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America's Forgotten Project: TAPline and the Rise of a New Capitalist Order in the Levant, 1945-1950

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America's Forgotten Project
TAPline and the Rise of a New Capitalist Order in the Levant, 1945-1950

Senior Project Submitted to
The Divisions of Social Studies
and Interdivisional Programs and Concentrations of
Bard College

by

Eric Raimondi

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May, 2019

A note on footnotes

In this project, I use a dual system for citations. For documents created or collected by the U.S. State Department that are now archived in the U.S. National Archives at College Park, MD, I use the citation guide provided by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Abiding by this system, as opposed to Chicago Manual Style, which I use for all other sources, will hopefully facilitate other researchers' attempts to recollect government documents cited in this thesis.

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For my grandparents

Introduction

A 1951 celebratory publication titled *Tapline, the Story of the World's Biggest Oil Pipeline* describes the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line (TAPline)—the largest and longest pipeline ever constructed at the time—as a symbol of mutual progress for both the United States and Middle Eastern countries.¹ The publication compares TAPline's construction, in which both Arabs and Americans were involved, to the biblical Tower of Babel, a monumental infrastructure inscribed in the Western Canon—whose architects designed “its top [to be] in the heavens.”² In the book of Genesis, the people who lived in the city of Babel lived as one people and were, therefore, able to commence construction on the sky-reaching tower. Yet, before the Tower of Babel was completed, “the Lord scattered them”³ out of fear that “nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them,”⁴ thus halting the project and dividing the world of humans. In this celebratory publication, which TAPline issued, the American rendering of the Tower of Babel is considerably different than its biblical counterpart. Here, the TAPline Company, in constructing the line and linking two different geographies, the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the Eastern Mediterranean, and two different peoples, Arabs and Americans, picks up where the architects and workers of Babel left off.

Whereas God stopped the Tower of Babel's construction, the TAPline Company, and the millions of dollars needed to complete the project, succeeded in uniting different worlds as one. *Tapline, the Story of the World's Biggest Oil Pipeline* argues that “a [common] language came into being along the pipe line,” and was something that could be shared by both foreign and local

¹ *Tapline, the Story of the World's Biggest Oil Pipeline* (New York: Trans Arabian Pipeline Company, 1951), 15.

² Gn 11:4.

³ Gn 11:8.

⁴ Gn 11:6.

agents. Essentially, the company's public relations department argued that TAPline was not just a project of the American oil industry, but a project that included Arab workers, entrepreneurs, and rulers who were willing to cooperate. For this reason, the publication states that the Arabs, not the Americans, "gave the name TAPline," and that the project was, according to a later company brochure, a "common goal."⁵ Drawing from the book of Genesis, the company demonstrated that it was playing a role in its own genesis, the genesis of the American economy's hegemony. True, it is strange that the TAPline Company highlighted similarities between its project and the Tower Babel, but this characterization of the pipeline speaks to the tangible qualities of capitalism, in which wealth and infrastructure bind developing states, like the postcolonial states of the Middle East, to the ambitions of well-endowed companies, like the TAPline Company. Indeed, this story is indicative of a greater historical development: the establishment of America's new *capitalist* empire, extending beyond the nodes of capitalist and imperial authority in Washington and New York, to the postcolonial territories in the Levant.

Like the Tower of Babel, TAPline was an ambitious project that would, in its own way, connect the mundane world of men to a future "in the heavens." Through a reading of multiple archives, I argue in this thesis that the TAPline Company, at the moment when the U.S. and its economy were becoming hegemonic, was in large part independent of Washington—it repeatedly attempted to distinguish itself from the government. In addition, I show that the TAPline Company, as an authoritative influence in the Middle East, influenced the policies of Arab governments and subsequently assembled an early alliance to rally around the petroleum industry. Saudi Arabia and Lebanon were consistently staunch supporters of the American TAPline project, except for a brief period due to the U.S. government's support for Zionism. Syria, on the

⁵ The Building of TAPline, ARAMCO Public Relations Department, no date, Box 5, File 1, *TAPLINE-Makkinje Collection*, Archives and Special Collections, American University of Beirut (AUB) University Libraries.

other hand, posed significant difficulty for the project. The company played a key role in the re-configuration of Syrian governance, effectively pressuring the country to adopt an authoritarian form of government, and significantly, encouraging the first military dictatorship in the Middle East.

But before we pursue the thesis stated above, the reader must understand the context in which the TAPline project existed, as well as the archival material used to substantiate these claims. The TAPline Company, incorporated in 1945 in the state of Delaware as a private subsidiary of the massive oil conglomerate Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), occupied a position of significant authority in the Middle East. First conceived as a government project and then later changed to be a private enterprise, TAPline's construction is a monument of the American oil industry's expansion in the Middle East. Designed in accordance with the U.S. government's broader post-war economic agenda, TAPline was the means by which Washington subsidized ARAMCO's expansion in the Middle East. It was thus a link between the government and the private oil industry, and was as much a project of the private sector *and* the government. However, in an attempt to enrich our understanding of the history of TAPline, I seek to nuance the discourse about American power in the postwar era by emphasizing the role of the American oil industry in the Middle Eastern postcolonial landscape.

American business activity, which included the TAPline project, was a novel development in the states of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine. At the same time, the U.S. government lacked substantial foreign service infrastructure in the region. For much of the second half of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century, American activity in the region

was largely limited to missionary work and educational endeavors.⁶ For example, in Ottoman Syria, protestant missionaries from New England established the Syrian Protestant College in 1866 in Beirut, later named the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1920.⁷ This contrasts with the legacies of the British and the French powers, who both participated in a long history of resource exploitation and eventual occupation of parts of the region after the First World War. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the French mandate system manufactured the new nation states of Syria and Lebanon. Consequently, when Lebanon and Syria gained formal independence in 1946, their respective governments struggled to become truly authoritative bodies.

For that matter, American oil companies first acquired a concession for Saudi oil in 1933, but it was not for another five years that the companies actually found oil. Once Saudi oil began to be exported, tankers transported this energy-rich resource around the Arabian Peninsula and through the Suez Canal. Since 1869, the Suez Canal was the leading transportation line in the region, if not the world. TAPline, interestingly, was designed to accomplish a similar task: to bridge the Middle East's oil resources and wealth to Europe and the United States. In the Middle East, where TAPline was constructed, the consequences of the company's newfound presence are readily seen in archival sources.

At this point, it is appropriate to state that this thesis does not primarily focus on the role of the U.S. government in the Middle East. In the last seventy years, the U.S. government has been rightly accused for committing overt and clandestine acts of intervention, particularly in the Middle East. In 1953, the CIA played a crucial role in the infamous coup in Iran, which deposed the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. And in 1958, the U.S. de-

⁶ Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 30-32.

⁷ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 37.

ployed 15,000 marines south of Beirut in Lebanon to preserve the regime of Prime Minister Camille Chamoun, a notably Western-friendly figure, from civil war.⁸ In the late 1940's, however, I argue, as have others before me, that the U.S. government did not yet possess the sophisticated foreign service network it later constructed. While it is important to recognize the power of the U.S. government, its supremacy should not be assumed. If historians assume the U.S. government's authority as supreme, then other arms of American power, in this case the TAPline Company, do not appear as subjects that warrant interrogation.

TAPline remains an understudied element of the postcolonial history of the Levant. Douglas Little is the authoritative voice on TAPline, and particularly the circumstances that led to its creation. His work is frequently cited in the historical scholarship on the petroleum industry and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.⁹ In his telling, TAPline is always secondary to larger historical actors, such as the U.S. State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other governments in the region.¹⁰ Another text that focuses on TAPline is Irene Gendzier's *Notes from the Minefield*. However, as a historian of Lebanon, Gendzier, who cites Little without proper interrogation, does not adequately address the company's tumultuous relationship with the Syrian government, a dynamic that is central to this project.

Taking place at a time when the U.S. government was viewed most poorly by the local Arab states, this story perhaps indicates a moment in which a subsidiary company called the shots on the economic policies of states in the Middle East. It is imperative that we remember the

⁸ Ultimately, Chamoun left office once his term concluded, thus prompting the U.S. military's withdrawal from the country.

⁹ For more on Douglas Little's work, see "Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 1 (Winter, 1990): 51-75.; "Early Experiments in Covert Action," *Press for Conversion* no. 51 (May 2003): 12-13.; *American Orientalism; The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

¹⁰ It is worth noting that Little's argument partly relies on the story of a former CIA agent, Miles Copeland, featured in his expose book, the author of *Game of Nations*, a book which has long been considered to be conspiratorial.

company's principal goal was to secure greater profit, not to supply the U.S. government with the necessary resources to become the world hegemon. Thus, TAPline as a company was not entirely a willing extension of the U.S. government. This is precisely why the company pursued negotiations with the government in Syria, despite its obstruction, which governed the territory assessed to have been the least expensive land route for the pipeline. Confusing the trajectories and concerns of the U.S. government and the TAPline Company does not only produce sloppy scholarship, it more importantly overlooks the company's own clandestine activity and the authority it possessed. In a process of historical revision and in examining the TAPline Company's relationship with the state of Syria, I reexamine the constitution of American power in the early years of the postcolonial period in the Middle East. What was TAPline's relationship with the United States and how does it characterize a larger trend in both the U.S. and the Middle East? How was TAPline involved in the development of oil politics of Arab states? How did TAPline shape the trajectory of postcolonial states in the Levant, particularly Syria?

This history relies on both published and archival sources. Newspaper articles, the trade magazine *Pipe Line News*, company publications, and contemporary journal articles reflected the world of the TAPline Company as it was publicly seen during the pipeline's construction. In particular, I found *Pipe Line News* to be most fruitful in reconstructing the community of businessmen in both the domestic and foreign segments of the American oil industry. Yet while these sources contribute to our understanding of the petroleum community at this moment in history, the material collected from Middle East and U.S. archives provide insight into a historical process that was hidden beneath the surface of publicly-available material.

In summer 2018, I collected a number of documents from the Jafet Memorial Library at the American University of Beirut, which holds a collection of TAPline Company documents that has recently been made available. I also rely on declassified CIA reports obtained through the online CREST database.¹¹ Most importantly, I gathered the majority of the documents cited in this thesis from the National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP), which I visited in January 2019. The documents collected from NACP were created by the U.S. State Department and the American legations in Beirut and Damascus.

The majority of company documents, as opposed to government documents, are unfortunately retained in private archives, most of which are inaccessible to the public. Thus, the window into the world of the TAPline Company is admittedly narrow. The body of primary sources that form the basis of this project also lacks Syrian and other Arabic sources. Not only are these sources difficult to locate as a result of the political circumstances in Syria, but reading and analyzing Syrian government sources and the massive body of the Arabophone and Francophone presses was frankly too ambitious a project to conduct in the given time frame.¹² In reading English-language archives, I try to reconstruct the voices of Saudi, Syrian, and Lebanese leaders involved with the TAPline project. However, I must note that these documents, usually copies of statements in Arabic that have been translated by government or company personnel, may not be entirely accurate representations of the original speakers' language. Yet unlike previous scholarship, this project places considerable emphasis on company-produced documents that were collected by government officials, and therefore reorients the reader's attention toward a new set of

¹¹ CREST—the CIA Records Search Tool—is the online database which houses all publicly-accessible material produced by the CIA.

¹² I have studied Arabic for three years at Bard College and in Beirut, Lebanon. My language skills are improving, but in order to read to Syrian press, I would have needed a lot of time, and probably additional help, to read this archive.

voices within the private sector as opposed to voices within the U.S. government. Without these company documents that were collected by the State Department and American legations or voluntarily shared by the company, the findings included in this thesis would be less original.

Accessing these sources proved to be an incredibly difficult process. I was scheduled to visit the archives over the winter intersession of the current academic year 2018/2019. Unfortunately, a government shutdown over disagreement of a federal appropriations bill from December 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019 initially prevented me from fulfilling this goal, jeopardizing the project and forcing me to reconsider the focus of my research. Then, when it was announced that the government would reopen at the end of January 2019, I made the immediate decision to travel to NACP. Over the course of only two and a half days, I collected nearly one thousand different documents related to TAPline in the Middle East, with a keen focus on Syria. This project is largely the result of that work.

I have structured the project into three different sections. The first chapter traces the company's roots, looking at its initial conception as a government project and its transformation into a private enterprise. This chapter demonstrates the way in which the authority of the U.S. government was conceded to the American oil industry, a moment that is representative of the country's broader shift towards corporatism in the Middle East through the expansion of the American oil industry's pipeline infrastructure and authority in the region. This chapter additionally constructs the company's initial relationship with the postcolonial government in Syria, addressing the immediate obstruction encountered by the company in its goal to secure the trust and cooperation of the government in Damascus.

The second chapter continues the thread begun in the first chapter. However, in this section the historical processes at work are centered around the partition of Palestine into two dif-

ferent states and the apparent consequences of that development on the TAPline Company's plan to construct its pipeline through Palestine or through neighboring states, such as Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan. I examine the relationship between the company and the U.S. government and the relationship between the company and the Arab states involved in negotiating the TAPline agreement. This chapter reveals the effects of the company's authority, as it shaped the government policy of Arab states and developed a petroleum alliance.

The third chapter clarifies the contradictions and inconsistencies between the company and Washington, the company and the Arab states, and among inter-Arab state relations, demonstrated in the first two chapters. In this chapter, I assess the economic circumstances of Syria immediately before the rise of Husni Za'im, who led the first coup d'état in the postcolonial Arab world, and ruled Syria for several months in 1949. Most importantly, I challenge the claim made by Douglas Little, who understands Za'im's rise as the result of direct CIA intervention. As part of my rebuttal, I read Za'im's short rule in relation to the TAPline project. In this process, I emphasize inconsistencies within Little's claim and argue that the TAPline Company played a substantial role in reconfiguring the direction of the Syrian nation state.

Needless to say, the TAPline Company played a major role in the region, as has been articulated in a growing collection of secondary literature on the Middle East's postcolonial history. However, I argue that a more critical perspective is needed on the operations of the company and its ultimate impact on the states involved with the company, most significantly Syria. It is to this story that we now turn.

1. Reconnaissance and the Early Developments of TAPline

Before TAPline was constructed, the question of who and what would manage the project and own the infrastructure was highly contested. This conflict between the government and the American oil industry reveals a widening rift that occurred in the high echelons of American power, a fracture that was often visible in not just the U.S. but in the Middle East as well. The TAPline Company was tasked with the enormous objective to rally both the American oil industry *and* Middle Eastern states around the pipeline project. In doing so, the company disseminated information through its own publications that characterized the project as both an essential element to U.S. hegemony and Middle Eastern economic development. In justifying the project to potential critics, the TAPline Company simultaneously prefaced its project as a key to maintaining international peace as well as an integral addition to the Middle Eastern political and geographical landscape. A story of genesis, the formation and rise of the TAPline Company is indicative of American oil's broader newfound international authority, particularly in the Middle East. Yet in the initial stages of the company's negotiations with Arab states, TAPline was met with obstruction from the Syrian government. In tracking the trajectory of the project, and problematizing its relationship to the U.S. government and to Arab states, this chapter provides the context needed to comprehend the seemingly endless failures encountered by the company in its tumultuous relationship with Damascus, which I recount in the next two chapters.

Changing Ownership

TAPline was designed to pass through Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon. On July 27, 1946, negotiations between the TAPline Company and the Syrian government, by far the project's most daunting negotiation job, officially began when the U.S. consular official in Damascus, George Wadsworth, introduced TAPline's Middle East Representative William

Lenahan to Prime Minister Saadallah Jabri. This moment, in which a member of the U.S. government facilitated conversation between an American private company and a foreign government, is representative of the TAPline project's broader move from its initial conception as a government project towards becoming a private enterprise. Less than three years earlier, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) first hinted to the Saudi King at the Yalta Conference of his long term plan to construct an oil pipeline from the American concession in Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean coast, the massive pipeline project was being developed within government circles.¹³ Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, who was one of FDR's longest serving cabinet members and the one responsible for implementing much of the administration's New Deal infrastructure program, spearheaded the government's bid to construct the Arabian line.

Before the war ended, TAPline was designated to be constructed by the U.S. government in cooperation with the American oil industry involved in extracting and exploring oil in Saudi Arabia. The government, according to these original plans, was to "construct...own and maintain" the entire pipeline system. The individuals, technology, and administrative network established during the Second World War were adapted to construct the major pipeline project in the Middle East. For example, Burt E. Hull, who would later become the President of TAPline Company, worked alongside Ickes and FDR, having been the President and General of the government-financed War Emergency Pipelines, Inc. (WEP).¹⁴ He is credited with the construction of the Big Inch and Little Inch pipelines from Texas to New Jersey, which were then the longest and largest pipelines ever to be constructed at the time.¹⁵ Significantly, a trade magazine article

¹³"Roosevelt Favors Oil Pipe Line," *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1944): 8.

¹⁴ The WEP was a non-profit corporation backed by a consortium of the country's largest oil companies. The primary project of the company was to construct the Inch lines. The government, not the oil companies, however, financed the project.

¹⁵ "Resolution of Appreciation to Burt E. Hull," *Pipe Line News* (Jan. 1944): 22.

about TAPline makes a direct reference to the Inch lines and remarks that the organization of an Arabian line will be similar.¹⁶ The Inch pipelines were constructed, notably in the interior United States, in order to secure large quantities of oil for the northeast during WWII. Hull frequented both government and business circles. In addition to directing a government company, Hull was appointed as the President of the Pipe Liners Club, a group made up of American oil executives and organized by the American Petroleum Institute.¹⁷

Yet, due to major concerns posed by the government Petroleum Industry War Council (PIWC) and the private Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA), the prospect of the government project was halted and interrogated. Entities like PIWC and IPAA were often attended by individuals from the private sector. In the PIWC, petroleum businessmen were likely called upon during the war for their counsel and cooperation with Washington's attempts to secure the country's access to energy resources. Representative of this pushback from the private sector can be seen in a written declaration named the "White Paper" authored by George A. Hill Jr., which bore a warning to the government not to intervene in "oil business."¹⁸ Hill, who was president of a sizable domestic petroleum company in Texas, said that a government-funded pipeline project in and around Saudi Arabia would create "nation-wide...rivalry" among commercial activity within the U.S. At a moment when the U.S. was still directly engaged in the war, the declaration remarkably stated that the government's proposed petroleum activity following the global conflict would undermine the country's claim to "free enterprise" and would plant the seed for future "international incidents" and potentially "war."¹⁹ The Petroleum Reserves Corpo-

¹⁶ "Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Will Take 18 Months to Construct," *Pipe Line News* (Feb. 1944): 13-16.

¹⁷ "Pipe Liners Club Is Organized: Burt Hull Named First President," *Pipe Line News* (Nov. 1945): 6.

¹⁸ "PIWC Assails Arabian Pipe Line Deal as a War Breeder," *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1944): 11-13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

ration (PRC), the government body that was assigned to build the pipeline under war-time measures and which the declaration called a “fascist” entity, had limited authority, with the war’s end near.²⁰

The government’s proposed ownership of one of the largest American infrastructure projects in a foreign territory appears to have exposed old wounds first encountered during FDR’s New Deal era. In a town hall event between Secretary Ickes and oil businessman turned Senator E. H. Moore from Oklahoma, the PRC was further interrogated for its role in the pipeline project. Moore was himself a petroleum businessman and founded the Independent Oil and Gas Company and then later E. H. Moore Inc, both of which operated oil wells in his home state, Oklahoma, as well as in Kansas and Texas.²¹ As a vocal critic of government overreach into the private sector, Moore frequently voted against FDR’s New Deal legislation. Now, with the war’s end near, Moore expressed his criticism of government overreach. In rather astounding language from a U.S. senator, Moore said that the U.S. government was flirting with a “policy of imperialism” in which corporations were owned by the government.²² For the next four months, congress argued over the legality of the government project, and during this time, Moore introduced legislation to the senate chamber that would have dissolved PRC and suspended the government’s role in the project.²³

This argument can be situated within a broader conversation that occurred at the time, in which government and private business wrestled over ownership of the petroleum industry in the Middle East. Military leaders, such as Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox and Under Secretary of

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Carolyn G. Hanneman, "Moore, Edward Hall. (1871 - 1950)," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=MO015>.

²² “Ickes Defends Arabian Pipe Line as Necessary Oil Insurance,” *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1944): 14.

²³ “Ickes Urges PRC Be Continued,” *Pipe Line News* (May 1945): 28.

War Judge Patterson, were keen on overtaking American private oil's foothold in Saudi Arabia, which included their wish to construct the pipeline as a military measure. As part of this discussion, Knox supposedly made the first public admission that Washington was considering purchasing all of the American companies' rights in Saudi Arabia.²⁴ It is known that Ickes first approached oil executives in 1943 concerning the question of nationalization, provoking an uncooperative response.²⁵ The Senate Oil Committee scheduled hearings to interrogate the government's role in the project, after which the body would produce a report that would determine the project's ownership.²⁶ Before these scheduled hearings were held or any such report was published, Secretary Ickes announced in July that the project would be built and operated by American oil companies in Saudi Arabia, not the U.S. government. The project was handed off to ARAMCO, which was in 1944 jointly owned by Standard Oil of California (Socal) and Texas Company (Texaco) and were the two companies that jointly shared concession rights in the oil rich kingdom.²⁷

The outcome of this conflict between the U.S. government and the private American oil industry, in which Washington would maintain relative distance from petroleum matters in the Middle East, was not destined to be so. Petroleum businessmen and business-friendly elected officials successfully lobbied the government in surrendering rights to the pipeline project. The executive branch of American government, which operated with increased authority through war-time measures during the Second World War, was now confronted by a growing and eager segment of American business. Unlike the British oil operations in Iran and Iraq, the American

²⁴ "Knox States Arabian Line Will Be of Great Benefit to Government If Constructed," *Pipe Line News* (Apr. 1944): 16.

²⁵ Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, & Power* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 380.

²⁶ "Prospects Are That Saudi Arabian Line Will Be Constructed as a Military Measure," *Pipe Line News* (May 1944): 46.

²⁷ "Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Will Be Built by Oil Companies as Postwar Project," *Pipe Line News* (Jul. 1944): 7-8.

oil industry in the Middle East was small. However, that oil industry underwent a period of rapid expansion in the U.S. domestic context during the Second World War, the largest projects of which were financed and constructed by the federal government. In this context, the individuals involved and the business community which they inhabited would become the main negotiators and architects of one of the largest privately-financed infrastructure projects in modern history. Powerful, wealthy, and influential, the private oil industry indisputably altered the future of the American petroleum industry in the Middle East.

Justifying TAPline

In changing the ownership of the TAPline project, petroleum businessmen altered the destiny of the infrastructure project, divorcing it from the government in Washington and turning it into a private enterprise. Significantly, however, the project remained an American venture, and not just a private one, but to an extent a gear in the broader operations of the United States' economic expansion after the war. Paradoxically, the company framed its ultimate construction of the line as the result of its separation from government, even when it benefited from its privileged relationship with Washington.

The TAPline Company's own publication, *Tapline, the Story of the World's Biggest Oil Pipeline*, with a corresponding publication in the *Pipe Line News* July 1951 issue with the similar title "The Story of TAPline," discusses the project's transformation from a government project to a private enterprise. On the one hand, the pipeline was truly an achievement because of its status as a private company and more importantly the absence of government intervention. According to the company's publication, a large infrastructure project like TAPline, without "nationalization" or "government subsidy," could be completed "better, faster, and cheaper" than through any other means available. Additionally, the publication argues that as a private enterprise job,

TAPline planners were forced to use “initiative and imagination” in order to navigate the obstacles they confronted in negotiations with foreign states, as well as construction of the line and other company infrastructure in the Middle East. In other words, the pipeline project was completed efficiently and inexpensively, largely due to the lack of the government’s participation. On the other hand, the pipeline was set to be a pillar for “national security and international peace.” By ensuring the United States with increased access to petroleum outside the Western Hemisphere at the inauguration of the Cold War, TAPline was, according to the publication, an effective measure for securing American interests in the Middle East and countering Soviet expansion. Furthermore, the publication argues that the project is “proof” that democracy, in particular American democracy, is a governing structure that reserves space for private enterprises and allows them to accomplish industrial projects that might have otherwise been taken up by a government. The company, despite a failed attempt by the FDR administration before the conclusion of the war, was not nationalized. Still, TAPline remained an *American* project not just in name, but also in content. Indeed, the company was given access to an entire market with the help of the U.S. government.²⁸

The Marshall Plan

Despite its private ownership, TAPline was involved with the U.S. government’s plan to expand the American economy after the Second World War. Particularly, importing petroleum from the Middle East rather than from the Western Hemisphere was an integral element to the U.S.’s ambitious and expensive plan to reconstruct post-war Europe. In Western Europe, importing petroleum from the Middle East as opposed to the Western Hemisphere was an integral ele-

²⁸ *Tapline, the Story of the World’s Biggest Oil Pipeline*, front page.

ment to the U.S.'s ambitious and expensive plan to reconstruct post-war Europe. The European Recovery Program (ERP), more commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was crafted by American Secretary of State George Marshall and foreign policy-maker George Kennan only a few months before the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine was passed in the fall of 1947. It sought to cultivate a strong economic partnership between war-ravaged Europe and the American economy through investment.²⁹

Simultaneously, the American oil industry designed TAPline in order to expand its operations in the Middle East. Unlike the British oil companies, which had beginning in the 1930's constructed and maintained a number of pipelines from Kirkuk in northern Iraq to coastal cities on the Mediterranean Sea, American oil companies had no major oil pipelines in the Middle East. Additionally, American presence in the region was largely limited to missionary work and educational endeavors.³⁰ One of the most famous examples of this is in Lebanon protestant missionaries from New England established the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, which was later named the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1920. After the Second World War, however, the American oil industry began expanding its operations in the region. A production line, beginning in the Western United States, where the Bechtel Construction Company was headquartered and where the major steel mills which supplied the steel pipe were based, ran to the Eastern seaboard, where the TAPline Company and ARAMCO were headquartered.³¹ Before, during, and after TAPline was constructed, the public relations departments of companies involved with the project, and oil and gas trade magazines, propagated a narrative that linked the

²⁹ Henry Heller, *The Cold War and the New Imperialism: A Global History, 1945-2005* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006), 58-59.

³⁰ Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*, 30-32.

³¹ Copy of Memorandum of Tapline Situation, H. H. Hall, Vice President of TAPline Company, Jan. 13, 1948 (Tapline Situation, Jan. 13, 1948); Central Decimal Files, 1945-1949, box 7206 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7206); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

American oil industry in the United States with Europe and the Middle East. Significantly, this narrative was used to justify the pipeline project. The obvious goal of the project was simple: to provide Western Europe with the necessary energy to propel the continent in a vigorous phase of reconstruction after the Second World War. It was argued, though not entirely based on fact, that the oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere would not withstand the expanding oil consumer market in both the United States and Europe. The pipeline was designed to be built from the ARAMCO gathering area in northeastern Saudi Arabia and would pass across Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham), later to be shipped from a coastal port to a European receiving center.

TAPline's Burt Hull said that the government would not finance the project but would simply support it.³² However, the transfer of large sums of capital from the U.S. government to the private venture suggests a relationship that is contrary to what Hull suggested. American oil, which had already been embedded in the economy of Western Europe and accounted for over fifty percent of total petroleum imports by 1947, was central to the continent's trade relationship with the American private sector. Out of the ERP's total \$12 billion investment over the course of four years, about 10% of the capital was used to purchase oil, thus directing nearly \$1.2 billion into the coffers of the same four companies that constituted the TAPline Company. Before the war, Europe's consumption of oil accounted for only 15% of worldwide consumption.³³ However by the mid-1940's, the U.S. government indirectly subsidized the American oil industry, thereby expanding the market for oil purchases in Western Europe and expanding oil exploration and extraction in the Middle East. Direct transfers of capital to ERP countries funded the increas-

³² "Arabian Line to Be Built After War," *Pipe Line News* (Jan. 1945): 33.

³³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Oil Developments," United States, Oct. 22, 1948. (redacted and declassified on Apr. 1, 2002). Also available online at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80-00926A000600040001-2.pdf>. It is important to note that this particular document, though published by the CIA and now stored on its online archive, was prepared by the Arabian-American Oil Company; thus, this cooperation clearly indicates the oil industry's close relationship with the American intelligence agency.

ing petroleum needs of Western Europe. This money ultimately found its way into the pockets of the American oil companies operating in the Middle East. As part of this new economic regime, the U.S.' public and private sectors directed unprecedented attention to the Middle East, wherein the fundamental resource of petroleum served as the key to American success.³⁴

Without the Marshall Plan, the oil industry would not have received economic support from the government. Simultaneously, without the oil industry, oil reserves from the Western Hemisphere would have been exhausted, thus stifling the United States' economic authority and threatening the execution of Western Europe's economic recovery program. In framing TAPLine as a privatized means to reconstruct Western Europe with U.S. government subsidies, the company essentially justified the project. Indeed, this mutual cooperation between the U.S. government and the American oil industry demonstrates that the two used their own respective authorities to construct an economic network that benefited both of them.

Redefining Geography

Trade magazines were instrumental in articulating this justification for the TAPLine project, emphasizing the future energy channel from Saudi Arabia to Europe, and the bridging of the U.S. with both geographies through steel, technical experience, and perhaps most importantly, the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to realize the project. There were many oil and gas magazines circulating at the time and each of them played a critical role in disseminating information about infrastructure projects, recruiting personnel, and advertising products. However, one trade magazine, *Pipe Line News*, stood out from its contemporaries. According to its own estimates in 1950, *Pipe Line News* circulated around 4,000 issues a month, compared to less than 2,500 by its closest competitors, such as *Oil and Gas Journal*, *Petroleum Engineer*, and *World*

³⁴ David S. Painter, "Oil and the Marshall Plan," *The Business History Review* 58, no. 3 (Autumn, 1984): 361-363.

Oil.³⁵ While 4000 issues may seem to be a small number, the magazine's readership in the 1940's and 1950's was probably a very niche community of American businessmen and engineers who worked in the pipeline industry. Its growing readership and advertisement space may indicate increased interest in pipeline infrastructure.

Trade magazines such as these operate as forums for business exchange. A number of companies in different sectors, such as General Electric, Motorola, Bechtel International, Williams Bros, and Graver Construction, bought advertisement space in these trade magazines at various points throughout the years 1947 to 1951. Bechtel International in particular is a company worth noting, as it was the construction company which was responsible for constructing the majority of TAPLine.³⁶ By the time that the Marshall Plan was funneling over a billion dollars into the American oil industry in the Middle East, it appears that *Pipe Line News* and other fossil trade magazines were experiencing their own renaissance. In the years 1945 to 1949, *Pipe Line News*, perhaps the most widely circulated pipeline trade magazine in the United States, enjoyed a steady advertisement base. In 1950, the same year that TAPLine was constructed, the monthly editions of the magazine saw a considerable increase in advertisements. The trade magazine, with *Pipe Line News* in the leadership, positioned TAPLine at the center of the oil and pipeline industries' global expansion. In this way, TAPLine was not only relevant to the TAPLine company, but to the broader American oil industry as well.

In *Pipe Line News*, the TAPLine project was likened to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia. In "The Story of TAPLine," Mesopotamia and the wider region is recalled as the

³⁵ *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1950): inside front cover.

³⁶ Bechtel is currently the largest construction company in the United States and the seventh largest company in the country: "ENR 2017 Top 400 Contractors," *ENR*, May 2017 <https://www.enr.com/toplists/2017-Top-400-Contractors1>.

place where “Ur, Nineveh, and Babylon, and later the illustrious Baghdad”³⁷ emerged, all of them being places of wealth and power. Significantly, the region on which TAPline was constructed, despite it actually being in the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula, not Mesopotamia, is said by the TAPline Company and *Pipe Line News* to be defined by its canals of liquid, of which TAPline was the newest and the largest. In an advertisement on an earlier page in the same *Pipe Line News* issue that features “The Story of TAPline,” an advertisement for Graver Construction Company (see fig. 1), which developed a number of pump station facilities along the line as well as the oil tanks at the Sidon terminal, includes a drawn depiction of TAPline and the surrounding terrain.³⁸ Emphasizing the accelerated rate and quantity of oil transportation, the illustrator shows the older means of transporting American oil, which required a “10-day run around the Arabian Peninsula.”³⁹ In contrast, TAPline transports perhaps the world’s most coveted resource through “mud, sand, and desolation.”⁴⁰ To the east of the pipeline, the illustrator includes the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Significantly, the emphasis of “The Story of TAPline” and this particular advertisement fail to mention the sovereign and independent states through which the pipeline passed. Instead, these publications are much more interested in understanding the pipeline territory in ecological terms. Perhaps unintentionally, the article and advertisement in the trade magazine classicized and naturalized the land on which TAPline was built. Meaning, rather than taking into account the present-day political and social structure of the region, the magazine reproduced the Middle Eastern cultural and geographical landscapes along contours determined by the American oil industry. Perhaps, this was all the author could confidently say about the region. Or rather, maybe

³⁷ “The Story of TAPline,” *Pipe Line News* (Jul. 1951): 34.

³⁸ Graver Construction Company Advertisement, *Pipe Line News* (Jul. 1951): 19.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the author thought that readers would lack interest in a discussion about the Middle Eastern states involved in the project. Regardless of the intentions of the author, the publication's focus on geography effectively avoids discussion about the company's relationship with the states of Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This discussion, however, is critical to understanding the American oil industry's expanding role in the Middle East.

Reconnaissance and Initial Negotiations

In the summer of 1945, the TAPline Company was officially incorporated in the state of Delaware, a popular location for companies as a result of its business-friendly legal framework.⁴¹ The pipeline project, now operating as a private enterprise with remnants of the government project, most evident in Burt E. Hull's serving as the TAPline Company's president, immediately encountered major obstacles. Before it was officially announced that the project would become a private enterprise, plans to survey the land were scheduled. Hull, who still worked for the government-financed WEP corporation as general manager, and Oscar Wolfe, who worked at the same company as Chief Engineer, and an engineer from Socal, ventured to Arabia to do a preliminary survey not for Washington, but for their "own companies."⁴²

In continuing these reconnaissance efforts, the TAPline Company deployed larger teams of engineers with the mission to identify potential transit routes in late 1945 and into the early part of 1947. In Transjordan and Syria, these engineering teams were not granted legal access to survey the land by the host governments. Fortunately for them, the British-majority IPC's infrastructural foothold in the region, both materially and administratively, served the TAPline Company's immediate needs to enter the sovereign territory in Syria and Transjordan. IPC pipelines

⁴¹ "New Company Is Formed for Work," *Pipe Line News* (Aug. 1945): 16.

⁴² "Prospects Are That Saudi Arabian Line Will Be Constructed as a Military Measure," *Pipe Line News* (May 1944): 46.

continued to be monitored by IPC-hired watchmen, allowing for TAPline's engineers to survey the new territory on which the pipeline was to be built.⁴³ The engineering teams almost entirely travelled alongside existing IPC lines when performing all ground surveys. Other areas in which IPC lines did not exist were only assessed from the air.⁴⁴ These reconnaissance reports, in emphasizing the help the survey parties received from the IPC, reveals the TAPline Company's lack of experience in the region.

The American company encountered obstacles that the British in the 1930's had previously avoided, that is, negotiations with sovereign states. Lebanon and Syria gained full independence from their French occupiers, respectively in 1943 and 1946. Soon afterwards, in 1946, Transjordan gained its independence from Great Britain. Presumably, the sovereign terrain of Lebanon and Syria should have undoubtedly necessitated negotiations between TAPline and the respective host governments in order for the company to conduct the surveys.

Without first completing negotiations, however, a team including W.R. Chandler, Oscar Wolfe, and S.P. Johnson in 1946 proceeded to conduct their reconnaissance with the help of IPC officials. At various points in this report, the nature of the engineering team appears to exist covertly while in the host countries. In Lebanon and Syria for example, the report states that it was necessary to disguise the purpose for their travels. And in nearby Transjordan, the team's activity was camouflaged as engineering guests of IPC "for the purpose of inspecting pump stations and new pipeline construction."⁴⁵ A year later in a *New York Times* article, it appears the American pipeline company averted a public relations catastrophe when a team of surveyors and engineers

⁴³ George Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 124.

⁴⁴ Oscar Wolfe and S. P. Johnson, "Reconnaissance of Alternate Routes for the Proposed Trans-Arabian Pipe Line," Jul. 1946, Box 4, File 1, *TAPLINE-Makkinje Collection*, Archives and Special Collections, AUB University Libraries.

⁴⁵ Wolfe and Johnson, "Reconnaissance," Jul. 1946, *TAPLINE Collection*, AUB.

were confronted by “several hundred” bedouins. One engineer’s life was reportedly threatened and it was only when his Arab driver persuaded them he was British that the bedouins set him free.⁴⁶

Though IPC was at times in competition with American interests, the company’s existing material and administrative infrastructure indeed was an avenue through which the TAPLine Company imagined and later realized its master project. Conversely, when the company commenced its reconnaissance operations in the region, the U.S. government offered administrative support to TAPLine’s survey party in Syria but the company declined Washington’s offer.⁴⁷ With the help of the British IPC, TAPLine was able to begin preliminary reconnaissance. Largely without direct state intervention, the American oil industry began to realize its own imagination of American economic power, which was one of the critical goals of the project.⁴⁸

Selecting a Route

Now, TAPLine was to choose a coastal terminal on the Eastern Mediterranean from which petroleum would be transported on tankers to European ports. Referring to an early reconnaissance report from 1944 and 1945, during which the American government under FDR had not yet determined its position on a possible Jewish state, an engineering committee concluded that the best route was through Palestine or Lebanon. From engineering and financial standpoints, inaugurating a terminal on the coasts of these two regions was most preferable due to the op-

⁴⁶ Dana Adams Schmidt, “Bedouins, Druses Top Arab Fighters,” *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1947, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴⁷ Dean Acheson, Acting Secretary of State, to American Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Dec. 13, 1946; Central Decimal Files 1949-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁴⁸ For another history of infrastructure, see Fredrik Meiton. *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019). Similar to TAPLine’s role in the Levant, Meiton argues in his book that the development of technological infrastructure and capital played a considerable role in the construction of the Jewish State of Israel.

tion's minimal length and cost.⁴⁹ In this same report, the company also considered a terminal in Egypt, perhaps because such a route would avert the political turmoil in Palestine and the uncertainty in Syria. According to the same reconnaissance report, the Egyptian government was actively lobbied the TAPLine Company to construct its proposed pipeline through its own country and to terminate on its coast near Alexandria.⁵⁰ However, correspondence between the American consulate in Saudi Arabia and the Department of State reveal that the Egypt route, as early as 1945, was only promulgated by the company to serve as a "lever" to use in negotiations.⁵¹ This serious consideration of the plan never took off because the extra pipe required for the longer line was estimated to cost an additional \$20 million, which the company considered an exorbitant cost.⁵²

By 1946, it appeared that Haifa, Palestine would be selected as the location for the pipeline's terminal (see fig. 2).⁵³ An agreement between TAPLine Company and the British Mandate government in Palestine was made in March of that year.⁵⁴ The conditions of the deal greatly privileged the American company. The concession was proposed to be seventy years long, during which the company would have the authority to construct multiple pipelines as well as other transportation infrastructure, such as railroads and asphalt roads. In addition, the British High Commissioner would allow the transportation and export of petroleum without any taxation.⁵⁵ Because of the affordability of this deal and the tangible security of operating in British territory,

⁴⁹ Wolfe and Johnson, "Reconnaissance," Jul. 1946, *TAPLINE Collection*, AUB.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ William A. Eddy, Envoy to Saudi Arabia, to Edward Stettinius Jr., Secretary of State, Jan. 10, 1945; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7213; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, MD.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "Permits Granted for Arabian Oil Line," *Pipe Line News* (Oct. 1945): 25.

⁵⁴ "Details on Arabian Pipeline in Palestine," *Pipe Line News* (Sep. 1946): 19.

⁵⁵ "Details on Arabian Pipeline in Palestine," *Pipe Line News* (Sep. 1946): 19; "Palestine Pipe Line Exempted from Taxes," *Pipe Line News* (Apr. 1946): 24.

these conditions were most desirable to the company. The circumstances in Palestine looked increasingly grim, however. Conflict between Palestinians and Zionists erupted throughout the territory and the company was concerned that a line through this area would be impossible.⁵⁶ As a result, the company pursued other potential avenues, for example, through Syria and Lebanon.⁵⁷

Encountering Obstruction in Syria

IPC infrastructure facilitated TAPline's initial activity to realize its own authority in the Middle East. Negotiating with Syria was however a very difficult matter. When the TAPline Company began to prepare to negotiate with the Syrian government in late 1946, Syria had gained independence from France only a few months earlier. As a new postcolonial government, the pressure to stimulate economic growth and solidify the central government's newfound authority was perhaps one of its most important initiatives. Throughout these early stages of discussion, the Syrian government was interested in having TAPline construct more infrastructure to Damascus's benefit than the company had initially proposed. At the time of discussions, the location of the line was still uncertain. The company's preferred route would terminate on the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, as opposed to on the Egyptian coast, and would therefore run through Saudi Arabia and Transjordan. For reasons that will be addressed in the following chapter, Syria came to be an integral part of the company's plans.

TAPline was designed by ARAMCO partly in order to secure agreements with the host states that privileged the American oil industry. Though a subsidiary company of ARAMCO, TAPline was in no legal sense a petroleum company, despite its ownership exactly mirroring ARAMCO's, but rather a transportation company. Deliberately designed by ARAMCO to fur-

⁵⁶ "Political Trouble May Alter Arabian Line," *Pipe Line News* (Aug. 1946): 28.

⁵⁷ "Progress for Arabian Oil Line," *Pipe Line News* (Nov. 1946): 21.

ther its own capitalist ambitions, TAPLine was formed with the necessary contours to negotiate conventions with the future transit states that would be most beneficial to the larger petroleum consortium. As the negotiating entity, TAPLine was insured with the ability to secure considerably lower transit fees.⁵⁸

The Syrian government, in an apparent attempt to increase its access to energy, used its own leverage in negotiations to lobby the company to consider constructing a pipeline terminus and its own modest refinery attached to it in Syrian territory.⁵⁹ In some discussions, the possibility of a shared refinery and terminus between Lebanon and Syria was discussed. When the British IPC first secured its transit rights through Syria, the authorities in Damascus were French mandate, or rather colonial, authorities. Consequently, this agreement provided zero compensation to the local governments involved. Now, in TAPLine's mission to secure transit rights through Syrian territory, a sovereign, local government stood in the way.

In the first meeting with the Syrian government, TAPLine representative Lenahan reported that discussions resulted in "very little progress."⁶⁰ And for practically a full year afterwards, barely any progress had been made. By the end of that year, 1946, the Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson noted that the TAPLine Company had considered, yet ultimately decided against, invoking treaty rights in order to secure transit rights through Syria.⁶¹ The treaty under question is unclear, though it was perhaps similar to the U.S.-Lebanese agreement made in 1944, which

⁵⁸ Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East*, 154-155.

⁵⁹ Most petroleum refineries throughout the world have historically been located in lands of the metropole, i.e., the United States, the United Kingdom, France, etc. Significantly, Syria's request for a refinery in its own territory would likely have been judged to be audacious.

⁶⁰ Gordon H. Mattison, Consular Official (Damascus), to James F. Byrnes, Secretary of State, Aug. 26, 1946; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁶¹ Acheson to American Legation, Dec. 13, 1946; CDF 1945-1949, box 7201; RG 59; NACP.

mandated mutual consultation on economic matters.⁶² The company and Acheson feared that invoking treaty rights and diverting the sovereignty of the Syrian democratic government would potentially “jeopardize” future concessions in the country.

The patience of the TAPLine Company appears to have run its course and a few months later, the company arguably took its first drastic move. Given the impending delay caused by divisions within the Syrian government, the company offered President Quwatli an ultimatum: if the Syrian government did not pass the resolution to agree to TAPLine’s terms within a matter of four days, the pipeline would take a different direction and bypass Syria altogether.⁶³ Less than a week later, communication between the two parties further deteriorated when the Syrian government committed to meet TAPLine’s demands under the condition that the pipeline terminus be located on the Syrian coastline north of the Lebanese coastal city of Tripoli.⁶⁴ Unwilling to oblige to this counter offer, President Hull requested that Lenahan return to Beirut to brainstorm a response. According to an American consular report, the U.S. government was concerned that Hull’s actions would make matters between the company and the Syrian government more difficult in the future.⁶⁵

The leading figures within the Syrian government were from early on aggravated with the negotiating process because of its relation to its deteriorating relationship with Lebanon. According to the government in Damascus, it had an agreement with the Lebanese government to negotiate and sign a deal with TAPLine simultaneously, supposedly in order to secure a convention

⁶² Irene Gendzier, *Notes From the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 111-113.

⁶³ James S. Moose, Consular Official (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Mar. 4, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁶⁴ James S. Moose, Consular Official (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Mar. 7, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

that equally benefited both countries.⁶⁶ Yet the Lebanese government, to the dismay of the Syrians, had signed their own TAPline convention months before. When TAPline officials first approached the Lebanese government to commence project negotiations, the company was met with nearly no opposition.⁶⁷ Along with Transjordan, Lebanon agreed to a TAPline concession in July 1947 and continued to publicly and privately support the infrastructure project throughout its construction process.

In a series of concessions to the Syrian government in an effort to secure an agreement, the TAPline Company agreed to the following: in exchange for the Syrian government's support, ARAMCO would pledge two hundred thousand tons of crude oil to the Syrian government, annually, and Syrian labor would be preferred over foreign labor in the construction of the line in the southern part of the country. In these concessions, which were believed to make ratification "certain," the company anticipated parliament would likely sign the agreement. However, the company also anticipated that without a refinery in Syria, the government would not agree to TAPline's terms.⁶⁸ The message articulated by the company is utterly contradictory. On the one hand, the company was confident that its concessions, which were arguably conservative, would secure the pipeline's future in Syria. On the other hand, the company was equally concerned that without major infrastructure pledges in Syrian territory, negotiations would remain static.

Conclusion

TAPline, first conceived as a government project, ultimately became a private venture. As infrastructure that linked the U.S. economy to the economies of Europe and the Middle East,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Gendzier, *Notes From the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958*, 96.

⁶⁸ Robert Memminger, Charge (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Sep. 1, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

however, TAPline remained an interest of, and financially tied to, the government in Washington. In the first years of the TAPline Company's existence, the company occupied the intersection of the U.S. government and the American oil industry. Through the government's indirect subsidization from the Marshall Plan and the subsequent support from the private sector, the TAPline Company therefore was in an ideal position to successfully complete the pipeline project. However, TAPline immediately encountered obstacles in its negotiations with newly-independent Syria. Though petroleum businessmen altered the form of the TAPline project allegedly with the assumption that this form would be more efficient and cost-effective, the project still experienced severe delays in its first year of planning. In the following two years, however, the company's ties to the U.S. government were again interrogated. Except this time, the objection did not come from the domestic oil industry in the U.S., but rather from the peoples and governments in the Middle East.

2. Reactions to the Partition of Palestine

Negotiations between the TAPline Company and all the parties involved showed signs of significant progress. Lebanon and Transjordan signed agreements with the company in the summer of 1947 and Syria signed an agreement shortly thereafter. The *New York Times* reported that Syrian Prime Minister Jamil Mardam agreed to negotiations with the company. In a rather celebratory manner, the newspaper reported that “the last political obstacle, i.e., Syria,” had been “cleared away,” thus inaugurating the pipeline’s construction and delivering victory to the company.⁶⁹

All states in which the pipeline was planned to traverse, excluding Saudi Arabia, were proposed to be paid about £1.5 for each 1,000 tons of oil transported, with a minimum payment of about £20,000 a year. Additional protection fees were also proposed to be allocated: £40,000 to both Syria and Lebanon and £25,000 to Transjordan. Particularly in Lebanon, the country negotiated to collect extra fees from the company as a result of the pipeline’s terminal in the southern part of the country.⁷⁰ However, due to the Syrian government’s attempts to secure better compensation from the TAPline Company, Syria along with Lebanon agreed to receive 50% of the terminal fees, despite it having no territorial claim over the terminal facility’s location.⁷¹ This final arrangement was due to the Syrian government’s ultimatum that it would not permit the pipeline to pass through Syrian territory unless it received additional royalties.⁷²

⁶⁹ “Syria assents to oil pipeline plan; building of project is set to start,” *New York Times*, Sep. 2, 1947, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Syria, Lebanon Will Split Pipe Line Fees; Revenue Agreement Due To Be Signed,” *Pipe Line News* (Jun. 1947): 29.

It seemed as though all the necessary components to begin construction were in place, yet if anything were to obstruct the company's progress, it would likely stem from the crisis in Palestine. In the late fall of 1947, violence erupted in Mandate Palestine as a result of the U.N.'s resolution to partition the territory between two sovereign Jewish and Arab states.⁷³ Due to the conflict, the TAPline Company's previous plans to terminate its pipeline at Haifa were ceased, and the company was forced to reconsider the line's route and terminal. Within this process, the TAPline Company's relationship with the U.S. government appeared to deteriorate, as their respective agendas clashed on this issue of Palestine. Most significantly as a result of the conflict in Palestine, the company's standing in the Middle East became complicated. Public opposition against the company began to coalesce and the project's completion seemed increasingly unlikely. Later, amidst the ensuing war between the Arab coalition of Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Syria against the newly-declared State of Israel, TAPline negotiations with the Syrian government were halted.⁷⁴ Syrian politicians were visibly divided on the topic of pipeline ratification, thus negotiations remained at a standstill for all of 1948 and into the beginning of 1949.⁷⁵

In this chapter, I discuss the TAPline Company's handling of its challenged relationship with the U.S. government and its negotiations with Arab states. I argue that, as a private American company operating in the Middle East, the TAPline Company was situated between the U.S. government's agenda and the demands of Arab states. The company's position as an obvious extension of American economic power through its direct contact with the U.S. government and the Marshall Plan, often crippled its ambitions, most importantly, to secure concession agreements with Arab states. The leaders of Arab states, infuriated with the U.S.'s public support for the Zi-

⁷³ "Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine," United Nations, Nov. 29, 1947. <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253>.

⁷⁴ Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East*, 155.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 158.

onist movement, appeared determined to halt the American oil industry's expansion in the Middle East, a process that was partly contingent on TAPline's construction. Remarkably, however, the TAPline Company demonstrated significant resilience in what seemed to be a fatal situation. Declassified documents reveal that even in the midst of severe anti-American sentiment in the Middle East, the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and even Syria, continued to cooperate *and* collude with the company. Essentially, the TAPline Company's promises of wealth and industrialization to Arab states afforded the American enterprise with the ability to exert influence in the region. TAPline, although hindered by its ties to the United States, remained a formidable and influential authority during the tumultuous period before, during, and after the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.

An Imperfect U.S.-TAPline Relationship

The relationship between the U.S. government and the TAPline Company first began to falter in late 1947, largely as a result of the partition plan and its aftermath. As a company operating overseas, TAPline was subject to criticism from not just the U.S. government but also from the domestic American oil industry. The first conflict between the company and the U.S. government since the company's conception was largely the result of the situation in Palestine, to which the two parties approached with vastly different agendas. The second conflict emerged between the company and both the government and the domestic oil industry, and was the result of a steel shortage in U.S.

The Foreign Policy of the TAPline Company

The Truman Administration, in contrast to a large host of American foreign service officials in the Middle East, supported the sovereignty of a Jewish State.⁷⁶ Consequently, the violence that followed Britain's unilateral declaration to evacuate the Mandate in 1948 affected American oil operations not only in Palestine, but in neighboring Arab states as well, such as Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Egypt. In Saudi Arabia, where U.S. private and public interests were notably salient, the founder of the state King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud (r. 1932-1953), had communicated to the oil companies as well as to the U.S. government years earlier that he was absolutely opposed to a Jewish state.⁷⁷ Although the U.S. government was likely sure to benefit from expanded oil operations in the Middle East, the executive branch's policy towards Zionism practically crippled the American private sector in the region for months and could very well have devastated future prospects of business and construction ventures. At this moment, the U.S. public-private oil partnership proved to be flawed. In spite of the obvious threats towards American business interests and widespread disapproval by both the private oil industry and the American foreign service legations in the Middle East, the Truman administration maintained its support for Zionism and essentially became a liability to capitalist ventures like TAPline.

Indisputably, the anticipated conflict in Palestine provoked great uncertainty for private ventures in the Middle East and cornered the TAPline company in a position that was at odds with Washington. The company's own political leanings are made evident in its 1951 publication (see fig. 3). On a map of the TAPline route, the State of Israel is not recognized. Instead, the par-

⁷⁶ Scholars such as Robert Kaplan in *The Arabists* have claimed that the Truman Administration's support for the Jewish state of Israel was tied to the ongoing New York City mayoral race, in which the city's large Jewish population maintained a sizable part of the constituency. Truman, in an effort to curry favor with the city's Jewish population, supported the sovereignty of Israel.

⁷⁷ Douglas Little, "Pipeline Politics: America, TAPLINE, and the Arabs," *The Business History Review* 64, no 2 (Summer, 1990): 264.

tioned territory was marked a uniform “Palestine.” In addition, the company had long suspected, on multiple occasions, that oil operations in the coastal Mandate would be challenged by regional instability and Washington’s Zionist policy. Drawn from discussions between the company’s survey party, and American government officials and private sector executives, an internal TAPline report published in 1946 expresses the company’s own political position on the issue of Palestinian partition. This survey party, a group of company engineers tasked with studying potential routes for the pipeline, had consulted a number of actors in the region, such as the American Consul-General in Jerusalem, American legation officials in Cairo and Beirut, and AR-AMCO vice president and TAPline’s representative in the Middle East, William Lenahan. It appears the company in fact supported a resolution that favored the Palestinian Arabs as a means to minimize the seemingly inevitable turmoil in Palestine. The report predicted that if the consequences of the conflict were “confined to Palestine,” then TAPline could still be constructed without further obstruction. The company’s primary fear, and rightly so, was that Syria, more so than Lebanon and Transjordan, was the country most susceptible to the U.S. government’s “regrettable policy.” In a remarkably explicit tone, the report warned that “Syria...will be a scene of a great deal of unrest” in the event that a decision is made that is “unfavorable to the Arabs on the Palestine issue.” While American private oil companies and the U.S. government were cooperating through the Marshall Plan arrangements, the administration’s new foreign policy prepared a marked fracture between the pro-Zionist Truman administration and the American company.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Wolfe and Johnson, “Reconnaissance,” Jul. 1946, *TAPLINE Collection*, AUB.

The Battle for Steel

Interwoven in this broader rift between the TAPLine project and the U.S. government was the allocation of steel and the domestic industry's attempt to curtail its export to Saudi Arabia. In early 1947, export contracts between steel companies and ARAMCO were signed and the first export licenses from the Commerce Department's Office of International Trade (OIT) were secured.⁷⁹ However, the company needed to renew these licenses every quarter of the year. On the domestic front, the petroleum industry in the United States encouraged the government to reject ARAMCO's request for 240,000 tons of steel pipe for the TAPLine project. Specifically, the IPAA, which opposed the government's role in the project just before the Second World War concluded, protested what it understood to be the government's preferential treatment of ARAMCO. In a letter to various government departments, the IPAA interrogated the oil conglomerate's formal request for pipe. The business group argued that the pipeline would not prevent "World War III,"⁸⁰ as it was publicized, but was instead valued for its mere "convenience,"⁸¹ i.e., increase of profit, for ARAMCO. This letter reveals a sizeable rift that had formed between the ARAMCO parent companies and smaller U.S.-based oil companies. While ARAMCO prefaced the TAPLine project as a project that would ensure peace and economic prosperity in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East via the project's brilliant innovation, skeptics like IPAA executives pushed the government to reconsider its relationship with the oil conglomerate.

Four months later in a U.S. Senate hearing regarding American oil operations in the Middle East, in which ARAMCO Vice President Terry Duce and Secretary of the Navy and Secre-

⁷⁹ "Contracts Set for Arabian Line Project; 1,000 Miles of 30 Inch Pipe Line Involved," *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1947): 26.

⁸⁰ "Joint Chiefs of Staff of Army and Navy Desire Arabian Pipeline as Military Need," *Pipe Line News* (Mar. 1944): 15.

⁸¹ "IPAA Protests Proposed Export 240,000 Tons of Steel Pipe for Saudi-Arabian Pipe Line," *Pipe Line News* (Sep. 1947): 24.

tary of Defense James Forrestal were present, the export of steel to Saudi Arabia was again called into question. Because of the “situation in that area,” — the imminent partition of Palestine — Senator Wherry of Nebraska emphasized the shortage of steel for domestic use and questioned whether or not the Commerce Department should continue to allow the shipment of steel pipe from the U.S. to Saudi Arabia for the TAPline project. Like Wherry, Forrestal recognized the precarity of the situation, saying that his department would soon produce a report assessing the effectiveness of a pipeline instead of a fleet of tankers.⁸²

While this report has yet to be located, the Commerce Department’s following move indicates the government’s modified position regarding TAPline’s free access to American steel. Later in 1948 during the steel shortage in the U.S. and the political situation in Palestine, the company’s steel export license was placed under “review,” according to a front-page article in *Pipe Line News*.⁸³ The article, titled “Trans-Arabian Line Proving Tougher Job than Building ‘Inch’ Lines During War...,” refers to a lecture that TAPline President Burt Hull addressed the American Chemical Society in September. At the lecture, Hull said that the Commerce Department’s “reluctance” to fulfill the company’s license threatens the TAPline project and its foundational role in implementing the Marshall Plan in Europe. He, furthermore, addressed the project’s critics who claimed that the project was *not* a cost-effective option to the alternative construction of tankers. According to the company’s estimates, the pipeline required 215,000 tons of steel, whereas a fleet of tankers would have required about 322,000 tons. TAPline, as Hull rightly notes, encountered far more obstacles than the government-financed “Inch” lines constructed in the early 1940s as a wartime measure. As a result of the Truman administration’s support for a

⁸² David A. Robertson, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, to Loy Wesley Henderson, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Mar. 18, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁸³ “Trans-Arabian Line; Proving Tougher Job Than Building ‘Inch’ Lines During War, Burt Hull Reports,” *Pipe Line News* (Oct. 1948): 7-11.

Jewish state and the Commerce Department's revocation of steel export licenses, the TAPline project was being undermined by the government from which it was first conceived.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government, lacking direct control over the project, attempted to influence the location of the line and to secure a mutually-beneficial economic agreement with ARAMCO. The U.S. Navy, which understood the construction of TAPline to be vital to its own energy supplies, actively lobbied for an alternative route that would have crossed the Red Sea near Aqaba and through Egypt.⁸⁴ According to a Navy report, Egypt, rather than Syria, was a better location for TAPline for a number of reasons. The extended delay in negotiations between Damascus and the TAPline Company reportedly also delayed plans for "other Mid-East [pipeline] companies," since TAPline had "first priority" on the only 30-inch steel pipe factory in the world located in Utah and thus prevented other pipeline projects from commencing.⁸⁵ Additionally, Navy officers believed that Egypt was better situated to host the TAPline infrastructure, noting that a line through the country would allow for two termini on the Red Sea and Mediterranean. More importantly, two termini in Egypt would reduce the company's negotiations to only two states, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as opposed to four. In what the report cites as a burgeoning era of "cold warfare," altering the pipeline's route to Egypt would dodge the "political...crisis" in and around Palestine and would even serve as the potential "springboard for economic penetration" in all of Africa.⁸⁶ Although a line through Egypt was never seriously considered by the company due to its exorbitant cost, TAPline did believe that having Egypt as a backup would,

⁸⁴ Stanton Griffis, Ambassador to Egypt, to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Oct. 20, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

according to Lenahan, provide the company with “another basket for our [the TAPline Company’s] eggs.”⁸⁷

Additionally, the TAPline project was identified by the government as an opportunity to cultivate a mutually-prosperous exchange between the U.S. Navy and the American oil industry in the Middle East. The prospective agreement included that in exchange for giving the U.S. Navy a “preferential price position” for TAPline oil, the Commerce Department would ensure the company “immediate allocation of steel.” A draft of a letter from TAPline engineer Rhea Putnam to Secretary of the Navy Sullivan, in which crude oil would be transported to “[departments] of [the] National Military Establishment” in exchange for the “export of pipe,” confirms the company’s serious consideration of the arrangement.⁸⁸ Yet to the dismay of the Navy, the ARAMCO representative participating in these discussions, Philip C. Kidd, was reluctant to cultivate a highly visible partnership with the U.S. government. Mr. Kidd cited the British government’s relationship with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which he says has been a “source of difficulty” for the British oil industry in Iran. Additionally, Kidd said that the American oil conglomerate was paying the U.S. government more in taxes than it paid the Saudi government in royalties.⁸⁹

The TAPline Company’s relationship with the U.S. government, which proved to be both a liability and outright obstacle to the project’s progress, became a legitimate concern. Rumors consequently began to circulate throughout the TAPline Company and its board of directors that the project would be forced to take a different direction. There were two options being consid-

⁸⁷ William Lenahan, TAPline Middle East Representative, to H.H. Hall, Vice President of TAPline, Jan. 13, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁸⁸ Rhea Putnam to John L. Sullivan, Secretary of the Navy, Feb. 18, 1949, Box 3, File 1, *TAPLINE-Makkinje Collection*, Archives and Special Collections, AUB University Libraries.

⁸⁹ Memorandum of Conversation of Navy-Commerce Proposal Regarding Steel for TAPline, Nov. 22, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 2905; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

ered by company executives and legal representatives. The first and more drastic option included that the pipeline project be indefinitely abandoned and that a fleet of oil tankers be immediately constructed. The less extreme option, which guaranteed only a temporary resolution to the problem, included that the project be suspended, for six or so months, and that negotiations be continued *after* the conflict in Palestine allayed.⁹⁰

TAPline in the Middle East

The TAPline Company's pipeline project was nearly jeopardized as a result of the Truman administration's support for a Zionist state. Despite this reality, the U.S. government moved forward with its support for the U.N. partition plan and voted "yes" in the General Assembly. The TAPline project, having first been advertised as a private venture designed to ensure the U.S.'s national security, was now encountering major obstacles in the Middle East as a result of its relationship with Washington. As the company had earlier suspected, anti-American sentiment exploded as a result of the government's decision—and in its crosshairs, unsurprisingly, was the TAPline project. The tactics that the company used in response to these obstacles, including intimidation and even bribery, are quite astonishing. The company's actions reveal the influence that promises of industrialization had on Middle Eastern states in early years of post-colonial independence.

Anti-American Sentiment

In Syria, popular attitude towards the Americans was exceptionally destructive. In early December 1947, just days after the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine was passed, a group of IPC engineers believed to be American were attacked by Bedouins near Syria's border with

⁹⁰ Tapline Situation, Jan. 13, 1948; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

Transjordan.⁹¹ A group of TAPline workers operating nearby, out of a concern for their safety, were quickly evacuated to Beirut in the aftermath of the attack.⁹² The IPC workers, interestingly, were let go once they convinced their captors that they were British.⁹³ As this particular event shows, word of the U.S. government's support for a Jewish state in Palestine had travelled widely throughout Syria. The resentment towards America, which effectively paralyzed the TAPline convention's chances in the Syrian parliament, proved to be perhaps one of the most significant obstacles to the pipeline's completion.

Additionally, theories about the TAPline Company began to emerge within ruling circles in the Middle East. In February 1948, State Department intelligence reported that the Arabic newspaper *Al-Assas*⁹⁴ was promulgating that American oil companies would conspire with Zionist factions in Mandate Palestine and thereafter lobby the U.S. government to fully support a Jewish state with "force of arms."⁹⁵ According to the logic exhibited in this newspaper, the Jewish government would permit pipeline extensions through the new state's territory in exchange for arms from the U.S. The fear, it appears, was that the TAPline Company would act as an intermediary between the imminent Jewish state and the U.S. government. Additionally, the CIA reported that communist elements in Syria were also propagating messages that targeted the TAPline operations in Syria specifically. The report notes that communists had spread rumors which claimed that TAPline personnel were not actually private employees but were instead "camou-

⁹¹ Schmidt, "Bedouins, Druses Top Arab Fighters," *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1947.

⁹² Memorandum of Conversation on Report Regarding TAPline, Dec. 3, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

⁹³ Schmidt, "Bedouins, Druses Top Arab Fighters," *New York Times*.

⁹⁴ After looking through the WorldCat online global catalogue, I was able to confirm, as the government correspondence suggests, that *Al-Assas* was published in Egypt. However, I was unable to determine the exact city or cities in which the paper was based.

⁹⁵ S. Pinkney Tuck, Ambassador to Egypt, to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Feb. 26, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

flagged military personnel” charged with the objective to inaugurate a formal American “military occupation.” According to the CIA report, this objective would be a “lengthening...of the...base...in Saudi Arabia.” This message, propagated by communist elements in Syria, perhaps exaggerates role of the U.S. government in what is more likely a private business affair between a foreign government and an arguably predatory private American company.⁹⁶ While these theories are likely not grounded in fact, as the TAPline Company opposed the creation of a Jewish state and enjoyed an imperfect relationship with the U.S. government, they do however reveal a growing anxiety around the question of American private enterprise in the Middle East. Indeed, the “American” in ARAMCO became a liability.

This dynamic seems to have been utilized by other foreign, competing private actors in the region. The British government, which was likely speaking on the behalf of British-owned oil companies in the Middle East “encourage[ed] public trend” in Syria to differentiate nations who voted for partition and for those who did not.⁹⁷ The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and IPC, both of which were themselves in the process of securing transit rights for their own pipelines through Syria, were natural competitors to TAPLINE. In contrast to the United States’ positive vote at the U.N. to partition Palestine, the United Kingdom abstained. Remarkably, one of the U.S.’s closest allies in Europe emphasized the U.S. government’s policy most likely in an effort to further diminish Washington’s reputation and simultaneously boost London’s.

These accusations, some more legitimate than others, prompted Arab states to publicly denounce the TAPline project. First, in December 1947, the Arab League considered a set of res-

⁹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “Communist Propaganda About TAPline,” United States, Jan. 8, 1948, (redacted and declassified on May 10, 2001). Also available online at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R001200400005-3.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Robert Memminger, Charge (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Jan. 22, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

olutions called the Bloudane secret decisions, which would have vowed to deny any future oil concessions to governments that supported the Jewish state.⁹⁸ This set of resolutions also would have prompted a regional examination into cancelling existing concessions with the member states.⁹⁹ The league was however “embarrassed” by the anticipated consequences of such a move and many of the member states recognized the impossibility of cutting economic ties with the American and British oil industries. Ultimately, the entire matter was postponed to a later date.¹⁰⁰ At an Arab League Session in March 1948, delegates from all across the Middle East appeared unanimous in their opposition to the U.S.’s support for the partition of Palestine, with the Syrian representative at the helm of the initiative. Yet when the session’s discussion turned to petroleum agreements, delegates disagreed on the Palestinian delegations’ proposal to cancel existing and future economic treaties and concessions with American companies. Saudi Arabia, which was the country most saliently braided in American capital, was vehemently opposed to this proposal, claiming that the U.S. government’s position on Palestine is irrelevant to the operations of American companies. The Syrian delegate, taking the discussion a step further, recommended a policy in which no new economic agreements with American companies be made. Then, surprisingly, the Lebanese delegate introduced the construction of TAPline. Ultimately, the Arab League unanimously adopted a resolution which agreed that all member states refrain from completing negotiations with the TAPline Company. It seems unlikely that the Lebanese government, which

⁹⁸ While it is uncertain what exactly the “Bloudane” in the Bloudane secret decisions comes from, it is highly likely that the name comes from the Syrian village of Bloudan, which lies on Syria’s border with Lebanon and may have been a meeting place for the governments in Syria, Lebanon, and other nearby states after the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine. Bloudan houses the Great Bloudan Hotel and hosted the first pan-Arab Bloudan conference in 1937 to discuss the Arab revolt in Palestine.

⁹⁹ Habib Abi-Chahla, TAPline Attorney, to Burt E. Hull, TAPline President, Dec. 31, 1947 (Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7206); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

¹⁰⁰ Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

was an early supporter of the American project, was actually interested in postponing TAPline's construction. Months before this session but after the U.N. resolution on partition, Lebanon expressed that if the U.S. government were to "show...a favorable hand or even a neutral hand," President Khoury would push for TAPline at the Arab League.¹⁰¹

In fact, when the Lebanese delegate introduced this topic, his intention may not have been to indefinitely stall the project. Perhaps, in highlighting the uncertainty of "TAPline...in the event that the Syrian government refuses to permit the passage of [TAPline] through its territories," the Lebanese delegate did not suspect that the project would be struck down by the council. In the next section of the report, it seems that the fate of TAPline was decided. According to the Arab League's own agreement, in which all member countries appeared unanimous, negotiations with the TAPline Company were now illegal.¹⁰² In a remarkably public setting, the Arab League protested in patchy solidarity against American oil's expansion in the Middle East.

The Petroleum Alliance

This depiction of Arab solidarity, in which a major American business venture was halted by all seven member states of the Arab League, collapsed almost immediately afterwards. Archival evidence reveals that the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Lebanon went against the league's resolution and actively cooperated with both the TAPline Company and the American legations in their countries in order to secure TAPline's pathway to final construction. In private discussions immediately after the Arab League passed the Bloudane secret decisions, an alliance was clearly forming between Arab states interested in collaborating with the American oil industry.

¹⁰¹ Tapline Situation, Jan. 13, 1948; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹⁰² Central Intelligence Agency, "Resolutions and Discussions of the Last Arab League Session in Cairo," United States, Mar. 29, 1948. (redacted and declassified on May 10, 2001). Also available at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R001400280009-1.pdf>.

In one particular instance, the American Legation in Beirut obtained a copy of a letter from Saudi King Abdulaziz to Lebanese President Khoury. Abdulaziz expresses in the letter his “confidential” reactions, not to be shared with other Arab states, to the recent resolution regarding the American oil industry’s oil concessions and pipelines.¹⁰³ Citing Saudi Arabia’s reliance on the American oil industry, in which “oil is at... [Saudi Arabia’s] foundation,” Abdulaziz confides to Khoury that his country “cannot enforce” the resolution. The Saudi King, whose government was indeed dependent on foreign investment in petroleum and even civilian infrastructure, demonstrated his commitment to the pipeline project. Given that TAPline’s success required the cooperation of all three transit countries in addition to the producing country, it should not come as a surprise that Abdulaziz reached out to Lebanon, where TAPline’s terminal was set to be constructed.

Khoury, who willingly shared Abdulaziz’s letter with the American legation, additionally had a vested interest in the TAPline project. After the Bloudane secret decisions were first introduced in December 1947, Lebanon started to place significant pressure on the Syrian government. Company correspondence describes that “Lebanese public opinion” was “alarmed” because of the uncertainty surrounding TAPline.¹⁰⁴ Validating his government’s strong partnership with the TAPline Company, Khoury disclosed to Lenahan that he considered the project to be “indispensable” to both Lebanon’s *and* Syria’s industrialization.¹⁰⁵ In a drastic plea to save the country’s claim to hosting the pipeline’s terminal, company correspondence suggests the Lebanese government halted all economic relations with its Syrian neighbor. Khoury, citing Damas-

¹⁰³ Copy of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, King of Saudi Arabia, to Sheikh Beshara Khoury, President of Lebanon, Mar. 15, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

¹⁰⁴ Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹⁰⁵ Habib Abi-Chahla, TAPline Attorney, to William Lenahan, TAPline Middle East Representative, Jan. 12, 1948 (Abi-Chahla to Lenahan, Jan. 12, 1948); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7206); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

cus's "mistake," declared that relations with Syria would resume only when the TAPline convention was passed by the Syrian parliament.¹⁰⁶ By ceasing economic trade with Syria, the Lebanese government likely placed an incredible degree of pressure on the Syrian economy and more importantly emphasized its commitment to the pipeline project. In essence, the company's agenda was adopted by Arab states.

Despite the U.S. government's support for a Jewish state, Arab governments involved with the TAPline project, save for Syria, continued to support the project. This unwavering support, in spite of popular disapproval within their countries, illustrates the power with which companies like the TAPline Company operated, or at the very least, how they characterized themselves to the public. An editorial in *Pipe Line News*' made the case for this characterization clear when it described the Americans who worked in the TAPline Company as having entered "the Middle East simply as businessmen."¹⁰⁷ Their company is, according to oil publications, a sovereign entity that is both separate from, and holds a different world view than the government in Washington. In the remaining two sections of the chapter, I examine the company's Middle East representatives' desperate attempts to secure the rights of transit it needed to survive.

Company Diplomacy with Syria

The TAPline Company, which had successfully secured negotiations with Lebanon and Transjordan, and was unafraid of its convention's chances in Saudi Arabia, confronted enormous difficulty in Syria, largely as a result of the unfavorable popular opinion discussed earlier. In an effort to forcefully progress negotiations with Syria, the company stressed on numerous occa-

¹⁰⁶ Lowell C. Pinkerton, Envoy to Lebanon, to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Nov. 6, 1948 (Pinkerton to Marshall, Nov. 6, 1948); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7206); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).; Youssef Chaitani, *Postcolonial Syria and Lebanon: the Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 163.

¹⁰⁷ "The Story of TAPline," *Pipe Line News* (Jul. 1951): 26.

sions that the TAPline project rested on Syria's full and immediate cooperation with the company. In one instance, TAPline Company Chairman William S.S. Rogers publicly stated in the *New York Times* in late 1947, "[o]ur line and others projected almost have to go through Syria."¹⁰⁸ Syria's agreement was thus framed as absolutely essential to the project's standing in all the transit states involved. In a more direct effort to influence the company's situation in Syria, TAPline President Hull and Syrian Prime Minister Mardam met to discuss pending negotiations just weeks before Britain's dissolution of its mandate in Palestine. Negotiations in Syria had seen no significant movement for months, despite pressure from Lebanon and the TAPline Company. Hull, perhaps anticipating that Syrians' anti-American sentiment would only worsen, conferred to Mardam that if the Syrian parliament "failed to ratify" the convention before the company's next board meeting in January 1948, the board would "likely vote [to] abandon [the] project."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Hull stated that if the construction did not resume soon, then the U.S. government would possibly "cancel TAPline's pipe export licenses," which would further prolong the project. There is nothing in this report to suggest that Hull was lying. His concern over pipe export was real, and the U.S. Commerce Department did in fact revoke the company's license in 1948. More broadly, the company had feared this very situation since the early phases of TAPline reconnaissance. However, Hull decided not to share with Mardam that TAPline executives were considering temporary suspension as an alternative to a complete abandonment of the project. Negotiators with Syria, amidst uncertain circumstances in Palestine and beyond, interlaced dramatized and even false statements in an effort to secure the host government's immediate cooperation.

¹⁰⁸ Dana Adams Schmidt, "Syria Blocks Pact on U.S. Oil Transit," *New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1947, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Memminger, Charge (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Dec. 31, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

The TAPline Company continued to place pressure on the Syrian Prime Minister Jamil Mardam and President Shukri Quwatli. Given that both leaders signed a convention with the company earlier in 1947 and recommitted their investment in the project in early 1948, the company understood that their negotiations in Syria were not entirely fruitless.¹¹⁰ Significantly, Mardam and Quwatli were members of the country's landed elite, descended from prominent and wealthy families in Ottoman Syria and were instrumental figures in securing Syria's independence.¹¹¹ As leaders of Syria immediately after national independence from France was achieved, Mardam and Quwatli favored projects like TAPline that would industrialize the country. However, they knew that Syria was set to have the least amount of TAPline infrastructure among all four states along the route. Specifically, Syria was set to be the only country without a pumping station, as is evident in the map below, and would therefore see little benefit from hosting TAPline (see fig. 4). This is precisely why they emphasized in negotiations their dissatisfaction with Lebanon's anticipated authority over the pipeline terminal at Sidon, and lobbied for the TAPline terminal to be alternatively constructed at either Latakia on the Syrian coastline, or at least at Tripoli in the Lebanese north, whereby the two countries would share jurisdiction. This is also why Syria was interested in gaining a TAPline refinery project of its own, which would have been used to provide the country with 200,000 tons of oil annually, or about 4,000 barrels per day.¹¹² The TAPline Company, however, had already submitted a counter offer that included what they argued was a generous payment to the Syrian government for the pipeline's transit rights. It seemed unlikely that the company would make any additional concessions.

¹¹⁰ Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹¹¹ Philip S. Khoury, "Factionalism among Syrian Nationalists during the French Mandate," 13, no. 4 (Nov. 1981): 459.

¹¹² Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

The more significant obstacle in Syria, however, was the anti-American sentiment that appeared to be widespread among the country's public. The company's own documents suggest that Mardam and Quwatli blamed their government's inability to ratify the TAPline agreement on the popular anger towards anything American. In a rather astounding way, the resentment towards all American interests in the country was successfully suppressing the aspirations of the ruling elite that Quwatli and Mardam belonged to. Evidently, the parliamentary system operated in a manner that resisted and checked the authority of the president and prime minister, principally as a result of pressure from the "excited" Syrian populace.¹¹³

The influence of Syrian public opinion was surely too powerful to dissipate in a matter of weeks. In both urban and rural spaces, anti-American attitudes made any public discussion about TAPline nearly impossible. Yet in the major cities of Syria, where public opinion was largely constructed through the local press, TAPline officials saw an opportunity to choke the source of public information — they decided to bribe the newspapers. Just after the U.N. resolution was passed and fears of the project's abandonment seemed near, TAPline officials, including the company's representative in the Middle East, had on two occasions discussed the possibility of "subsidizing" the newspapers in Damascus and Aleppo for 65,000 L.S., or about 30,000 USD.¹¹⁴ They reasoned that in order to mitigate the growing enmity towards the U.S., the company could easily "silence" the Syrian press on the topic of TAPline.¹¹⁵ The most interesting component of this arrangement, however, was that it was agreed on by not just TAPline officials. The Syrian

¹¹³ Abi-Chahla to Lenahan, Jan. 12, 1948; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹¹⁴ Mahmoud El-Yusuf, TAPline Representative (Syria), to unknown, Jan. 13, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park. According to the *1949 Statesman's Yearbook*, there were 8.83 Syrian Pounds to the Pound Sterling and 4.00 dollars to the Pound Sterling.

¹¹⁵ Don Wilson, TAPline Representative (Syria), to William Lenahan, TAPline Middle East Representative, Dec. 24, 1947; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

Prime Minister, who publicly opposed the project, agreed to cooperate with the company.¹¹⁶ With the newspapers in Damascus and Aleppo bribed to not report on TAPline, and with additional help from the company, Mardam and Quwatli could “maneuver parliament into successful ratification.” The plan included that Quwatli would hold “secret” meetings with parliamentary leaders, a company representative would speak with the opposition in Aleppo, and Mardam would meet with officials around Damascus.¹¹⁷ The opposition, without the press’s dissemination of information, would have become a much smaller and manageable negotiator. This was exactly what the TAPline Company needed to secure right of transit.

It remains uncertain, however, if the company followed through with this plan. According to correspondence from the American legation in Beirut to Washington, to which many of the TAPline documents were voluntarily attached and shared by company officials, Texaco, ARAMCO, and TAPline executives would “not countenance bribery,” or any other “underhand methods,” in order to push its convention in Syria.¹¹⁸ It is unclear if public opinion against the TAPline project was actually as strong as Quwatli and Mardam claimed. However, without forgetting the TAPline representatives’ own duplicitous contributions, it is worth noting that Quwatli and Mardam, famous for their roles in advancing Syria’s formal independence, were prepared to undermine the public’s access to information about the TAPline project.

The TAPline Company’s Optimism

Despite the newly formed alliance of Arab state leaders around the question of American-owned petroleum, the project was still postponed for at least six months, from January to June

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Lowell C. Pinkerton, Envoy to Lebanon, to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Jan. 20, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

1948, at which time the project's future would be reassessed. Consequently, employees were sent home, negotiations remained at a virtual standstill, and the construction of the pipeline was halted. The question of the company's ultimate success now depended on the U.S. government's position on Israel and its own concessions to the Syrian government. As part of the TAPline Company's initiative to mitigate the threats against its interests, company executives implored the U.S. government to neutralize its pro-Zionist policy. The ultimate fear was that the U.S. government would seek to enforce the partition with force—a move that would surely arouse the already explosive situation in the region. Enforcing the partition through military intervention, according to company documents, would cripple American interests throughout the whole Middle East, even in Saudi Arabia, where American interests were most pertinent.¹¹⁹

If Washington refrained from acting with force in Palestine, it was only a matter of “patience,” said TAPline Chief Engineer H.H. Hall, before the U.S. would regain its “tremendous prestige” among the populations in the Middle East.¹²⁰ Indeed, as Lebanese President Khoury and Saudi King Abdulaziz agreed, a favorable, even a neutral position on Palestine would theoretically afford the Syrian leaders with the opportunity to act on the pipeline ratification. In a final plea to the board of directors, to which TAPline's success was held on by a thread, H.H. Hall recommended that the company make a “special effort by every means at our command to get prompt Syrian ratification.”¹²¹ Such a move would have involved approaches to “King [Abdulaziz],” the “State Department and the American General Staff,” and the “British General Staff,” all in an effort to swiftly secure the pipeline's ratification. Such an alliance with the U.S. government, particularly occurring at a moment about which there are claims that Washington

¹¹⁹ Abi-Chahla to Hull, Dec. 31, 1947; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹²⁰ Tapline Situation, Jan. 13, 1948; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP.

¹²¹ Ibid.

and the CIA have been accused of regime change, poses serious questions about the company's activity in Syria.

The ineffectiveness of the Syrian government, in which the leaders of the ruling structure held a different view than the constituencies from which their authority was derived, ultimately choked Quwatli and Mardam's rule. Prime Minister Mardam resigned in December 1948 at the onset of Syria's defeat in its war with Israel. Three months later, Husni Za'im, then head of the military, deposed President Quwatli and initiated a rapid and significant transformation of Syrian government agenda, a process that would be imitated by other militant successors. Almost sixty years later, rumors have circulated that the political rupture was the result of a CIA plot. Yet is it possible, perhaps, to hypothesize that the TAPline Company, not the U.S. government, played a larger part in the rise of Husni Za'im? Besides, U.S. government officials directly involved with the TAPline negotiations repeatedly showed naivety and short-sightedness. Envoy Pinkerton, for example, questioned the severity of the entire situation and thought the prospect of suspension to be unnecessary. Numerous TAPline negotiators, in contrast, were convinced that the line was set for suspension, and possibly abandonment. At the heart of the following chapter is this very question.

3. Regime Change and the Formation of America's Economic Rule in the Middle East

TAPline executives and the company board in New York considered abandoning the project during the uncertainty produced by the conflict in Palestine. By the time the warring parties agreed to a truce in spring of 1949, nearly twelve months had passed since the project was initially suspended. The company board of directors, despite these significant delays, did not vote to entirely halt the project. Remarkably, negotiations between the TAPline Company and the Syrian government appeared to gain ground, as the Syrian Prime Minister Khalid al-'Azm, who succeeded Mardam a few months prior, supposedly orchestrated a consensus regarding TAPline. The pipeline convention was soon to be considered by parliament by the end of March 1949.¹²² However, before such a measure was judged, Syrian Chief of Staff, Husni Za'im, who had assumed control of the country's military a year earlier, overthrew the elected government on March 30, and declared himself president and prime minister, in what has been characterized as a bloodless coup.¹²³

While Za'im ruled Syria for a mere four and a half months until falling to another coup, the mechanics of his rise to power and his government's following brief relationship with both the U.S. government and the TAPline Company shed light on our broader understanding of the role of oil in Syria.¹²⁴ The full details of his rise to power, namely the motives of Za'im and the possibility of foreign intervention, remain largely unclear. Douglas Little, who is the only professional

¹²² Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East*, 158.

¹²³ Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria; A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 42.

¹²⁴ Just five months after Za'im assumed power, Sami Hinnawi and Adib Shishakli, both members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), overthrew Za'im on August 14, 1949 and ordered for him to be executed. Scholars have characterized this coup as partly a reaction to a particular moment in Za'im's reign, in which he ordered the execution of SSNP party leader Antun Sa'adeh.

historian in the English-speaking Academy exclusively interested in Za'im's ascension to power, has argued in a number of scholarly articles that the former chief of staff received support from the recently-founded American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹²⁵ The available evidence rightly reveals that Za'im, as early as March 1948, a year before the coup that brought him to power, was engaged in communication with CIA operatives, in which Za'im requested tangible and financial support from the U.S.¹²⁶ However, as other moments of regime change in the Middle East have shown, communication between the U.S. intelligence and local agents of coups do not indisputably indicate cooperation *and* action.¹²⁷ Thus, Little's claim should be approached with skepticism.

I argue, in contrast to Little's assertion, that the CIA had little involvement in Za'im's rise to power. In the process of writing a history of a coup, it is important, if not essential, to read the historical sources without the assumption of ultimate U.S. hegemony, even if Washington's authority was truly expansive. Scholarship that prescribes so much authority to single institutions, sometimes as a result of assumption or convenience, discard the multiple dimensions of power dynamics for more digestible narratives. This chapter, in an effort to address the concerns above, reads Za'im's rise in relation to the TAPline project, while keeping in mind the region's domestic

¹²⁵ For more on Douglas Little's work, see "Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 1 (Winter, 1990): 51-75; "Early Experiments in Covert Action," *Press for Conversion* no. 51 (May 2003): 12-13; *American Orientalism; The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

¹²⁶ Douglas Little, "Smoking Gun NARG84," (unpublished research notes, 1986), PDF file. From private correspondence with Professor Little, I received two PDF files of Little's personal notes from his 1986 research visit to the former National Archives in Suitland, MD. His reading of these notes can be found in his article: "Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958." With his permission, I have included information from these notes in this paper.

¹²⁷ For example, in the later 1952 Free Officers' Coup d'état, soon-to-be president Gamal Abd al-Nasser contacted the U.S. consulate in Cairo before his final seizure of power. In fact, the available evidence indicates that Nasser hoped the U.S. consulate would communicate with the British that the Egyptian army would resist a foreign invasion. For more on Nasser's rise, see Michael T. Hornhill's "Britain, the United States and the Rise of an Egyptian Leader: The Politics and Diplomacy of Nasser's Consolidation of Power, 1952-4," *English Historical Review* 119, no. 483 (Sep. 2004): 892-921.

and foreign circumstances. Syria's postcolonial history, especially during the early years of independence, was not wholly guided by foreign hands, as previous diplomatic historians have previously suggested. For example, archival evidence reveals that the TAPline Company continued to encounter obstruction in Syria, even after the obstruction from the partition of Palestine during Za'im's reign, thus calling for a closer reading. Interestingly, Za'im, who desperately needed to justify his rule, used his authority in negotiations with the TAPline Company to strengthen his own standing in Syria. In exploring the economy of oil, the role of the TAPline Company, Syria's relationship with Lebanon, and the ambitions of Za'im himself, this chapter reveals that that historical moment witnessed a drastic resolution to a contradiction within the high echelons of Syrian governance during the 1940s.

Democracy's Shortcoming and the Reconfiguration of Syrian Governance

Before Za'im's rise, the Syrian government, desperate to secure support from the public, was plagued by poor access to oil, the disastrous war against the new state of Israel, and the broader corruption and inefficacy of the national government. The fact that these factors coexisted further crippled the government's standing. For tangential reasons, though ultimately related to TAPline, Syria was set for structural change. The American oil industry, first in controlling much of the petroleum in the IPC lines to Haifa and Tripoli, and more importantly in negotiating the TAPline project, possessed the means to subject Syria to a status of economic dependence. Concurrently, with the failure in the 1948 war with Israel, Husni Za'im was afforded with the political legitimacy to supplant the ruling government in exchange for the promise of an authoritarian and efficient government.

During a short period from 1947 to 1949, Syria's economic weakness became evident. The country's reliance on British currency, which was previously sufficient for petroleum trans-

actions, was being supplanted by the growing importance of the U.S. dollar. Ever since the Bretton Woods agreement was signed in 1944 between all Allied states, except Britain, during the Second World War, the dollar became the currency to which all nations pegged their national currencies. Then, with the inauguration of the U.S.-financed reconstruction of Western Europe, the dollar further trounced the pound sterling. As Britain began to relinquish its previous colonies, such as India and Myanmar, and then in 1948, Palestine, coupled with the rise of the dollar, the position of the pound sterling weakened, forcing former colonies into states of economic disarray.¹²⁸

Before the widely anticipated British evacuation from Palestine and the subsequent formation of the state of Israel, the British Exchange Control Office decided that American petroleum products could no longer be paid with pounds sterling but with dollars. Unfortunately, Syria, along with a host of other countries throughout the world after the Second World War, suffered from a severe dollar shortage. While the country was “prepared [to] pay pounds sterling” for American petroleum, the government simply had “no dollars” to spend.¹²⁹ The Haifa refinery was eventually closed a few months later when the Arab-Israeli war began in May.¹³⁰ Even if Syria had better access to dollars, its ability to purchase petroleum was diminished. In light of Haifa’s closure, the TAPline project gained new importance to regional petroleum-buyers. However, the currency issue was not confined only to the Haifa refinery; at the Tripoli terminal in

¹²⁸ Catherine R. Schenk, *The Decline of Sterling; Managing the Retreat of an International Currency, 1945-1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 38.

¹²⁹ Robert Memminger, Charge (Damascus), to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Mar. 18, 1948; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

¹³⁰ Lowell C. Pinkerton, Envoy to Lebanon, to George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, Jun. 16, 1948 (Pinkerton to Marshall, Jun. 16, 1948); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7206 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7206); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

northern Lebanon, Syria again was unable to purchase the petroleum products it needed.¹³¹ In an effort to resolve this obstruction to both American oil companies and Syria, an economic agreement was brought forth by the Lebanese and U.S. governments. The agreement would make the Lebanese Pound, which was much more stable and secure, transferable to Syrian Pounds. Such an arrangement, according to the U.S. legation, would strengthen Syria's buying capabilities.

In both of these cases, the company in question is Socony-Vacuum, which, together with Texaco, was the majority shareholder of ARAMCO and TAPline. Throughout this period in which Syria was unable to purchase American petroleum, Socony-Vacuum remarkably subsidized the country "indefinitely" with necessary petroleum supplies.¹³² The American company's material support warrants our scrutiny, especially at the moment when TAPline's suspension deadline of June 1948 had passed, and the project's stagnation was extended without an end in sight. Perhaps, in subsidizing Syria, Socony-Vacuum maintained and further encouraged the Syrian government's support, albeit privately, in negotiations with the TAPline Company. Syria's economic vulnerability therefore became an opportunity for American oil to seize and prolong the country's private support for the project.

It is difficult to determine the full extent of Syria's and Lebanon's relationships with the TAPline Company and all of its shareholding companies in the period between the project's suspension in early 1948 and the summer. This is largely due to the fact that the majority of company correspondence, unlike government documents, are stored in private archives that are far less

¹³¹ Robert A. Lovett, Acting Secretary of State, to American Legation (Damascus), concerning currency exchange, Oct. 28, 1948 (Lovett to American Legation (Damascus), concerning currency exchange, Oct. 28, 1948); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7201); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

¹³² Robert A. Lovett, Acting Secretary of State, to American Legation (Damascus), Oct. 28, 1948 (Lovett to American Legation (Damascus), Oct. 28, 1948); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7201); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

accessible to the public. Government archives, however, make it evident that Syria's inability to purchase petroleum on its own positioned it in a submissive position to the American oil industry. TAPline, desperately seeking to secure ratification, conversely enjoyed a position of privilege and authority.

The company's privileged position became clear during the project's suspension period. In a stark contrast to the Syrian government's role, outlined in the previous chapter, in which the Syrian delegate led the initiative to curtail American oil concessions and pipeline transit rights in all participating Arab League states, there is archival evidence that suggests that the Syrian government came to regret this decision. During the Arab League session in Cairo in the fall of 1948, just seven months after the controversial resolution was passed, the Lebanese Foreign Minister reported to President Khoury, who then informed the American legation, that Syrian policy toward "oil companies including TAPline" was a "mistake and *must* be changed."¹³³ The reasons behind this opinion was that Arab governments should be afforded the "freedom" to decide whether or not to agree to oil concessions, despite the fact that agreeing to such concessions entail surrendering a considerable amount of sovereignty. The Lebanese government, according to the American Legation in Beirut, believed that if the resolution were indeed rescinded, the TAPline convention would be ratified by the Syrian parliament without further delay.

Simultaneously, as Syria was subjected to this inferior position, the army's performance in the war against Israel was most damaging to the regime's reputation among the populace. In the fall of 1948, when it was revealed that Socony-Vacuum was subsidizing Syria with petroleum products, the Syrian military, under the command of President Quwatli, was effectively dis-

¹³³ Pinkerton to Marshall, Nov. 6, 1948; CDF 1945-1949, box 7206; RG 59; NACP. Emphasis added.

lodged from their position in Israel.¹³⁴ Thus, Syria was deemed economically *and* militarily weak. The defeat of the Syrian army, in the fall of 1948, proved to the Syrian populace the ineffectiveness and weakness of its government and nation's security.¹³⁵ These circumstances, in which the country was severely vulnerable on a number of fronts, created the conditions for the structural change that Za'im would later bring.

The negotiations between Syria and the company on the eve of Za'im's coup, despite the existence of private agreement between both parties, reached a moment of disarray. The pipeline convention, which was unratified for nearly two years now, effectively devolved as a result of sustained obstruction in parliament. It was reported that in a meeting between TAPline President Hull and Syrian President Quwatli, the company demanded immediate ratification under the threat of another ultimatum: TAPline would be built through another territory if the government did not comply.¹³⁶ Perhaps in an effort to place pressure on the negotiations with Syria, Hull later shared with Quwatli details of a meeting he had had with King Abdullah of Jordan, during which the two discussed the state of the pipeline, particularly in relation to Syria. Government correspondence suggests Abdullah in this meeting expressed to Hull his full support of the line, even suggesting that if the current route were not secured, a new route that preferred Transjordan could be accomplished. While not explicitly referenced, Hull said that Abdullah suggested TAPline could be built through Transjordan and Israel. This prospect worried Quwatli and his like-minded colleagues who privately supported the American project. Hull's comments caused them to reach the conclusion that a deal with other states had already been made. Even before this ex-

¹³⁴ Seale, *The Struggle for Syria; A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, 33.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

¹³⁶ James Hugh Keeley Jr., Envoy to Syria, to Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, Mar. 10, 1949; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

change rumors were circulating about TAPline's secret communication with the new Israeli government, as was mentioned in the previous chapter.

Hull's discussion with Quwatli was almost certainly intended to alarm the Syrians and force the government into a state of complete compliance. However, his scheme did not accomplish what he had hoped for and the pipeline was never ratified by parliament. The state of negotiations between Syria and the TAPline Company evidently lacked clarity, constructive communication, and fair play. Even though Syria was repeatedly subjected to a submissive position and additionally expressed support for the project, the central government was never successful in its attempts to finalize the agreement. The Syrian parliamentary government, tasked with the incredible job to develop the national economy and concurrently maintain its newly-obtained sovereignty, hindered the demands of the American enterprise and the governing elite of Syria.

Challenging the CIA's Role

The parliamentary system in Syria, just a matter of three years after the country's independence, was toppled with the rise of Husni Za'im. Current historical accounts of Za'im's relationship with the U.S. remain simplistic and incomplete. Contrary to Douglas Little's assertion, there is not enough credible evidence to confidently suggest that the CIA was in the position to single-handedly and successfully orchestrate a coup. As opposed to the CIA's covert activity, on a global scale, in the '50s when Cold War tensions were exceptionally high, the intelligence agency's capabilities in 1948 and 1949 remain unclear. It was not until June 1948 that the Truman Administration passed NSC Directive 10/2, which officially authorized the intelligence agency with the necessary legal infrastructure to conduct extensive forms of covert operations.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 32.

And it was not until the Korean War in 1950 that the agency acquired the exorbitant mass of funds and personnel necessary to comprehensively conduct espionage and significantly alter political landscapes.¹³⁸

In a 1950 published article in *The Middle East Journal*, just after Syria's tumultuous year of repeated coups d'état subsided, the American missionary Alford Carleton did not suggest there was foreign intervention involved in Za'im's. Carleton, who worked throughout the Middle East for the United Church of Christ and was President of Aleppo College,¹³⁹ an American secondary school, believed that Za'im's rise was a local affair and was the result of public distrust in the national government, in spite of theories which suggested otherwise. Of the theories he referenced, none of them charged that the U.S. government colluded with Za'im. Instead, the theories he referenced accused the French government of orchestrating the regime change.¹⁴⁰ While Carleton's writing in no way absolves the U.S. government of later accusations of intervention in the first coup d'état in 1949, it does suggest that Little's claim was new within academic circles.

In the absence of irrefutable evidence that points to collusion in Syria of the kind Little suggests, the known details of Za'im's rise as well as his subsequent relationship with American economic interests, particularly his cooperation with the TAPline Company, do in fact maintain room for conjectures. During Za'im's communications with CIA operatives in the months leading up to March, 1949, he had expressed his forthcoming cooperation with both the American government and private sector. For instance, on November 30, 1948, months before Za'im became the leader of Syria, he was identified as a possible friend to the U.S. CIA officials reported to Washington that Za'im's authority in the country would serve as a blockade to the growing

¹³⁸ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 68-69.

¹³⁹ "Dr. alford carleton, 80, dies; led united church missions," *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1983, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁴⁰ Alfred Carleton, "The Syrian Coups D'État of 1949," *Middle East Journal* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1950), 4.

tide of communism as well as a single voice with which to negotiate current and future political and economic agreements.¹⁴¹ Almost immediately after Za'im's ascension to power, a CIA internal report revealed that he had expressed his commitment to cooperating with the U.S., on matters pertaining to armistice negotiations with Israel as well as the ratification of TAPLine.¹⁴² This commitment to political and economic agreements perhaps provided Za'im with the necessary leverage to acquire arms and capital from the U.S., as was conjectured in a CIA report.¹⁴³ Despite their being no evidence to suggest the U.S. had promised Syria weapons or financial aid, the amenable relationship between Za'im and American economic interests ultimately coalesced through a particular exchange: the U.S. government's formal recognition of Syria's new regime, and Za'im's ratification of the TAPLine Company's transit rights.¹⁴⁴

The Confluence of Authority in Syria

Za'im's military acquisition of the president's office effectively resolved the contradiction between foreign capitalist ventures on the one hand, and the voices in opposition from the Syrian parliament on the other. TAPLine, in need of a fully cooperative government, understood that it would greatly benefit from working with an undemocratic, military government. Za'im, who was the leading military figure in Syria's war with Israel, dissolved parliament and shifted the government's authority to the president's office. For the TAPLine Company, the absence of a democratic government was exactly what the company wanted. Within a week of Za'im's rise,

¹⁴¹ Douglas Little, "Smoking Gun NARG84," (unpublished research notes, 1986), PDF file; Little, "Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958:" 55.

¹⁴² Central Intelligence Agency, "Near East/Africa Branch Intelligence Summary for Week Ending 6 April 1949," United States, Apr. 6, 1949. (redacted and declassified on Jul. 22, 2013). Also available online at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A004700010047-8.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Statements of General Husni Za'im to Lebanese Prime Minister Sulh," United States, Apr. 24, 1949. (redacted and declassified on Feb. 19, 1999). Also available online at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002700290005-0.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Little, "Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958:" 57.

the top executives of ARAMCO and TAPline met to discuss the project's future with the new military government. In memorandum of conversation of a meeting between ARAMCO executives and NEA officials, the participants take no issue with Za'im's undemocratic seizure of power. Instead, they discuss the positive future of TAPline in Syria. According to a State Department report, Za'im's government assured TAPline that ratification was expected. In fact, company representatives reported that Za'im's government was strong enough that no other element in Syria was capable of "overthrowing" Za'im.¹⁴⁵ It is important to note that Za'im himself came of age under military rule. A teenager during the Young Turk revolution in 1908, Za'im, who was raised in an upper-class family in Ottoman Syria, probably became politicized in a moment of radical change. Forty years later, as the head of the Syrian military and the leader of a coup, he may have resembled the military rulers of his youth.¹⁴⁶

Though Za'im received the praise of TAPline and Syria's bourgeoisie, the military president made efforts to present his coup as a *temporary* reorganization of the country's democratic institutions. In the military government's discussion with TAPline representatives, the pipeline ratification was to be done by "legislative decree," an obvious contrast to the authoritarian nature of Za'im's regime. Secondly, in an effort to frame his own initiatives as a continuation of the democratic regime of his predecessor, Za'im also vowed to seek parliament's ratification after a new set of elections were held. That Za'im jailed political opponents, particularly communists, and fabricated an election to justify his rule while in power renders his democratic rhetoric hol-

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation of TAPline Convention in Syria; Possible Ratification by Military Government, Apr. 6, 1949 (Possible Ratification by Military Government, Apr. 6, 1949); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7201); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

¹⁴⁶ Sami Moubayed, *Steel and Silk: Men and Women Who Shaped Syria, 1900-2000* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2006), 350-353.

low.¹⁴⁷ Yet for the TAPLine Company, the Syrian president's rhetoric was enough for the company representatives to unanimously agree to Za'im's terms.

In fact, a cooperative Syrian dictatorship was perhaps the key to relieving the company's earlier concerns regarding the Truman administration's Zionist policy. Though the oil company's relationships with Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, and Lebanon were not drastically changed due to Washington's position on the partition of Palestine, its negotiations with Syria remained stagnant. Yet, through Za'im's singular authority, the company's earlier concern that Syria's anti-imperialist populace could cancel the entire TAPLine project seemed no longer valid. When opposition did arise within Za'im's ruling circle in May 1949, TAPLine representatives recommended that Za'im throw his opponents in jail, thus removing any doubt about the company's tolerance of—or even preference for—authoritarianism.¹⁴⁸

Za'im was unapologetically ruthless and additionally insecure about his Syrian advisers' allegiance to him. For example, when one of his cabinet members did object to the convention, Za'im turned to TAPLine for legal advice, rather than to his own confidants.¹⁴⁹ And at one point, he suggested that former Prime Minister Mardam, then exiled in Cairo with Quwatli, be the “first to be hanged for betraying...his country during the Palestine crisis.”¹⁵⁰ In a *New York Times* article published in June, it was reported that Za'im would allegedly “rule for life.”¹⁵¹ For the Amer-

¹⁴⁷ Carleton, “The Syrian Coups D'État of 1949,” 9.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of Meetings with Colonel Husni-El-Za'im and Habib Abi-Chahla, May 3-16, 1949 (Meetings with Za'im and Abi-Chahla, May 3-16, 1949); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7201); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP).

¹⁴⁹ James Hugh Keeley Jr., Envoy to Syria, to Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, May 13, 1949 (Keeley to Acheson, May 13, 1949); Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201 (CDF 1945-1949, box 7201); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park (NACP);

¹⁵⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, “Relations Between Husni Za'im and Jamil Mardam,” United States. Apr. 14, 1949. (redacted and declassified on Jan. 14, 1999). Also available online at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002700370012-3.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ Albion Ross, “Syria Hints Zayim May Rule for Life,” *New York Times*, Jul. 6, 1949, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

ican company, the collapse of Syria's democratic government posed as an opportunity for the completion of the pipeline a resolution to the past two years of obstruction.

Za'im's position among the public remained broadly positive during the first few months of his rule, especially among the entrepreneurial and professional segments of the population.¹⁵² While Syrian public opinion was overwhelmingly anti-American immediately before and during the partition of Palestine in May 1948, public anger appears to have refocused its attention on the inefficacy of the government before Za'im, in which infrastructure programs like TAPline were stagnant. When Za'im shared with the American Legation officials and the TAPline Company that he intended to ratify the pipeline convention and additionally pronounced "America as its [i.e. Syria's] example," he demonstrated that he understood the necessity of communicating his new policies to the Syrian public. After TAPline was officially ratified, Za'im said that he would communicate the country's new economic and political outlook through "press and radio," and would specifically announce the TAPline "terms of agreement."¹⁵³ It was not until the end of his reign that Za'im was threatened by the public.

Syrian Industrialization

In an effort to qualify the american project's value to Syria, it is imperative that TAPline be understood within its broader context. At that particular moment of the later 1940s, the Syrian ruling elite was making attempts to industrialize, partly through opening the country to foreign business. The IPC lines which terminated in Haifa and Tripoli were negotiated during the mandate period in 1931.¹⁵⁴ TAPline, however, was the first large-scale petroleum infrastructure to be

¹⁵² After the March 30th coup, elections were held on June 25; Za'im was however the only presidential candidate, thus resulting in his victory.

¹⁵³ Keeley to Acheson, May 13, 1949; CDF, 1945-1949, box 7201. NACP.

¹⁵⁴ Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East*, 153.

successfully negotiated and constructed in post-independence Syria. The pipeline was significantly portrayed by American trade magazines, such as *Pipe Line News*, as well as by Arabic newspapers based in Beirut, as an accessible source of wealth and energy. The TAPline Company unofficially promised that some of the generated wealth, aside from negotiated transit fees, would be invested in the non-producing territories through which the pipeline passed. Arabic local newspapers circulated stories about American oil industry's plan to develop new means of transporting oil and simultaneously initiate a privately-funded economic development project through its own expansion.¹⁵⁵ It was publicized that ARAMCO, and therefore its subsidiary TAPline Company, would invest close to \$2,000,000,000 in the regional oil industry.¹⁵⁶ Thus, future transit countries that allowed TAPline to pass through their territory were effectively promised their own Marshall Plan through future oil exploration and extraction.

Most likely, it was clear to Za'im, as well as to the TAPline Company, that oil was a key resource for Syria's economic ambitions and thus the means of ensuring the stability of its young government. Given these circumstances, characterizing Za'im's pro-Western performance entirely as the result of an overbearing CIA seems misleading and simplistic. Understanding that the U.S. and the American economy could fund these formative years in Syria's early postcolonial years, Za'im perhaps understood that cooperation with American government and business was an obvious opportunity to lead Syria's new era of independence into the new economic and military world order.

¹⁵⁵ Little, "Pipeline Politics: America, TAPLINE, and the Arabs:" 256.

¹⁵⁶ Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East*, 156.

TAPline was not the only development project being considered by the Za'im regime.¹⁵⁷ In the short period that Za'im was in power, his regime inaugurated a broad public works campaign, in which projects that were discussed long before his rise were finally commenced. These projects included the construction of Latakia Harbor, the Euphrates River Project for the city of Aleppo, and a railway that would traverse the country's desert.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, while TAPline was being negotiated, the Middle East Pipeline Company (MEPC), a subsidiary of AIOC, was also in the process of ratifying its own pipeline convention with the Syria government. TAPline was indeed an important infrastructure project, if not the *most* important infrastructure. However, it is important to read TAPline as part of a wider development in Syria.

In the recorded minutes of meetings between Za'im and the TAPline representative Abi-Chahla, there is no indication that the TAPline project was important for its immediate material benefit to Syria but for its possible trailblazer to other future American projects. Za'im, when negotiating the project with TAPline, repeatedly understood this particular project as a component of his broader "economic program"¹⁵⁹ to industrialize Syria and to establish a productive relationship with American and European private enterprises. Za'im, whose personal history is steeped in military government and experience, understood that his principal objective as leader of Syria was to strengthen the might of the country's military. Especially after the army's defeat in its war with Israel, Za'im personally understood Syrian military's vulnerability. TAPline, along with other infrastructural projects, were favored by Za'im, according to minutes of a meet-

¹⁵⁷ Most recently, James Barr in *Lords of the Desert* writes that in support of this claim which says that the CIA was actively involved in Za'im's rise, that Za'im ratified the TAPline convention just four days after the coup. This fact is utterly wrong, as records of meetings between company officials and Za'im indicate a far more complicated story. The company, which was most excited to continue negotiations with the Syrian government in far more favorable circumstances, appointed Habib Abi-Chahla to meet with Za'im. The convention was not actually ratified until May 16, more than a month and a half after Barr's assertion.

¹⁵⁸ Carleton, "The Syrian Coups D'État of 1949," 6.

¹⁵⁹ Possible Ratification by Military Government, Apr. 6, 1949; CDF 1945-1949, box 7201; RG 59; NACP.

ing held on May 3, because he wanted to “make Syria a strong military power” in order to “establish order in the interior, but also to ensure our [i.e. Syrian and American] common security in case of future war.”¹⁶⁰ Although Za'im was characterized as a pro-American figure even before he came to power, the delay of TAPline's ratification points in a different direction. Za'im's government, which was considerably weak and understaffed—Za'im himself supposedly worked twenty hours a day in order to fulfill all of the necessary duties required to govern—used TAPline as a “political tool” in order to pressure the United States government to recognize Za'im's legitimacy.

Conversely, private companies involved with the question of energy, and thus at the heart of infrastructural projects in nearly all countries across the globe, were able to exert a degree of influence on countries that governments could not. In Syria, the new government boded well for the American project, and for the infrastructural development of the country. Moreover, it is clear that TAPline representatives in charge of negotiating with Za'im understood the circumstances in which he was acting. At various points in their negotiations with Za'im, TAPline representatives predicated the success of the project on the future incorporation of Syria into a “new era of international cooperation.”¹⁶¹ The private sector, in this case TAPline, constantly shared with Za'im that future projects would not be agreed to, by TAPline or other companies, if he did not ratify the convention “immediately.”¹⁶² Most significantly, the company warned Za'im that if TAPline were not ratified, the U.S., which was the leading provider of steel in the world, would not provide steel to any other infrastructural project throughout Syria. Since TAPline itself did not possess the authority to prevent Syria from importing U.S. steel, it is probable that the im-

¹⁶⁰ Meetings with Za'im and Abi-Chahla, May 3-16, 1949; CDF, 1945-1949, box 7201. NACP; 3.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid, 5.

plied message was that steel exports to Syria would be more difficult to process in the U.S. At this point in the conversation, it almost appears that Abi-Chahla, one of TAPline's attorneys, is voicing his company's relationship with the U.S., at one point saying that "I wish you always bear in mind that TAPline is a hundred percent American project as is ARAMCO, and as are the four parent companies."¹⁶³ In this way, Abi-Chahla flexes his company's relationship with the U.S. government, as he understands clearly that without the investment by the American oil industry, Syria would likely fall behind its neighboring Hashemite kingdoms of Iraq and Transjordan, which Za'im and his predecessor Quwatli feared to be expansionist.¹⁶⁴

Unintended Consequences

Za'im, despite his early successes, was later marred by his government's own inefficiencies. Though Za'im's rule was favorably recognized by U.S. intelligence, the CIA correctly predicted that there would be future consequences to his rise. Considering the politically sensitive and contested regional landscape in which Syria was situated, Za'im's authority was feared to be explosive.¹⁶⁵ Throughout his short reign, the Syrian president accumulated many foreign and domestic enemies, and was ultimately overthrown by frustrated elements in the army.¹⁶⁶ More importantly, the CIA feared Za'im's rule would provoke greater instability in the wider region, beyond Syria. Just two days after the March 30th coup, an intelligence report recorded concern that the events in Syria would inspire future "coups d'etat in Egypt, Lebanon" and "Iraq."¹⁶⁷ As

¹⁶³ Ibid, 16.

¹⁶⁴ Seale, *The Struggle for Syria; A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, 56-57.

¹⁶⁵ Talal Asad and Roger Owen, *Sociology of "Developing Societies;" The Middle East* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 18.

¹⁶⁶ Seale, *The Struggle for Syria; A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Near East/Africa Branch Intelligence Summary for Week Ending 4 May 1949," United States, May 4, 1949. (redacted and declassified on Jul. 22, 2013). Also available at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A004700010051-3.pdf>.

predicted, the governments in all three countries mentioned in the report fell to army-supported coups d'état—Egyptian King Farouk was deposed in 1952, Iraqi King Faisal and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said were deposed later in 1958.¹⁶⁸ Also, in neighboring Lebanon, a civil war threatened the regime of Camille Chamoun and culminated in the deployment of U.S. marines on the beaches of south of Beirut.¹⁶⁹

While Za'im's new founded authority was in some ways encouraging to the TAPline Company and the American government, the success of his coup, which was notably the first in the region, established a new precedent in posing an opportunity to other military insurgents within the Middle East. As Za'im showed in his coup, the landed elite, that had principally maintained power in these states and were active figures in their states' movements towards independence from British and French control, could all be overthrown by military power.¹⁷⁰ When Za'im was eventually deposed in August, the company feared that the project would be plagued by repeated delays again. The TAPline Company, expressing its fear, officially communicated with the U.S. government requesting that the U.S. legation in Damascus take "serious" action, in the event that the new Syrian government opposed the infrastructure project.¹⁷¹ Because it is unclear what would have entailed "serious" action against the Syrian government, one can only wonder what "serious" might have meant.

¹⁶⁸ From the U.S.'s perspective, the emergence of army-supported dictatorships in the Middle East posed as a threat to the stability of the region. Though Za'im's rise to power ensured TAPline's successful construction, future army-supported governments ultimately destabilized the broader American oil industry, as was evident in Egypt in 1956 when the Suez Canal was nationalized.

¹⁶⁹ For further reading on the U.S. military's activity in Lebanon in 1958, see Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁰ Seale, *The Struggle for Syria; A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, 37-57. For example, in 1941 in Iraq, officers within the Iraqi military led by Rashid Ali staged a coup against the British-supported regime. In response, however, the British invaded the country in the same year and occupied it until 1947. It was thus not until the successive coups in Syria in 1949 that a local military government ruled in the Middle East.

¹⁷¹ Harrison M. Symmes, Consular Official, to Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, Aug. 17, 1949; Central Decimal Files 1945-1949, box 7201; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park.

After three consecutive Syrian coups d'état in 1949, TAPline was ultimately constructed in 1950, in an environment of sudden and undemocratic changes of local authority. From then until 1976, TAPline continued to transport oil through Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon, suggesting its resilience in the postcolonial Levant.

Conclusion

Now, having explored the intricacies of the TAPline project, allow me to use these final pages to retell this story in an integrated fashion, and qualify parts of the thesis. In assessing the TAPline project from around 1944 at the end of the Second World War to 1950 with the pipeline's ultimate construction, and in relation to the U.S. government and to postcolonial states in the Middle East, this thesis complements *and* revises previous histories of TAPline.

My main argument in this thesis is that the TAPline Company, despite previous characterizations of it, was in large part independent of Washington. On the one hand, the TAPline Company was first and foremost a capitalist enterprise that prioritized profit over the needs of the U.S. government. On the other hand, the company was effectively subsidized by the government through Marshall Plan funds. Evidently, the Washington-TAPline relationship is one of many contradictions. There are moments in this story in which the company publicly defined itself as an *American* enterprise with an interest in the national security of the U.S., especially when it required the approval and assistance of U.S. Congress and Federal Departments for monetary subsidizations and steel. However, we should not confuse the company's self-proclaimed patriotic character with its internal operations. In its negotiations with the governments in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria before and during Za'im's regime, the company conversely distanced itself from the U.S. government. I show that, though TAPline was indeed an infrastructure that benefited the U.S. government, the TAPline Company's relationships with Middle East governments did not echo the U.S. government's diplomatic relationships with the same states. In calling for a more nuanced reading of the petroleum industry and the U.S. government in the Middle East, this thesis is meant to enrich our understanding of the constitution of American power as it was actually experienced. Significantly, I show that the TAPline Company was in

and of itself an institution of wealth and power, and was effectively able to exert an incredible degree of influence on the Arab states involved with the pipeline project.

The TAPline Company, a subsidiary company of ARAMCO, played a major role in determining the trajectory of the postcolonial Levant. The company organized an informal alliance with the governments of Saudi Arabia and Lebanon around the TAPline project, and entrusted them with the responsibility to place pressure on Syria whose government obstructed the American enterprise. The tactics employed by the company to exercise this influence were critical parts of the negotiating process. As a result, the company assumed an authoritative presence in these Arab states and consequently compromised their sovereignties in the early years of independence. In Syria, where the government underwent a regime change in March 1949, the company's influence was most apparent. From issuing ultimatums to considering bribing the press, the company pressured the Syrian government to comply with its demands to ratify the pipeline agreement. Though I do not argue that the company, or even the CIA for that matter, was wholly responsible for the overthrow of Shukri Quwatli and the rise of Husni Za'im, I do show that the TAPline project played a part in encouraging this drastic reconfiguration of the state's governance. This reality ultimately complicates previous understandings of American power in relation to the 1949 Syrian coup. Instead, a private enterprise, led by a company with its own interests, was an active force in altering the political landscape of Syria.

Thus far, scholars have studied ARAMCO's operations throughout the Middle East and have constructively drawn connections between the oil-conglomerate and the government in Washington. A considerable body of scholarship also exists on the U.S. government and American private companies from the 1950's onwards. However, the genesis of American authority,

both derived from the government and private companies, particularly in the Levant, remains understudied. In studying a subsidiary project like TAPline, this project has sought to pierce through conventional understandings and reconstruct an immensely important historical process of the early years of the postcolonial Levant.

I can situate this thesis within several subfields of academic historical study. As a project that focuses on the operations of a company in a foreign setting, this thesis contributes to the histories of American business, and American capitalism. This thesis also provides a historical basis for Saudi Arabia's and Lebanon's later corporatist policies, in which private business interests continued to determine their governments' political and economic orientations. In Saudi Arabia, where the government is now in possession of ARAMCO, the most profitable company in the world,¹⁷² TAPline was essential infrastructure to expand the oil industry in the country. In Lebanon, the Maronite elite, which were largely responsible for facilitating negotiations with TAPline without difficulty, sowed one of the seeds for the 1958 civil war, which culminated in the deployment of U.S. marines on the beaches south of Beirut and the end of the pro-Western president Camille Chamoun. In Syria, the military-led government that began with Za'im's rise in 1949 was a transformative process that would be replicated two more times that year. As a result, an authoritarian government ruled the country for five years after Za'im's rise until Adib Shishakli was overthrown in 1954. This form of authority also rose in countries throughout the Middle East, as exemplified in Egypt and Iraq.

In an effort to qualify this project's scope, I want to mention several important topics of study that do not appear in this work. This thesis could have focused on labor, an indisputably

¹⁷² Saudi ARAMCO, according to the *New York Times* article cited here, is now the most profitable company in the world, with a revenue of \$111.1 billion in the 2018 fiscal year and exceeding the profits of its competitors, such as Royal Dutch Shell and Exxon Mobil, and even other major companies, such as Apple.: Stanley Reed, "Saudi Aramco Is World's Most Profitable Company, Beating Apple by Far," *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 2019.

important part of infrastructure histories. There is a sizable body of scholarship on labor histories of the gulf, particularly in relation to the petroleum industry, and could have served as a template for a similar history on the TAPline Company.¹⁷³ This project would also have benefitted from a reading of the company's relationship with a number of academic institutions in both the Middle East and the United States, particularly the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. As a company that needed educated Arab and American personnel, institutions like AUB and Georgetown supplied essential expertise. For example, while AUB provided the company with Arab engineers, Georgetown provided the company with Arabic language materials for its American employees. The university archives at AUB and Georgetown, and the ARAMCO private archives hold valuable sources that would enrich elaborations on this study.

If this project is to be rewritten or revised and expanded in the future, a more diverse and comprehensive body of archival work would be necessary to complete the story. This project admittedly assesses the TAPline project through its highest level of correspondence, focusing on the roles of company executives and leaders of Arab states. A comprehensive reading of the Syrian Franco-phone and Arabophone press would be necessary in order to effectively illustrate the perspective of the Syrian public opinion. In addition, while these documents are inaccessible, a comprehensive assessment of TAPline negotiations with Syria would require a study of Syrian government documents. Unfortunately, the Syrian government archives have been inaccessible

¹⁷³ For more on the petroleum labor history of the Gulf, see Robert Vitalis's *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), which is set in the 1950s and studies ARAMCO workers in Saudi Arabia. Also, for a labor history on TAPline workers in Lebanon, see Zachary Cuyler's "Building shared power: the Trans-Arabian Pipeline and the techno politics of anti-sectarian labor mobilization in Lebanon, 1950-1954." *Labor History* (August 2018), and "'Building the Earth': Labor Politics, Technopolitics, and Tapline in Lebanon, 1950-1964." Georgetown University, 2014.

for many years, first due to the Assad regime's restrictions on academic research, and second due to the outbreak of civil war that first began with the 2011 Arab Spring protests.

That being said, this project highlights a segment of the history of the postcolonial Middle East that remains understudied. And so, despite these gaps, I hope that in qualifying the project, this study's contribution is constructive to our broader understanding of the assembly of American power in the Middle East.

Appendix

Names and occupations of key individuals

Abdulaziz Ibn Saud: King of Saudi Arabia (1932-1953)

Abdullah I bin Al-Hussein: King of Transjordan or Jordan (1921-1951)

Alford Carleton: American missionary; President of Aleppo College in Syria (1937~1954)

Bechara Khoury: President of Lebanon (1943-1952)

Burt E. Hull: President and General Manager of War Emergency Pipelines Inc.; President of TAPline Company

Camille Chamoun: President of Lebanon (1952-1958)

David A. Robertson: Office of Near Eastern Affairs

Dean Acheson: U.S. Under Secretary of State (1945-1947)

Don Wilson: TAPline Representative in Syria

Edward H. Moore: Senator of Oklahoma (1943-1949)

Edward Stettinius Jr.: Secretary of State (1944-1945)

Faisal II: King of Iraq (1935-1958)

Farouk I: King of Egypt (1936-1952)

Frank Knox: U.S. Secretary of the Navy (1940-1944)

George A. Hill Jr.: President of Houston Oil Company

George C. Marshall: U.S. Secretary of State (1947-1949)

George Wadsworth: U.S. Ambassador to Syria (1944-1947)

Gordon H. Mattison: Consular Official (Damascus)

Habib Abi-Chahla: TAPline Company Middle East Attorney

Harold Ickes: U.S. Secretary of the Interior (1933-1946)

Husni Za'im: Chief of Staff of Syrian Military (1946-1949); Prime Minister of Syria (April 1949-June 1949); President of Syria (April 1949-August 1949)

James F. Byrnes: U.S. Secretary of State (1945-1947)

James Forrestal: U.S. Secretary of the Navy (1944-1947); U.S. Secretary of Defense (1947-1949)

Jamil Mardam Bey: Syrian Prime Minister (1946-1948)

James S. Moose: U.S. Charge D'Affaires in Syria (1947-1952)

Judge Patterson: U.S. Under Secretary of War (1945-1947)

Kenneth S. Wherry: U.S. Senator of Nebraska (1943-1951)

Khaled al-Azm: Prime Minister of Syria (1948-1949)

Lowell C. Pinkerton: U.S. Envoy to Lebanon (1956-1951)

Loy Wesley Henderson: Office of Near Eastern Affairs

Mahmoud El-Yusuf: TAPline Representative in Syria

Nuri al-Said: Prime Minister of Iraq (nonconsecutively served from 1930 to 1958)

Oscar Wolfe: U.S. War Emergency Pipelines, Inc. Chief Engineer; TAPline Company Chief Engineer

Rhea Putnam: TAPline Engineer

Robert A. Lovett: U.S. Under Secretary of State

Robert Memminger: U.S. Charge D'Affaires in Syria

Saadallah al-Jabri: Prime Minister of Syria (1943-1944)

Shukri al-Quwatli: President of Syria (1943-1949)

S. Pinkney Tuck: U.S. Ambassador to Egypt (1946-1948)

S.P. Johnson: Engineer of Standard Oil Company of California

Stanton Griffis: U.S. Ambassador to Egypt (1948-1949)

Terry Duce: Vice President of ARAMCO

William A. Eddy: U.S. Envoy to Saudi Arabia (1943-1945)

William Lenahan: TAPline Company Middle East Representative

William S.S. Rogers: TAPline Company Chairman

W.R. Chandler: TAPline executive and President and CEO of TAPline (1963-1972)

Illustrations

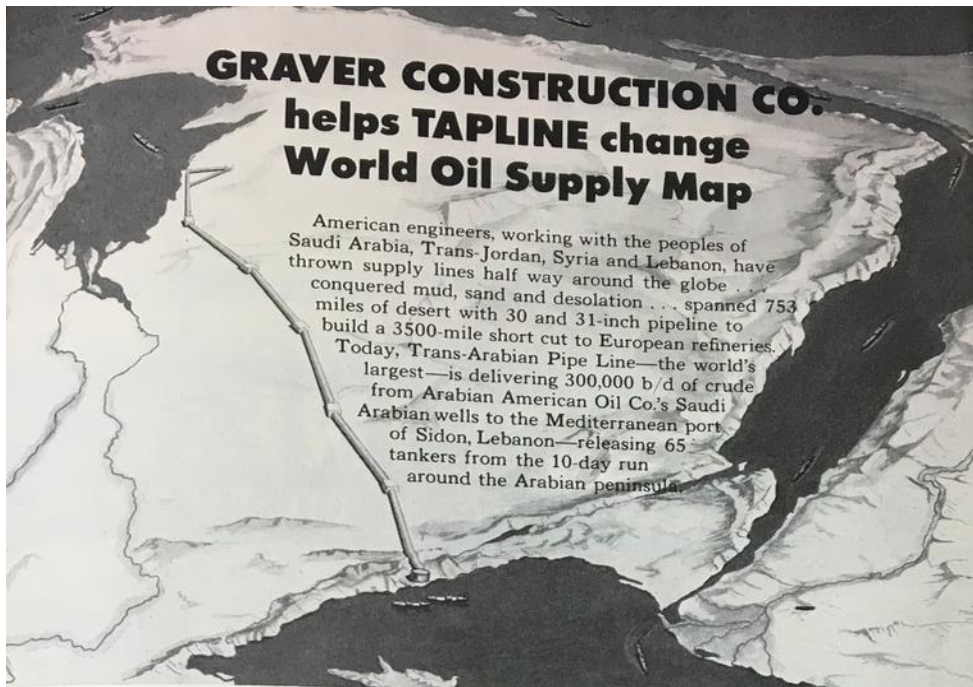


Fig. 1. From: *Pipe Line News*, July 1951, 19. Graver Construction Company advertisement

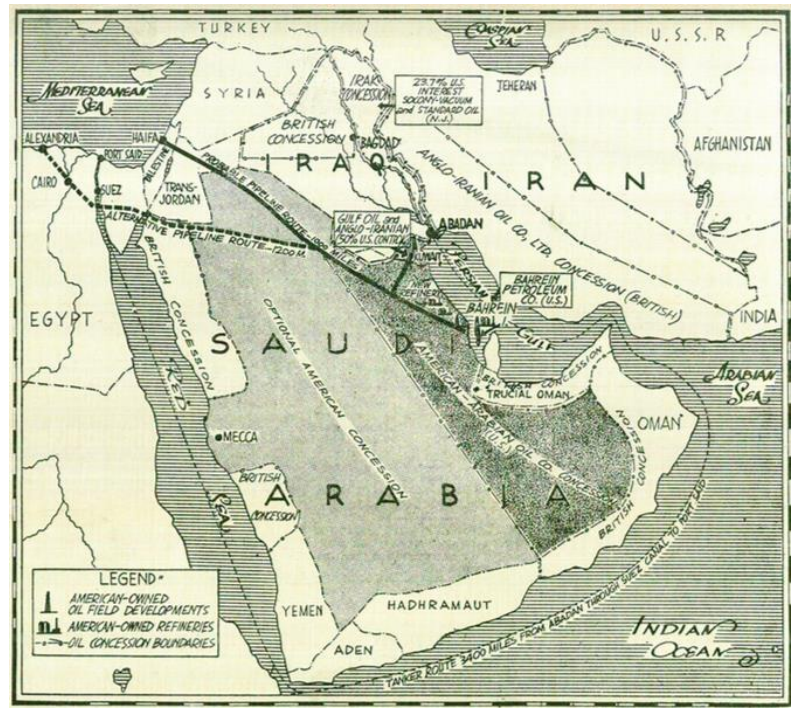


Fig. 2. From: "Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Will Take 18 Months to Construct." *Pipe Line News*, February 1944: 14. Map of an alternative route of the pipeline to Alexandria.

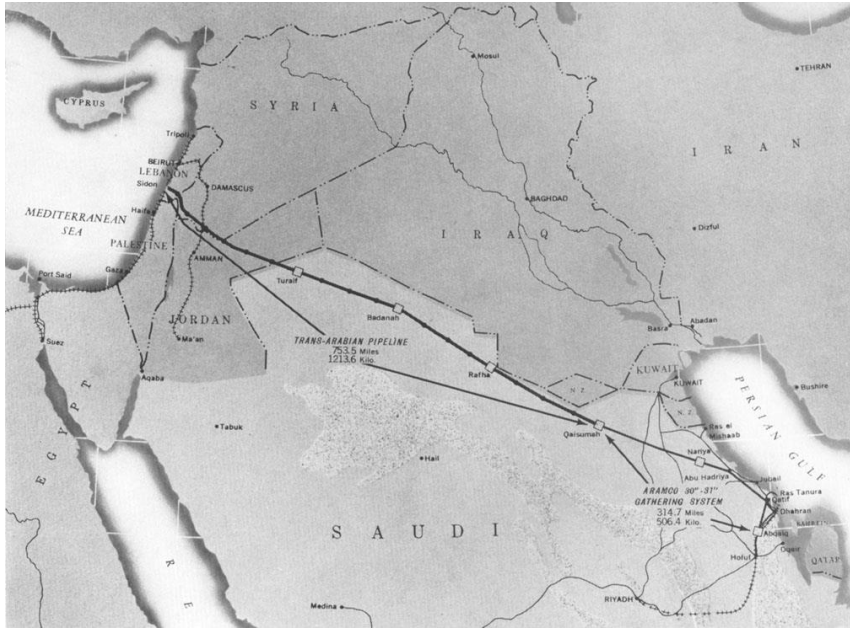


Fig. 3. From: *Tapline, the Story of the World's Biggest Oil Pipeline*. New York: Trans Arabian Pipeline Company, January 1951, 2.
Map of the completed pipeline that does not include the State of Israel.

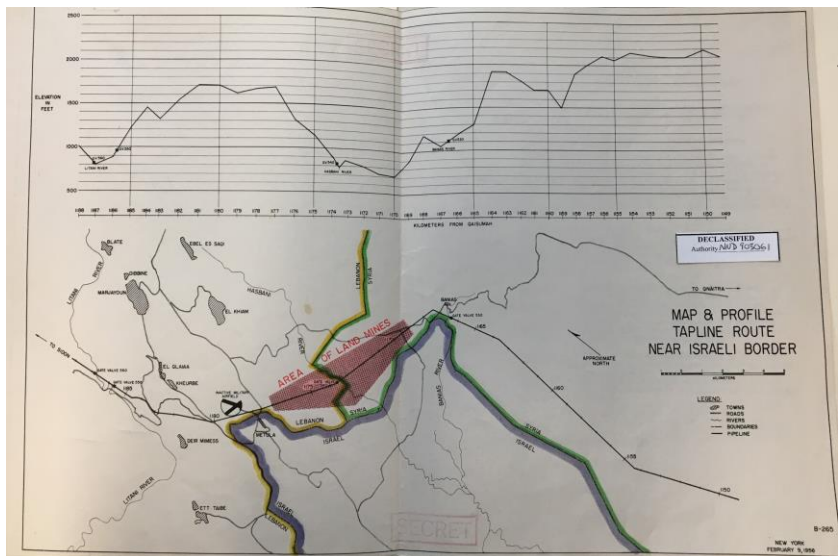


Fig. 4. Map; "Map and Profile TAPline Route Near Israeli Border," New York, Feb. 1956; unknown creator; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, MD.



Fig. 5. From: "Engineering and Design Features of the Trans-Arabian Line Part I." *Pipe Line News*, September 1949, 16.

Burt E. Hull, President of the TAPline Company (center), Clyde A. Swigart, a vice-president of the TAPline Company (left), and A. N. Horne, another vice-president of the TAPline Company (right), pictured with a piece of the pipe used for the project.

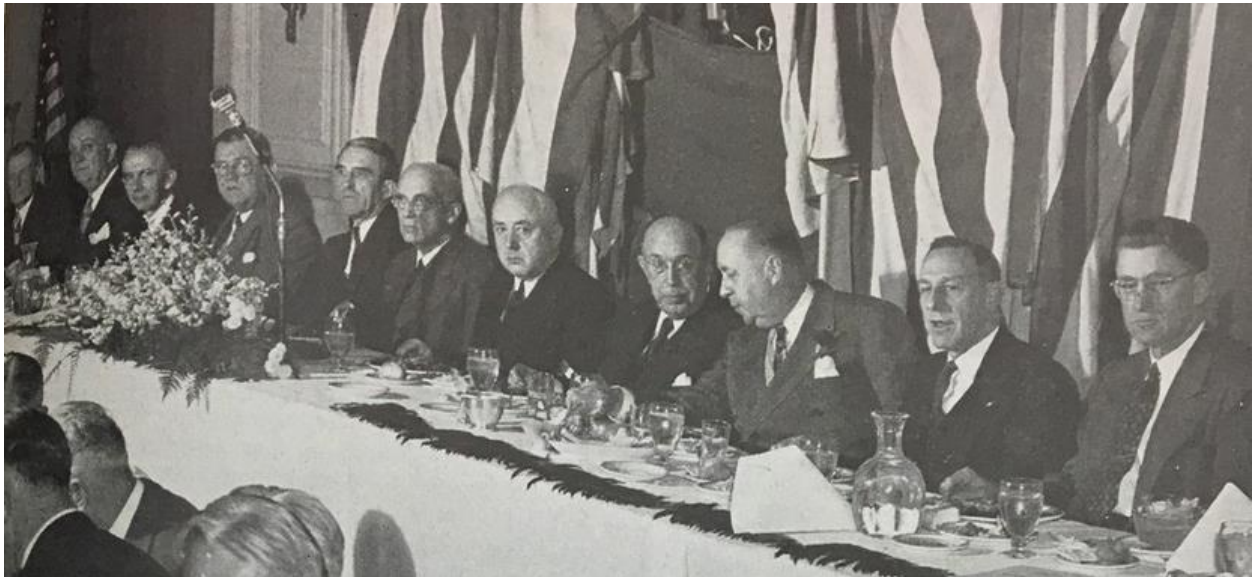


Fig. 6. From: "Pipe Liners Club Third Annual Banquet is Big Success." *Pipe Line News*, December 1948, 13. The speakers table at the Pipe Liners Club annual dinner at the La Salle Hotel in Chicago, IL on November 8, 1948. Most notably, the individual on the far-left end is Oliver C. Klinger, publisher of *Pipe Line News*; and near the center, four people from the right, is Burt E. Hull, President of the TAPline Company.

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