Arab Legion in particular distinguished
itself under Glubb Pasha’s leadership in Iraq and Syria in 1941. The TJFF was predominantly used to guard the Iraqi Petroleum pipeline in the desert, thus safeguarding oil supplies required by British forces. When the TJFF was eventually disbanded in 1948 many of its members joined the Arab Legion.

4. Oman

a. Background: Oman differs historically and culturally from the other countries discussed in that it was never part of the Ottoman Empire, and nor was it ever officially a British protectorate. From the late nineteenth century however, British commercial and military treaties with the Omani sultanate gave Britain increasing control over Omani defence. Britain militarily buttressed the coastal areas ruled by the Al Bu Sayyid family against threats from the interior, where a series of imams vied for tribal support and periodically threatened the coastal regime. The British-Muscat Treaty of 1891 elicited a pledge from the Sultan never to cede any territory to a third power, and over the twentieth century Britain strengthened the Sultanate’s military capacities. In the 1950s Britain backed the Sultanate against the interior tribes and the Saudis in the contest for oil concessions, and in the 60s and 70s British forces fought in the Dhoffar rebellion on the Sultan’s side. Britain withdrew the vast majority of its military troops and bases from the Middle East in 1970 and in 1977 returned its airbases at Salalah and Masirah to the Omani government, ending the period of ‘informal empire.’

b. British Interests in Oman: As elsewhere, British interests in Oman have evolved significantly. Until the early twentieth century, alliances with Oman served to preserve Britain’s maritime supremacy along the Arabian coastline and provided a stopping point en route to India. During World War One, securing oil transportation routes was a central interest, and after the war Oman became important as a telecommunications centre and as part of the south Arabian air route across the empire. New British air bases were built there, which were to become vital during World War Two. The potential for winning oil concessions became an additional incentive.

c. Britain’s Role in the Security Services: As a great maritime nation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Sultanate had a strong naval tradition, yet had no permanent armed forces in the nineteenth century. Instead, the Sultan relied on ‘askaris (armed retainers) and on tribal levies drawn from supportive tribes. When these proved unsatisfactory, the Sultan attempted to create garrison forces to protect the capital, though these were shown to be inadequate in 1895 when the British Government of India felt obliged to protect the Muscat-Matrah area. Consequently Indian Army troops were sent
to defend Muscat in 1913. In 1921, on the recommendation of the British government in India, the Muscat Levy Corps (MLC), a small garrison force, was established to protect key buildings and the Muscat-Matrah road. The creation of a more robust standing Omani army came only in the 1950s, and was directly tied to British oil interests in the peninsula. The oil company British Petroleum Development Oman funded the creation of the Muscat and Oman Field Force (MOFF) to counter Imamate and Saudi forces in Buraimi. Around the same time the Batinah force, also British led, was established. Between 1953 and 1956 the total strength of the Sultanate’s forces increased from 300 to 1100 men [Peterson 2007: 64]. In the late 1950s a British army officer, Colonel David Smiley, reorganized the armed forces to establish the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF). The SAF were deployed to counter insurgencies in Jebel Akhdar in 1958 and in Dhofar in the 1960s. British officers personally oversaw the operational aspects of war. [Cheney 1984: 19] Oman’s first European-style intelligence agency was established in 1959. Even as Britain’s direct military involvement in Oman was vastly reduced, evidence of its influence at all levels in the security services remained. In 1970, Sultan Sa’di was deposed by his Sandhurst educated son, Qabus bin Sa’id. Until 1992 it was directed and manned at the senior levels by British agents and former army officers. Top level reports were written in English not Arabic [Eickelman & Dennison 1994: 1/25].

SECTION TWO: STRATEGIES

As a colonial power, Britain became known for its pursuit of certain strategies for maintaining overall control of its territories, where possible at minimal cost. Some of these strategies were first developed in India and Northern Ireland, and can be summarized as follows:

1. Maintaining a ‘light British footprint’ on the ground.
2. Minimizing challenges posed by local actors to British authority by:
   a. Limiting the capabilities and remit of the military.
   b. Fostering the dependency of the security services.
   c. Pursuing a ‘Divide and Rule’ policy.
   d. Nurturing a network of informants to keep an ‘ear to the ground’.
3. Reforming and/or professionalizing security services to enable eventual self-rule.

As should be immediately apparent, not all of these strategies were complementary, and frequently there were competing agendas, personalities and bureaucratic mechanisms. In each case study, some or all of these approaches are evident with regard to the
development of the army, police and intelligence services, but British interests and the internal dynamics in each case varied widely, and thus the employment of such strategies played out in very different ways.

1. The ‘Light British Footprint’
The British colonial approach, particularly in the 1920s, of running its territories with a mere skeletal administrative staff, has been contrasted with the more hands-on approach of the French. [Crowdor: 1964] This strategy, which promoted indirect forms of control, was designed to cut costs and preserve a low profile so as not to encourage resistance. It is exemplified in Britain’s treatment of the Sudan where, for the duration of British/Egyptian control, a scant handful of men – almost exclusively Oxbridge graduates – were left in charge. [McGregor 2006: 199]

In Egypt, the light touch principle was certainly the preferred approach of Gladstone’s cabinet. [Mowat 1973: 116]. From the outset, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Dufferin, recommended that British administrators should officially take on only advisory roles in the key ministries, in what has been termed a ‘veiled protectorate’. Dufferin, while supporting the use of European policemen in predominantly European neighbourhoods, wanted the majority of European officers to withdraw after assisting with reorganization and training, leaving a predominantly Egyptian force. In Alexandria, hundreds of Albanian and Turkish police were immediately dismissed. [Tollefson 1951: 3-4] However, some of the broader proposals made by British administrators such as Clifford Lloyd (Inspector-General of Reforms in the Egyptian Ministry of Interior from 1883-1884) had the opposite effect and increased the British presence in the security forces. At the same time, Evelyn Baring, the British Consul General in Egypt between 1883 and 1907, pursued a line of reforms which often ran contrary to the ambitions of the British Cabinet. Roger Owen writes:

“Baring’s actions and arguments … had helped to place Egypt on a path along which the only logical destination was not self-government but annexation. In other words, the country would now be subject to the familiar colonial process by which the more reforms were implemented, the more further reform was seen as absolutely necessary; and that the more extensive these reforms became, the more Baring and the British believed they could only be executed by European personnel.” [Owen 2004: 233]

In Iraq, direct British rule was immediately shown to be disastrous and exorbitantly expensive, with over 100,000 soldiers required to suppress a widespread Kurdish and Shi’a rebellion that broke out in 1920. [Terry 5: 2008]. At the Cairo Conference it was decided that four Iraqi army battalions would be raised to permit the withdrawal of
large numbers of British troops. [Terry 2008: 35]. The Iraqi army did not assume full military responsibility in 1928 as projected but its strength grew progressively. Britain also dedicated a detachment of the Royal Air Force to Iraq’s defence [Slugglet 2007: 182], and throughout the 1920s, Britain pursued the infamous practice of ‘air policing’, whereby centres of resistance were bombed into submission. This was a ‘light footprint’ approach in the sense that it vastly reduced military manpower and costs, but it was a crude policy that reinforced the gulf between occupiers and occupied.

In both Jordan and Oman, the British presence in the armed forces was initially small, limited to the most senior officers and training positions. Post-independence, with the large-scale expansion of the Arab Legion, the British government refused to second large numbers of British officers. In contrast, a large number of British officers and ex-officers were deployed to assist the Omani army in the 1950s, and the British Army played a major part in quashing the Dhofar rebellion.

Overall, it appears that although Britain’s intention was to minimize its own physical involvement, this was not always possible, and, as John Darwin remarks:

“…the Middle East was no remote protectorate to be governed on a shoestring and garrisoned with a corporal’s guard of local levies. It was instead an exceptionally stressful environment in which to assert an imperial claim – as every world-conqueror since Alexander had discovered.” [Darwin 1999: 160]

2. Minimizing Challenges by Local Actors to British Authority

The ‘light touch’ principle required reliance on a predominantly local staff, but since British power in its Middle Eastern territories ultimately relied on coercion rather than on consensus, British administrators could not afford for local agencies to grow too powerful lest they reject veiled British rule. As a consequence they employed various strategies to check this threat.

a. Limiting the Capabilities of the Military:

On the one hand security forces needed to be strong enough to control internal dissent; on the other hand, as heavily armed bodies, military forces represented the most prominent threat to British rule. This was particularly the case in Iraq and in Egypt, where expressions of anti-colonialism gained a strong presence within the military. Britain checked the powers of mandate/protectorate militaries in various ways. Where possible, they were constrained to internal roles, thus limiting their combat effectiveness. In fact, both the Egyptian and Jordanian armies were employed in regional conflicts: Egypt over a prolonged period in Sudan and then during the First World War, and Jordan in the Second World War and
during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. But when the Iraqi government repeatedly offered its army’s services to the British for external operations during World War II, it was turned down.

Britain often strove to limit armies’ size. This was especially the case when it had reason to distrust the army, as in Egypt and Iraq. However, the tactic was not always possible. In Egypt, Britain’s first move in 1882 was to cut the size of the Egyptian Army, which had been involved in the ‘Urabi uprising, to 6,000 [Mansfield 1971: 123]. Despite Britain’s intention to retain only an internal function for the Egyptian army, the need to suppress the Mahdist revolt in Sudan led to its retraining and expansion almost threefold. [McGregor 2006: 193].

At the army’s formation in Iraq, the monarchy wanted a 6,000 man force but Britain set an upper limit of 4500 [Batatu 1979: 90]. At independence the army was immediately expanded and the Iraqi government introduced national conscription in 1934. Britain reduced the size of the Iraqi armed forces again in 1941 after stepping in to topple the ‘Golden Square’ army generals during World War Two, and from 1940 to 1944 numbers shrank from 43,400 to 28,000, although this seems largely connected to lax application of the conscription law. [Silverfarb 1994: 93]

The Omani and Jordanian armies differed, however. In both cases Britain supported the ruler and thus promoted the growth of the armed forces. In Oman, between 1921 and 1953, the Muscat Levy Corps consisted of only a few hundred men, their purpose restricted to maintaining the security of the apparatus of government and the Sultan’s residence. This initially served British interests by securing uninterrupted maritime access. However, the discovery of oil in Oman changed the nature of British interests and necessitated the creation of a more robust force that could quell insurrection in the interior. In Jordan, Britain shared Amir ‘Abdullah’s ambition to bring the tribes under state control, and used the Arab Legion as the principal tool for doing so.

Another controlling mechanism was to restrict the quality and quantity of weaponry supplied to the army, which was also often tied to Britain’s own financial capabilities. It can be seen most clearly with the Iraqi army in the late 1940s when the War Office, fearing another military takeover, refused to release modern tanks and aircraft to Iraq, thus restricting the army’s capabilities in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. [Silverfarb 1994: 101]

Finally, even while constraining militaries as much as possible to the quelling of internal dissent, Britain sometimes tried to use the police instead of the military, even if this meant converting soldiers into policemen. There were various benefits in such a policy. First, the police were less heavily armed than the army, and thus less expensive, and less
dangerous to British authority. Secondly, and as a consequence, the police represented a less conspicuous show of force. Thirdly, the police tended to have a closer rapport with the local community and thus were better sources of intelligence than the army. This could work two ways, however, since the loyalties of the police were generally to their own kith and kin. Jill Crystal notes that Britain, like France, tended to sponsor three types of police forces:

“...a military with significant domestic policing responsibilities, an urban police concerned with crime and civil unrest, and a rural gendarmerie occasionally tasked with civil unrest, assisted at times by a deputized, quasi-privatized rural force.” [Crystal 2001: 472].

Broadly, this was the model adopted in Egypt, where the army, the urban police and the gendarmerie were all used to control dissent, as well as to investigate criminal offences. In addition, the British relied heavily on the pre-existing ghaffir system to monitor and patrol urban communities. By the end of World War One, Egypt had an estimated 50,000 ghaffirs [Thomas 2008: 39]. The ghaffirs were drawn from their local villages and were cheap to maintain but were also prone to corruption and nepotism. For the first few years of occupation, British administrators attempted to imbue the police forces with a civilian-style ethic in contrast to the military, but eventually it was the militarized Royal Irish Constabulary model which took hold, for the gendarmerie and the urban police. Harold Tollefson notes that:

“...as the fear of a coordinated army and police revolt faded, the British came to view militarization of the police forces as economical and useful in the suppression of real or imagined political opposition.” [Tollefson 1951: 11]

This blurring of military and civil roles increased when further reforms of the Egyptian police in the 1890s meant that the urban police came to be composed predominantly of ex-soldiers.

Elsewhere, the division between the military and civil apparatus of state coercion was even less apparent: in Jordan, for instance, the Arab Legion served as an internal policing body for the latter part of the 1920s when its role was supplanted by the Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force. The police and the gendarmerie were attached to the army until the 1950s, coming under the jurisdiction of the Defence Ministry, not the Interior Ministry, and in fact Glubb Pasha’s refusal to relinquish overall command over the police was one of the causes of his eventual dismissal.

b. *Fostering the Dependency of the Security Services*: Colonial administrators used both formal and informal means to maintain their influence over the security services. Formal bilateral defence treaties stipulated that nations were obliged to purchase British arms, appoint British advisors, and to send their officers to British institutions for further training, while at an informal level, Britain
relied heavily on education to instil cultural values into security service recruits. In Jordan, as commander of the Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb set up an Army Education Branch that ran schools from which Arab Legion officer cadets were recruited. Glubb notes that:

“The need of the production of Arab officer cadets, apprentice tradesmen and future NCOs from Arab Legion schools was to become more pressing as time went on. The government schools were saturated with politics, and many school-teachers were Communists. In Arab Legion schools, every effort was made to teach the boys a straightforward open creed – service to king and country, duty, sacrifice and religion.” [Glubb 1957: 263]

In Iraq, ‘Britishization’ was more problematic. A military academy opened in 1921 and employed twenty instructors, fifteen of whom were British and taught British military doctrine. [al-Marashi & Salama 2008: 27] At the same time, however, their efforts were countered by Arab instructors who instilled anti-British views. Sati al-Husri, a Syrian-born product of the Ottoman education system, followed King Faysal to Iraq and as the Director General of Education from 1923 until 1927 promoted a sense of militarism in the public education system, believing that:

“…the army served as a crucial socializing agent to imbue in a new soldier-citizen a cause greater than advancing the interest of his ethnic or sectarian group.” [al-Marashi & Salama: 26]

In the 1930s, his successor, Sami Shawkat, continued the trend of promoting anti-British, pan-Arab sentiment. Britain experienced even greater problems in imparting British values to the police, particularly those operating in rural areas, such as the Egyptian ghaffirs. The police are by nature more subject to societal norms than the military, and British officials struggled to manipulate the Ministries of Justice and Interior due to an insufficient understanding of their finer mechanisms. In 1890, the advisor to the Egyptian Minister of Justice, Sir John Scott, attempted an ambitious overhaul of the Ministry of Justice to move the legal system away from the French model and toward the English one but was forced to abandon his plans due to Egyptian opposition.

Pursuing a Divide and Rule Policy: Both British and French colonial powers commonly pursued ‘Divide and Rule’ policies, favouring one ethnic or religious group – usually a minority – above another and preserving it in the ruling class and upper echelons of the security services. This type of favouritism served (for a limited time) to prevent the consolidation of anti-Colonial nationalist blocs. To a greater or lesser extent, this policy was used in all of the case studies. However, it was not a case of simply choosing and backing one group as British officials were often obliged to practice complex juggling
acts in order to maintain the upper hand.

In Egypt, the British inherited a long-standing system of rule by the Turco-Circassian elite. The Arab-Egyptian ‘Urabi revolt sparked Britain’s military intervention, but once they arrived, rather than staging a high-profile takeover of the key ministries, they continued to prop up the existing regime structure. In the Interior and Justice Ministries however, British administrators waged a long battle to reduce the powers of the mudirs (provincial governors) – traditionally Turco-Circassians – with respect to the Egyptian police. In 1884, for instance, Clifford Lloyd, the under-secretary of state, attempted to bring in a range of reforms which included making the police directly answerable to police inspectors rather than to the mudirs, and placing prisons under the control of prison directors instead of the mudirs. He also wanted to introduce non-Turco-Circassians into mudir posts. The Minister, Nubar Pasha, himself a Turco-Circassian, objected and Lloyd was dismissed, [Tollefson 1951: 16], but the battle between the mudirs and British administrators promoting greater centralized control continued into the 1890s.

In Iraq, the British accepted overall King Faysal’s sharifian and Ottoman entourage – who were overwhelmingly Sunni - as the ruling elite; continuing the exclusion of the Shi’a from political power. Senior Arab army officers were also mostly drawn from the urban Sunni classes, but this meant that in political terms, this was the group that represented the greatest direct challenge to British control. As with the French colonialists in North Africa, British administrators hedged their bets by circumventing the official Iraqi governance structures to make bargains with rural tribal leaders – mostly Sunni, but also some Shi’a and Kurdish. This deprived central government of ultimate control, and provided an economic way of stabilizing rural areas which the British could not control directly. In the 1920s, when the Iraqi Minister of Defence attempted to introduce national conscription as a tool to incorporate Iraq’s disparate communities into a nation and enforce a sense of citizenship, Britain rejected the proposal, fearing that conscription would put the tribes under the control of the Sunni urban elite. [al-Marashi & Salama: 24]. Interestingly, this attitude was at odds with the British stance in Oman in the 1960s: the Sultan himself favoured placating tribal leaders in areas beyond the direct reach of the state, and told his British advisors that ‘if Oman’s little rulers [i.e. the tribal leaders] are all right then so is Oman’ [Owtram 121]. But here, Britain could not accept such indirect forms of rule since greater access to the Omani interior was needed, and therefore the Sultan’s Armed Forces were developed.

The most conspicuous example of divide and rule within the security services in Iraq did not involve Sunni, Shi’a or Kurds, but the
small Christian Assyrian minority. Until Britain’s total withdrawal from Iraq in 1955, the British supplemented their own and Indian-British soldiers and gendarmerie with the Iraq Levies, a predominantly Assyrian Iraqi force, created before the army in August 1919. Its origins dated back to the First World War when Kurds, Arabs and Turcomen had been employed as local scouts. By the close of the war they numbered nearly 4500. At the Cairo Conference in 1921, it was announced that:

“The function of the Iraq Levies... is to relieve the British and Indian Troops in Iraq, take over out-posts in Mosul Vilayat (province) and in Kurdistan, previously held by the Imperial Garrison, and generally to fill the gap until such time as the Iraq National Army is trained to undertake these duties.” [Browne 1932]

Following the creation of the Iraqi Army, many Arabs serving in the Levies were transferred, and Assyrians appointed in their place. In the 1920s the Assyrian Levies provoked resentment amongst the Iraqi Army and much of the Arab populace, who believed – not unjustifiably - that the British favoured the Levies and used them for suppressing revolts and policing to avoid strengthening the Iraqi Army. The Iraqi government officially decommissioned the force after independence in 1933, but most members continued to work directly for Royal Air Force bases in Iraq. In this context, a popular Iraqi colonel, Bakr Sidqi, orchestrated the massacre of 300 Assyrians in Simele. This met with popular approval, as it was seen as evidence that the Iraqi military was ‘emerging from the shadow of British domination’ [al-Marashi & Salama 2008: 32]

The Levies, unlike the Iraqi Army, played an active part in World War Two. In Iraq, where the government was briefly an Axis ally, their most notable victory against Axis Forces was at the Habbaniya air base in 1941. Following this victory parts of the force were sent to fight across Europe and to guard air bases and oil installations in the Middle East. [Solomon 1997]. Although their numbers were cut significantly after the war, they continued to work for the RAF until they were disbanded in 1955.

In Oman, the geographical base of support for the Sultan before the 1950s was so minimal that the divide and rule principle was hardly an option. It was more a case of importing mercenaries or co-opting outsiders who would rely entirely on British patronage. The early Muscat Levy Corps was formed almost exclusively of foreign Baluchi and black African mercenaries. In the 1950s, the tiny ‘Dhofar Force’ composed of jebali tribesmen was replaced by the creation of the Baluchi Southern Regiment, led by Brits and manned by Pakistanis. [Cheney] Even in the 1960s, the early British-led Omani intelligence organisation was supported by ‘headmen’ who were marginalized from mainstream
Omani society. These included Omanis who had fled Zanzibar after its 1964 leftist and anti-Arab revolution and members of minority groups such as the Baluch. [Eickelman & Dennison 1998: 8]

In Jordan, Britain backed Amir ‘Abdullah, whose early administration was composed of the Sharifian elite who had accompanied him from the Hijaz, and of Syrians, Palestinians, Circassians and Lebanese whom he enlisted from outside. The first officers of the Arab Legion were consequently drawn from these groups, rather than from amongst the majority Transjordanian population, much of which eschewed the new authority, demanding a ‘Transjordan for the Transjordanians’ [Vatikiosis 1967: 62-63]. ‘Abdullah also drew his special guard from the minority Circassian population in Transjordan, but with British assistance, worked to incorporate the broader Transjordanian population gradually into the armed forces. Initially this did not include the Bedouin tribes, who were the main targets of the Arab Legion’s operations, but in 1931, with Glubb’s creation of the Desert Patrol, the Legion began to recruit large numbers of Bedouins as a mechanism for incorporating them into the apparatus of the state.

d. Keeping an Ear to the Ground: In view of Britain’s tenuous authority over its protectorates and mandates, the requirement to maintain networks of informants across the territory in order to pre-empt emerging sources of threat was vital. There is no one single model for the early structures of intelligence gathering in the Middle East, which were influenced by a combination of the pre-existing political situation, geographic factors and material capabilities. Nonetheless, the one common denominator amongst these various agencies and networks was that their principle purpose was to reinforce the authority of the state and/or British rule rather than to detect dangers to public welfare. Frequently the prosecution of criminal behaviour was conflated with the suppression of political dissent deemed to threaten British authority.

In Egypt, pre-World War One, operatives within the intelligence chain typically included the urban police, who filed reports relating to dangerous political activity, the gendarmerie and ghaffirs in the provinces, and military intelligence officers in rural areas. In 1886, the Special Division, the first secret police, was established in Cairo. [Tollefson 1951: 38] Nonetheless, in the 1890s, it was to the Egyptian Military Intelligence Director, Reginald Wingate, that the British Cabinet turned for information regarding the new Khedive Abbas Hilmi. [Daly 1993: 224]

During World War One, the focus of intelligence gathering was switched to the war effort. The Arab Bureau, used to collect intelligence from across the Middle East, was based in Cairo, and after the war, Britain experienced difficulties in re-orientating
intelligence to internal affairs. This was particularly the case because both rural and urban police were considered untrustworthy sources of information. [Thomas 2008: 110]. The Mandates of Jordan and Iraq posed similar challenges in terms of intelligence. Britain assumed control over territories with large desert-expanses populated by nomadic and semi-nomadic Bedouins who were, for the most part, unknown quantities. Mandate authorities were under pressure to gain a detailed understanding of the land and the tribes in order to secure their acquiescence. In Iraq, the RAF, who were ultimately responsible for imperial policing there, appointed Special Service Officers and Political Officers who supervised tribal levies in the desert and sourced intelligence reports for the High Commission in Baghdad, although due to the scope of their remit, these were not always accurate [Thomas 2008: 548]. Significantly the British in Iraq relied heavily on their own military officers and agents rather than on Iraqi officers, who were often distrusted. During World War Two, the Iraqi Prime Minister authorized the British to strengthen their position in the Iraqi provinces and assume greater control over the Iraqi police. A number of British officials with long-standing experience of Iraq were appointed to live and travel in the countryside, filing reports on local conditions to the embassy. [Silverfarb1994: 81].

In Jordan, British officers attached to the Arab Legion took on the task of intelligence gathering. The establishment of a criminal investigation branch in 1926, a passport office in 1927, and a fingerprint bureau in 1928 promoted surveillance of the population, as did the introduction of new laws such as the Trailing of Persons Law. [Massad 2001: 152] Again, Oman proved an exception. Since Britain did not seriously attempt to extend the Sultan’s authority into the interior until the 1950s, its intelligence requirements were smaller than elsewhere. Prior to 1958, the Sultan relied on updates from his allies. Prompted by the Jabal al-Akhdar war in 1958, the British insisted on the creation of a military intelligence unit with posts co-located with SAF bases throughout northern Oman. All of its officers were British. In 1971 the Oman Intelligence Service (OIS) was established [Eickelman & Dennison 1998: 8].

3. Reforming and/or Professionalizing State Agencies to Enable Eventual Self-rule
Alongside these strategies designed to bolster British control, there was also a need to professionalize the security services so that they would be capable of standing alone after the British withdrew. Britain stood to gain enormously from strengthening the army, police, and intelligence services to the point where they could withstand internal and external threats, under regimes which would continue, after independence, to be supportive of British interests in the region. The reality,
however, was that strategies employed to achieve short-term objectives generally hindered the fulfilment of longer-term goals. In some cases, however, Britain was obliged to carry out professionalization in order to achieve short-term operational requirements. In Egypt, for instance, a genuine priority of police professionalization in the 1880s and 90s was to cut crime and promote security, or as Lord Dufferin, the Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte, expressed it, to ‘rescue the people from anarchy’ [Tollefson 1951: 1]. In Iraq, even whilst denying the Iraqi army large quantities of modern armaments during World War Two, in 1944 the need to repel the Kurdish rebellion induced Britain to improve the organization and training of the army [Silverfarb 97-98]. The British had opposed the introduction of a conscripted army in the 1920s believing that a volunteer army would be of a higher quality, but in fact they were disappointed that the volunteer force attracted what they classed as ‘undesirable elements’ [al-Marashi & Salama, 2008: 22].

Similarly, in Egypt, one of Clifford Lloyd’s failed attempted police reforms was to make the whole institution voluntary. A subsequent Commander of the Cairo Police (Charles Coles Pasha) noted police salaries were inadequate to attract men of quality, and only procured ‘wasters from the cities’.

‘Professionalization’ in the security services, in addition to improving capabilities, can refer to ethical norms. In the post-colonial period, most historical commentators have viewed British liberal reform principles at that time with cynicism. Indeed, in a climate of World Wars and domestic insurgencies, civil liberties took a distinct back-seat to maintaining order. Even so, the case of Egypt prior to World War One demonstrates that British administrators did intermittently try to push through liberal reforms, specifically in the police and prison systems. As Egyptian society became increasingly hostile to British rule, many liberal reform objectives fell by the wayside as the British administrators resorted to harsher forms of oppression, but it is important to recognize that in the earlier years of the occupation they actually considered liberal reform as a possible means of gaining greater legitimacy within the wider population.

SECTION THREE: LEGACIES
In the years since independence, security forces have undergone a series of reorganizations, and, in the case of Egypt and Iraq, their governments have seen some dramatic regime changes. Equally, in the course of the Cold War, the USSR and the US took over Britain’s position as the main suppliers of arms and training. In recent decades, amidst a climate of international pressure for democratization within Arab countries, security services have been subject to further restructuring. It is therefore important to consider the extent to which the
legacy of British Colonial policies within the army, police and intelligence services has remained, and where it has been supplanted, either as a result of domestic developments or under the influence of post-colonial foreign interventions.

**Table No. 2: Factors Affecting the Security Sectors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Regime Changes</th>
<th>Post-Independence Formative Events</th>
<th>Principal non-British External Influences on Security Sector</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Ba’athist Coup overthrows Qassim but Ba’athists forced to cede power to ‘Abd al-Salam al-Sharif</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Ba’athists regain power</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>1990-91 Gulf War</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>1991 Shi’a Uprising</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>2003 War against Coalition Forces</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>1948 war</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>1950-56</td>
<td>Turbulence following annexation of the West Bank</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>1956 War</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1967 Six Day War leading to influx of thousands of Palestinian Refugees</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>1970 – Black September</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989, 1996</td>
<td>Bread Riots</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Sultan Sa’id overthrown by son Qabus</td>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>1954 – Buraimi Crisis</td>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>1957-59</td>
<td>Jebel al-Akhdar Rebellion</td>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>1963-76</td>
<td>Dhofar Rebellion</td>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>1990 Gulf War</td>
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This final section briefly analyzes how the development of security services in each country has been influenced by the characteristics of post-independence regimes, their relations with third powers, and domestic events. It concludes by highlighting some traits common to many Arab security sectors that bear resemblances to strategies used during British rule and assesses the extent to which they can be linked.

1. Egypt

In the aftermath of the Free Officers’ coup in 1952, the security services were entirely restructured. Personnel associated with the British authorities and the former Turco-Circassian elite were swept aside. Military promotions under Nasser’s Presidency were awarded on the basis of political affiliations to the Revolutionary Command Council, but the Egyptian conscript military reflected a large degree of homogeneity in Egyptian society. The glaring exception was the Coptic Christian minority (10-15% of the population) which despite its active role in politics and the military during the 1920s and 30s, was marginalized from influential positions under Nasser and his successors. At the same time, Islamist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood and more extreme offshoots such as *al-Takfir wa’l-Higra* gained footings within the army and the police, much to the regime’s discomfort [Vatikiotis 1985: 439]

During the 1960s and 70s, the army borrowed significantly from Soviet military organizational models. Between the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars, considerable efforts were made to professionalize the Egyptian army, which appeared to pay dividends in 1973. More competent commanders were appointed, greater cohesion developed, and military education strengthened [Kamrava: 81]. Reliance on Soviet advice and assistance was greatly increased, although Egyptian officers mistrusted Soviet motivations and were thus reluctant to adopt their doctrines wholeheartedly [Eisenstadt and Pollack 2001: 552]. Since Egypt’s 1979 peace agreement with Israel, U.S. military aid to Egypt has flowed, making Egypt the second largest recipient after Israel. In 2009, Egypt received $1.3 billion in military funding [Sharp 2009: 35].

The Egyptian military exercised enormous influence in the political sphere under Nasser, and over 50% of ministerial portfolios were exercised by officers in 1961 [Picard 1990: 198]. Under Sadat and Mubarak, the direct influence of the military in politics has decreased significantly and some attempts have been made to bolster the status and role of the police viz-a-viz the army. In 1966, the Central Security Forces (CSF) were created to perform some of the more heavy-handed policing/gendarmerie functions such as riot control and SWAT. Accountable to the Ministry of Interior, the CSF is composed of police officers and army conscripts.
Following the 1979 Egyptian/Israeli peace agreement the CSF were deployed to the eastern edge of the Sinai bordering Israel in place of the Egyptian army. However, a mutiny by CSF members in 1986 necessitated a reinforcement of state control by the army [Springborg 1987: 7]. At the same time, the army’s defence industry and development of agricultural enterprises has played and continues to play an important part in the Egyptian economy.

The Egyptian regime has placed a high premium on the development of sophisticated intelligence agencies whose duties overlap but whose existence provide a checks-and-balances mechanism for averting the threat of a military coup. These include the General Intelligence Directorate - (al-Mukhabarat al-‘Ama,) and the Military Intelligence (al-Mukhabarat al-Harbiyya) who are answerable to the President, and the General Directorate for State Security Investigation (Mubahath ad-Dawla), controlled by the Interior Ministry, which performs a counterterrorist role [Sullivan & Jones 2008:33]

2. Iraq

The post-independence development of the Iraqi security sphere bears certain resemblances to that of Egypt, where a politicized military overthrew the monarchy and assumed control, before witnessing a “civilianization” of the regime. British Mandate fears over the emergence of an overly-powerful Iraqi military elite were realized in the post-war years. Since British rule ended, Iraq has witnessed three bloody regime changes: one in 1958 which brought Brigadier ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim to power, one in 1963 in which he was overthrown by his erstwhile ally ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif, whose death in 1968 gave way to a Ba’athist military and political takeover, and most recently in 2003 when the Ba’ath Party and its leader Saddam Hussain were toppled by Coalition Forces.

Trained by the British for purely internal security, the Iraqi Army has engaged in a number of regional conflicts since independence: against Israel, Iran, and, in 1991, Kuwait and its allies during the Gulf War. Internally, under Ba’athist rule, Iraq was engaged in almost uninterrupted fighting against Kurdish separatists in Northern Iraq in the 1960s and 70s, and in 1991, following the Gulf War, Saddam’s security forces crushed a Shi’a rebellion in southern and northern Iraq. In addition to the official security agencies, a popular militia – al-Jaysh ash-Sha’abi – was created by the Ba’ath Party in 1970. hugely popular, by 1987 its membership, an estimated 650,000, rivalled that of the army itself. While its role was initially purely internal, it was employed to fight during the Iran-Iraq war. [Picard 1990: 202]

Iraq’s relations with the USSR steadily strengthened following the declaration of the
republic. This had some effect upon the capabilities and doctrine of Iraq’s armed forces, although probably less than has been described. Keen to replace Britain as its main supplier of arms, Iraq made large arms purchases of tanks, helicopters, fighters, armoured personnel carriers and rockets from the USSR in the 1960s and 70s, so that between 1974 and 1978, 90% of Iraq’s arms imports came from Russia. [Smolansky & Smolansky 1991: 27]. One result of these sales was that large numbers of Soviet military advisors were deployed in Iraq to provide training in weapons systems. At the same time, numerous Iraqi Army officers were sent to Soviet training institutes.

Nonetheless, the Ba’ath Party’s antipathy to communists in Iraq stymied relations with Moscow, and in the period after 1978 bilateral relations deteriorated significantly. Eisenstadt and Pollack note in their article on the impact of Soviet military doctrine on Arab armies that although the Iraqi army employed Soviet equipment during the Iran-Iraq War, they incorporated only minor elements of Soviet operational thought and continued to use mostly British based tactics. Indeed, in May 1980 the Iraqi Chief of Staff was preparing for an invasion of Iran based on an exercise conducted under British military supervision at the War College in 1941, although the plan was altered in line with Soviet doctrine to involve heavy bombardments and methodical progression across enemy ground. [al-Marashi & Salama 2008: 130-132].

The transformation from monarchy to socialist military dictatorship changed the bases of power patronage, but did not change the predominance of the Iraqi Sunni minority within the security services. The Kurds and the Shi’a remained largely excluded from the higher echelons. Over the course of Ba’ath Party rule, power over the intelligence apparatus and the military was increasingly concentrated in the hands of family members from al-Tikrit, and promotion throughout the security services was dependent on party affiliation. In addition to the professional security services, in 1970 the Ba’ath established the Popular Army - a militia composed of civilian volunteers, which grew to 600,000 during the Iran–Iraq War. [Kamrava 2000: 82]

Faced with the constant threat of a coup, Saddam created a number of intelligence agencies within agencies designed to report on the activities of members of the security services and/or to protect the President himself. These included the Republican Guard, Saddam’s Fedayeen, and the Special Republican Guard, and they reported directly to the president not the Ministry of Defense. [al-Marashi & Salama 2004: 10]

3. Jordan

Since independence Jordan has remained under the rule of the Hashemite monarchy and maintained friendly relations with Britain.
The Jordanian Armed Forces have continued to send officers to British military institutions, and Britain has continued to supply large quantities of arms to Jordan, although the US became Jordan’s main arms supplier as early as 1963 [Levey 2006: 527].

Despite the absence of any dramatic regime changes, the shape of the security sector has changed significantly since Jordan’s independence. As commander of the Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb oversaw the Legion’s most extensive external operation in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Entering Palestine as soon as the British Mandate expired, Jordanian forces subsequently annexed the West Bank of Palestine and incorporated it into Transjordan in 1950. The Legion expanded rapidly between 1948 and 1956 into a modern army so as to control its newly acquired territory. The Armed Forces again engaged in the 1956, 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, but otherwise the emphasis of the army’s missions has been on maintaining internal stability.

Domestically, the dismissal of Glubb in 1956 heralded the separation of the police from the Army with the establishment of the Public Security Directorate in 1958, and in 1964 the General Intelligence Directorate was separated from the police. The greatest threat to Jordan’s internal stability post-independence has been posed by tensions between East Bankers and Palestinians. These became most serious in the late 1960s when the Palestinian Liberation Front used Jordan as a staging post for attacks on Israel and assumed de facto control over much of the Palestinian population in Jordan. The army and police were deployed to eject the PLO from Jordan in September 1970. Nonetheless, the continued influx of thousands of Palestinian refugees has put pressure on the Jordanian economy, causing further resentment. Palestinians are now estimated to comprise 60% of Jordan’s total population, and have entirely altered the demographics of the Jordanian state.

Following Glubb Pasha’s departure, King Hussain pursued a vigorous policy of Arabizing the security services to placate Jordanian hadari officers who, under Glubb’s command, had been barred from senior positions due to his preference for Bedouin soldiers. Conversely, incorporation of the Palestinian population into the army and police still lags behind. Where they are recruited, they tend to occupy technical rather than combat roles [Vatikiotis 1967: 6].

The intelligence services also witnessed an Arabization process in the post-independence period, although minorities such as Circassians and Christians continued to be disproportionately represented. During the 1960s and 70s Jordan was characterized as a typical Arab ‘mukhabarat’ (intelligence) state, with the remit of the GID growing enormously. The repressive powers of the security forces as a whole have increased in
times of political turbulence, most recently in response to threats posed by Jordanian Islamist movements, although moves towards political liberalization initiated in 1989 have served overall to make the security services less conspicuous.

4. Oman
Although, or perhaps because, Oman was never officially a British protectorate, its relations with Britain in the security sphere have been little interrupted since the British withdrawal in 1970, even while US military links have steadily grown. Oman did in fact undergo a coup, though not a regime change, in 1970 when Qabus deposed his father Sa’id bin Taymur, but this was with British acquiescence. Britain’s own military, particularly the Special Air Service (SAS) and the Intelligence Corps, has played an extensive role in fighting off the insurgencies in Jebel al-Akhdar and Dhofar. In 1973, the Shah of Iran also sent a brigade of soldiers and some helicopters to assist the Sultan. [Eilts 1980: 93].

The Royal Omani Police was established in the 1970s, reporting to a ministry separate from both the Interior and Defence Ministries, and in 1974 the intelligence agency was separated from the military and renamed the Omani Research Department. It was transformed in 1887 into the Internal Security Service.

Oman’s security services have, on the whole, developed bureaucratically into modern, well-organized state agencies. However, in southern Oman, where the Sultan did not gain effective control until the mid-1970s, archaic modes of policing have remained. During the Dhofar rebellion SAS trained jebeli fighters who had defected were formed into firqat teams. Their role was decisive in ending the rebellion. The Sultan has maintained many of these firqat in the post-rebellion years to act as paramilitary policemen for their tribal areas and to assure their loyalty to the Sultan, although the Royal Omani Police now also operate in the mountains [Peterson 2004: 265]. Another combat institution created after the Dhofar rebellion was the Sultan’s Special Force, a counterpart to the British SAS. It was based in Dhofar and initially recruited mainly jebeli Dhofaris [ibid]. Nonetheless, Dhofaris remain underrepresented within the security services. Sultan Qabus undertook an Omanization programme following Britain’s withdrawal, which, by the 1980s, had even permeated the upper levels of intelligence agency. By 1995 only 10% of the Oman military were foreign. [Allen & Rigsbee 2002: 91]. However, the majority of officers come from northern Omani tribes that have traditionally supported the Sultan [ibid].

5. Common Strands
In all cases barring that of Oman, the security services have undergone complete overhauls
since the departure of British colonial powers. Indeed, in Egypt and Iraq perhaps the greatest legacy of British rule has been the backlash against it. Therefore it is curious that current Arab regimes employ some of the same strategies used by the British authorities, resulting in some shared characteristics among their security services.

a. The Blurring of Police/Military Roles: British colonial powers tended to use highly militarized police forces to suppress dissent in the Middle East. Today the roles performed by the police and the army are similarly confused. This ambiguity is attributable to a range of factors. In many cases the police force was not officially separated from the military until relatively recently and the military high command has continued to dominate over the police, creating a situation whereby in some countries, for example Jordan, the police act as service providers to the army. In addition, the military has continued to play an active role in suppressing internal dissent, so that both army and riot police are deployed to control the same situation. Conversely, regimes are aware that this poses the danger that their armies – which overall maintain high public approval ratings – will become unpopular. As a result they have created new militarized branches of the police, or gendarmerie units, whose tasks straddle the civil-military policing divide.

b. The Reliance on Intelligence to Suppress Dissent: Just as the British relied on their informants to pre-empt threats to their authority, so contemporary Arab regimes have prioritised intelligence. Since the colonial period, intelligence agencies have proliferated: the army and the police generally have their own intelligence capabilities in addition to the official state agency. Due to lack of trust within Arab regimes, specific agencies are also commonly assigned to report on the rest of the security agencies, and they report back directly to the ruler.

c. The Exclusion of Certain Social Groups from the Higher Echelons of the Security Services: Britain’s divide and rule policy has a complex and varied legacy within her former mandates and protectorates. Almost without exception, some sort of backlash against former elites took place post-independence, even if the new elite is drawn from the same religious, ethnic or social group as the old one. Therefore, in Iraq, post-independence, the Sunni minority continued to rule the majority Shi’a and Kurdish populations, but under Saddam, the military and intelligence services came to be dominated by a very small Sunni minority drawn from his Takriti kin network. In Jordan, the monarchy immediately pursued a vigorous ‘Arabization’ in the higher ranks of the army following Glubb’s dismissal, reversing Glubb’s trend of favouritism for Bedouin commanders. However, it was then the Palestinians who were excluded from the upper levels of the security sector. Where
Palestinians did join the military and the police, they tended to occupy technical rather than combat roles [Vatikiotis: 1967]. In Egypt, whilst the old Turco-Circassian elite were swept aside, the new minority largely excluded from military command were the Copts. At the same time, the Egyptian military have developed into a class elite of their own, and young officers are generally drawn from this pool. In Oman, the Sultan’s policy of Omanisation finally ended the prevalence of Baluchis at the lower levels of the security services and Brits in senior intelligence and military positions. The armed forces are popular, but despite the establishment of specialist Dhofari units, the vast majority of recruits come from northern, not southern Oman.

Invariably, under post-independence regimes, certain social groups have been excluded from assuming powerful positions within the security services, although it is not clear whether these trends are always the result of deliberate policies or are the result of a process of self-selected exclusion by those who feel disenfranchised by their regimes.

CONCLUSION

What these case studies demonstrate is that although Britain certainly resorted to some of the same tried and tested strategies throughout their colonies, there was no overarching model, because overall objectives differed in every case. So, for instance, whilst in Jordan the British were immediately required to strengthen the armed forces and subdue the tribes in order to create a viable state in the 1920s, in Oman they were content to leave the Sultan with the bare minimum military force until the 1950s when their own requirements for oil led them to create more robust armed forces to combat rebellion. And while in Iraq, the British opposed the conscription of rural tribal populations into the army in the 1920s because they feared that this would reduce British control over these populations, in Jordan Glubb Pasha made concerted efforts to bring Bedouin into the army in order to instil them with a sense of national identity.

Nonetheless, some general trends do emerge, specifically relating to areas where the British were successful, and where they failed with the security services. British army officers achieved some measure of success in creating elite fighting corps composed predominantly of one social group: for instance the Assyrian Levies in Iraq; the Baluch regiments in Oman, and to a lesser extent the Bedouin Desert Patrol in Jordan (lesser because the Bedouin were drawn from different tribes). In the absence of a sense of national identity, these types of formations took on an esprit de corps based on ethnic heritage. Conversely, Britain experienced far greater difficulties in penetrating the mechanisms of the police, the justice systems and the ministries of defence than it did with the army and the Ministry of
Defence. Despite the fact that militaries were trained to act internally, they tended to be assigned with offensive operations and riot control rather than the more complex areas of criminal investigation and the micro-level day-to-day dispute resolution tasks which are common to the police. British administrators found it difficult to take police forces under their control because they lacked sufficient knowledge of the norms and laws of their subject populations, and it was hard to control corruption within these forces because they did not fully grasp the bases of patronage.

Clearly it may be argued that since the modern Middle Eastern state system is a product of the colonial era, Britain is at least partly to ‘blame’ for the failings of security agencies in her former mandates and protectorates. Nonetheless, in light of the diverse post-independence influences on each of the security sectors in question, we should avoid over-estimating the legacy of the British protectorate policies. But since that is the case, how should we account for those traits common to both colonial and contemporary Middle Eastern security agencies? We may find clues by looking at the characteristics of the security agencies of any non-democratic state, in history or today: it cannot come as a surprise that they share many characteristics, when only a finite number of strategies for rule are available to regimes whose control ultimately relies upon coercion rather than consensus.
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