

The U.S. Foreign Aid Approach in The MENA Region Implications For Regional Stability and Global Politics

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the implications of U.S. foreign aid in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, analysing how it reflects the broader strategic objectives of the United States and how its aid plays a pivotal role in shaping the region's geopolitical landscape, prioritizing short-term security and strategic interests over long-term democratic and economic development. The findings confirm that U.S. military aid often supports authoritarian regimes, prolongs conflicts, and undermines efforts toward good governance and human rights. These aspects not only contribute to regional instability but also have significant consequences for global politics, including the erosion of U.S. credibility and the strain on international alliances.

key words: U.S. foreign aid, MENA region, Regional Stability, Global politics, Conflicts.

Introduction:

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is one of the most crucial parts of the world in the realm of international relations due to its strategic geographic position, vast energy resources, and complex social and political dynamics. Often called the crossroads of civilization, this region has attracted major global powers because of its rich fossil energy sources and reserves, key maritime routes, and even its cultural and spiritual role as the cradle of major world religions. Furthermore, the MENA region has frequently been at the center of global conflicts, from the Gulf Wars and the long-standing disputes between Arab countries and the Zionist Occupation to more recent issues like terrorism and political instability. As a result, the actions and maneuvers of external powers, particularly super powers like the United States, have greatly impacted the region's stability and development.

Within this framework, U.S. foreign aid has been a significant tool of diplomacy and influence in the MENA region for decades. This aid has included economic support to, allegedly, foster development and stability,

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as well as military assistance. If during the Cold War, it was mainly oriented to counter Soviet influence, the goals of this aid have definitely been later developed to include maintaining key alliances, promoting regional stability and most of all, securing vital interests such as The Zionist Occupation's security and access to energy resources. This is why, foreign aid has become, over time, a key part of U.S. foreign policy, helping the U.S. shape political and security outcomes in this significant region.

Undeniably, since World War II, U.S. involvement in MENA has evolved significantly, reflecting changes in global power dynamics and U.S. foreign policy priorities. This is how during the Cold War, U.S. aid focused on countering Soviet influence, leading to substantial military and economic support for allies like The Zionist Occupation, Egypt, and Iran. At another time, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and especially due the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, U.S. foreign policy shifted toward counterterrorism, resulting in increased military engagement and aid to stabilize conflict-ridden countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Later on, the Arab Spring further reshaped U.S. engagement in the region, as the U.S. faced the challenge of supporting democratic movements while trying to maintain stability in a rapidly changing political landscape characterized by an elevated friction between internal and external actors.

In view of the above, this research paper tends to explore the implications of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region by highlighting the strategic importance of the region, the role of U.S. aid as a tool of influence, and the evolving nature of U.S. involvement. It attempts to provide a setting for understanding the complex interplay between U.S. foreign aid as an extension of its foreign policy and regional dynamics in MENA. It aims to respond to this problematic starting from the following central question:

What are the implications of U.S. foreign aid to the MENA region and how does it reflect the broader strategic objectives of the United States within the Middle East?

In order to answer this problematic, this research paper will analyze the role of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region starting from the following hypotheses:

- 1) The strategic deployment of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region has historically played a pivotal role in shaping the geopolitical landscape, ensuring the security of U.S. allies and deterring adversaries.**
- 2) U.S. foreign aid prioritizes short-term security and strategic interests over long-term democratic and economic development in**

the MENA region, leading to the endurance of authoritarian regimes and the marginalization of efforts toward good governance and the safeguarding of human rights.

- 3) U.S. military aid has contributed to the prolongation of conflicts in the MENA region by strengthening key actors in ongoing disputes, with consequences on the region's stability and global politics.***

The methodology employed in this research combines qualitative and quantitative analysis of U.S. foreign aid policies with case studies from key MENA countries and actors. The Data used in this purpose relates to bilateral foreign aid and was gathered from academic literature, governmental reports, and policy briefs to assess how U.S. foreign aid aligns with broader geopolitical objectives in the region. Additionally, the study makes use of historical and contemporary examples to explore the link between military and economic aid, authoritarian resilience, and conflict prolongation. By applying a comparative approach between rhetoric and action, the paper evaluates the real motives behind U.S. aid and how they affect both regional stability and global politics.

I. Historical Development of U.S. Foreign Aid in the MENA Region

The United States' engagement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region can be traced back to the early 20th century. However, it was after World War II that foreign aid emerged as a key instrument in American foreign policy. This era marked the beginning of the U.S.'s strategic efforts to influence the region, primarily through economic and military assistance. During the Cold War, the U.S. provided substantial aid to counter the spread of Soviet influence, supporting key allies like The Zionist Occupation and Egypt, and aiming to maintain stability in the Persian Gulf. These actions established the foundation for the strategic alliances that have shaped U.S. policy in the region for decades.

As the Cold War ended, there was a noticeable shift in U.S. foreign aid strategy. The focus moved towards peace-building initiatives, particularly concerning the Zionist Occupation-Palestinian conflict, and addressing the growing threat posed by Islamist extremism. The attacks on September 11, 2001, further escalated U.S. involvement in the MENA region, leading to increased military and economic aid directed at combating terrorism and fostering democratization in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. These developments illustrate how U.S. strategic objectives in the MENA region have evolved in response to global power shifts and regional challenges.

Post-World War II and Early Cold War Period (1945-1960s):

After World War II, the United States emerged as a leading global power and initiated foreign aid programs, such as the Marshall Plan, aimed at rebuilding Europe. These efforts were also intended to prevent the spread of communism, which was a key concern during the early stages of the Cold War. The U.S. used foreign aid as a strategic tool to counter Soviet influence and promote a world order based on democracy and free-market economies.

During this time, the MENA region began to attract U.S. attention due to its significant oil reserves and strategic location within the Cold War context. However, despite its growing importance, U.S. foreign aid to MENA countries was relatively small compared to the aid provided to Europe, notwithstanding the fact that the Zionist Occupation and countries like Iran and Egypt began to receive more U.S. attention as part of its foreign policy' broader efforts to secure allies in the region.

As already stated above, U.S. foreign aid in MENA gained momentum after World War II, given that the 1947 Truman Doctrine was a pivotal moment, signalling the U.S.'s intention to support nations vulnerable to Soviet influence. In the MENA region, this translated into providing both economic and military aid to key allies, with the wider objective seeking to promote regional stability while countering Soviet expansion. This strategy was part of a larger U.S. effort during the Cold War to curb communism's spread worldwide, using foreign aid as a tool to reinforce alliances and assert American influence.

During this period, the U.S. established important strategic partnerships with countries like Turkey, Greece, and Iran, which were critical in creating a buffer against Soviet influence. To cite but one example, as a significant event during this time, was the 1953 CIA-backed coup in Iran, which resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and the installation of the Shah as a pro-American ruler.¹ This move highlighted the lengths to which the U.S. was willing to go to maintain its influence in the region. Additionally, U.S. aid to The Zionist Occupation commenced, focusing initially on economic development, setting the stage for a long-lasting and significant alliance in American foreign policy.

The Eisenhower Doctrine and Regional Realignments (1950s-1960s):

The 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine marked a deepening of U.S. commitment to the MENA region by offering economic and military aid to any Middle Eastern country resisting communist aggression. This doctrine was largely

a response to the 1956 Suez Crisis, which underscored the critical importance of the region's oil reserves and the strategic Suez Canal.² The Eisenhower Doctrine resulted in increased U.S. involvement in countries like Lebanon and Jordan, where military and economic aid were provided to support pro-Western governments. This policy reflected the U.S.'s determination to prevent the MENA region from falling under Soviet control, emphasizing the strategic need to secure vital resources and maintain influence over critical trade routes.

During the 1960s, U.S. foreign aid efforts increasingly concentrated on The Zionist Occupation, which was perceived as a vital ally in a highly unstable region. The 1967 Six-Day War was a significant turning point, leading to a substantial increase in U.S. military aid to The Zionist Occupation, which became central to U.S. strategy in the Middle East. This period also saw the U.S. strengthening its relationships with Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, primarily to secure oil resources and maintain a balance of power in the region. This dual approach of bolstering The Zionist Occupation while engaging with Arab nations underscores the complexities and contradictions inherent in U.S. policy in the MENA region during the Cold War.

The 1970s: Oil, Alliances, and the Arab-Zionist Conflict:

The 1970s were a crucial decade for U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region, heavily influenced by the 1973 Yom Kippur War (the October War) and the subsequent Arab oil embargo. The war highlighted the strategic importance of The Zionist Occupation to the U.S., leading to an increase in military aid to ensure its security. At that time, the U.S. recognized the fact that The Zionist Occupation was a vital ally in a region characterized by frequent conflicts and instability. However, the oil embargo exposed the vulnerability of the U.S. and its allies to disruptions in Middle Eastern oil supplies, prompting a re-evaluation of U.S. relationships in the region. During this period, the U.S. had to navigate the delicate balance of supporting The Zionist Occupation while, in the same time, attempting to rebuild and strengthen ties with key Arab states.

In this perspective, the U.S. deepened its engagement with Arab states, throughout the 1970s, using economic aid and arms sales as convincing tools to secure energy supplies and promote peaceful resolutions to the Arab-Zionist conflict. A significant outcome of these efforts was, undoubtedly, the 1978 Camp David Accords, which led to the first peace treaty between The Zionist Occupation and an Arab country, Egypt, which was facilitated by U.S. President Jimmy Carter. This peace agreement was

accompanied by substantial U.S. aid to both nations and marked a significant achievement in U.S. diplomacy in the region.³ The U.S. aimed to leverage foreign aid to foster stability and cooperation in the MENA region, particularly among its strategic partners, amidst ongoing regional tensions and conflicts.

From the Cold War to the Gulf War (1980s-1990s):

During the 1980s and 1990s an escalation in U.S. involvement in the MENA region was noted, driven by events such as the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the First Gulf War. The Iranian Revolution, which replaced the U.S.-backed Shah with a theocratic regime, required a shift in U.S. foreign policy. This led to the U.S. strengthening its ties with other regional powers, particularly Iraq during its war with Iran. The U.S. provided military aid to Iraq, reflecting the changing nature of alliances in the MENA region, where shifting geopolitical interests often needed rapid policy adjustments.⁴ However, this relationship turned, culminating in the Gulf War, which was triggered by Iraq's attack on Kuwait.

At this point, it can be argued that the 1991 Gulf War underlined the strategic worth of the MENA region to U.S. interests as the U.S. led a coalition to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and the war's aftermath saw the establishment of a long-term U.S. military presence in the Gulf. During this period, U.S. military aid to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states increased, reaffirming the U.S. commitment to protect its regional allies, particularly The Zionist Occupation and Saudi Arabia. The Gulf War also marked the beginning of a new era of U.S. military engagement in the MENA region, focusing on guaranteeing the security of key allies and maintaining regional stability in the presence of many threats.

Post-9/11 Era and the Global War on Terror (2000s-2010s):

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, represented a watershed moment in U.S. foreign policy, leading to the launch of the Global War on Terror and significant changes in U.S. foreign aid strategies in the MENA region. The U.S. invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 were accompanied by substantial increases in military and economic aid aimed at stabilizing these countries and combating insurgencies. The U.S. also expanded its aid efforts to other MENA countries as part of its broader counterterrorism strategy, adopting a more interventionist approach in the region. Foreign aid became a critical component of U.S. efforts to support military operations, promote reconstruction, and foster stability in the aftermath of conflict.

During this period, nations like Pakistan, Yemen, and Jordan received significant military aid to combat terrorism and secure their borders. Additionally, the U.S. emphasized promoting democracy in the region as a means of achieving long-term stability, initiating programs such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which provided economic aid linked to governance reforms. However, these initiatives often encountered challenges, including political instability and resistance to external influence. The U.S. strategy in the MENA region during this time reflected a blend of immediate security concerns and broader aspirations to foster political and economic reforms, amidst the ongoing complexities of regional politics.

From the Arab Spring and its Aftermath (2011-Present):

The Arab Spring, which began in late 2010, triggered widespread uprisings across the MENA region, leading to the overthrow of long-standing dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. These uprisings presented new challenges for U.S. foreign aid, as the U.S. sought to support democratic transitions while maintaining regional stability. However, the outcomes of these uprisings were mixed, with some countries descending into prolonged conflict and others grappling with persistent political instability. The U.S. had to navigate these complex dynamics while attempting to align its foreign aid with the rapidly changing political landscape in the region.

In Egypt, for example, U.S. aid priorities shifted to support the military after President Hosni Mubarak was overthrown, resulting in a complicated relationship with subsequent governments. In Libya, the U.S. and NATO intervened militarily to support rebel forces against Muammar Gaddafi, but the country has since faced ongoing instability, raising questions about the effectiveness of U.S. foreign aid in post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, the Syrian Civil War also became a major focus of U.S. foreign aid, with assistance directed towards opposition groups and humanitarian relief efforts. However, the conflict has resulted in one of the most severe and prolonged humanitarian crises in recent history. The rise of ISIS further complicated U.S. aid efforts, leading to increased military assistance to countries like Iraq and Syria as part of the broader fight against the terrorist organization.

In the present day, U.S. foreign assistance in the MENA region is shaped by a combination of strategic priorities, including ensuring the security of The Zionist Occupation, maintaining the stability of key allies such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and containing Iranian influence. However, the

U.S. faces the ongoing challenge of balancing short-term security needs with long-term objectives, such as promoting economic development, governance reforms, and human rights. This balance has become increasingly difficult to achieve as regional conflicts and political instability continue to persist.

The recent Abraham Accords, announced in August 2020 under the Trump Administration, which normalized relations between The Zionist Occupation and several Arab states, represent a significant shift in regional dynamics, with U.S. foreign aid playing a role in these agreements. Nevertheless, the region continues to confront substantial challenges, as these Accords created tensions inside the Arab world between those choosing normalization and those refusing any kind of ties with the Zionist Occupation. In addition to the evoked discomfort, the war on Gaza, ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen, political instability in Lebanon, and economic crises exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic constitute huge challenges for the U.S. foreign policy in the region.

In sum, As the U.S. continues to manage its relationships with MENA countries, foreign aid remains a vital tool for advancing American interests and promoting stability in a region that remains central to global geopolitics. The historical development of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region illustrates the evolving priorities and challenges faced by successive U.S. administrations, highlighting the complexity and enduring significance of this strategic partnership.

II. Understanding the U.S. Foreign Aid Approach in MENA:

This section was mainly developed based on the U.S. official document titled "The Green Book, 1945-2019", which is a thorough report that provides data on U.S. foreign assistance from 1945 to 2019. It covers different types of aid, focusing on both economic and military assistance given to countries around the world. For a closer look at specific periods and datasets, especially concerning the MENA region, the analysis can be divided as follows:

Overview of U.S. Foreign Aid in MENA in numbers:

The MENA region, which includes a diverse group of countries from Morocco to Iran, has been a key focus of U.S. foreign policy for many years. Its strategic importance, driven by vast energy resources, geopolitical significance, and ongoing conflicts, has made it a priority for various U.S. administrations. As a result, U.S. foreign aid to the MENA has been extensive and varied, providing economic assistance (including humanitarian aid) and military support as it can be illustrated below:

The U.S. Foreign Aid Approach in the MENA Region -----

Country	Table presenting the Total of U.S. Foreign Aid to MENA Countries (1946-2019) including Loans in U.S. \$Million			% Loans/ Total 1946-2019
	Foreign Aid Type	Total 1946-2019	Of which Loans 1945-2019	
Algeria	1. Total Economic Aid	378,4	11,6	3,1
	2. Total Military Aid	36,1	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	414,5	11,6	2,8
Bahrain	1. Total Economic Aid	15,8	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	559,3	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	575,1	0,0	0,0
Egypt	1. Total Economic Aid	33 062,6	6 751,3	20,4
	2. Total Military Aid	48 360,0	4 550,0	9,4
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	81 422,6	11 301,3	13,9
Iran	1. Total Economic Aid	820,8	311,0	37,9
	2. Total Military Aid	1 412,5	504,1	35,7
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	2 233,3	815,1	36,5
Iraq	1. Total Economic Aid	38 991,7	14,4	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	30 965,6	3 955,0	12,8
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	69 957,3	3 969,4	5,7
The Zionist Occupation (aka Israel)	1. Total Economic Aid	34 336,6	2 105,0	6,1
	2. Total Military Aid	101 206,3	11 305,0	11,2
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	135 542,9	13 410,0	9,9
Jordan	1. Total Economic Aid	15 110,6	514,8	3,4
	2. Total Military Aid	8 748,9	878,3	10,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	23 859,5	1 393,1	5,8
Kuwait	1. Total Economic Aid	23,4	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	0,5	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	23,9	0,0	0,0
Lebanon	1. Total Economic Aid	4 625,5	48,0	1,0
	2. Total Military Aid	1 612,0	243,7	15,1
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	6 237,5	291,7	4,7
Libya	1. Total Economic Aid	879,9	8,5	1,0
	2. Total Military Aid	86,0	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	965,9	8,5	0,9
Morocco	1. Total Economic Aid	4 066,1	1 091,0	26,8
	2. Total Military Aid	1 477,4	469,6	31,8

	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	5 543,5	1 560,6	28,2
Oman	1. Total Economic Aid	310,1	77,5	25,0
	2. Total Military Aid	537,1	199,1	37,1
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	847,2	276,6	32,6
Qatar	1. Total Economic Aid	12,5	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	0,3	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	12,8	0,0	0,0
Saudi Arabia	1. Total Economic Aid	47,2	4,3	9,1
	2. Total Military Aid	295,2	256,7	87,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	342,4	261,0	76,2
Syria	1. Total Economic Aid	6 564,1	539,3	8,2
	2. Total Military Aid	93,7	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	6 657,8	539,3	8,1
Tunisia	1. Total Economic Aid	1 990,0	616,9	31,0
	2. Total Military Aid	1 525,6	492,0	32,2
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	3 515,6	1 108,9	31,5
UAE	1. Total Economic Aid	24,9	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	1,3	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	26,2	0,0	0,0
Palestine (West Bank/Gaza)	1. Total Economic Aid	8 099,1	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	0,9	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	8 100,0	0,0	0,0
Yemen	1. Total Economic Aid	4 403,5	169,8	3,9
	2. Total Military Aid	303,3	12,3	4,1
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	4 706,8	182,1	3,9
Not Specified	1. Total Economic Aid	5 198,7	0,0	0,0
	2. Total Military Aid	3 670,1	0,0	0,0
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	8 868,8	0,0	0,0
Total All MENA Region	1. Total Economic Aid	158 961,5	12 263,4	7,7
	2. Total Military Aid	200 892,1	22 865,8	11,4
	3. Total Foreign Aid (1+2)	359 853,6	35 129,2	9,8

Source: Summary by the authors using as Data source: United States Agency for International Development (The Green Book), "U.S Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loans Authorizations: July 1, 1945 – September 30, 2019", pp. 13-33.

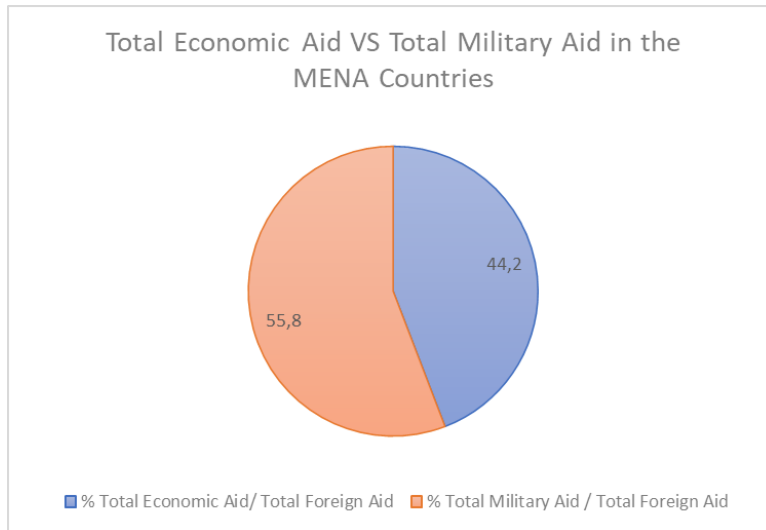
The table provides a detailed overview of U.S. foreign aid to MENA countries from 1946 to 2019. In what follows is a simplified analysis of the key points allowing a comparison between the recipients and a better understanding of the U.S. foreign aid strategy as an extension of its foreign policy: (i) Top and Low Recipients, (ii) Economic versus Military Aid, (iii) Proportion of Loans compared to Grants.

(i) The top and lowest recipients of U.S. Foreign Aid are classified as follows:

*For the top ones, **the Zionist Occupation** received the greatest part of U.S. aid, totaling \$135.5 billion, with a large portion (\$101.2 billion) dedicated to military aid, which reflects the strong military ties between the U.S. and the Zionist Occupation and principally, the importance of this latter as the first ally of the U.S. in the region. **Egypt** follows with \$81.4 billion in total, including significant military assistance (\$48.4 billion) due also to its role as a key U.S. ally, especially after the Camp David Accords. **Iraq** comes in the third position as it received \$70 billion in aid, split between economic (\$39 billion) and military (\$31 billion) assistance, with most of it registered after the U.S. direct involvement in the country post-2003. Finally, **Jordan** is fourth in line receiving \$23.9 billion, mostly for economic assistance (\$15.1 billion), supporting its role as a moderate state regarding the Arab-Zionist conflict and its help with refugees, especially from Palestine and Syria. As for the countries receiving the lowest volumes of U.S. foreign aid, it can be observed that **Qatar, UAE and Kuwait**, received minimal U.S. aid, with respectively, \$12.8 million for Qatar, \$26.2 million for the UAE and \$23.9 million for Kuwait, of which almost no military aid, likely due to their high-income prosperous economies, on the one hand, and strong strategic partnerships and stable relationship with the U.S., on the other hand.*

(ii) Economic versus Military Aid :

In order to better understand the orientation of U.S. foreign policy through the route of aid, the following pie chart depicts the global distribution of Total Economic Aid versus Total Military Aid provided by the U.S. to MENA from 1946 to 2019:



As it is clearly illustrated in the pie chart, U.S. foreign aid to the MENA region is characterized by a clear emphasis on military aid, which accounts for 55.8% of the total aid provided. This substantial proportion highlights the central role that military support plays in U.S. foreign policy within the region. In contrast, economic aid constitutes 44.2% of the overall aid, demonstrating that while the U.S. remains committed to fostering economic development and addressing humanitarian needs in the MENA region, these goals are secondary to military objectives.

As stated above, military aid is a significant component of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region. For instance, a large portion of U.S. aid to **the Zionist Occupation**, approximately 74.7%, has been directed toward military purposes. This highlights the U.S.'s commitment to ensuring The Zionist Occupation's security in a volatile region, where military strength plays a critical role in maintaining its regional influence. The same for **Egypt**, with \$48.3 billion, meaning that military aid represents around 59.4% of the total aid it received from 1946 to 2019. Similarly, **Saudi Arabia** has received predominantly military aid, with \$295.2 million (86.2%) of its total \$342.4 million in aid dedicated to reinforcing its defense capabilities. This reflects the U.S.'s strategic interest in maintaining a military presence in the region, particularly in securing oil supplies and countering potential threats.

As for economic aid, countries like **Egypt** and **Jordan** have been major recipients of U.S. economic aid with respectively \$33.1 and \$15.11 billion in economic aid, which constitutes consecutively about 40.6% and 63.6% of the total aid they received from the U.S. This substantial support reflects

*the U.S.'s focus on promoting stability and economic development in both countries, considered as key regional allies. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that all aid directed toward **Palestine**, amounting to \$8.1 billion, which is quite insignificant compared to already mentioned Arab countries, was allocated for economic purposes, with a focus on humanitarian and developmental support, in an attempt to address the multiple and critical socio-economic challenges and political uncertainty faced by the Palestinian authorities because of the enduring conflict with the Zionist Occupation. Furthermore, **Algeria** (\$0.4 billion), **Morocco** (\$5.5 billion), **Libya** (\$0.9 billion), **Lebanon** (\$6.2 billion) **Syria** (\$6.6 billion) and **Yemen** (\$4.7 billion) received much more economic than military aid with respectively, 91.2%, 72.2%, 91%, 74.1%, 98.5% and 93.5% of the total aid.*

*In contrast, **Iraq** received a more balanced distribution of economic and military aid, with respectively \$38.9 and \$30.9 billion, which underlines the U.S. efforts to both rebuild Iraq's infrastructure and economy after years of conflict while also providing military support to stabilize the country and counter insurgent and extremist threats. Likewise, **Tunisia** also benefited from a balanced mix of economic and military aid, with respectively \$1.9 billion (56.6%) and \$1.5 billion (44.4%). This balanced aid strategy reflects the broader U.S. policy of supporting allies that contribute to regional stability while addressing both their developmental and defense needs.*

(iii) Proportion of loans compared to grants:

*The proportion of loans versus grants plays a significant role in understanding the economic and military ties that exist between the United States and its aid recipients. Countries like Oman, Morocco, and Tunisia show high loan proportions: **Oman**, with 32.6% of its aid coming in the form of loans, and **Morocco**, at 28.2%, suggest a noteworthy reliance on loans to finance their development initiatives and military acquisitions. Similarly, **Tunisia**, with 31.5% of loans composing its aid, underlines the country's dependence on borrowed funds to drive its economic and security agendas. Hence, these high loan proportions indicate that these countries, have, in some cases, no choice but to take on debt obligations to meet their developmental and security needs.*

*In contrast, The Zionist Occupation and Egypt, despite being among the largest recipients of U.S. aid, have relatively low loan ratios. For instance, The **Zionist Occupation** has only 9.9% of its aid package structured as loans, while **Egypt's** loan proportion stands at 13.9%. This suggests that*

the majority of the aid provided to both of them comes in the form of grants, reflecting the U.S.'s long-term strategic investments in these key allies, allowing them to allocate resources without the financial burden of debts repayment, thus enhancing their ability to pursue military and economic goals more freely.

On the other hand, **Saudi Arabia** presents a unique case, with a remarkably high loan proportion of 76.2%, which can be linked to its military assistance agreements that contribute to structuring aid as loans for purchasing advanced military equipment and defense systems. This high loan-to-grant ratio highlights the U.S.'s strategic interest in securing military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, while also showing the kingdom's wealth and its capacity to take on significant loan obligations for military investments.

U.S. Foreign Aid Main Goals:

As already stated above, "The Green Book, 1945-2019" provides a detailed overview of U.S. foreign assistance over several decades, highlighting the changing priorities and strategies in U.S. foreign policy. Both the examination of available data and a profound reading of the historical development of U.S. aid in MENA demonstrate how this latter has been driven by a mix of strategic, political, and humanitarian goals, with military aid playing a major role, particularly in territories like The Zionist Occupation and countries like Egypt. Economic aid has often been tied to peace processes and reforms, while humanitarian aid has increased in response to regional crises. The data shows the complexity and evolving nature of U.S. foreign assistance, especially in a dynamic and volatile region like the MENA.

The United States has pursued several key objectives in its foreign aid strategy in the MENA region. These objectives include maintaining regional stability, supporting economic development, promoting political reforms, enhancing security through counter-terrorism efforts, providing humanitarian aid, and improving the perception of the U.S. in the region. The main official goals of U.S. foreign aid in MENA, as promoted by different U.S. administrations through the years and extracted from the analysis of available data, can be summarized in the following arguments:

➤ **Maintaining Regional Stability:**

One of the main goals of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region is to promote stability, often through military assistance and security cooperation. Significant military aid to allies like Egypt and the Zionist Occupation has

been crucial in maintaining the peace treaty between them. Similarly, U.S. aid to Jordan has helped it act as a stabilizing force in a turbulent region. Indeed, since the signing of the Egypt- Zionist Occupation' Peace Treaty in 1979, the U.S. has given significant military aid to Egypt estimated to \$50 billion, in order to help Egypt control its borders and play a stabilizing role in the region.⁵ Similarly, during the Arab Spring in 2011, the U.S. provided emergency economic and diplomatic support to Tunisia and Egypt to help their transitional governments maintain stability after the revolutions.

However, the focus. on military aid has sparked controversy. In some cases, it has strengthened authoritarian regimes, allowing them to avoid meaningful political reforms. For example, as it will be developed in the next section (III), U.S. military aid to Egypt has been criticized for enabling the government to maintain a repressive security apparatus. This raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of such a strategy, as it might foster resentment and contribute to radicalization among marginalized populations.

➤ ***Assisting Economic Development:***

Economic aid is another key component of U.S. strategy, aimed at promoting economic development and, by extension, political stability. Programs like the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) have been instrumental in funding infrastructure projects, promoting education, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

To cite some examples, the U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) has supported Jordan's development with over \$20 billion in economic assistance since 1946. This aid has been used to improve infrastructure, education, and healthcare, which have all contributed to the country's economic growth.⁶ On the other hand, in Morocco, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) launched a \$460,5 million compact in 2015 to reduce poverty through economic growth. This compact, which ended in 2022, focused on improving education and increasing productivity in important sectors.⁷

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that while economic aid has led to positive outcomes in areas like healthcare and education, its overall effectiveness in fostering sustainable development has been mixed. Issues such as corruption, weak governance, and limited institutional capacity have often hindered the success of aid programs. Additionally, economic aid has sometimes been perceived as advancing U.S. economic interests

rather than addressing the genuine needs of recipient countries, as it will be explained in Section III.

➤ **Encouraging Political Reforms and Democratization:**

Promoting political reforms and democratization has been a stated goal of U.S. foreign aid, particularly since 9/11. The idea is that democratic governance can create more stable and prosperous societies, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies. Programs supporting civil society, free media, and electoral processes have been implemented across the region. In the same perspective, the U.S. has also worked to promote political reforms and democratization in the MENA region, especially after the Arab Spring. For this purpose, between 2011 and 2021, the U.S. provided \$685 million to Tunisia to support democratic governance and political reforms. This aid helped Tunisia draft a new constitution and hold free and fair elections.⁸ Likewise, after the 2003 invasion of Iraq to 2013, the U.S. spent over \$60 billion on reconstruction, with a significant portion dedicated to creating democratic institutions and drafting a new constitution.⁹

However, the results have been inconsistent in some cases. Indeed, if in Tunisia, U.S. aid has supported a successful transition to democracy, efforts have been undermined by internal resistance and geopolitical dynamics in other MENA countries. For instance, in Egypt and Bahrain, authoritarian regimes have resisted democratization efforts, sometimes using U.S. aid to bolster their security forces and suppress opposition.

➤ **Promoting Counter-Terrorism and Security Cooperation:**

Counter-terrorism has been a central pillar of U.S. foreign aid strategy in the MENA region, especially since 9/11. Aid has been directed towards strengthening the security apparatus of partner countries, enhancing intelligence cooperation, and supporting counter-terrorism operations. Countries like Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan have been significant recipients of such aid.

In this regard, from 2003 to 2011, the U.S. provided over \$20 billion in security assistance to Iraq to help combat insurgency and terrorism. This aid was crucial in training and equipping Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to fight terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Through the Strategic Framework Agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, the U.S. is focused on enhancing Iraq's defensive capabilities, providing security assistance, and working with Iraq to improve its stability and security, particularly through efforts to prevent ISIS from reemerging and particularly carry out counter-terrorism operations.

Since 2015, the U.S. Department of State has provided Iraq with \$1.25 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to enhance Iraq's long-term sustainment and logistics capabilities, as well as to professionalize the ISF, including the Peshmerga, to effectively respond to threats.¹⁰ For instance, in 2021, the U.S. approved \$735 million in arms sales to the Zionist Occupation to strengthen its Iron Dome Defense System,¹¹ which has been key in protecting the Zionist Occupation civilians from rocket attacks by Palestinian revolutionary groups like Hamas.

However, it must be pointed that while these efforts have achieved successes, such as weakening Al-Qaeda and ISIS, they have also encountered challenges. The focus on security and military solutions has sometimes overshadowed the need to address the underlying socio-economic and political grievances that fuel extremism. Furthermore, disproportionate security measures have occasionally led to human rights abuses, which can exacerbate anti-American sentiments and contribute to radicalization.

➤ ***Ensuring Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response:***

Humanitarian aid is another critical aspect of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region, particularly in response to conflicts and crises. The Syrian civil war, the Yemeni conflict, and the plight of Palestinian refugees are notable examples where U.S. aid has played a crucial role in providing relief to affected populations.

To cite more examples, since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, the U.S. has provided over \$14.1 billion in humanitarian assistance and \$1.3 billion in stabilization assistance to support Syrian refugees and provide emergency relief.¹² Similarly, during the Yemen crisis, the U.S. provided nearly \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance in 2022 to help address severe food insecurity and malnutrition caused by the ongoing conflict.¹³

Unfortunately, humanitarian aid has undoubtedly saved lives and eased suffering, but it has also faced obstacles such as access restrictions, security risks, and the politicization of aid. Moreover, the scale and extended nature of crises in the MENA region have often outpaced the resources and capabilities of humanitarian programs, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

➤ ***Improving the Perception of the United States in the MENA Region:***

The implications of U.S. foreign aid strategy extend beyond its immediate impacts on stability, development, and security; they also shape how the United States is perceived in the MENA region. Public opinion toward the

U.S. is influenced by various factors, including historical grievances, cultural differences, and the outcomes of U.S. policies. Indeed, in many parts of the MENA region, U.S. foreign aid is viewed with suspicion and skepticism. There is a widespread perception that U.S. aid serves its own strategic interests rather than the genuine needs of the recipient countries. This perception is exacerbated by instances where U.S. aid has been seen to support oppressive regimes or where aid has been conditioned on political and economic concessions.

Improving how the U.S. is perceived in the MENA region has been a challenging but important goal, often pursued through public diplomacy and cultural exchange programs. Indeed, programs like the Fulbright Program have been key in this effort, bringing thousands of students from the MENA region to study in the U.S. Since 1949, almost 8,000 scholars have participated in the Fulbright Program, either as American Fulbrighters in Egypt or Egyptian Fulbrighters in the United States,¹⁴ helping to foster better understanding and improve perceptions of the U.S. In 2015, the U.S. launched the “Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)” to improve the socio-economic conditions of young people in MENA.¹⁵ By addressing issues like unemployment and promoting participatory governance and economic opportunity, this program aims to counter anti-American sentiment and reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

III. Implications and Critical Assessment of U.S. Foreign Aid Approach in MENA

As already discussed in the previous section, through its aid to MENA, the U.S. has, allegedly, aimed to secure energy resources, counter terrorism, and maintain stability in the region. However, the distribution of aid has raised questions about how effective this aid has been, especially in addressing authoritarian regimes and resolving conflicts. This section looks at how U.S. foreign aid has struggled to address these issues and the impact it has had on the stability of the MENA region and global politics.

Impacts on Regional Stability:

U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region has often aimed to support strategic allies while promoting political and economic development. However, these goals have now and then conflicted, particularly when the U.S. has backed authoritarian regimes that are seen as reliable partners. This approach has led to significant deficiencies and challenges in U.S. foreign aid policy as it will be discussed below:

➤ ***Contribution to the Endurance of Authoritarian Regimes:***

One of the most significant criticised aspects of U.S. foreign aid in MENA has been its contribution to the survival of authoritarian regimes. Countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have consistently received large amounts of U.S. military and economic aid, despite the fact that they are viewed by the west and human rights activists as autocratic regimes lacking of democratic governance and freedom of speech. In these countries, U.S. aid has been, indeed, instrumental in reinforcing authoritarian control, as it enables these regimes to strengthen their security forces, suppress political opposition, and evade meaningful reforms. By failing to promote democratic governance, U.S. foreign aid has not only entrenched authoritarianism in the region, ultimately undermining long-term stability, but also lead to questioning the U.S. real position regarding democratic principles and observance of human rights.

In Egypt, for instance, military assistance from the U.S. has boosted a powerful security apparatus used to silence opposition and restrict civil society. The Egyptian government's harsh crackdown on opposition, especially after the military coup of 2013 that overthrew the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, has drawn widespread condemnation all over the world. Nevertheless, in spite of the Egyptian government's authoritarian measures, U.S. aid has continued, reflecting Washington's strategic interest in maintaining Egypt as a stable and cooperative partner at any costs. This policy has led to the claim that U.S. foreign aid is more concerned with maintaining the status quo than promoting democracy and human rights.

Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, U.S. aid has supported a regime that limits political freedoms and engages, allegedly, in widespread human rights abuses, especially in Yemen. The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, with the support of U.S. military assistance, illustrates the problematic impact of this aid as the conflict in Yemen has resulted in one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, marked by civilian casualties, displacement, and famine. U.S. support for Saudi Arabia has helped exacerbating the suffering of the Yemeni people, while reinforcing the Saudi regime even though considered by the west as authoritarian and resistant to political reform.

On the other hand, Bahrain, despite being a small country, is of strategic importance in the Persian Gulf and has also benefited from U.S. military aid, especially because of its naval base, home to the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which is crucial for American military operations in the region. However, despite

the significance of this military relationship, Bahrain's use of U.S. aid to suppress dissent has drawn widespread criticism since Human rights organizations have documented how U.S.-supplied weapons and equipment were used by the Bahraini government to commit human rights violations.¹⁶ As a result, continued U.S. support for Bahrain, despite these abuses, is perceived as another tacit approval of an authoritarian regime that resists democratic reform.

➤ ***Prolonging Regional Conflicts***

Another critical failure of U.S. foreign aid in the MENA region has been its role in prolonging regional conflicts. Substantial military aid has been provided to actors involved in protracted conflicts, such as The Zionist Occupation, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. While this aid is often justified by the will to enhancing security and combating terrorism, it has also been a vector for exacerbating violence and obstructing peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

In Yemen, U.S. military aid to the Saudi-led coalition has been a major factor in prolonging a civil war that has caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Similarly, U.S. aid to The Zionist Occupation, primarily in the form of military support, has enabled the continuation of The Zionist Occupation-Palestinian conflict over decades by reinforcing The Zionist Occupation's military dominance. As it will be argued below, these conflicts have destabilized the region, with broader implications for global security.

✓ ***The Zionist Occupation-Palestinian Conflict:***

The Zionist Occupation-Palestinian conflict is one of the most enduring and complex disputes in the MENA region. U.S. foreign aid to The Zionist Occupation, predominantly military in nature, has played a key role in prolonging this conflict. While U.S. assistance is often justified on the grounds of safeguarding The Zionist Occupation's security, it has also offered The Zionist Occupation the opportunity to maintain its occupation of Palestinian territories and pursue military solutions rather than engage in genuine peace negotiations.

Since 1948, The Zionist Occupation has received over \$310 billion in U.S. aid, much of which has been used to acquire advanced military equipment. This support has bolstered The Zionist Occupation's ability to conduct military operations in the occupied territories, leading to high Palestinian casualties and widespread destruction. Effectively, U.S. aid has allowed The Zionist Occupation to continue its military approach to the conflict, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence and hindering efforts toward a

peaceful solution, which is proved once again, since the October 7th 2023 war on Gaza, with the U.S. enacting legislation to deliver to the Zionist Occupation no less than \$12.5 billion in military aid¹⁷ despite the International Community calls for the cease of the Palestinian genocide.

✓ ***The War in Yemen:***

The war in Yemen, which began in 2015, has escalated into one of the most devastating conflicts in the region, with U.S. military aid playing a pivotal role in its continuation. U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition, which includes large arms sales, intelligence sharing, and logistical assistance, has prolonged the conflict and worsened the humanitarian situation, which lead to the assumption that U.S. aid, no matter the form it takes, has contributed to indiscriminate airstrikes that have caused significant civilian casualties and widespread destruction.

Despite the international calls over the humanitarian disaster in Yemen, U.S. aid to Saudi Arabia has continued, raising concerns about American complicity in perpetuating the conflict and sharing responsibility with the Saudi-led coalition over human rights violations.¹⁸

Impacts on Global Politics:

The direct and indirect links between U.S. foreign aid and the durability of authoritarianism and conflicts in the MENA region have profound implications for global politics. Instead of enhancing the image of the U.S., its foreign aid policy provoked the erosion of its credibility, strained international alliances, and increased global instability, creating a more complex and unstable international landscape.

➤ ***Erosion of U.S. Credibility and Strain on International Alliances:***

The perceived inconsistency in U.S. foreign aid policy, particularly its support for authoritarian regimes and war crimes perpetrators in the MENA region, has severely undermined America's credibility on the global stage. While the United States often presents itself as a promoter of democracy and human rights, its alignment with autocratic governments in countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain and also with a rogue actor such as the Zionist Occupation, paints a picture of hypocrisy. This divergence between rhetoric and action has eroded the moral authority of the U.S., making it harder to influence global affairs.

A key example is the U.S.'s support for Egypt, where billions in military aid continue to flow despite widespread reports of human rights abuses and democratic backsliding. As already stated above, the 2013 military coup in Egypt, which deposed the first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, was met with tacit U.S. approval, as aid continued largely

uninterrupted. This contradicts the U.S.'s global narrative of supporting democratic governance, damaging its image as a defender of democratic values and thus questioning the political conditionality that supposedly accompanies Western aid all over the world.

This erosion of credibility goes beyond the MENA region, affecting U.S. foreign policy globally. For example, in Latin America, the U.S.'s stance on supporting democracy has been questioned in light of its actions in the MENA region. Nations that view U.S. actions as driven by strategic interests rather than principles of human rights and democracy may be less willing to cooperate with Washington on initiatives related to governance, security, and development. In Africa, where U.S. influence is already challenged by China's growing presence via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), inconsistencies in U.S. aid policies further weaken American diplomatic efforts in areas dominated by Chinese infrastructural projects. Efforts to rehabilitate the image of the U.S. have been insufficient. Programs like cultural exchanges, public diplomacy initiatives, and civil society engagement represent steps toward repairing its global image. However, without a substantive realignment of foreign aid policies to reflect democratic values, these efforts remain superficial. The failure to integrate human rights concerns into aid strategies, especially when compared to other global powers such as the European Union, continues to limit the effectiveness of U.S. diplomatic outreach.

On the other hand, the support of authoritarian regimes in the MENA region has also strained U.S. alliances, particularly with European countries that prioritize human rights and democratic governance in their foreign policies. The divergence between U.S. and European approaches to foreign aid and international relations is most evident in cases like Saudi Arabia and the war in Yemen. For instance, U.S. military aid and arms sales to Saudi Arabia, despite the kingdom's controversial military intervention in Yemen, have led to significant friction with European allies. In the wake of the Yemeni conflict, European countries such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands have either suspended or reconsidered arms sales to Saudi Arabia, citing human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.¹⁹ The U.S., on the other hand, has continued to provide material and logistical support, resulting in a clear policy rift between the transatlantic allies.

Moreover, the U.S.'s support for autocratic regimes has strained relations with other democratic countries outside of Europe. For instance, Canada has been openly critical of U.S. support for Saudi Arabia following the

diplomatic fallout from the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which many attribute to Saudi state actors. These accusations further intensified the tension between the west and Saudi Arabia but, as already explained above, when some western countries made the decision to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia following the incident, the U.S. maintained its strategic alliance, causing extra rifts with nations that prioritize human rights in their foreign policies discourses.

Similarly, the U.S.'s unwavering military and diplomatic support for The Zionist Occupation, particularly in its conflict with Palestine, has caused tensions with countries all over the world and even with some allies in Europe. Indeed, while European countries acknowledge The Zionist Occupation's right to security, they also emphasize the importance of a two-state solution and many of them have been critical of settlement expansions in Palestinian occupied territories: on May 23rd 2024, Spain, Ireland and Norway already announced the recognition of the State of Palestine and it is believed that many others will follow on this same path. As a result, it can be argued that U.S. foreign aid, largely focused on maintaining The Zionist Occupation's military dominance, is seen by many European partners as a barrier to peace and a contributor to prolonged instability. This divergence in political positions complicates international cooperation on Middle Eastern peace initiatives and undermines broader diplomatic efforts.

➤ ***Potential for Increased Global Instability:***

The instability in the MENA region, worsened by U.S. foreign aid policies, has significant repercussions for global politics since the advent of authoritarianism and prolonged conflicts not only destabilize the region but also create a ripple effect that contributes the exacerbation of global instability, mainly in the form of refugee crisis, spread of extremism and impacts on global trade and energy security.

Firstly, one of the most immediate impacts of regional instability has been the displacement of millions of people, particularly from conflict zones like Syria, Yemen, and Libya. The Syrian civil war alone has produced millions of refugees, leading to one of the largest displacement crises since World War II. European nations, particularly those bordering the Mediterranean, have borne the burden of this unprecedented human influx, facing immense political, social, and economic pressures as they struggle with receiving and helping refugees. This crisis has sparked the rise of far-right and populist movements in countries like Italy, Hungary, Germany and even France with leaders advocating for stricter immigration controls.

The inability of U.S. foreign policy to stabilize the MENA region has indirectly contributed to these internal European tensions. For example, U.S. intervention in Libya and its support for various factions contributed to the collapse of the Libyan state, turning the country into a major transit point for refugees heading to Europe. In the absence of effective international coordination, the refugee crisis continues to fuel political divisions in Europe and strain transatlantic relations.

Secondly, another global consequence of U.S. foreign aid policy in the MENA region is the rise and spread of extremism. Undeniably, authoritarian regimes, often backed by U.S. aid, suppress political opposition and civil society, leaving few channels for peaceful dissent; likewise, U.S. direct or indirect military intervention in many Arab countries has led to unprecedented chaos and thus the rise of non-state actors. As a result, many disillusioned and indoctrinated groups turn to extremist ideologies and so, extremist organizations, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have thrived in the chaos of conflict zones like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, exploiting people's despair and grievances related to bad governance, corruption, and unwanted foreign intervention.

This has had a profound impact on global security, as extremist groups carry out attacks not only in the MENA region but also in Europe, the U.S. and other parts of the world. The rise of ISIS, for instance, led to a series of terrorist attacks in European cities, including Paris, Brussels, and Manchester. These attacks have heightened security concerns, leading to a strengthening of counter-terrorism measures and military interventions in the region by global powers. However, these responses, mostly disproportionate, often contribute to a cycle of violence, further entrenching instability and aggravating innocent people's suffering.

Thirdly, instability in the MENA region also has significant implications for global trade and energy security. The MENA region is home to some of the world's largest oil and natural gas reserves, and disruptions in the region can have severe consequences for global energy markets. For instance, the civil war in Libya led to a sharp drop in its oil production, affecting global oil prices. Similarly, the conflict in Yemen, situated near the strategically important Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, has posed threats to the free flow of oil and world trade in general, which is estimated by the World Bank to 30% of oil and 40% of dry goods, transiting through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.²⁰

Hence, U.S. foreign aid, which has often been linked to securing energy resources, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, has failed to

bring long-term stability to this critical region. This uncertainty, resulting from conflicts in countries like Yemen, Syria, Iraq and the intolerable war on Palestine, has led to fluctuations in global energy prices, affecting economies far beyond the MENA region, especially in energy-dependent nations in Asia and Europe.

Conclusion:

The U.S. foreign aid strategy in the MENA region presents a complex problematic within the International Relations discipline because of the challenging interaction and balancing between strategic interests, developmental objectives, and ethical considerations. Indeed, the data analysis of U.S. foreign aid has shown that the U.S. foreign aid to MENA is heavily shaped by geopolitical factors reflecting the broader strategic objectives of the United States, which concentrate on securing geopolitical interests, maintaining regional stability, and protecting key allies. Through the strategic deployment of foreign aid, particularly military aid, the U.S. has shaped the region's geopolitical landscape, as highlighted by the first hypothesis. Aid has been instrumental in deterring adversaries, bolstering key allies such as the Zionist Occupation, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and ensuring U.S. influence in a region critical to global energy markets and security.

However, as posited in the second hypothesis, U.S. foreign aid has largely prioritized short-term security goals over long-term development, governance reforms, and human rights. This approach has resulted in the endurance of authoritarian regimes and the marginalization of democratic aspirations across the region. By focusing on military aid and strategic partnerships, the U.S. has often neglected the importance of political reforms and economic development, leading to stagnation in efforts to promote good governance and human rights in many MENA countries. This short-term focus undermines sustainable development and reinforces authoritarianism, contributing to regional instability over time.

The third hypothesis is also confirmed by the analysis, as U.S. military aid has, in some cases, exacerbated ongoing conflicts rather than contributing to their resolution. The provision of arms and military aid to key actors in conflicts, such as Saudi Arabia in Yemen and the Zionist Occupation in its war on Palestine, has prolonged hostilities and increased regional tensions. These conflicts not only undermine regional stability but also have broader implications for global politics, including humanitarian crises such as famine and the refugee crisis, the spread of extremism with

the emanation of terrorist groups, and last but not least, multiple challenges to international alliances.

In sum, while U.S. foreign aid has played a critical role in advancing American strategic interests in the MENA region, its focus on short-term security goals has come at the expense of long-term stability, democratic governance, and conflict resolution. The erosion of U.S. credibility, strain on international alliances, and increased global instability underscore the urgent need for reform. A more consistent approach, aligned with democratic values and human rights, is vital for restoring U.S. credibility and addressing the region's challenges because failure to reform U.S. foreign aid policy will likely perpetuate these adverse effects, exacerbating political and security challenges on a global scale. This is why a recalibration of U.S. foreign aid policies, with greater emphasis on development, governance, and human rights, is necessary to foster sustainable peace and stability in the region, aligning both U.S. interests and the aspirations of the MENA populations. Without such a shift, the U.S. risks prolonging cycles of instability and conflict, with far-reaching implications for both the region and global politics.

In the light of the challenges facing the MENA region, it is essential for Arab recipient countries to consider a set of strategic recommendations to maximize the benefits of U.S. aid while safeguarding their sovereignty and promoting long-term development goals:

First, MENA Arab recipient countries must first establish clear national development priorities. By articulating their own long-term goals before engaging with aid programs, they ensure that foreign assistance aligns with domestic objectives rather than being externally imposed. This proactive approach allows governments to gain autonomy in decision-making and avoid compromising their political and economic independence. In addition to defining their priorities, they should negotiate aid agreements that respect their sovereignty by carefully crafting and analysing the terms of aid agreements in order to keep away from undue external interference in domestic policies. By rejecting conditions that overstep on political autonomy and accepting mutually beneficial development initiatives, these countries can ensure that foreign aid serves their interests without compromising national integrity.

Second, diversifying aid sources is another crucial strategy for preserving sovereignty since reliance on a single donor, such as the U.S., can lead to dependency and thus excessive external influence. By seeking aid from multiple international partners such as the European Union, China, or

multilateral organizations and focusing on domestic revenue generation, MENA countries can reduce their vulnerability to foreign control and maintain a more balanced approach to international relations. Moreover, reinforcing regional cooperation also plays a strategic role in reducing aid dependency especially when it takes the form of partnership with neighboring countries on development initiatives in areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure. By doing so, MENA nations can address common challenges while reducing reliance on external aid and promoting a collective approach that strengthens regional stability and allows countries to use resources in pursuit of shared goals.

Third, strengthening domestic governance and institutional capacity is vital for managing foreign aid effectively. Accountability and improved governance structures contribute to reducing corruption, and enhancing institutional capacity and thus help to ensure that aid is used efficiently and remains under domestic control. Strong institutions enable recipient countries to dictate the terms of aid utilization, minimizing external oversight and influence over their internal affairs. Furthermore, promoting ownership and local solutions in aid programs is equally important. MENA countries should work on the design and implementation of development initiatives, ensuring that foreign aid supports homegrown solutions tailored to local needs and serves in building vital sectors such as infrastructure, education, technology, and institutional development in order to enhance economic resilience and thus gradually reduce future dependency on foreign aid and by all means limit the influence of foreign actors.

Last but not least, when it comes to military aid, MENA Arab countries should ensure that military aid contributes to their broader strategic objectives and not those of the donor of aid by carefully setting boundaries to align with their specific security needs and sovereignty concerns as military aid should not pressure them into operations that undermine internal stability or fail to serve national interests. This is why, Arab countries should prioritize unity and regional cooperation to counter the influence of U.S. military aid and reduce external interference in regional conflicts and affairs. By maintaining control over security decisions, fostering collective security initiatives and promoting diplomatic resolutions to regional disputes, Arab nations can build a cohesive front that diminishes reliance on foreign military aid. Indeed, cooperation in areas such as intelligence sharing, defense coordination, and peacekeeping would strengthen their regional self-sufficiency and reduce

the leverage of external powers, such as the U.S. Moreover, Arab unity would enable the region to address shared security concerns, such as extremism and border disputes, without resorting to foreign intervention, thus preserving regional autonomy and stability. Through multilateral institutions, such as the Arab League, coordinated strategies on conflict resolution and security can be developed, empowering Arab states to shape their own security future and reduce dependency on external military support.

In conclusion, the U.S. must realign its foreign aid strategy in the MENA region to reflect a more ethical, transparent, and effective approach. This includes addressing critical normative questions, such as the ethical considerations of supporting repressive regimes, the balance between donor influence and recipient sovereignty, and the issues of fairness and equity in global aid distribution. By doing so, the U.S. can contribute to a more stable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the MENA region, while also strengthening its global standing and influence. Meanwhile, by advocating for more balanced aid allocations that prioritize both security and development, MENA Arab countries should benefit from aid that not only addresses immediate security concerns but also supports long-term development in areas like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. A more balanced aid distribution will promote stability, foster economic growth, and reduce vulnerability to foreign influence over time.

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