

## The Position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Jordan on the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957

Ismail Mohammed Hassan Al-Wais  
University of Kirkuk, Iraq



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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This investigation focuses on the stand taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, vis a vis the Eisenhower Doctrine made public by the United States in 1957 as part of its containment policy toward Soviet penetration in the Middle East. **Method:** The doctrine took shape after the Suez crisis and the ascendance of Arab nationalism as championed by Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, prompting Washington to offer its allies in the region direct military assistance to compensate for the rising power in the Arab world. **Results:** Saudi Arabia adopted the doctrine with a degree of caution, officially embracing it but did not directly get involved or use it as an excuse for intervention in Arab countries' affairs. This was in light of its struggle to ensure the independence of Arab decision-making atoning between regional relations and international dimensions, in addition to fears of the doctrine as a tool for establishing US hegemony. Jordan's attitude was based on fluctuation, marked by heavy internal and external pressures. At first, King Hussein refused to embrace the doctrine to avoid popular and nationalist backlash, but with economic crisis and external security threats, eventually he could not escape aid offered by the US based on the doctrine with a marginal room for maneuvering. **Novelty:** The article asserts that these responses by each country to the Eisenhower Doctrine indicate the manner in which elements of the Middle East's political realities were entangled at that time; interests in the observance of national sovereignty, in obtaining Western aid, and in responding to rapidly occurring political transformation in the region.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of the cold war and the acute competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for world power, this period was indeed a turning point in the history of the Middle East. That year the United States unveiled the "Eisenhower Doctrine" to contain Soviet expansion in the region and provide countries threatened by it with economic and military assistance. It was formulated at a time when America was increasingly concerned about the growth of Soviet influence in the Arab world, due largely to the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt of 1956, and to what the Western powers saw as the failure to check Nasser's appetites [1].

There were mixed reactions among Arab states to the doctrine, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan displaying different stances on the doctrine as their own internal and external circumstances varied. This stance was influenced by the perceived necessity of Western patronage, a determination to preserve national sovereignty and attitudes towards the currents of Arab nationalism then fashionable. The purpose of this study is to investigate the positions of Saudi Arabia and Jordan towards the Eisenhower Doctrine, and to illustrate the political, economic, and

regional factors that influenced these attitudes, paying particular attention to the political impact of the doctrine on Arab American relations [2].

### **The Position of Saudi Arabia and Jordan on the Eisenhower Doctrine**

After the Suez Crisis of 1956, British and French influence in the region became limited. As a result, American diplomacy moved in with an eye to taking over the region in the place left by Britain and France and the first practical measure of the U.S. policy of ruling and holding control in the area. Western powers pretended friendship with Arab nationalism while disavowing their own allies who had inaugurated the aggression. The real reason behind this policy is believed to have been their concern that the USSR would use the Suez Crisis to increase its influence in the Middle East and help to establish contacts with Arab nationalist movements in that area [3].

The failure of the Baghdad Pact dealt a severe blow to British presence in the region, paving the way for increased American control. This was followed by another significant move when Britain dismissed General John Bagot Glubb iconic symbol of British dominance in the region signaling the beginning of a decline in British influence and a prelude to expanded U.S. control.

Tensions between the United States and Britain over Middle Eastern affairs reached their peak during the Suez Crisis. The war launched by Britain, alongside its allies France and Israel, against Egypt in October 1956 served as a critical test of Anglo American rivalry and marked a turning point for British presence in the region overall [4][5]. The attack on Egypt provoked a sharp American backlash, with U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles accusing Britain and France of promising Israel parts of Jordanian territory specifically the West Bank should the invasion succeed. However, this American indignation is widely considered to have been contrived and formed part of a broader new U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

After the Suez War, the administration of U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower began preparing to succeed Britain's role in the region. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed this approach by stating, "The United States is not acting on a passing impulse, but rather according to a new policy it has designed for the region and is determined to implement. As we see it, Britain has come to an end in the Middle East, and the time has now come for the United States to advance and establish a new order in the region, assuming full responsibility directly [6]."

British Prime Minister Anthony Eden acknowledged this shift by saying, "After our actions in Suez, the United States began preparing to take action in the Middle East, which has now become a threat to their interests. I was certain that this situation would reveal unfortunate consequences in the future, and that further interventions in the Middle East by us, or possibly by America, would be inevitable."

Similarly, General John Bagot Glubb commented, "Britain has lost the Middle East as a result of its actions in Egypt and will no longer have any protectorate influence in the region."

In the same context, British Minister Richard Natting remarked, "After Suez, Britain turned its back on the Middle East and left it to the Americans and Soviets."

Although this statement is not entirely accurate since Britain, despite its withdrawal from Suez, did not completely lose interest in the Middle East the withdrawal effectively symbolized the practical end of British dominance in the region [7].

At the same time, the Suez Crisis intensified the conflict between President Gamal Abdel Nasser and the United States. Consequently, the first idea that came to the mind of U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower was to establish and economically strengthen a coalition consisting of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq to confront the Arab nationalist movement led by Egypt.

This intent is clearly reflected in a memorandum written by President Eisenhower on November 21, 1956, entitled "The United States' Urgent Plan in the Middle East." In it, he called for exploiting the influence of the monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq to diminish President Nasser's prestige and isolate Egypt by forming a federal union comprising these monarchies [8][9].

So the contours of the American plan took shape after the attack on Nasser's Egypt. Essentially, it was a plan to quarantine Egypt and kill the nebulous tide of Arab nationalism that the United States at that time considered more dangerous than communism. The plan was to weaken Arab nationalism by underwriting it in a bloc dominated by monarchies, ostensibly anti communist.

President Eisenhower's plan, in other words, was a direct byproduct of the 1956 Tripartite Aggression against Egypt, which marked the end of both British and French authority in the region. This decline raised American fears that the West's interests in the region were imperiled, and that the Soviets would gain influence. Accordingly, American diplomacy actively sought through this period to supplant those roles of the British and French in the Middle East and to fill in the vacuum created by the Suez conflict.

It was revealed in a January 5, 1957, speech by President Dwight D. Eisenhower before the U.S. Congress requesting authority to use U.S. forces and other assistance to protect the Middle East's territorial integrity. It was time to bluntly challenge the Soviet challenge in the Middle East and protect the flow of oil from the gulf. "The vacuum in the Middle East must be filled by the United States and as it is filled, incidentally, the Middle East gains a good chance for lasting peace," he said. It was adopted by the Congress on March 7, 1957, and signed into law by the President two days later. This was the Eisenhower Doctrine and it had the following important provisions [10]:

1. Authority for the President of the United States to use military force for the purpose of preventing or retaliating against any military aggression initiated or supported by terrorists, resulting in an act of aggression on the United States or any of its armed forces stationed abroad, the safety of which is threatened by such aggression.
2. Authorizing the U.S. government to provide military aid programs to any country or group of countries in the region willing to accept it, as well as to offer the necessary economic assistance to strengthen their economies and safeguard their national independence.

Additionally, President Eisenhower requested Congress to allocate \ \$200 million to support the peoples of the Middle East economically and militarily.

The first to conceive the idea of filling the vacuum embodied in the Eisenhower Doctrine was Allen Dulles, the head of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. On November 10, 1956, while British and French forces were still in Egypt, he wrote to his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, expressing his fear of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's growing influence over the pro Western regimes in the region, particularly the government of Saudi Arabia, which he saw as a threat to Israel's security. He also anticipated the withdrawal of British and French troops and warned that this would create a vacuum that only the Egyptian army could fill. Allen Dulles urged the U.S. President to strengthen American presence in the region by maintaining and reinforcing military bases, keeping them in a state of full and permanent readiness, supporting the Baghdad Pact and other military defense organizations, and working to isolate Saudi Arabia from Egypt.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative historical-analytical approach to examine the responses of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957. The methodology involves the systematic review and interpretation of primary and secondary historical sources, including archival diplomatic documents, official state records, political speeches, newspaper articles, and academic literature.

Primary sources utilized in the study include official documents from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volumes covering the 1955-1957 period. These documents offer firsthand accounts of political decisions, diplomatic communications, and internal governmental debates within Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the United States. Additionally, transcripts of parliamentary sessions and official statements by King Saud and King Hussein provide insight into the nuanced stances taken by both monarchies during this period.

Secondary sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, memoirs of political figures such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Anthony Eden, and modern analyses of U.S.-Middle East relations. These sources are employed to contextualize the regional and international dynamics of the Cold War, Arab nationalism, and Western foreign policy in the Middle East.

The study employs comparative historical analysis to contrast the political, economic, and ideological considerations that shaped the responses of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. This includes assessing domestic political pressures, geopolitical alignments, dependency on Western aid, and attitudes toward Arab nationalism and communism. A thematic content analysis is used to interpret and categorize statements, policies, and diplomatic correspondence.

This methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of how these two monarchies navigated a complex geopolitical environment, balancing sovereignty,

security, and regional loyalties in response to American strategic interests. The aim is not only to document historical events but also to interpret the broader implications of state behavior under foreign policy pressure during a transformative period in Middle Eastern history.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech, it is understood that his new policy aimed to link Middle Eastern countries to American politics under the slogan of "filling the vacuum," justified by the need to curb the spread of communist propaganda in the region by confronting the Soviet Union, which sought to expand its influence there. The underlying reason for the U.S. Soviet rivalry was the fact that two thirds of the world's oil reserves were located in the Middle East, as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles openly acknowledged by stating, "The Middle East contains the largest known reserves of oil in the world."

Undoubtedly, this reinforces the impression that the Eisenhower Doctrine was a colonial policy aimed at controlling the region, albeit through a method different from the traditional British colonial approach. This impression of the doctrine's colonial nature is further strengthened by the amount allocated by the U.S. Congress for its implementation, which was 200 million dollars. This sum is undeniably small compared to the vast economic and military needs of the countries in the region, underscoring the American colonial policy of "filling the supposed vacuum" in the Middle East as if the region were subject to international trusteeship, where the departure of one foreign power simply meant the arrival of another, or as if the region were devoid of local populations and forces[11][12].

Accompanying Eisenhower's announcement was a broad American diplomatic campaign aimed at convincing regional countries to accept the policy of filling the vacuum and to receive American aid. The U.S. government recognized the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of persuading all Arab states, including Syria, so it decided to approach each country individually. Given Saudi Arabia's strategic importance in American policy, it was the first to be approached. Several reasons motivated the U.S. government to engage with Saudi Arabia: its strategic location, religious significance, deep economic, oil, and military interests (especially the Dhahran base agreement), its lack of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and its anti communist stance. Additionally, anti American sentiment in Saudi Arabia was significantly less than in Egypt and Syria, despite Saudi Arabia's alliance with those countries. Moreover, King Saud wielded considerable influence over Arab kings and presidents, and he felt that the increasing pressure from the Arab liberation movements in the region could only be resisted with American support, especially through the use of the Dhahran military base. Lastly, King Saud sought to magnify President Gamal Abdel Nasser's role in the region[13][14][15].

The American ambassador in Jeddah, Butterworth, met with King Saud on the evening of January 5, 1957, the same day the Eisenhower Doctrine was announced. After

discussing the doctrine, King Saud expressed full understanding of it and welcomed American aid, provided that such assistance would be given without political conditions, especially given the potential opposition from some Arab countries to the doctrine. Soviet researcher Primakov noted that the implementers of the doctrine hoped to achieve success first in Saudi Arabia, particularly after King Saud rejected Soviet offers of economic and military cooperation and expressed concern about the increasing Soviet influence in the region[16][17].

Following Saudi Arabia, American authorities promptly reached out to Jordan. This is evident from the meeting between the American ambassador in Amman, Lester Mallory, and King Hussein on January 7, 1957. Mallory officially presented the U.S. government's position regarding the doctrine. King Hussein cautiously expressed his support, emphasizing that the Arabs would not allow any foreign power to "fill the vacuum," since any vacuum that arises would be filled by the Arabs themselves. He welcomed any assistance aimed at developing and strengthening their economy and building military bases to guarantee their sovereignty, provided that such aid did not contradict their sovereignty or hinder their efforts to achieve independence and self determination.

This announcement angered many Jordanian opposition groups, forcing King Hussein to declare that the Arabs would fill any vacuum in their homelands themselves and would not allow any foreign power to do so. He added, "The Arabs welcome all economic and military assistance, provided that it carries no objectives that contradict their sovereignty." However, it seems that King Hussein later softened his stance and sought to accept the Eisenhower Doctrine, driven by several factors: his need for the American friendship umbrella through which he could operate, the necessity of finding a new source of financial aid to replace the British support especially after the termination of the Jordanian British treaty in March 1957 and his doubts about the true commitment of Arab states to the aid pledges they had agreed to provide Jordan in January 1957 as a replacement for British aid [18][19][20][21].

In contrast, the Jordanian government's position differed from that of King Hussein. The government rejected acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine. In a statement, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abdullah Rimawi affirmed the government's refusal of any economic aid that carries political aims or entails foreign influence. Similarly, Prime Minister Suleiman al Nabulsi declared on January 20, 1957, that his government would not allow anyone to intervene in Jordanian affairs under the pretext of defense, emphasizing that the right to defend Arab countries belongs solely to the Arabs themselves, and that the freedom and independence of Arabs are not for sale.

Notably, the rejection was not limited to the government. The leaders of the Jordanian Communist Party sent a protest telegram the next day to King Hussein via the American ambassador, warning him of American colonialism attempting to replace Anglo French colonialism [22]. On January 10, 1957, King Hussein responded to this telegram with a speech in which he announced Jordan's acceptance of any unconditional aid, stressed that the Arabs themselves would fill the vacuum in the Middle East, and

finally warned against spreading communist ideas in the country, asserting that the real danger Jordan faced was not the communists' claims but rather the materialist ideologies they represented.

The parliamentarians strongly opposed the Eisenhower Doctrine. Abdullah Rimawi, Member of Parliament and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in al Nabulsi's government, declared his rejection of the "fill the vacuum" theory and any policy built upon it. He explained that the general policy of the countries aims to liberate the homeland from all colonial influence; therefore, no new foreign influence can be accepted. He emphasized that the policy adopted at that time was "positive neutrality," which is based on rejecting the involvement of Arab countries in any foreign alliances, regardless of their nature, and maintaining non alignment with either bloc [23].

Similarly, MP Shafiq Arshidat announced the National Socialist Party's categorical rejection of the Eisenhower Doctrine, affirming that all national bodies were united and agreed on following the path of national liberation, adhering to the policy of positive neutrality and fighting colonialism in all its conspiracies and alliances. In this context, Socialist MP Hikmat al Masri stated:

"We live under the policy of positive neutrality, which means resisting colonialism and eliminating its influence in all its forms. We accept economic assistance only if it is unconditional and does not infringe upon our sovereignty or limit our freedom [24]."

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood also participated in drafting the statement issued at the Muslim Brotherhood leaders' conference on February 18, 1957. The statement called on Arab countries to be vigilant toward American policies and to adopt a unified stance to thwart American attempts [25]. It highlighted the dangers and volatility of American policies, recalling the tragic history of the United States' actions toward the Arab nation, particularly due to the "Zionist cancer" infiltrating its core. The statement warned against over reliance on the U.S. and revealed U.S. objectives aimed at gaining substantial advantages in Arab countries following the deployment of the American fleet to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba [26][27].

At any rate, we seem to be witnessing a meeting of minds between the Saudi and Jordanian monarchs on this doctrine: both voiced qualified approval of it. They were not so much attracted to the signing in order to enhance the economic and military potential of their kingdoms as to put a check on the burgeoning communist movement in the area, which threatened their very existence. Both sides were scared of the liberation nationalist movement, the Saudi side nearly as much as of the communists, the Jordanian side believed that the then current Arab aid was not enough to fulfill Jordan's potential and developmental needs. As a result Jordan perceived the US project as means by which to obtain more money from the US.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** In conclusion, this research exposes the positions of Saudi Arabia and Jordan vis à vis the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 as responding to two divergent attitudes towards the American policy in the Middle East in light of the

complicated regional and international conditions. The Saudi response was cautious and implicitly negative as part of a drive to preserve national sovereignty and political autonomy and its opposition to a doctrine closely identified with Western hegemony at a time when the doctrine was being used against the emergent Arab nationalist movement dominated by Gamal Abdel Nasser. **Implication** : Jordan, for its part, was in a more delicate position given both domestic and external challenges, and it also partially accepted American assistance which it required to keep the internal order in place and its regional stature intact but with reluctance, and it felt the pressure. These stances reflect the conflicting interests both sides tried to balance as they tried to develop relations with great powers while preserving national principles, and show the need to understand their historical and political contexts in order to analyze states' reaction to international initiatives. **Limitation** : Moreover, the cautious Arab policy toward non Arab influence began during this period with the escalation of the Cold War rivalry in the Middle East. **Future Research** : Future research could explore how this initial cautious stance evolved into more complex foreign policy orientations over time and how such attitudes influenced subsequent Arab responses to later U.S. and international doctrines.

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**\*Ismail Mohammed Hassan Al-Wais (Corresponding Author)**

University of Kirkuk, Iraq

Email: [ismail.unesco@uokirkuk.edu.iq](mailto:ismail.unesco@uokirkuk.edu.iq)

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