

THE PERSIAN GULF OFFERS HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE US STATE
DEPARTMENT: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF HURRICANE KATRINA AND
THE GEOPOLITICS OF OIL


SUBMITTED ON THE 15TH DAY OF APRIL, 2021
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE HONORS PROGRAM
OF NEWCOMB-TULANE COLLEGE
TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ART
WITH HONORS IN HISTORY

BY



Rory M Davis

APPROVED:



Andy Horowitz, Ph.D.
Director of Thesis



Jana Lipman, Ph.D.
Second Reader



Brian Horowitz, Ph.D.
Third Reader

Rory M. Davis. *The Persian Gulf Offers Humanitarian Aid to the US State Department: A Historical Analysis of Hurricane Katrina and the Geopolitics of Oil.*

(Professor Andy Horowitz, History)

Split into two chapters analyzing declassified State Department documents and Arabic media coverage, this thesis historicizes prominent oil actors and their reaction to and uses of humanitarianism in the early 21st century during Hurricane Katrina. The countries that made the largest state-sponsored offers to the US Government for Hurricane Katrina recovery were the Persian Gulf states of Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. These Persian Gulf leaders made foreign aid offers using post-humanitarianism ideology that would benefit their expansion into the North American oil economy or their entrance into the Global North's vision of civil society. Once these offers were made, the US State Department fielded them despite legislation dictating otherwise and rejected over 50% of the monies. Together, the actions of US State Department and Persian Gulf actors during Hurricane Katrina recovery reveal trends of de-democratization, post-humanitarianism, and realist foreign policy repeated in the following decades.

Table of Contents

Introduction1

Chapter 1: Comparing Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia’s Disaster Diplomacy in Response to Hurricane Katrina

 Introduction14

 Qatar20

 Kuwait31

 Saudi Arabia44

 Conclusions53

Chapter 2: The State Department’s Response to Hurricane Katrina Foreign Aid

 Introduction 56

 The Intended Federal Emergency Response 58

 The State Department Goes Off Script..... 62

 Bush, Clinton, and Limited Means to Recovery 73

 Conclusions 79

Epilogue 82

Introduction

On August 27th, 2005, pictures of flooded homes, overtured trees, and kids wading through flooded New Orleans streets graced Al Jazeera's news site.¹ Al Jazeera, the Middle East's only Arabic-language global and live coverage network in 2005, mimicked other press's response to Katrina by describing scenes no one would affiliate with the United States.² Arab audiences watched as the US Government exhumed its own citizen's bodies out of the water and dealt with wide-spread infrastructure damage.³ Many, having read articles about the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, saw jolting similarities. The world consumed limitless media on Katrina, all of which showed the United States had failed its own citizens.

But viewers in the Middle East watched with a combination of shock and fear. No region outside the US had more to lose from a sinking US reputation and ruined Louisiana oil infrastructure than the Middle East. In the twenty-year span from 1985 to 2005, the Middle East had more turbulent economic and political ties to the US Government than any other region. Following two wars in Iraq, Afghanistan's invasion, denuclearization efforts in Iran, and multiple Israeli-Palestinian peace attempts, Middle Eastern politicians knew their region could easily be the location of the United States' next reputation-saving or oil-siphoning scheme.

In fact, many of the US Government's historic decisions in the Middle East revolved around increasing their control of the international oil market. After the OPEC

¹ "مصرع سبعة جراء إعصار كاترينا بفلوريدا" English: Seven killed by Hurricane Katrina. August 27th, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

² Editor. n.d. "Media Ethics: Coverage of Hurricane Katrina." *Media Psychology Review* (blog). Accessed April 15, 2021. <http://mprcenter.org/review/giudici-katrina-media-ethics/>.

³ Seven killed by Hurricane Katrina. August 27th, 2005

Oil Embargo of 1973, the US government began implementing domestic solutions to international oil price spikes. Initiatives included President Richard Nixon's "Project Independence" which set goals for domestic energy independence and the creation of the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve which stored 563 million barrels in case of another market disruption.⁴ Other small-scale efforts included national speed limits on interstate and fuel economy standardization.⁵ At first, these efforts created mediocre results. But, when paired with the United States' new foreign policy objectives, the goal of American oil hegemony was met.⁶

The United States' new foreign policy insured their oil hegemony. Henry Kissinger put forth the goal to be "engaged in intensive oil diplomatic efforts among allies" in 1973.⁷ Except, instead of just diplomatic efforts, conflict and security assurance became the other avenues of maintaining US interests. The latter two methods were essential to retaining access to Middle East oil after the 1973 Oil Embargo. For example, after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the United States supported and supplied Saudi Arabian military initiatives. With the sudden threat of Iran's Shia government, Saudi Arabia needed American weapons to ensure its own security. This became a lasting arrangement and allowed the US leverage in Saudi Arabia's control of its oil reserves which can singlehandedly raise or lower oil price per barrel.

⁴ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. *Historical Dictionary of United States-Middle East Relations*. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, no. 5. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 18.

⁵ "Milestones: 1969–1976." *Office of the Historian*. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo>.

⁶ "Timeline: Oil Dependence and U.S. Foreign Policy Oil Dependence and U.S. Foreign Policy | Council on Foreign Relations." n.d. Accessed April 15, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/oil-dependence-and-us-foreign-policy>.

⁷ "Milestones: 1969–1976." *Office of the Historian*.

Done tactfully, overt use of war in maintaining oil hegemony is hard to prove, but the American meddling in many Middle East conflicts is undoubtedly tied to its interest in the international oil market. In the years after 1973, Kissinger's objective of intense foreign policy would transform into the conflict-heavy Bush Doctrine which paved the way for the 2003 Iraq invasion, also known as the Second Gulf War.

In fact, the United States worsened the Middle East's economy with its military campaigns severely enough that it had to create economic stimulus programs in the region. From 1971 to 2001, the US supplied \$145 billion in aid to the Middle East, most of which went to Egypt and Israel.⁸ As the millennium neared, the portion of US international aid going to the Middle East grew. In 1994, 58% of US foreign aid went to the region. The year before Katrina, 2004, this percent totaled a staggering 73%.

Altruistic thinkers relate this increase to patching the US's stretch of violence in the region. For example, after invading Iraq in 2003, this country garnered the most US aid: \$18.5 billion. However, many scholars now realize this exorbitant aid just created a cycle of reliance. US-based organizations, nonprofits, military, or oil companies took up responsibility and therefore control of the country. These trends bring up questions about humanitarianism explored throughout this thesis. However, none of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states besides Iraq ever relied on these US economic stimulus initiatives. In fact, some Persian Gulf countries benefited from US military interventions against aggressive countries.

Middle East headlines after 1973 mainly focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq, and Iran. But, Persian Gulf monarchs did not sit idly during the US's

⁸ Hahn, Peter L. (2007). Historical Dictionary of United States-Middle East Relations. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, no. 5. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 58.

conflict-driven reclamation of the oil industry during this period. These rulers developed their own economic strategies over their nationalized resources which set them up to leach off American and UK foreign policy and even occasionally overtake them. Countries with the largest reserves, like Saudi Arabia, invested in their national company and sought national security assurance. Smaller countries like Qatar and Kuwait leaned into rent economies. In some ways, this strategy bolstered US oil companies, but not without a substantial fee. Reckoning with their relative strength in the region, countries like Kuwait and Qatar rented their resources to American companies and, consequently, assured US military protection. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, had to buy weapons to protect its assets and actually ended up pursuing a bigger-guns policy towards neighboring states. So, it can be argued that the two conflicts partially driven by oil, Operation Desert Storm and the Second Gulf War, increased the prominence of some intermediate actors like Saudi Arabia and the UAE in addition to the globe's leading power hegemon, the United States.

Because they survived the United States' military campaigns in the region, Persian Gulf Monarchies, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar, were primed to take action when Hurricane Katrina impacted US oil shares. On August 29th, 2005, Persian Gulf State elites, read about Katrina's projected economic impact. Al Jazeera's article, "Hurricane Katrina pushes oil prices to a new high," reported the price of US light crude

above \$70 a barrel.⁹ Up from a record high the day before of \$69.81, these prices were extreme compared to \$30-40 prices in early 2005.¹⁰

The August 29th price per barrel represented the mass fears surrounding Katrina's impact on oil supply. Shortages were sure to occur from the Gulf of Mexico's halting of oil and gas production. Al Jazeera, citing the US Minerals Administration, reported a loss of 1.4 million barrels of oil per day and 8.8 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day from Katrina. This adds up to nine closed refineries along the US Gulf South and four working at a 10% production cut.¹¹

The most elite of Persian Gulf State individuals, Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti diplomats, already knew this news. These actors would lose revenue if they did not act fast to absorb these petroleum market gaps. Besides domestic actions, they pursued diplomacy via foreign aid offers to the United States.

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE offered huge sums of humanitarian aid to the United States government, and Saudi Arabia pledged aid through private channels. Kuwait offered \$100 million in cash and \$400 million in oil, while the United Arab Emirates and Qatar offered \$100 million in aid each. A little later Saudi Arabia put together a \$250,000 gift. Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE's offers are some of the largest foreign aid offers made for Katrina relief.

⁹ Translation by Author:

“إعصار كاترينا يدفع بأسعار النفط لارتفاع جديد” English: Hurricane Katrina pushes oil prices to new high. August 31st, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

¹⁰ “Crude Oil Prices - 70 Year Historical Chart.” *MacroTrends*. Accessed April 15, 2021. <https://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.

¹¹ Hurricane Katrina pushes oil prices to new high. August 31st, 2005.

However, Hurricane Katrina marked the first instance of international aid being offered to the United States since 9/11 and, before that, the Civil War.¹² No precedent for these offers existed. In fact, the US Government balked at this gesture since most international humanitarianism comes from the Global North as a mechanism of neocolonialism. This thesis examines the objectives of Kuwait, Qatar, and the Saudi Arabia's aid offers as inconsistent with the pre-2005 trends of international humanitarianism.

Since the Department of State ambassadors were the ones receiving the official aid proposals from their Saudi, Kuwaiti, Qatari, and Emirati colleagues, this branch became where the decisions of rejection or acceptance occurred. Yet, the National Response Plan defined FEMA as the official agency for these actions. Unchecked because of the hectic conditions, the implicit bias of State Department officials became the most decisive factor in whether international aid offers were accepted by the US Government or funneled towards nonprofits. To no surprise, offers from the Global South felt almost universal rejection, while offers from NATO countries garnered a little more success. However, for some groundless reason, the State Department rejected the majority of the \$450 million offered by foreign governments.

Persian Gulf Monarchies found themselves in a unique position within this moment of unprecedented foreign aid donations to the United States. With agendas and close ties to the US Gulf South in the oil market, they already donated to the region's corporations, politicians, and nonprofits. But, never had there been an instance were

¹² Bennet, CT. 2015. "10 Surprising Stories Of The US Receiving Foreign Aid." *Listverse*. January 14, 2015. <https://listverse.com/2015/01/14/10-surprising-stories-of-the-united-states-receiving-foreign-aid/>. Accessed April, 14th, 2021.

donating to the US government appeared a popular and appropriate action. This instance broke the traditional global humanitarianism order wherein rich countries offer aid to poorer, less powerful countries to gain some amount of control. Instead, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, less powerful than the United States, used this moment of weakness to assert their nation's capabilities. When the US Government took ineffective emergency actions, these Muslim, authoritarian, Persian Gulf countries showed an interest in helping American citizens. It should be noted, 87 other countries also took an interest in Katrina recovery. However, these Persian Gulf countries complemented their public sympathies with the most money.

The exact direction of each Persian Gulf countries' humanitarianism campaign differed slightly. Kuwait and the UAE aggressively undertook this operation. Their offers were some of the largest and their diplomats fought the hardest for direct federal deposits. Qatar attempted this avenue but did not have the global power to force further conversations. Whereas Saudi Arabia kept its offers from the public. The complexity of each situation necessitated close analysis.

Chapter one looks at these three countries' foreign aid offers to the United States in more depth. Each country's correspondences with the State Department and other US Government bodies are summarized and analyzed. Declassified State Department documents help reveal the diplomatic intentions of each country as related to their shared petroleum histories. If State Department documents left unanswered questions, I looked at newspapers such as the New York Times and Al Jazeera for further information. At times, the information in Al Jazeera misaligns with other news reporting of Hurricane Katrina. In this chapter, I also examine the pitfalls and revelations of this source as they

relate to United States and Persian Gulf geopolitics. From this research I found that, in all four cases, these Persian Gulf states offered money but only as a trade. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were able to further their global oil influence by discussing North American investment opportunities and oil market manipulation. Qatar and the UAE pursued humanitarian reputations that would liken them to states in the Global North. So, the shockingly large Persian Gulf humanitarianism was not altruistic but instead another strategic geopolitical action.

Instead of the international perspective, chapter two looks at the US response to these and other foreign aid offers. To handle the huge influx of donations, the State Department formed the Hurricane Katrina Task Force as a communal deliberation and discussion space for these unprecedented international aid offers. This organization's actions ended up delaying and declining foreign aid monies. Seemingly, the State Department's main objective during this process was to maintain the American values of isolationism and superiority. This is evidenced in the State Department documents for inner-agency eyes only. Since the records were declassified during a Freedom of Information Act request, they are now available to civilians. These records when compared to the 2004 National Response plan show the State Department deviated from its mandate. The State Department should have passed foreign aid offers to FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security for dissemination or rejection. The reasons for their deviation are also examined in this chapter as declassified documents best evidence.

Though, when the State Department Task Force rejected foreign aid offers, it did suggest countries donate the monies to nonprofits. Caught up in indirect and bureaucratic systems, these foreign monies would have been better invested in direct aid or at least

mutual aid funds. Specifically, this foreign aid went underutilized in the Red Cross's "Means to Recovery" program and Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund grants.

Historiography

Other histories of Hurricane Katrina paint a similar picture. Sandy Rosenthal's *Words Whispered in Water: Why the Levees Broke in Hurricane Katrina* and *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security* by Chris Cooper and Robert Block both expose the recent government officials responsible for Katrina failures. Written in conjunction with journalistic and activist efforts, these two histories have an exposé edge. Because of their revealing conclusion, they are driven by the writer's interviews, insider scoop, and courage.

Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security by Chris Cooper and Robert Block most mirrors the methodology used in this thesis. Consisting of exclusive interviews, *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security* covers an inaccessible side of Hurricane Katrina: the internal malfunctions of government agencies. With their DC-insider knowledge, they can better piece together what went wrong than those unable to find the unrecorded cracks in bureaucracy. Cooper and Block can name individuals and offices. This makes their criticisms more about executive branch bureaucracy than American values. Harking on Block and Cooper's documentation of federal agency letdowns, I focus on the State Department's failings. Except, instead of exclusive interviews, I use recently declassified documents.

Another popular Katrina publication is Frank Rich's *The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina*. Unlike Rosenthal, Block, and Cooper, who look at Hurricane Katrina alone, Rich connects the US Government failures

made during Katrina to 9/11 and other Bush Administration decisions. By linking events, Rich also identifies larger trends in American governance. Rich's choice to end with Hurricane Katrina makes it the conclusion to the uncovering of America's faults. Unlike other pieces listed here, Rich sees Katrina as a definite symbol of American exceptionalism faltering. Other historians see Katrina as the beginning of America's reckoning with this idea.

Rich's timeline, only going back to 2001, is dwarfed by that examined in *Katrina: A History* by Andy Horowitz. Visualizing Katrina as a domestic, century-long story, Horowitz revitalizes the work that came "from 2005, 2006, 2007," to instead "see Katrina as something more like a whole" inclusive of racial, economic, and environmental disparities.¹³ For Horowitz, Katrina is predictable based on the past hundred years of geopolitics in the region. He argues the continual decision of money over people and environment led to the disaster.

Many scholars, like Block and Cooper or Horowitz, look at the domestic failures during Katrina as the death of American exceptionalism. These scholars analyze President Bush's reaction, Department of Homeland Security and FEMA communications, as well as local government missteps. However, there is minimal historical analysis of the State Department's actions during Hurricane Katrina. This is indicative of Western centric values applied to Hurricane Katrina. If historians instead contextualize Katrina within global trends of de-democratization and realist foreign

¹³ "Q&A: Author Andy Horowitz On His New Book, 'Katrina: A History, 1915–2015' | WWNO." 2020. Accessed December 5, 2020. <https://www.wwno.org/post/qa-author-andy-horowitz-his-new-book-katrina-history-1915-2015>.

policy, it very accurately predicts the actions of global actors in the two decades after the storm.

The trends behind the Persian Gulf state's humanitarianism can be analyzed amidst discussions of human rights and post-humanitarianism as well. In Peter Stamatov's *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy*, humanitarianism, like the foreign aid summarized in this thesis, is linked with the sixteenth-century beginnings of European expansion overseas and the need to fix distant problems in colonies. Simon Cottle and David Nolan, in their journalism studies article, "Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field" show the 1900s growth church-led humanitarianism into NGOs and nonprofits. Before the world began discussing global civil society, aid organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent existed. These organizations were often biased in Christian thought, white-saviorism, and conceptions of 'other.' However, they did offer small-scale aid that could boost a recipients access to capitalist resources at the cost of cultural homogenization. By the early 1900s, these organizations even offered aid without religious or cultural requirements.

By the 1900s, humanitarian organizations evolved along globalist forces and new concepts of government aid. As awareness of poverty rose, the idea of human rights was born. Humanitarianism became affiliated with granting human rights as editor Michael Barnett asserts in *Humanitarianism and Human Rights: A World of Differences?*. As this idea progressed, governments, with new Progressive-era momentum, used state-sponsored humanitarianism to further human rights in countries besides their own.

As state-sponsored humanitarianism took-off, private humanitarianism became enwrap in publicity. As Cottle and Nolan argue in the end of their article, NGOs and nonprofits branded themselves like corporations and celebrities in global media. Similar to today's concepts of green or pink-washing, this humanitarianism was a marketing concept to bring in donations and grow institutions. Nolan and Cottle argue this detracted from the "organizational integrity impugned and [left] communication aims compromised."¹⁴ Over time, the integrity of many large humanitarian organizations became distorted.

Cottle and Nolan's argument also applies to nations. The gifts of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar were tied to publicity and outsider impressions. By 2005, post-humanitarianism was the prominent trend in aid structures and explains the existence of unaltruistic foreign aid. Lilie Chouliaraki coined the term post-humanitarianism in her 2010 article "Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity." She defines post-humanitarianism as the period wherein neoliberalism impacted humanitarianism to be market-driven and individualistic. Meaning, humanitarianism exists within the forces of capitalism instead of acting against it –as it occasionally did within the historical record. Though unexamined under this terminology, the rising distrust in institutions like nonprofits is part of this phenomena and has resulted in increased mutual aid funds and direct giving. But, unfortunately, this was not yet the case during Hurricane Katrina.

Matt Mayer, without using the term post-humanitarianism, analyzed Hurricane Katrina aid within this lens. His piece "Accepting Disaster Relief from Other Nations:

¹⁴ Cottle, Simon & Nolan, David. 2007. 'Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field: Everyone Was Dying for Footage'. *Journalism Studies*. 8. 862-878. 10.1080/14616700701556104.

Lessons from Katrina and the Gulf Oil Spill” recommends policies that will counter post-humanitarianism’s impact on aid offers. Because, during Katrina, international aid offers were diplomatic instead of effective. Mayer’s work uses some of the same sources as this thesis. However, as a work of history, this thesis addresses the stories behind Mayer’s recommendations.

The above analyzed sources on Hurricane Katrina and humanitarianism show the underpinnings of Hurricane Katrina’s global impact. Three trends emerged. First, belief in American exceptionalism faltered. Second, US Government officials were careless in their preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina, showing small concern for constituents. And third, by the 2000s, global humanitarianism rarely arose through altruism. These historiographic trends of de-democratization, neoliberalism, and post-humanitarianism, though omnipresent, are hard to capture in one event. However, the story of Persian Gulf donations for Katrina recovery and the State Department response captures all of these phenomena in one instance.

Chapter One: Comparing Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia's Disaster Diplomacy in Response to Hurricane Katrina

Introduction

Many saw economic opportunity in Hurricane Katrina. Scholars including Naomi Klein¹⁵ call this process “disaster capitalism.” The theory of disaster capitalism hypothesizes previously undoable privatization and deregulation occur in the wake of natural or man-made disasters because of suspended disbelief. Usually, in the case of Katrina, the term is applied to those who bought flooded property and redeveloped entire neighborhoods leveraging the changing markets that the disaster disrupted in its wake. But the “disaster capitalism” frame also fits the actions of nation states. Four Persian Gulf countries, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, constructed large diplomatic, economic, and public relations plans in response to what they perceived as the US's most humiliating event since the 1973 embargo. Leaders of these nations saw an opportunity to further their country's image and economy as the expense of the US. Acting quickly, they decided how to handle the oil market disruption of Katrina and what strategies to employ in their diplomatic reactions as prominent actors in the international oil sector themselves.

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, the first move Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE made was offering huge sums of humanitarian aid to the United States government, while Saudi Arabia pledged aid through less public avenues. Kuwait offered \$100 million cash and \$400 million in oil, while the United Arab Emirates and Qatar offered \$100 million in aid each. A little later Saudi Arabia put together a \$250,000 gift. A wide array of

¹⁵ Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Co.

media outlets, including nascent online news sites, covered these donations. The world had read far more headlines about Americans exporting aid than receiving it, so the transaction's reversal shocked readers. In fact, Hurricane Katrina probably marked the first instance of international aid being offered to the United States outside of war times. With agendas and close ties to the US Gulf South in the oil market, nationals of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE had already donated to the region's corporations, politicians, and nonprofits. But never had there been an instance where donating to the US government appeared a popular and appropriate action.

Already reveling in the good PR from their offers, these countries wanted to follow through with their intentions of direct donations to the US government. Diplomats from the UAE and Kuwait fought hard for direct federal deposits. The Qatari regime attempted a similar path, but with a lesser international reputation, proved unpopular with US officials. So, Qatar instead began diplomacy through their media outlet Al Jazeera as well as private donations.

All three countries were ready to follow through on their offers, even if their original intentions were selfish. However, no protocol for receiving these offers existed on the American side and the process became increasingly difficult. Saudi, Kuwaiti, Qatari, and Emirati actors spoke with their corresponding ambassadors in the US State Department. Without a specific office for foreign aid, the State Department became the US body for accepting or rejecting these international offers. In the end, Persian Gulf states found themselves begging for US acceptance of their large offers to continue their reputation-centric humanitarian campaigns. Even Saudi Arabian offers, which were not intended as public displays, were met with resistance.

The records of these difficult conversations between American, Kuwait, Emirati, Saudi, and Qatari officials were retained through US archives specifically, U.S. State Department correspondences and intelligence analysis revealed through Freedom of Information Act requests.¹⁶ These sources provide the rationale behind America's slow reaction to foreign aid offers. Analyzing these declassified State Department documents, I was able to find patterns and hidden intentions from all five parties, including the US, regarding the offers, their potential acceptance, and ultimate rejection.

Linking each country's donations to its political goals, the State Department assumed a deeper rationale behind such large gifts. Reading the gifts as some means of diplomacy, the State Department had to decide if the repercussions of accepting the aid superseded its humanitarian impact. The most cordial correspondences came out of the Dubai office. Including recognition, appreciation, and discussion of in-kind vs. money percentages, the Dubai embassy was ready to get those affected by Katrina their help. In fact, their largest hang-ups were due to American interference.¹⁷ In contrast, the most corrupt and ambiguous intentions came out of Riyadh.

Though largely redacted, language indicates Saudi Arabia was bribing the US into conversations about the right price of oil. Seeing their donation was communicated secretly compared to the other three examples, this makes even more sense.¹⁸

Additionally, able to control international oil prices with their large reserves, the US needed Saudi Arabia's cooperation to offset American oil damages incurred during the

¹⁶ Regarding Katrina, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, CREW, had already completed Freedom of Information Act requests for State Department communications about Katrina aid offers, making these records public since 2007. Additionally, CREW had recirculated these records on Scribd, a document-sharing platform.

¹⁷ This trend is discussed further in chapter three.

¹⁸ Though largely redacted, some language indicated Saudi Arabia threatened oil market pandemonium if their bribes, camouflaged as aid, were rejected.

storm. So, through its conversations about its \$250,000 offer, Saudi Arabia created the space to discuss its preferred oil prices. Similarly, Kuwait's offer and their aggressive pushing for its acceptance was tied to international oil expansions related to their newest expenditure "Project Kuwait." Looking to enter the North American oil refining and processing market, Kuwait's offer was intended to better relations with the US government actors that could hinder this project.

Qatar proved a harder case study because of limited State Department correspondences. State Department officials quickly rejected Qatar's aid as the regime had not yet pleased global superpowers with impressions of democracy and humanitarian causes until the later 2010s. Blocked from its initial disaster diplomacy, Qatar pivoted to its largest power relative to its small size: Al Jazeera. I translated archived Al Jazeera articles and catalogued their media coverage of Katrina to reveal heightened criticism of American handling of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, Qatar found private aid recipients that had some amount of influence such as Habitat for Humanity, Louisiana Children's Hospital, and Tulane University.

To be sure, there are limits to the evidence of these hidden agendas. Much of the information in State Department reports was redacted. For example, many State Department intelligence reports on Saudi Arabia and Kuwait aid had more blacked out sections than readable text. Unredacted sections included direct quotes from ambassadors and media summaries, while redacted information seemed to pivot around business deals like Project Kuwait or Saudi Arabian oil price speculation. However, even these redacted sections may offer some conclusions. Why would the US need to hide evidence of Saudi or Kuwait corruption in their reports? Perhaps, because US politicians themselves are

implicated during these discussions. Though drastically harder to prove, American meddling in the oil market and negligence of their own constituents to further larger foreign policy goals. Despite their limitations, these State Department records (or Al Jazeera articles in the case of Qatar) offer the best available evidence of the American, Saudi, Kuwaiti, Emirati, and Qatari intentions behind the largest Hurricane Katrina aid offers.

Each countries' strategy for Hurricane Katrina foreign aid and diplomacy, however, was established on the historical context of oil geopolitics the century before. The oscillating relationship between the US and Persian Gulf Monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as global crude oil capitals began long before Hurricane Katrina. In fact, US actors built the oil industry in many Persian Gulf States. This initial intrusion has been hard to oust since. Resisting the economic imperialism of these transnational oil monopolies, most Persian Gulf countries began campaigns of nationalization in the 1960s. This forced American companies and the US government to guard their access to Middle East oil.

The tide turned temporarily when the United States was humiliated by the 1973 OPEC Oil Embargo. However, the US began investing in American oil production and reoriented their Middle East foreign policy to ensure another event like the 1973 Embargo would not happen again. Though it took a few years to implement, by 1990 the United States leveraged their ability to protect certain Persian Gulf states from the Soviet Union and its proxy wars, embodied mainly by Iran in the Middle East, against those state's ability to control global oil prices. However, this new Middle East foreign policy required conflict and, consequently, the United States began more conflicts than it

prevented. Eventually, US politicians and oil corporations even initiated conflicts to increase their power in the international oil market under the pliant Bush Doctrine. However, by the late 2000s this strategy was beginning to blow up in their face. Terrorism, excessive conflicts, and natural disasters caused their own constituents to be disillusioned with US government decisions and other actors edged their way into the international arms and petroleum game.

This was the situation in the geopolitical oil market that existed before Katrina hit. US Gulf South residents found their leaders were preoccupied with international oil markets. Whole Middle Eastern countries lay devastated from the strategic US invasions. And Persian Gulf countries who previously controlled the oil market under OPEC were US allies. Yet, they still vied for independent power via small diplomatic moves. Overall, the United States had bullied its way into controlling the oil economy and now held top producer and consumer roles even though the world protested over its position and the way it got there.

Then on August 29th, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit, US refineries halted production and the price per barrel of oil grew to over \$70.¹⁹ Hurricane Rita swept through right afterwards, sowing its own damage as well as slowing recovery from Katrina's destruction. One of the United States' most respected international analysis publications, The Council on Foreign Relations, inquired: "How serious was Katrina compared to other natural disasters that have affected the oil industry?" And, Richard Karp, the American Petroleum Institute representative in 2005, responded, "[Katrina] was

¹⁹ Pan, Esther. September 7th, 2005. "Katrina and Oil Prices." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed April 13, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/interview/katrina-and-oil-prices>.

the most dramatic impact of any hurricane that I can remember.”²⁰ Whether a result of engineering failures, increased use of petroleum products, or climate change, Katrina was one of the first disasters to impact oil price per barrel so drastically.

Therefore, it is no surprise Katrina piqued the interest of the growing global oil market players, such as Kuwait, or existing oil powers, like Saudi Arabia. Yet, often out shadowed by the 2003 Iraq invasion or 2011 Arab Spring, Katrina does not make the timeline of Persian Gulf foreign relations strategy. However, Hurricane Katrina lessened the reputation of the United States. And much like the 1973 OPEC Embargo, other global petroleum powers grabbed power during this moment of weakness. Overall, this moment would come to foreshadow the growth of the Persian Monarchies and the indignity of the United States in the decades after Katrina.

Qatar

By 2005, only one media outlet was dedicated to global live coverage in the Middle East: Al Jazeera Media Network. Al Jazeera’s live coverage in Arabic of both regional and global events was often the sole way Arabs got international news, giving the network’s voice an outsized influence –especially when used as a tool of its owner, Qatari Prime Minister Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani, and its funder, Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.²¹ Hurricane Katrina, being a disaster made day-by-day,

²⁰ Pan, Esther. 2005.

²¹ For reference the Emirs and Prime Ministers of Qatar are listed with their full names below.

Emirs: Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani (September 1971 - February 1972), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (February 1972 - June 1995), Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (June 1995 - June 2013), Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (June 2013- Present).

Prime Ministers: Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (May 1970 - June 1995), Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995- October 1996), Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani (October 1996-April 2007), Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani (April 2007-June 2013), Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani (June 2013-January 2020), Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdul Aziz Al Thani (January 2020-Present).

could only be disseminated to the world through live coverage. So, Al Jazeera was the main network with timely coverage of Hurricane Katrina in Arabic.

Al Jazeera Media Network ultimately supported the Qatari foreign relations strategy with its reporting. On television, viewers saw a crumbling America and Al Thani saw a chance to uplift Qatar at the expense of the US. His first actions included a \$100 million aid offer, but this strategy quickly failed. Instead, Al Jazeera's media coverage came to be the majority disaster diplomacy strategy of Qatar. The network's coverage of Hurricane Katrina contained exaggerated impact, coverage of rejected international aid, as well as misinformation to emphasize the US's mishandlings of natural disasters. Through these tactics, readers of Al Jazeera would conclude that the world's biggest economic power had no infrastructure to quickly aid its vulnerable populations, nor did they want to. Al Jazeera's origins had always been anti-imperialist, but this coverage was specifically anti-US Government.

Qatar's strategy is typical of small states. Because small states are limited in their buying and production capabilities, they focus on other ways to garner power. As Qatar does, one alternative way to create influence is in media production. Other examples of powerful small-state institutions include hyper-specialized markets, strong allyships with more powerful countries e.g., the Israel-American allyship, or even control of a key geographic transport hubs like Oman's presence in the Strait of Hormuz. By leveraging these assets, small states can control or influence their allies and enemies. In 2005, Qatar leveraged their outsized media influence to their benefit during Hurricane Katrina and would repeat this in later events like the Arab Spring and 2017 Saudi Arabian-Qatari conflict.

So, how and why did Qatar create this large media power that some even regard as the beginning of free press in the Middle East? The first years of Al Jazeera programming which began in 1996 were unlike the formal shows put on by other networks. The cause of this drastic shift in media coverage is labelled a natural gathering of “dozens of producers, journalists and technicians from all around the world” to Doha on Al-Jazeera’s website.²² However, Qatar’s then Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, paid these liberal media experts to come.²³ This expense was part of Sheikh Hamad’s larger foreign relations strategy that uprooted much of his predecessor, Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani’s, reputation of absolute authority.²⁴

Sheikh Hamad came to power in 1995 after an unconventional dynastic transition. With some calling it a “bloodless coup,” this transition marked a turn in Qatar’s reputation as a religious dictatorship to a liberal constitutional monarchy.²⁵ Installing Al Jazeera as the premier live news media of the Middle East was just the beginning of reforms. In his first year, Sheikh Hamad allowed an Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres to visit Doha and permitted the US Air Force to build its largest air base yet, Al Udeid.

However, Sheikh Hamad did not create his new beacon of liberalism, Al Jazeera Media Network, out of what was already in Qatar. He stole the staff from a failed Saudi-BBC merger through Orbit Communications.²⁶ Unable to agree on editorial overview, Saudi Arabia via Orbit pulled out of the new network deal when BBC showed the

²² “Our Story: Al Jazeera Media Network.” 2021. <https://network.aljazeera.net/about-us/timeline>. Accessed November 19, 2020.

²³ Zayani, Mohamed. 2008. “Arab media, corporate communications, and public relations: The case of Al Jazeera.” *Asian Journal of Communication*.

²⁴ Al-Kubaisi, Mohammed Ali M. 1984. *Industrial development in Qatar: a geographical assessment*. Durham E-Theses, Durham University. p. 77.

²⁵ Al-Kubaisi, Mohammed Ali M. 1984.

²⁶ Zayani, Mohamed. 2008.

Kingdom's violent execution technique in a special on human rights. After this, Sheikh Hamad quickly established Al Jazeera with the staff from BBC's failed venture. The BBC reporters were rare for the region with both English and Arabic fluency, global media expertise, and a drive for accurate reporting.²⁷ To keep the network in line with what BBC intended to produce with Orbit, Sheikh Hamad dedicated \$140 million to finance Al Jazeera.²⁸

The network was supposed to be self-sufficient from this "loan."²⁹ However, Al Jazeera never paid back this money to Qatar and was later given another \$1 billion by the new Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani.³⁰ Scholars assume Al Jazeera relied heavily on the Sheikh Abdullah's funding until Al Jazeera English took off in the 2010s.³¹ So, during its coverage of Hurricane Katrina, it can be assumed Al Jazeera's output was still controlled by Emir and Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah and therefore another institution of the Qatari government.

So, to no surprise, Al Jazeera's coverage of Katrina hewed closely to Qatar's foreign relations strategy. The network frequently exaggerated Hurricane Katrina damages, while focusing heavily on the impact on oil prices –to indicate the US was a failing state and dying oil power. To determine this bias, I compared Al Jazeera articles

²⁷ Gambill, Gary. 2000. "Qatar's Al-Jazeera TV: The Power of Free Speech." *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 2 (5). https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0006_me2.htm. Accessed April 13th, 2021.

²⁸ Gambill, Gary. 2000.

²⁹ Gambill, Gary. 2000.

³⁰ Sharp, Jeremy. 2003. *The Al-Jazeera News Network: Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East*.

³¹ Cohen, Noam. January 1st, 2009. "Al Jazeera Provides an inside Look at Gaza Conflict." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/technology/11iht-jazeera.4.19256575.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

to Wall Street Journal newspapers.³² As the leading economic publication in the United States, the Wall Street Journal had many of the figures regarding the oil market and overall damages that Al Jazeera included in its coverage. Overall, I found Al Jazeera covered Katrina severely enough to make it a potential marker of a larger geopolitical shift. Al Jazeera contextualized Hurricane Katrina along with the 2003 Iraq invasion and 2001 Afghanistan invasion. This was an early understanding of Hurricane Katrina as a trend in line with the failures of neoliberalism under the Bush Administration.³³ By emphasizing US failures, Al Jazeera coverage showed democratic and human rights practices in the United States and Global South.³⁴ This similarity created space for foreign aid offers to the United States which are normally not perceived as acceptable. Within this trend, Qatar proposed an oversized offer to show its commitment to humanitarianism as it relates to the Western values of democracy and human rights.³⁵ So, Al Jazeera coverage paired with the large Qatari aid offer effected US reputations negatively while uplifting Qatar in the global sphere. Additionally, intense coverage of the Persian Gulf's humanitarian offers to Katrina victims helped counter global Islamophobia that had been on the rise since 9/11.

³² The Wall Street Journal retroactively analyzed its own coverage of Hurricane Katrina a year after the storm. This source allowed for easy comparison between WSJ and Al Jazeera coverage in late August and early September of 2005.

"Late Summer Storm." 2006. WSJ. Accessed May 1, 2021.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB115681927896348076>.

³³ This would later become the mainstream understanding of Hurricane Katrina.

³⁴ The timing of this comparison was poignant as some countries traditionally classified as in the Global South had just dealt with Tsunami recovery which elicited much foreign aid.

³⁵ The connections between human rights law, humanitarianism, and colonialism are discussed in Michael Barnett's books *Humanitarianism and Human Rights: A World of Differences?* and *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*

Al Jazeera published its first article about Hurricane Katrina on August 27, 2005.³⁶ Overall, three rarities endure across much of Al Jazeera's coverage as compared to the Wall Street Journal, and they can be examined through this initial article and ten others. The title of the article focused on early human losses, reporting "7 Killed in Katrina." Compared to multiple Wall Street Journal article titles, Al Jazeera's titles use active voice to vilify human actions instead of the storm. This is also reflected in the writing within articles. Additionally, Al Jazeera had early reports from Florida instead of the more common Mississippi and New Orleans death tolls in the Wall Street Journal.³⁷ This is just one indicator of how Al Jazeera covered the regional impact of Hurricane Katrina from a humanistic lens. Last, Al Jazeera always links economic changes to the disaster. Citing the National Hurricane Center in Miami's warning about Katrina turning into a Category 4 storm, Al Jazeera estimated potential losses from 600 million to 2 billion USD. The Wall Street Journal includes damage estimates but not alongside human losses. These trends with further analysis are applied to other Al Jazeera articles below.

Before even reaching land, Al Jazeera covered Katrina's potential economic impact. This attribute allows Arabic audiences to understand the significance of what was happening and how much improper storm readiness would cost the US. In many of the following articles, there is a tie to the oil industry as well. Stand-out articles even include

³⁶ Translation by Author

"مصرع سبعة جراء إعصار كاترينا بفلوريدا." English: Seven killed by Hurricane Katrina. August 27th, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

"زإعصار كاترينا يكلف شركات التأمين 25 مليار دولار" English: Hurricane Katrina costs insurers \$ 25 billion." August 29th, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

³⁷ "Late Summer Storm." 2006. WSJ. Accessed May 1, 2021.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB115681927896348076>.

coverage of refinery shut-downs in Louisiana. “Hurricane Katrina pushes oil prices to a new high” published August 29, 2005, goes in depth, saying “the hurricane forced nine refineries in Louisiana and Mississippi and four other US refineries to cut production by more than 10% of their refining capacity.”³⁸ In addition to covering the destruction and human deaths, Al Jazeera had very early coverage of oil effects, reflecting their state’s interest in the oil market.

In addition to economic effects, Al Jazeera coverage in 2005 continued to emphasize the failures of government response. Many of the initial headlines focus on human rights failures such as death, dehydration, and poor conditions at the Superdome.³⁹ The later articles focus on economic impact and its relation to the global economy. For example, the September 2nd article, “Hurricane Katrina has died in the thousands, and Washington seeks refuge in oil reserves” combines both the humanitarian impact and economic detriment to “Washington.”⁴⁰ US politicians, often referred to as “Washington,” are the victim as well as perpetrators in many of Al Jazeera’s titles. Though many major media outlets used sensational headlines, Al Jazeera is unique for immediately emphasizing government’s role in this tragedy via its verbiage and reporting choices.⁴¹ This is furthered when Katrina is analyzed besides the 2003 Iraq invasion in

³⁸ Translation by Author

“إعصار كاترينا يدفع بأسعار النفط لارتفاع جديد” English: Hurricane Katrina pushes oil prices to new high. August 31st, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

“توقعات بوصول خسائر إعصار كاترينا إلى ملياري دولار” Translation: Hurricane Katrina’s losses are expected to reach two billion dollars. August 27th, 2005. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

³⁹ Though headlines exploiting tragedy news were common at this time.

⁴⁰ Comically, Al Jazeera’s use of “Washington” instead of the United States or American is a more accurate depiction as those political and economic elites pulling the strings were part of the US Government, best geographically embodied by Washington District of Columbia. The more common United States or American verbiage pulls in citizen connotations that are not applicable here.

⁴¹ This could be due the region’s increased government mistrust. As government turnover and change is more common in the Middle East, citizens are less likely to see governments as permanent and valid.

the article “Hurricane Katrina and the Scandal of the American System.”⁴² Though 9/11, the 2003 Iraq invasion, and Hurricane Katrina are retroactively seen as the Bush Administration’s trifecta of catastrophes, few combined them as evidence against neoliberalism in 2005. Al Jazeera, however, did.⁴³

Consequently, Al Jazeera often viewed Katrina through a much wider lens than other news sources. The emphasis on the oil market was not as popular in general interest papers, which instead focused on humanitarian impacts. Even the Wall Street Journal had less articles about oil market impacts. Al Jazeera posted three articles with oil in its headlines while the Wall Street Journal posted zero.⁴⁴ Within articles, the Wall Street Journal covered oil market impacts of Hurricane Katrina. However, they only linked oil price per barrel to Katrina in two articles. Coverage of the oil market continued but without mentions of shortages, increasing prices, and the other stats explicitly tied to Hurricane Katrina and infrastructure recovery.

Al Jazeera, for reasons discussed below, committed to in-depth coverage, and therefore documented economic outcomes as tied to Hurricane Katrina. For example, they reported on oil price increases, the political arena with State Department and Pentagon decisions, and even the historical context compared to global disasters like tsunamis and past US hurricanes like Betsy and the great Galveston storm.⁴⁵ Because of their large cultural and geographic distance from the US Gulf South, Al Jazeera reporters

⁴² ⁴² Translation by Author

“إعصار كاترينا وفضيحة النظام الأميركي” English: Hurricane Katrina and the Scandal of the American System. September 7th, 2001. *Al Jazeera Media Network*. Accessed March 5, 2021 via Al Jazeera Online Archive.

⁴³ This is seen in “Hurricane Katrina and the Scandal of the American System” as well as other less-popular Arabic news outlets.

⁴⁴ Figures come from the online archives of Al Jazeera and WSJ coverage. And of course, mentions of

⁴⁵ However, their sourcing of such broad information is not well documented. A simple source note “Agencies” is all that is provided by Al Jazeera’s online archives.

had to be better at explaining the full situation to removed audiences and provided more thorough content. Unlike the Wall Street Journal, by linking the Hurricane to these economic and political happenings, Al Jazeera emphasized the failures of American civil society to protect vulnerable citizens. The Wall Street Journal, on the other hand, reported changes without connecting them to catalysts and decision-makers.

In a September 5th US State Department letter,⁴⁶ officers summarized Qatar's media output on Hurricane Katrina.⁴⁷ This "media output" from late August and early September (largely from Al Jazeera Arabic's website) covered the remarks of appreciation from Fran Townsend, US Homeland Security Advisor, for the \$100 million Qatari donation to the US Government. Instead of focusing on damages like in many previous articles, with this message Al Jazeera scaled up the focus on gratitude from American representatives. This extra coverage emphasized American thankfulness for Qatar's offer, showing this small state was respected by the world's leading power. However, behind State Department doors, the Qatari offer was rejected.

A correspondence begun on the 5th, but not sent until the 15th, starts the direct discussion between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the US Ambassador to Qatar Chase Untermeyer about the \$100 million gift. Secretary Rice asked Ambassador Untermeyer to send his direct thanks to Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah. But he clarified the State Department would not be releasing the correspondence to the public.

⁴⁶ This is the first of many State Department documents accessed via the US National Archive's Freedom of Information Act records in this project. The State Department FOIA database allows direct download of the documents, but not individual URLs. Consequently, I will cite each document under *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database* and its subject line which is searchable at: <https://foia.state.gov/search/search.aspx>

⁴⁷ "Doha: Article Placement –USG Thanks to Qatar for Katrina Donation; Iraq Constitution." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

However, if Sheikh Abdullah wanted to show the US's appreciation, there was "no objection" from the State Department office. Also, important, Rice dictated there be no signed original copy of the letter.

Though benefitting from the offer's brief publicity, ultimately Qatar's opportunity to fulfil its promise was undermined by the US. Qatar could never have known the impending result based on its correspondences with US officials. Rice's letter itself began as most diplomatic correspondences about Hurricane Katrina did. Thanking the diplomat for their messages of sympathy, Secretary Rice then said she "deeply" respected Qatar's offer of \$100 million in aid, and that "we were pleased to accept your generous assistance." This "magnanimous" offer came in in the top few offers along with the UAE and Kuwait's. In a September 9th speech, the president emphasized Qatar's outsized donation as well. Qatari actors were beginning to believe their aid would garner them increased respect among top global powers. After all, a direct acknowledgement from the President of the United States is a high, if not the highest, honor.

Despite the president's acknowledgment of the offer, the U.S. did not accept the money directly. Instead, the funds were dispersed to private organizations. The State Department was recommending donations to the Red Cross and Bush-Clinton Katrina Foundation. However, Qatar strategically picked other organizations with larger regional influence and connections. These organizations include Xavier University of Louisiana, to which \$17.5 million was gifted, as well as Tulane University and Louisiana State University which received an undisclosed amount.⁴⁸ The Children's Hospital of New

⁴⁸ "Qatar Announces \$60 Million in Katrina-Related Grants." May 3rd, 2006. Philanthropy News Digest. <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/qatar-announces-60-million-in-katrina-related-grants>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Orleans, Habitat for Humanity, and the March of Dimes, all nonprofits, also received Qatari funds.⁴⁹

The acknowledgement yet ultimate rejection of Qatari aid suggests Rice did not mind if Qatari news media covered US “appreciation for the aid.”⁵⁰ However, in preventing an official copy of the above letter from leaking, Rice preserved the right to rescind State Department acceptance of the aid, which is exactly what she did.⁵¹ Her exact reasons are not evidenced in the State Department documents but are perhaps similar to the reasons for most aid offers being rejected which are discussed further in chapter three.

Despite this hurdle, Al Jazeera’s monopoly in international media coverage led to an outside influence in shaping the Arab understanding of Hurricane Katrina. Al Jazeera contributed to the perception of Hurricane Katrina as a distinct US failure. Therefore, when other Arab countries offered large donations to the United States, it jolted the pre-2000 understanding of world affairs, if even just for a second. Instead of Islamophobic preconceptions, Qatar and other Persian Gulf countries appeared more in-line with the enlightened thinking of the Global North because of their large aid offers than the United States. As, the United States was not fulfilling its promises of human rights. Instead, outside humanitarians Compounding their existing coverage of US failures during Iraq invasion, Al Jazeera’s audience got a clear message: US government and American civil society failed in upholding the liberalism it projected. And despite the United States not accepting their aid, Qatar’s disaster diplomacy after Katrina was the first event in a

⁴⁹ “Qatar Announces \$60 Million in Katrina-Related Grants.” 2006.

⁵⁰ “Secretary’s Message of Appreciation for Hurricane Katrina Aid to Qatar.” September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁵¹ “Secretary’s Message of Appreciation for Hurricane Katrina Aid to Qatar.” September 5th, 2005.

decade-long public relations campaign, wherein through monetary donations and carefully crafted Al Jazeera output, the country hid its affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood and other conflict zone militias by highlighting their humanitarian actions abroad.⁵² Amazingly, what in 2005 might have read as propaganda, Al Jazeera's immediate read of Hurricane Katrina reflects the now-popular understanding of Hurricane Katrina in global media perception, proving that diversity in reporting moves political analysis further.

Kuwait

Kuwait's offer of \$100 million in cash and \$400 million in oil remains the highest single donation offer given for Hurricane Katrina recovery.⁵³ Like all other geopolitical tactics, this one has a narrative, and it reaches back to a time the US helped Kuwait: Operation Desert Storm. Kuwait's large donation appears as a thank you for aid during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Overall, the large gift helped soothe Americans' begrudging the expense of Desert Storm. Many Kuwait citizens believed this was their government's intention and even gave private donations to the US Red Cross or Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund themselves.⁵⁴ Except, literature on global humanitarianism shows most state-sponsored foreign aid exists with hidden agendas.⁵⁵

⁵² Trager, Eric. July 2nd, 2017. "The Muslim Brotherhood Is the Root of the Qatar Crisis." *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/muslim-brotherhood-qatar/532380/>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁵³ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁵⁴ "Kuwaitis and Others Offer Outpouring of Support to Hurricane Katrina Victims." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁵⁵ Lilie Chouliaraki. 2010. "Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity."

In-line with this research, State Department letters reveal the outsized Kuwaiti gift to be a bribe related to the international oil market. Following Saudi footsteps, Kuwait wanted to begin building oil processing and shipping infrastructure in North America. Yet, hold ups in Kuwaiti parliament were making investment and government actors question the initiative. So, Kuwait's \$500 million gift reiterated their North American interests to these parties, especially State Department officials. However, this action was just another frustration to oil profiteers who had been dealing with Kuwaiti oil crises since they were invaded by Iraq and then saved by Operation Desert Storm as examined below.

The general population of America has a less intense memory of Operation Desert Storm than these government officials and oil investors. Recall, on January 15th, 1991, the United States launched Operation Desert Storm. The US began this initiative after Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Kuwait. Initially, Operation Desert Storm was viewed as an oil-driven rescue of United States' ally: Kuwait.

Through this mission, Kuwait became the first target of US military actions in the Persian Gulf that were publicly heroic yet privately business based. The timing of the United States rushing to save Kuwait from Iraq's invasions allowed the US to be recovered, reinvigorated, and ready with new strategies from their 1973 Oil Embargo setbacks. Kuwait had been the site of American and British oil allyships since US Gulf Oil Corporation and British Anglo-Persian Oil Company, struck oil in 1938.⁵⁶ Though the Kuwait government had nationalized their petroleum resources under the Kuwait National Petroleum Company by 1960, Kuwait still supplied 79 thousand barrels of oil

⁵⁶ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. *Historical Dictionary of United States-Middle East Relations*. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, no. 5. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, XVII.

day to the US in 1990.⁵⁷ So, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the US's oil imports were affected. Additionally, foreign policy advisors were shocked that Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, would strike Kuwait, a US ally, after receiving extensive American aid during the Iraq-Iran war. As Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was only achievable because of earlier American assistance, allowing this invasion would be detrimental to overall American interests and foreign policy in the Middle East.

To the average American, the rationale behind saving Kuwait and invading Iraq was already confusing. Via general misinformation and shrewd political narratives at the time, constituents were seduced into believing these conflicts were both patriotic and necessary. Of course, some never felt this way. However, over fifteen years later, the main reasons for these military actions (weapons of mass destruction and saving democratic allies) have been upended. Now, people are beginning to question if there was an alternative motive to Operation Desert Storm and the Second Persian Gulf War. One of the main theories revolves around disrupting the Persian Gulf's ability to set international oil prices and reinforcing the US, UK, and UN's influence instead. The next few paragraphs are dedicated to analyzing this theory within the case study of Operation Desert Storm.

Multiple theories about conflict's impact on the oil market, embodied by oil futures, premiums, and price per barrel, exist in common academic literature. The most prevalent theory to Operation Desert Storm focuses on conflict's impact on uncertainty.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Kuwait Exports of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products by Destination." 2021. US Energy Information Administration. https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/PET_MOVE_EXPC_DC_NUS-NKU_MBBLPD_M.htm. Accessed April 4th, 2021.

⁵⁸ Looney, R. 2003. "Oil Prices and the Iraq War: Market Interpretations of Military Developments." *The Journal of Energy and Development*, 29(1), 25-41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24809353>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

In the case of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, traders did not immediately evaluate the conflict as detrimental to their investments in oil.⁵⁹ But once the initial weekend of invasions revealed Iraq's commitment to the endeavor, oil futures, due to the uncertainty of the conflict's direction, shifted from positive to negative growth.⁶⁰ Additionally, oil price per barrel went up from \$21 in July to \$28 by August 6th. However, the fluctuation from the initial invasion on August 2nd, began to revert by August 8th when the United States announced its intention to step-in.⁶¹

Yet, on August 6th, the UN also placed an embargo on Iraq and Kuwait's oil exports. Less discussed, this step exemplifies another aspect in conflict's impact on the international oil market. By stepping-in and embargoing two of the world's largest oil suppliers at the time, the UN increased price per barrel. This increase reached its peak in mid-October at \$40 per barrel.⁶² However, oil investors know oil futures would once again stabilize because of the incoming US actions, and once Operation Desert Storm had boots on the ground, prices fell to the \$20-\$25 range once again.⁶³

So, from the initial invasion to having troops in Kuwait, oil consumers had to deal with the exaggerated process, yet oil investors and companies were protected. The UN embargo of Kuwait and Iraq paired with a planned US retaliation towards Iraq worked to stabilize uncertainty and reassure oil investors and oil futures while increasing proceeds for oil companies themselves. You could argue these decisions only negatively affected

⁵⁹ Looney, R. 2003.

⁶⁰ Looney, R. 2003.

⁶¹ Looney, R. 2003.

⁶² David, Henderson. 2014. "Who Caused the August 1990 Spike in Oil Prices?" *Econlib*.
https://www.econlib.org/archives/2014/06/who_caused_the.html. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁶³ David, Henderson. 2014.

oil consumers, Kuwaitis, Iraqis, and the environment.⁶⁴ However, somehow, these actions were still implanted because of popular support from UN and US actors. One could assume some of these actors were affiliated with the oil investors and companies that gained from this situation. But diving into records from the period, the narrative of Iraq's rationale for this invasion was also a factor.

To retain political support despite intruding into a conflict about as pertinent to US security as Vietnam, politicians and foreign policy designers in the State Department harked on a narrative about Iraq's intent to disrupt the oil market. Yes, from Saddam Hussein's perspective, overtaking Kuwait allowed access to new oil fields that would elicit some form of increased power.⁶⁵ However, he would never want his economy's leading export banned from its biggest markets. In fact, the US involvement with the Iraqis in the Iran-Iraq war was hugely related to preserving their oil allyship. So, the neither the American nor Iraqi long-standing foreign policy was meant to disrupt the oil market.

Except, once Iraq invaded Kuwait and the price per barrel of oil increased, American votes were at risk for certain politicians. Typically, if oil prices go up significantly, the politician in office will lose support. So, by employing military action, the US at least had some control over international oil prices and certain candidates would have a better chance at reelection. For example, during John Kerry's 1990 Senate race in Massachusetts, Kerry could confidently run on the promise "he'd fix the Iraq-induced oil price spikes" because he knew Operation Desert Storm would stabilize the

⁶⁴ By this I mean: there could have been so many oil recessions that, if incurred, they would have increased support for renewable energy earlier.

⁶⁵ David, Henderson. 2014.

international oil market.⁶⁶ So, at the risk of soldiers and military spending, politicians supported counteraction against Iraq because it increased their chance of winning.

Besides election and oil price impacts, some think the United States unleashed Operation Desert Storm in the off chance it would gain some control of Kuwaiti oil fields. As US forces fought off Iraqi rule in Kuwait, Americans held *temporary* control of certain oil fields. And ultimately, retreating Iraqi forces ruined much oil infrastructure that Kuwait would work to recover, not the US. However, the US did receive increased exports from Kuwait after Operation Desert Storm. As mentioned above, their pre-invasion exports to the US totaled 79 thousand barrels a day.⁶⁷ Two years after the Persian Gulf War ended, Kuwait was exporting 344 thousand barrels a day to the US.⁶⁸ Whether looking at the decisions of UN member states, UK private oil companies, or US investors during Operation Desert Storm, analyzing the hidden oil agendas in these two situations makes the decision for military conflict more founded than the average American realizes. However, the foundation for conflict is based on accumulating wealth and power instead of the false narratives about preserving democracy in a monarchical state and fighting non-existent nuclear warheads.

And despite a more adept understanding of the campaign's faux narrative of democracy and liberty, Persian Gulf States still supported the US actions in Operation Desert Storm. In fact, most Persian Gulf Monarchies verified their military allyship with the United States during this conflict. For example, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd welcomed American soldiers resisting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.⁶⁹ This decision cemented Saudi

⁶⁶ Davis, Henderson. 2014.

⁶⁷ "Kuwait Exports of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products by Destination." 2021.

⁶⁸ "Kuwait Exports of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products by Destination." 2021.

⁶⁹ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Page 30.

Arabia's position against Hussein's Iraq and severed the sympathies of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda leader and 9/11 mastermind. In the end, King Fahd's invitation to US forces, as well as the support of Qatar, Syria, Egypt, and NATO allies like the United Kingdom, made Operation Desert Storm a quick and successful mission.

However, during the conflict, Kuwaiti citizens did not realize the international interests in its resources would mean the Iraqi invasion would be quickly overturned. In the beginning of the Operation Desert Storm, Kuwaitis hope in the United State varied. Titled, "Letter from Kuwait," one Kuwait woman wrote President Bush, saying, "The Kuwaitis are losing hope. I don't think they can hold on much longer... Thank God for you, Mr. President. We know you will do the right thing."⁷⁰ Many now question whether Operation Desert Storm's offensive nature was the right decision, similarly to the US's 2003 invasion of Iraq. The average American citizen now views Desert Storm as an expensive military intervention to keep up oil connections and continue the project of democracy, or they do not remember it at all.⁷¹

Most Americans know even less about Kuwait's Katrina philanthropy. A Google search reveals one lonely blog entry about Kuwait's donation. This "AMERICA blog" article connects the total cost of Desert Storm to Kuwait's later Katrina donations. The blog's unknown author, speaking on Kuwait's donation, questions if the donations from Kuwait come close to what the US spent on Operation Desert Storm.⁷² For the answer,

⁷⁰ "Opinion Letter from Kuwait." January 14th, 1991. *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/14/opinion/letter-from-kuwait.html>. Accessed November 2, 2020.

⁷¹ Stump, Scott C. February 28th, 2017. "Desert Storm, a War Worth Fighting -- and Remembering." *CNN*.
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/28/opinions/desert-storm-opinion/index.html>. Accessed November 2, 2020.

⁷² "Kuwait Gives \$500 Million - Can We Have the Other \$75.6 22.6 Billion Now?" 2005. AMERICA Blog News, <http://americablog.blogspot.com/2005/09/kuwait-gives-500-million-can-we-have.html>. Accessed July 22, 2020.

look at the article's title, "Kuwait Gives \$500 Million - Can we have the other \$ 22.6 billion now?"⁷³ This question of repayment for charitable military intervention is the extent of most American's knowledge on Kuwait, if they have any at all.⁷⁴

Many Kuwaitis, in contrast, have been left with American influence in their lives because of Operation Desert Storm. Consequently, many Kuwaitis remain active viewers of US news, especially after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.⁷⁵ When Hurricane Katrina struck, those with available channels, wrote, donated to, and regarded Americans affected by the storm.⁷⁶ The most prominent writing came from the Kuwaiti Minister of Information, Dr. Anas Al-Reshaid.⁷⁷ His title "Letter of Hope from Kuwait" mirrors that of the earlier New York Times's "Letter from Kuwait."⁷⁸ Minister Al-Reshaid's letter promised Kuwaiti kinship during this trauma. He wrote, "Kuwaitis are well aware of what it means to be in a crisis and for friends to lend a hand," referencing America's support of Kuwait in 1991.⁷⁹

Published as a full-page advertisement in *USA Today* on September 14th and the *New York Times* on September 15th, Al-Reshaid's letter was the first time most Americans learned about Kuwait's relief offers.⁸⁰ Many Americans replied to Minister Al-Reshaid's letter in thanks and in shock that a state like Kuwait could and would offer

⁷³ "Kuwait Gives \$500 Million - Can We Have the Other \$75.6 22.6 Billion Now?" 2005.

⁷⁴ Stump, Scott C. 2017.

⁷⁵ Mohamed Satti. 2013. "International Media and Local Programming: The Case of Kuwait." *Arab Media & Society*. <https://www.arabmediasociety.com/international-media-and-local-programming-the-case-of-kuwait/>. Accessed November 2, 2020.

⁷⁶ "Kuwaitis and Others Offer Outpouring of Support to Hurricane Katrina Victims". September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁷⁷ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

⁷⁸ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005.

⁷⁹ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005

⁸⁰ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005

this assistance. In Kuwait, the response to Minister Al-Reshaid's letter gained extensive coverage. The US Ambassador to Kuwait at the time, Richard LeBaron, reported that all Kuwaiti newspapers mentioned the advertisement with Minister Al-Reshaid's letter, and many reported on the American response.⁸¹ The Arabic publications Al-Watan, Al-gabas, Al-Anba, and Al-Qabas all wrote extensive articles covering the Kuwaiti offer and American civilian response. Though seemingly exaggerated, the Kuwaiti Embassy in DC confirmed Arab news sources reporting an "overwhelming volume of letters sent by Americans."⁸²

The Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, amidst all the furor over Minister Al-Reshaid's letter, expressed his sympathy for Americans.⁸³ However, his language almost exactly contradicted the future direction of American-Arab sympathies. Amir Al-Sabah wrote in reply to American thank-you letters, "the American people can distinguish between monstrous terrorists and Arabs, who are peace-loving people." But in some ways his letter did predict how some Americans would find favor in Arab leaders. Almost fifteen years after Hurricane Katrina, on September 30th, 2020 Amir Al-Sabah passed away, and President Donald Trump wrote these words about him:

I am deeply saddened by the passing of my dear friend, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah... Sheikh Sabah was an unwavering friend and partner to the United States... His tireless mediation of disputes in the Middle East bridged divides under the most challenging

⁸¹ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005

⁸² "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005

⁸³ "Kuwaiti Message of Support in US Media, American Response Front-Page News." September 5th, 2005 & "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021.

*circumstances. I hope that the Gulf nations will come together to honor his legacy and work toward the cooperative future he envisioned.*⁸⁴

A heartfelt message between two oil rich country's leaders could be considered altruistic, but Trump's words do leave readers asking why Sheikh Sabah? The answer revolves around a deep history of diplomatic ties between the US and Kuwait that have built the two countries up as oil monopolies.

Declassified August 21st, 2016, a letter in the Department of State records reveals a brief sent to the office of, then, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice from Ambassador LeBaron during September 2005.⁸⁵ Amir Al-Sabah of Kuwait had a planned visit to the U.S. in September of 2005, and in this State Department letter, Ambassador LeBaron summarizes recent Kuwaiti-US relations for Secretary of State Rice who assumedly would be meeting with Amir Al-Sabah.⁸⁶

The letter begins with a reminder of the "demonstration of friendship" the Government of Kuwait showed in their pledged \$500 million for Katrina assistance. Unclear if they were included in the \$500 million, the letter also lists two donations of \$25 million to the specific aid organizations, the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund and US Red Cross via the Kuwaiti Red Crescent.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Trump, Donald. 2020. "Statement from President Donald J. Trump on the Passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait." 2020. *The White House*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-passing-highness-sheikh-sabah-al-ahmad-al-jaber-al-sabah-amir-state-kuwait/>. Accessed October 30, 2020.

⁸⁵ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021.

⁸⁶ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021.

⁸⁷ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 11.

But, as Ambassador LeBaron continues, he begins to describe Kuwaiti politics and economics, clueing in Secretary Rice on the most important aspects.⁸⁸ The most pressing update, judging solely by the space it takes in the letter, is the Government of Kuwait's intentions to expand oil internationally. Their goal, LeBaron says, is to "to bring in international oil companies in order to develop its northern oilfields and increase production from 450,000 to 900,000 barrels per day."⁸⁹ Further, the national oil company, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) already had "three oil company consortia" in mind for this outsourcing.⁹⁰ The exact meaning of increasing the number of consumable barrels per day internationally from Kuwaiti crude seems to simmer down to creating a refinery outside the country. He goes on to say, the KPC is eyeing "Eastern Canada, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arizona, and Aruba" as "preliminary" investment sites for the refinery.⁹¹ He clarifies the first site mentioned, Eastern Canada, as "most promising" due to the "American companies' lack of response."⁹² In quotes, assumedly from a KPC representative, creating a refinery in North America would mean "guaranteed markets" and a "joint venture" in the processing of their heavy crude products.⁹³ Yet, In the letter, Ambassador LeBaron urges "this USD 8.5 billion undertaking, known as 'Project Kuwait,' has been in the works for over ten years and the Kuwaitis are growing

⁸⁸ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 1-3.

⁸⁹ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 11.

⁹⁰ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 13.

⁹¹ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 13.

⁹² "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 13.

⁹³ "Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah." September 5th, 2021. Page 13.

increasingly impatient.”⁹⁴ Much of the letter describing “Project Kuwait” remains redacted until 2031.⁹⁵

Project Kuwait’s progress is instead measured by public sources underscoring the constant delayal by Kuwaiti parliament. A December 2005 New York Times article titled “Foreigners May Soon Play a Part in Kuwait Oil” describes the project.⁹⁶ Jad Mouawad, author of this article, now claims to be “ex-New York Times and ex-business,” but previously wrote about Hurricane Katrina refinery casualties and other oil industry news.⁹⁷ In his Project Kuwait article, Mouawad looks at the historical context of Kuwait’s endeavor.⁹⁸ Since 1970, Kuwait’s oil production has “lagged” due to oil fields requiring more advanced extraction methods.⁹⁹ Mouawad goes on to say that 2005 was a particularly insignificant year for Kuwaiti production with totals around 2.5 million barrels a day. With “Project Kuwait,” KPC hoped to raise the daily yield by 1.5 million barrels.¹⁰⁰

More than future oil production, Kuwait wanted oil production at max capacity while the price of oil was booming “the most in three decades.”¹⁰¹ Since the 1980s, crude oil ran under \$25 a barrel, but in August 2005, pre-Katrina, crude oil raised to \$60 a barrel.¹⁰² Though tough on oil consumers, this rise in price per barrel increased profits for

⁹⁴ “Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.” September 5th, 2021. Page 12.

⁹⁵ “Key Issues for the September 5 Visit of Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.” September 5th, 2021. Page 1.

⁹⁶ Mouawad, Jad. December 23rd, 2005. “Foreigners May Soon Play a Part in Kuwait Oil.” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/23/business/worldbusiness/foreigners-may-soon-play-a-part-in-kuwait-oil.html?searchResultPosition=1>. Accessed November 2, 2020.

⁹⁷ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

⁹⁸ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

⁹⁹ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

¹⁰⁰ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

¹⁰¹ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

¹⁰² Stevenson, Emma. 2017. “2003-2008 Oil Price Shock: Changing Effects of Oil Shocks on the Economy,” *Lehigh Preserve Institutional Repository*, Page 34.

oil companies exponentially. Along with KPC, the “three oil company consortia” interested in “Project Kuwait,” finally named in Mouawad’s article as BP, Chevron, and Exxon Mobil, were antsy to get production on Kuwaiti oil fields going during this market high.

However, as Mouawad argues in his article, the main roadblock to “Project Kuwait” is the Kuwaiti Parliament. Since its inception in 1997, “Project Kuwait” has remained gridlocked in parliament as relinquishing four of Kuwait's northern oil fields to international prospectors both “goes against the constitution” and reminds of previous colonial exploitation of Kuwait’s national resources.¹⁰³ The arguments for “Project Kuwait” mostly rest on international company’s ability to bring in technology faster while the market is hot. For some reason, unexplored in the article, when this was published, many thought the tide was turning and Kuwait’s Parliament would soon allow foreign investment.¹⁰⁴ The article ends with a quote from Kuwait’s Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah, “it is my understand that there are always opposition and supporters --this is democracy,” but he goes on to say that as minister he must prioritize energy, “but God-willing, I am crossing my fingers.”¹⁰⁵

Looking back to the State Department correspondences between Ambassador LeBaron and Secretary Rice, Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah was relying on more than just Gods’ will as Kuwait’s large donation was synchronized with increasing discussions between US companies and officials about “Project Kuwait.” Though many of the documents linking Kuwait’s donation to “Project

¹⁰³ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

¹⁰⁵ Mouawad, Jad. 2005.

Kuwait” remain redacted until 2031, news articles from 2005 affirm this project was timed synchronously with Kuwait’s increased publicity about their donation to Katrina victims. In the end, the intention of Kuwait’s gift was realist though it did help the country’s global perception. Less intertwined in North American markets than Saudi Arabia, Kuwait’s gift was a two-fold strategy to enter North American oil production. Their small imports to the region were not cutting it and so their gift helped ease American consciousness about Desert Storm as well as bought more time from politicians and investors for their North American investment projects.

Saudi Arabia

Unlike Kuwait’s large and largely publicized donation to the US for Hurricane Katrina recovery, Saudi Arabia’s response was kept under wraps. However, Saudi Arabia’s donation is by no means insignificant. The gift included \$250,000 and was given via The Arab Gulf Program for the United Nations Development Organization (AGFUND).¹⁰⁶ The US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James C. Oberwetter, met with Saudi Prince Talal on September 17 to thank him and his country on behalf of President Bush.¹⁰⁷ However, the appreciation was just as likely to be relief. Saudi’s gift seemed to be a front for conversations concerning the global oil economy. With verbiage about setting the “right price for oil,” State Department documents hold the evidence of Saudi’s threat to increase oil prices beyond what US officials wanted. Yet, these documents are heavily redacted meaning the few remaining statements can only support limited analysis.

¹⁰⁶ “Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina.” September 4th, 2005. & “TFUS01: Donation for Hurricane Katrina Victims.” October 4th, 2005.

¹⁰⁷ “Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina.” September 4th, 2005.

To garner more evidence, I also looked to newspaper articles about Saudi Arabian oil exploits in the US from 2000 to 2005 as well as corporate links between ARAMCO and its US-based subsidiary Saudi Refining Inc. All together, these sources show Saudi Arabia's concern for North American, including their aid offers after Katrina, only occurred to increase political leverage that would protect their absolute advantage in international oil exports.

Before the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became an international oil hegemon, their petroleum resources were owned by the US company, Standard Oil. They did this through a series of oil concessions signed by King Ibn Saud. By 1933, Standard Oil set up the first oil pumps in the country, and by 1938, California-Arabian Standard Oil, a child company of Standard Oil, struck oil in Dhahran from well Dammam No. 7.¹⁰⁸ California-Arabian Standard Oil made more than 3,810 barrels per day off the initial Dammam No. 7 by the end of the first month's drilling. King Ibn Saud could not have realized the wealth he gifted Standard Oil in these early years of oil drilling. This success foreshadowed the massive profits of other Anglo-American oil companies would make from other oil concessions in the next decades.

By the 1950s, Standard Oil's children companies all throughout the Middle East got a major wake-up call. Respective governments were demanding ownership of the oil fields in Persian Gulf States of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁹ By the 1950s, navigating the change of global superpowers post World Wars, these Persian Gulf States began explicitly resisting the international concessions they had signed earlier.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. 30.

¹⁰⁹ "Standard Oil Geologists Arrive in Saudi Arabia." 2020. *History.com*. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/standard-oil-geologists-arrive-in-saudi-arabia>. Accessed October 30, 2020

¹¹⁰ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Page 156.

Persian Gulf leaders knew they must regain autonomy over their country's resources. However, the path to this required their own nationals to learn the game. Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Tarik was the first to do this. After he earned a master's degree in oil engineering from the University of Texas, Tarik took his expertise back to Saudi Arabia. Called "the first Saudi to understand the oil business," Tarik and others like him created a cascade of oil nationalization support.¹¹¹ With more Saudis educated in the industry, reliance on American experts waned and discussions of increased profit shares began.

On January 2nd of 1951, ARAMCO,¹¹² trying to partially retain their role, agreed to split their proceeds from Saudi Arabian oil fields evenly with their host nation.¹¹³ The ARAMCO's 34% profit concession was only possible with US government's help.¹¹⁴ By arranging a reduction on ARAMCO's taxes, US officials helped stabilize the Saudi monarchy and its allyship during the cold war. Additionally, they helped retain American ownership of the company despite losing a larger percent to "rent."¹¹⁵ This deal, technically between two corporations, but only possible with US government intervention, marked the beginning of a new trend in the oil market as well as a lasting diplomacy between the US Government and Saudi Arabian monarchy.

This shared oil history allowed Saudi Arabia to better leverage its needs during discussions after Hurricane Katrina. With pre-established State Department communications, Saudi Arabia could guarantee its Katrina foreign aid was properly respected and the oil price discussions it facilitated were properly leveraged. The

¹¹¹ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Page 157.

¹¹² The new name of the former Arabian-California Standard Oil, established in 1944.

¹¹³ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Page 157.

¹¹⁴ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Page 18.

¹¹⁵ Springborg, Robert. 2013. "GCC Countries as "Rentier States" Revisited." *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (2013): 301-09. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698051>. Accessed April 14, 2021.

acceptance of Saudi Arabia's gift is the initial evidence of State Department favoritism. Despite being the smallest gift from the Persian Gulf, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's \$250,000 gift is the only one taken.

This evidence comes from a State Department record with the transaction's receipt number.¹¹⁶ The document starts with notes about the \$250,000 contribution, saying the check was cut "directly to the Embassy in Riyadh."¹¹⁷ With the check also came an "enclosed letter" for US Ambassador Oberwetter, stating the \$250,000 check "made in the name of the Embassy" is attached.¹¹⁸ Also in the archive is a note that the check was, "deposited with the Embassy cashier and the following fiscal data was credited: USD 250, 000-2005-19-X-6755-0000-00-9927-547001-ABDJ."¹¹⁹

The \$250,000 AGFUND donation appears in another State Department document, but this time the record is signed by the next US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Gary Grappo.¹²⁰ Titled "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina," Grappo's letter connected Saudi Refining Inc., the American-based subsidiary of ARAMCO, to the aid offers. Received by Secretary Rice, the US Embassies in Qatar and Kuwait, Washington DC's National Security Council, the US Homeland Security Center, and Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, this letter enclosed a note labeled "immediate."¹²¹ Classified by Grappo himself, much of the letter is redacted.

¹¹⁶ "TFUS01: Donation for Hurricane Katrina Victims." October 4th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹¹⁷ "TFUS01: Donation for Hurricane Katrina Victims." October 4th, 2005

¹¹⁸ "TFUS01: Donation for Hurricane Katrina Victims." October 4th, 2005

¹¹⁹ "TFUS01: Donation for Hurricane Katrina Victims." October 4th, 2005

¹²⁰ "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹²¹ "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005.

Section 1, though piece-meal, covers non-governmental Saudi contributions to Hurricane Katrina recovery. Section 2, however, is more complete and reads:

The Government of Saudi Arabia would contribute one hundred million USD to Hurricane Katrina relief funneling its contribution through Saudi Refining, Inc., a subsidiary of Saudi Aramco, based in Houston. The Saudi contribution will be primarily used to purchase the relief and humanitarian items the U. S.

*Government had earlier indicated where most needed. The company will then provide these items to NGOs and local organizations working on the ground, as well as to state and local governments.*¹²²

Grappo's letter goes on to describe Saudi Refining, Inc. as the American location of Saudi Aramco.¹²³ Saudi Refining itself made a separate \$5 million donation to the US Red Cross in the wake of Katrina.¹²⁴ Additionally, Grappo's letter repeats that the \$250,000 AGFUND donation is recorded as being given directly to the US Embassy."¹²⁵ However, this is not the most important letter the impressive list of recipients would receive on this subject.

Grappo signed another State Department letter about Katrina relief that covered American and Saudi discussions about the "right price of oil." This letter has the title: "Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the "Right" Price for Oil." Sent to an even longer list, recipients of this letter include the US Department of Energy, the National Security Council, OPEC Collective, and the US

¹²² "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005.

¹²³ "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005.

¹²⁴ "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005.

¹²⁵ "Saudi Arabian Assistance to Victims of Hurricane Katrina." September 4th, 2005.

Central Intelligence Agency.¹²⁶ Some positions and people are directly named.¹²⁷ These include Secretary Rice, and other State Department employees, Gallogly, McManus, Brodman, Mid-East Director Office Person, and Molly Williamson.¹²⁸ The letter has numbered sections like the last. The first calls for a “guidance request” for the Department of Energy.¹²⁹ Section two repeats the Saudi offer of Katrina relief assistance as well as condolences were in another diplomatic meeting.¹³⁰ The first explicitly referencing oil, section three summarizes Saudi’s oil market share shifting after Katrina.¹³¹ The Saudi Minister, Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi, declared that Saudi Aramco would “provide additional crude oil supplies to world markets to help dampen price spikes.”¹³² The next section contradicts Naimi’s offer with counter intelligence, stating “Saudi refineries were already operating at capacity and there was ‘pretty little’ additional refined product available for the Saudi Government to supply to the U. S. Government.” And therefore, “the decision of the U. S. Government and the International Energy Administration to release supplies of crude from strategic reserves was an appropriate action that was having a positive impact.”¹³³

¹²⁶ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹²⁷ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹²⁸ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹²⁹ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹³⁰ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹³¹ “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹³² “Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

¹³³“Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the ‘Right’ Price for Oil.” September 5th, 2005.

The rest of Grappo's second letter is redacted much like his first, but does include one last section, titled, "the 'right' price of oil." Discussion about the right price is not revealed as this section remains entirely redacted. In the lines preceding the black blocks covering the top-secret information, it is hinted there was a direct conversation about which direction to manipulate oil prices, up or down.

From the available sections of this letter, it can be assumed both the US and Saudi reserves could have been used to dampen oil price spikes caused by Katrina damages. Employing their habits of disaster capitalism, both countries wanted to use their reserves to bring in added revenue. However, the US responded that they preferred to use their own oil reserves, leaving Saudi Arabia to either accept this or fight to instead use their oil. If the latter decision, Saudi Arabia could lessen exports from their reserves and drive the price to the higher number they preferred by furthering worldwide oil shortages. This did not happen, but from the letter's last section, it seems Saudi Arabia instead discussed how the United States could ensure their preferred price per barrel – "the right price." Unfortunately, the accessible State Department documents include no more information on this conversation.

The corporate record, however, contextualizes these momentous conversations about oil price manipulation in the desperate moments after Hurricane Katrina as no big deal in the grand scheme of Saudi and American oil hegemony. The larger concern of this conversation between Saudi and American officials is the increasing power of Saudi Arabia to impact international oil prices if American oil infrastructure is damaged. Further, because of Saudi ARAMCO's presence in North America, Saudi Arabia's oil

output is less likely to be impacted by disasters, whether natural or human-driven “catastrophes” likes war.

In 2005, Saudi Refining Inc. and other Saudi ARAMCO subsidiaries held a large percent of North American oil production. Broadly part of ARAMCO Americas, there are four subsidiaries in Houston, Texas. These include Aramco Shared Benefits Company, Saudi Refining, Inc., Aramco Training Services Company, and Aramco Performance Materials. Saudi ARAMCO also has a subsidiary in New York: Saudi Petroleum International, Inc. (SPII) which manages the 10% of US oil imports coming from Arabia. This Saudi ARAMCO subsidiary and Saudi Refining Inc, because of its Motive Enterprises management are by far the largest companies. The other smaller companies deal with research, HR, and international trade rules.

Saudi Refining Inc tends to slip from media reports. However, its child company Motiva Enterprises does not. Responsible for the operation of “North America’s largest refinery in Port Arthur, Texas” and the production of “600,000 barrels a day” Motiva cannot go unnoticed. Additionally, the subsidiary has the largest oil distribution plant and delivers to 5,200 retail outlets (as of 2020).¹³⁴

By the turn of the millennium Motiva Enterprises had struck controversy in Delaware. Installing refinery infrastructure by 2000, an explosion drew attention to the facilities and their corporate ties to international actors.¹³⁵ The 2001 explosion resulted in substantial environmental destruction in the Delaware River shed.¹³⁶ Naturally because of

¹³⁴“Our Parent Company & Affiliates.” *ARAMCO Corporation*. <https://americas.aramco.com/en/who-we-are/about/our-parent-company-and-affiliates>. Accessed February 21, 2021

¹³⁵ Cable, Josh. October 27th, 2005. “\$23.7 Million Motiva Settlement Brings ‘Tragic Chapter’ to Close.” *EHS Today*. <https://www.ehstoday.com/archive/article/21908105/237-million-motiva-settlement-brings-tragic-chapter-to-close>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹³⁶ Cable, Josh. 2005.

the explosion, but also because of recently entering the Atlantic region, Motiva faced high public outrage and news coverage for an oil company.¹³⁷ And by 2004, Motiva found itself facing legal action.¹³⁸

Despite paying a settlement nearing \$25 million for the incident in 2005¹³⁹ the company did quite well. In 2005, Motiva expanded further across the US. One common expansion strategy was to purchase and then manage port space in North America so ARAMCO could cut down on docking costs and move products more seamlessly. Titled, “Who is mining the state's ports?” Jan Spiegel researches the company’s control of two ports in Connecticut.¹⁴⁰ Turns out, Motiva controls most of a random Connecticut port.¹⁴¹ Though an insignificant single example, Spiegel’s concern reflects the growing concern about foreign control of US infrastructure. Today, Motiva boasts “the largest refinery and lubricant plant in North America” in Port Arthur, Texas.¹⁴²

Ironically, Saudi Arabia’s oil companies have taken on Standard Oil’s initial international investment strategy in North America since 2000. Like the American investors who visited Dhahran in 1933, Saudi Arabia, via ARAMCO and its subsidiaries, have found and solved the deficits in the North American petroleum infrastructure and created a market reliance on their oil organization. Able to establish massive infrastructure and negotiate international ports, ARAMCO, by 2005, was essential to

¹³⁷ Cable, Josh. 2005.

¹³⁸ Cable, Josh. 2005.

¹³⁹ Cable, Josh. 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Spiegel, Jan. March 5th, 2006. “Who Is Minding the State's Ports?” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/05/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/who-is-minding-the-states-ports.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁴¹ Spiegel, Jan. 2006.

¹⁴² “Motiva Enterprises LLC Company Profile.” *Dun & Bradstreet*. https://www.dnb.com/business-directory/company-profiles/motivaEnterprises_llc.4a5afd225ccc07af1cc06abf93cc3b0.html. Accessed March 2, 2021.

global oil production, manufacturing, and shipping. So, when Hurricane Katrina decimated many of the American competitors to ARAMCO, Saudi Arabia had leverage over the American oil-centric economy. This power paired with their large donation landed Saudi strategists the ear of many important American politicians. It may never surface what artificial oil price changes were covered in the redacted sections of the State Department correspondences between the US and Saudi Arabia. However, it is very apparent Saudi Arabia profited from increased use of its oil reserves during a moment of American weakness. And they are primed to do it again.

Conclusion

A disaster amidst one of the leading country's in the global north offered the Persian Gulf an economic and geopolitical opportunity. Second in oil production only to the United States, the Persian Gulf was able to ease the increase of oil price and fix oil transport delays created by Katrina. For Saudi ARAMCO, this was due to their prior investments in North American oil infrastructure and existing oil reserves. Kuwait, however, was trying to enter the North America and absorb some of the damaged US Gulf oil market share. Qatar, on the other hand, has lessor ability to impact the oil market at large and, instead, leveraged their media power via Al Jazeera to hoist themselves into the humanitarian positions more common of the global north.¹⁴³ This opened the door to hosting international events like the World Cup among others.

These reactions of growing Persian Gulf powers are often lost in the research on Katrina's global media discourse. After 9/11, the 2001 Afghanistan Invasion, and 2nd

¹⁴³ Scholarship by Jason Beckett (2016) in ““Creating Poverty” shows much of the global north's humanitarianism, especially that derived in international human rights law, actually works to sustain poverty rather than reduce it.

Iraq War, the United States had its hands all over the Middle East. However, the Persian Gulf Monarchies, Saudi Arabia in particular, were prominent in the region as well. In fact, the richest of the Persian Gulf monarchies, like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were quickly becoming targets for Asian investors. Americans, however, were less likely to see Middle Eastern countries as deserving business partners (or even reputable threats) because of Islamophobic and orientalist bias.

Knowing their reputation in the west, Katrina served as a key diplomatic moment for Persian Gulf countries with enough capital to launch large scale foreign relations. It also served as a perfect example of post-humanitarianism. Instead of aid unconnected to its donor, in the time of neoliberalism, humanitarian aid reflects the actor donating it by valuating liberalist actions in line with human rights. In essence, it gives a market value to the act of donating as well as negates value from those in need of donations. The extent each Persian Gulf country pushed their economy versus their global reputation during this diplomatic moment differed depending on past events. For example, Saudi Arabia already knew the US would consider their conversations on the “right price” for oil because they had five decades of diplomatic relations. This contrasts Qatar’s rocky relationship with the US. Linked with the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran in various historical moments, Qatar and, by proxy, Al Jazeera, were more anti-imperialist and anti-Western in previous international policies. Besides pre-2000s diplomacy, the strategies of Qatar and Saudi Arabia in 2005 are predictors of each country’s strategies through the 2011 Arab Spring and Qatari-Saudi conflict as well. Discussed further in the epilogue, the large diplomatic campaigns by these Persian Gulf states in 2005, cement their prominence in the post-neoliberalism globe.

Kuwait's Katrina diplomacy, however, serves as an example more typical of the Middle East. Heavily impacted by earlier Anglo-Saxon meddling, Kuwait falls in between Qatar's boisterous Napoleon complex and Saudi Arabia's comfortable Monopolism. Kuwaiti reliance on the US during Operation Desert Storm guaranteed loyalty and led to decreased oil autonomy than other Persian Gulf States in 2005. During Hurricane Katrina, Kuwait lacked Saudi Arabia's absolute advantage in world oil and instead had to try to advance its North American projects via a showy humanitarian aid offer. Little did Kuwait know that any large Katrina aid offers would be blocked unless paired with additional leverage. Out of the 90 foreign aid offers from countries across the globe, less than 15 were taken by the US.¹⁴⁴ The US's internal mechanisms for these decisions are examined in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁴ "Only a Fraction of Foreign Aid after Katrina Was Used." April 29, 2007. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-apr-29-na-aid29-story.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Chapter Two: The State Department's Response to Hurricane Katrina Foreign Aid Introduction

On September 5th, the United Arab Emirates, represented by Sultan Al Rumaithi, Office Director for Deputy Prime Minister, and Sheikh Hamden Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister State Foreign Affairs, offered \$100 million the United States government for Hurricane Katrina relief.¹⁴⁵ As news of the donation reached US offices, the UAE had already constructed an inter-ministerial committee to 'coordinate' the \$100 million.¹⁴⁶

This committee included representatives from the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Abu Dhabi Emirate Ministry of Finance, and the UAE Red Crescent Society.¹⁴⁷ The donation itself needed coordination because it was later to be clarified as half "in-kind" and half in cash.¹⁴⁸ The "in-kind" aid included MREs, medical aid, and bedding.¹⁴⁹ To get these supplies to US Gulf South victims quickly, the UAE aimed to contract with American companies and purchase these supplies from North American suppliers.

The UAE, despite its ability to begin the aid process immediately, sat and waited for the US response to their offer. According to the 2004 National Response Plan, the State Department coordinates all incoming foreign aid offers and then delegates the decision of acceptance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Department of Homeland Security. However, this process had never before been put into effect. Once receiving the UAE's offer, the State Department's UAE Foreign Officers

¹⁴⁵ "TFUS01: UAE Offers \$100 MN in Hurricane Katrina Relief." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁴⁶ "TFUS01: UAE Offers \$100 MN in Hurricane Katrina Relief." September 5th, 2005.

¹⁴⁷ "TFUS01: UAE Offers \$100 MN in Hurricane Katrina Relief." September 5th, 2005.

¹⁴⁸ "TFUS01: UAE Donation –Hurricane Katrina." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁴⁹ "TFUS01: UAE Offers \$100 MN in Hurricane Katrina Relief." September 5th, 2005.

expressed gratitude but did not address next steps. The US Ambassador to the UAE, Michele J. Sison, “expressed US government appreciation for the generous offer,” and said he, “would inform Washington immediately.”¹⁵⁰ However, the State Department response to the UAE’s quick, thought-out plan was disorganized and inadequate. Of course, as discussed in the previous chapter, many of the foreign aid offers related to Hurricane Katrina were not simply altruistic. But the truth is, the State Department response to these aid offers was not in the best interests of those suffering in US Gulf South either. Instead of prioritizing efficiency and maximizing foreign aid, the State Department rejected much aid and left the accepted aid in unused accounts for months. This moment, when put in context with US domestic and foreign policy throughout the 2010s, shows a United States transitioning from neoliberalism to de-democratization.

Critics of Katrina recovery often say local inefficiency led to the New Orleans’s insurmountable problem.¹⁵¹ However, federal agencies had the most potential to help anyone affected in the US Gulf South, yet they disappointed their constituents the most. A 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report attempts to explain the aid acceptance process instituted by the federal government under the 2004 National Response Plan. However, in the same report, the Government Accountability Office claims the State Department, FEMA, and the Department of Homeland Security were unable to implement this process efficiently, if at all, and in the course left \$60 million for Katrina relief in an unused account for months. Cross referencing the information in the GAO report with declassified State Department documents shows more than \$300

¹⁵⁰ “TFUS01: UAE Offers \$100 MN in Hurricane Katrina Relief.” September 5th, 2005.

¹⁵¹ “Katrinagate fury spreads to US media”. September 7th, 2005. *Television New Zealand*. Accessed April 14th, 2014.

million was rejected in addition to the \$60 million left in accounts. In total, US Government actions kept over \$360 million in foreign aid from citizens in the Gulf South.

Once these offers were rejected by the US government, the State Department suggested countries donate their monies to nonprofit alternatives. The State Department suggestions were mainly limited to the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund and the US Red Cross. However, both organizations had internal pitfalls which made the donation amounts deteriorate before reaching Katrina victims. Much of the money was used ineffectively, and those who needed it most were left wanting. These ineffective programs pushed victims of Hurricane Katrina into the refugee cycle more commonly affiliated with NGOS in international countries.¹⁵² Altogether, many victims were forgotten, demeaned, and othered by the nonprofit efforts funded by foreign aid.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, some of these government and nonprofit failures came under legal scrutiny. The first to file a lawsuit for federal agency documents was Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), a nonprofit committed to US Government transparency. Filed in September of 2005, this Freedom of Information Act Request preceded any official government inquiries. For example, the GAO report referenced above was written almost a year and half after Katrina and its suggestions have not been entirely instituted. Comparatively, the CREW lawsuit effected more change. It made 25,000 Department of State documents available, including all of those used in this thesis. Additionally, it led to the establishment of the Red Cross Ombudsman Office which now monitors the organization for corruption.

¹⁵² Cottle, Simon & Nolan, David. 2007. 'Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field: Everyone Was Dying for Footage'. *Journalism Studies*. 8. 862-878. 10.1080/14616700701556104.

Unlike the oil-related, realist political decisions by State Department officials examined in chapter one, this chapter focuses on the pitfalls of the State Department in getting needy US constituents foreign aid. Instead of a case study into post-humanitarianism, this chapter analyzes Hurricane Katrina as a moment where the values established at the beginning of post-humanitarianism become altogether undemocratic. Besides controversial decisions about which aid to accept, the State Department failed at using this money effectively. They also failed at giving it to nonprofits that would use it effectively. One could determine the State Department's main objective during this process was to maintain the American values of isolationism and superiority. Despite Bush Administration priorities of preserving democracy and American patriotism, the State Department decided to hold and reject money that would have uplifted fellow Americans.

Further, the State Department took-on the responsibility of rejecting foreign aid. When, in fact, their only responsibility was to coordinate aid offers and then pass them to FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security for acceptance or rejection like the 2004 National Response Plan mandated. This chapter is yet another case study of the US government organizing to eliminate culpability and consciously weaseling around the mandated protocols and legal system—all of which keeps the public misinformed and maintain the status quo within federal agencies.

The Intended Federal Emergency Response

Hurricane Katrina painted a picture of the United States unlike ever before. The world saw images of Americans stranded on roofs and dead in the water. These images were reminiscent of the 2004 tsunami's effect on Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, and Thailand --all so-called 'developing countries.' Americans were used to seeing slow

responses to these disasters but were shocked to see a similar thing happening on their soil. Much literature exists on the failures of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security during Hurricane Katrina. However, the US State Department's derailment from their protocol goes mostly undetected.

In December 2004, the National Response Plan outlined how the US would accept and administer foreign assistance to best help in emergencies. Though the State Department is allowed to coordinate international assistance offers, FEMA, under the Department of Homeland Security, accepts or rejects this assistance and decides how to distribute it.¹⁵³ In the "Authorities" section of the National Response Plan, it is that noted the 2004 plan does not "alter the existing authorities of individual Federal departments and agencies" but instead defines them explicitly. Section III of the National Response Plan, titled "Roles and Responsibilities," lists the responsibilities of each federal agency involved in domestic disasters.¹⁵⁴ The plan says that the State Department directs "international coordination responsibilities" via the Secretary of State. Examples of international coordinating responsibilities include "managing international prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities relating to domestic incidents, and for the protection of US citizens and US interests overseas."¹⁵⁵

Dealing with foreign aid offers after Hurricane Katrina would fall into the listed example of coordinating international response. However, the National Security Council of the Department of Homeland Security takes the role of "interagency policy coordination regarding domestic and international incident management." Disasters

¹⁵³ *The National Response Plan*. 2004. US Department of Homeland Security. <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dhs/nrp.pdf>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁵⁴ *The National Response Plan*. 2004. Page 8.

¹⁵⁵ *The National Response Plan*. 2004. Page 8.

covered under the Stafford Act,¹⁵⁶ such as hurricanes, are available for supplemental Federal assistance, which is to be coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security as well. These clauses, together, show that the State Department did not have jurisdiction to receive and coordinate the foreign aid *monies*. The Department of Homeland Security's National Security Council should have dealt with the interagency coordination efforts and supplementary assistance.

To be fair, the National Response Plan did not have any direct instructions for dealing with foreign aid *to* the United States. The plan did allude to the opposite: foreign aid from the United States. However, as the report is tailored towards domestic incidents, the words "foreign aid" went unused entirely. This occurrence highlights US imperialist thought: the authors did not conceive of a situation in which the United States would require foreign aid, because they did not believe the US could have disasters on the scale of "developing countries." Hurricane Katrina's challenge to this philosophy surprised those involved in disaster preparations and helped break global perceptions of American exceptionalism.

To test the National Response Plan during a natural disaster, FEMA funded a simulation exercise in July 2004. Over a week in Louisiana, FEMA gathered 300 officials to run a simulation called "Hurricane Pam." Designated a "slow-moving Category 3," Hurricane Pam's destined location was New Orleans where the simulation projected upwards of 10 feet of flooding in most areas of the city. During the exercise, a million people underwent forced evacuation, over 300,000 were injured or became ill, and up to

¹⁵⁶ "Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act Fact Sheet." 2021. Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. 2021. <https://www.astho.org/programs/preparedness/public-health-emergency-law/emergency-authority-and-immunity-toolkit/robert-t--stafford-disaster-relief-and-emergency-assistance-act-fact-sheet/>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

60,000 perished.¹⁵⁷ This exercise showed improvements were needed in disaster response and infrastructure capabilities to avoid epic damages.

However, as Chairman Susan Collins stated in the opening statement of “Preparing for a Catastrophe: Hurricane Pam Exercise,” a 2006 Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs US Senate meeting: “Pam should have been a wake-up call that could not be ignored.”¹⁵⁸ Chairman Collins likens the exercise to the ancient literary figure Cassandra. Cassandra predicted Troy would be destroyed in Homer’s Iliad, however no one listened to her prophesies. Chairman Collins indicated that much like the Cassandra’s words about the ultimate destruction of Troy, “the hypothetical problems identified in Pam predict with eerie accuracy the all-too-real problems of Katrina.”

Though “Hurricane Pam” proved very accurate in its infrastructure damage estimates when compared to Hurricane Katrina, it did not predict the failures of federal services. In fact, Hurricane Pam highlighted various miscommunications between state and federal government bodies. The simulation suggested there would be some lag time between FEMA’s arrival to the disaster and what would have been ideal. Jefferson Parish Director of Emergency Management, Dr. Walter Maestri, based his estimates on FEMA’s response time during Hurricane Katrina on the Hurricane Pam simulation. During Pam, FEMA did not arrive immediately but was present within 72 hours. Dr. Maestri would have of course preferred immediate shipments of water and food, but state authorities

¹⁵⁷ “A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina.” 2005. H. Rept. 109-377. Official Publications from the U.S. Government. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/FCRPT-109hrpt377/FCRPT-109hrpt377>. Page 1. Accessed April, 14th, 2021.

¹⁵⁸ *Preparing for a Catastrophe: The Hurricane Pam Exercise*. 2006. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-109shrg26749/html/CHRG-109shrg26749.htm>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

would need time to clear the roads and truck in these shipments. However, during Katrina, FEMA did not get substantial relief to Jefferson Parish for 11 days.¹⁵⁹

To officials like Dr. Maestri, expectations for federal government emergency services were defined during the Hurricane Pam simulation. So, when they “did not do those things,” it was clearly a failure of FEMA and not a failure of local governments to have predicated FEMA’s lag time.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, FEMA’s actions during Hurricane Katrina undershot the expectations set during Hurricane Pam. The State Department continued this tradition of not meeting expectations.

The State Department Goes Off Script

The State Department’s actions as outlined in the National Response Plane, much like FEMA’s response in Hurricane Pam, differed drastically from what actually happened during Hurricane Katrina. Most of the accepted foreign aid was held in State Department accounts until March 2006.¹⁶¹ The State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force, established on September 3rd, 2005 and a “National Security Council-led interagency working group” decided that instead of putting the funds in FEMA and Department of Homeland Security accounts as the National Response Plan dictated, they would instead keep them in State Department accounts. As, under the Stafford Act, funds in FEMA and Department of Homeland Security accounts had a smaller range of “possible uses.” These uses, as defined under the Stafford Act, are, individual assistance, hazard mitigation, and public assistance for eligible applicants and facilities.

¹⁵⁹ *Preparing for a Catastrophe: The Hurricane Pam Exercise*. 2006.

¹⁶⁰ *Preparing for a Catastrophe: The Hurricane Pam Exercise*. 2006.

¹⁶¹ US Government Accountability Office. 2006. *Comprehensive policies and procedures are needed to ensure appropriate use of and accountability for international assistance*. <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06460.pdf>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Additionally, funds can be used to do approved emergency work or permanent restoration work as well as pandemic or mutual aid relief.¹⁶² Certainly, the \$126 million of foreign aid temporarily processed by the State Department could have gone to these Stafford Act-approved uses and helped Hurricane Katrina victims. Instead, the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force and National Security Council-led interagency working group delayed victims this aid, whether on purpose or by mistake.

Besides delay, the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force outright denied victims aid. There was much more aid offered to the US government than the State Department's \$126 million figure from 36 countries. In total, 90 countries offered aid totaling over \$450 million.¹⁶³ In the ad-hoc system developed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the State Department both coordinated the offers and helped decided on their usability. Out of \$450 million, the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force helped directly reject \$324 million including the Kuwaiti and Qatari donations discussed in the last chapter. The accepted aid was often in-kind, meaning tangible supplies, from NATO countries. However, the fiscal aid from most countries was outright rejected. So, who on Hurricane Katrina Task Force decided this? And why? Was there nothing that could be done with cash donations?

There is very little evidence of a State Department Task Force altogether. In fact, my research indicates that only three documents reveal there was a State Department committee on Hurricane Katrina that coordinated the foreign aid offers at all. These references exist in government documents only. Two documents, the GAO and President

¹⁶² "Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act Fact Sheet." 2021.

¹⁶³ "Report: U.S. Turned Away Foreign Aid Offered After Hurricane Katrina." 2007. Insurance Journal. April 30, 2007. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2007/05/01/79164.htm>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Bush's "Lessons Learned" report on how the executive branch should have handled Katrina, date a full year after the storm, and the third, State Department correspondences, would have gone unseen except for the CREW Freedom of Information Act request in September 2005. These factors show that the media reported on Katrina's foreign aid offers but their pathway via internal State Department mechanisms disappeared into classified US government communications.

The actual protocol and rationale for rejecting the \$300 million in aid are examined in a single State Department letter titled "Updated Instructions on Cash Donations for Hurricane Katrina Relief Operations." The letter clarifies all foreign aid donations were to be "accepted in principle." However, the only foreign aid offers sent to FEMA as directed by The National Response Plan protocol were "assistance" such as in-kind relief supplies. The note sent out to State Department indicated these assistance offers should be forwarded to the "Task Force, preferably by front channel cable." The State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force would then make sure FEMA and the US government "reviewed" these "entities." As the GAO report later summarized, this outer agency did not review all the offers, only those of in-kind classification.

Consequently, the cash foreign aid offers faced very different trajectories. In the case where the foreign nation was "prepared to make, and perhaps insist[ed] on making, cash donations directly to the USG," the State Department referred the offers to their internal Task Force. At this point, ambassadors were to, "await guidance from the Department Task Force on whether to accept the donation and provide payment instruction."¹⁶⁴ This is the explicit instruction that overlooked FEMA and the Department

¹⁶⁴ "Updated Instructions on Cash Donations for Hurricane Katrina." September 8th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 3. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

of Homeland Security's part in the decision process. Further documentation of the State Department's Hurricane Katrina Task Force communications remains classified.

To no surprise, the actual individuals on the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force are even harder to identify. Clues to their identity exist in recipient lines of State Department letters. Two names are listed as "coordinators" of the Hurricane Katrina Task Force: D. Kostelancik and M Gallagher. Upon further research, M Gallagher could not be identified. However, David "D." Kostelancik's identity can be found because of his continued State Department service. Highlighted in many articles as a career Senior Foreign Service Officer of the United States, he was promoted to the Director of the State Department's Office of South-Central Europe in 2019 --despite contributing to the foreign aid mishandlings during Hurricane Katrina. Between Hurricane Katrina and his 2019 promotion, Kostelancik served as "Director of the Office of Russian Affairs and Deputy of the Office of North Central Europe at the State Department, Acting Minister Counselor for Political Affairs at the US Embassy in Moscow. He also had postings to the US Mission to the OSCE, the US Mission to NATO (Brussels, Belgium), the US Embassy Tirana, Albania, and the US Embassy Ankara, Turkey."¹⁶⁵

In this case study, Kostelancik is the single embodiment of those who served on the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force. Though he contributed to the rejection of over \$350 million in foreign aid, he did not face any consequences. In fact, Kostelancik went on to hold more leadership positions within the Foreign Service. Decisions like those made within the Hurricane Katrina Task Force, as well as the individuals that make them, are enabled, and protected by the State Department's

¹⁶⁵ "David Kostelancik." 2011. Belgrade Security Forum. 2021 - 2011. <http://www.belgradeforum.org/speaker/david-kostelancik/>.

unlimited impunity. In this case study, State Department officials denied aid to thousands for seemingly no reason with the only accountability coming from organizations enacting the Freedom of Information Act.

To reiterate, of the \$126 million amount, \$60 million lay unused in the State Department treasury accounts until March 16th, 2006 despite technically being designated for immediate FEMA and DHS use. Further, out of \$450 million of foreign aid donated to the US government, “Gallagher,” Kostelancik, and other undisclosed Hurricane Katrina Task Force members seemed to have decided that only \$66 million should be available for immediate use and the remaining \$384 million in could sit unused for 6 months or be discarded entirely.

Instead of committing these funds to Stafford Act uses like individual assistance, hazard mitigation, public assistance, approved emergency work, permanent restoration, or mutual aid relief, the State Department Hurricane Katrina Task Force, greenlit by the National Security Council-led interagency working group, set them aside for other uses. However, it is unclear if they were ever used for actions outside of the approved Stafford Act list. Furthermore, in these side accounts, the funds could not accumulate interest and even depreciated in inflation-adjusted value.

This illogical decision cannot be fully understood from the available sources. However, a few reasons for the Hurricane Katrina Tasks Force’s decision can be theorized. Perhaps, the Stafford Act-approved uses were truly too limiting, and State Department actors thought this money would have greater impact elsewhere. After all, the State Department did recommend countries donate directly to nonprofits. Or maybe the State Department wanted hang time in case one of the donor nations demanded a

reciprocal diplomatic act. Aid offers rejected outright could fall into this thinking. Those on the Hurricane Katrina Task Force may have valued the detriment to US foreign policy had it taken aid from non-allies as greater than the humanitarian impact of over \$300 million. However, until more sources emerge, the evidence shows rejecting most of the foreign aid offers and transferring the accepted monies into odd accounts was done for no reason --or rephrased, these actions occurred because of bureaucratic ineptitude.

Conversely, it could be argued the entire process was for publicity only. The United States, as the world's largest economic power, had plenty of funds for emergency response. Instead, US Government and other powerful actors did not care if aid reached those in need. This explanation fits into discussions of post-humanitarianism previously mentioned. As Cottle and Nolan found with NGOs and nonprofits, the US Government, by leaning into the publicity and diplomacy of humanitarianism, distorted its ability to give altruistic aid. State Department actions during Katrina uphold the common narrative of failing neoliberalism while also predicting the United States' later descent into authoritarianism through utter negligence of constituent needs. United States federal response during Katrina, through this negligence, can be compared to that of Global South during the tsunami the year before. Begging the question, are the values promoted by US Government officials such as human rights and liberalism, if unable to protect constituents, anything more than an evolved imperialism?

After making their decisions, the Hurricane Katrina Task Force disbanded rather quickly. On September 16th, 2005 at 4:00 pm., the group was put to rest.¹⁶⁶ In the same

¹⁶⁶ "TFUS01 Hurricane Katrina Trask Force Situation Report NO. 029 as of 1530 EDT Friday, September 16, 2005." September 16th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database*. Page 3. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

State Department document noting the Task Force's end, a Chinese boy is reported to have donated \$12.50 to the US embassy in Beijing for his "American small friends." This boy, six-year-old Zhang Jing, donated his life savings after seeing mothers carrying infants out of New Orleans floodwaters on the news. His \$12.50 never reached Katrina victims either.¹⁶⁷

Bush, Clinton, and Limited Means to Recovery:
Nonprofit Use of Foreign Aid

In the face of the government inefficiencies, nonprofits across the United States rushed to help Katrina victims; the State Department even directed some foreign aid monies to nonprofits. In fact, the State Department initially advised all cash offers go to each nation's corresponding Red Cross/ Red Crescent NGO. Assumedly, these organizations would be more familiar with how to handle and coordinate emergency supplies. Since coordination between FEMA and the Red Cross was outlined in The National Response Plan, FEMA should have been able to accept the foreign aid and then immediately coordinate its uses via the Red Cross.¹⁶⁸ Besides the Red Cross, the State Department directed foreign aid to a lesser-known charity: The Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund. State Department foreign correspondences explicitly stated that The Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund was "the national fund" for Katrina relief and that "all of this money will be distributed to the governors of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi" for rebuilding.¹⁶⁹ In the end, both these State Department-recommended nonprofits sat on foreign aid monies and left Katrina victims even more alone.

¹⁶⁷ "TFUS01 Hurricane Katrina Trask Force Situation Report NO. 029 as of 1530 EDT Friday, September 16, 2005." September 16th, 2005.

¹⁶⁸ Strom, Stephanie. June 9th, 2006. "Relief Rift Persists." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/09/us/nationalspecial/09cross.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁶⁹ "Updated Instructions on Cash Donations for Hurricane Katrina." September 8th, 2005

For example, the programs implemented by the Red Cross through foreign aid monies did not meet their stated goals. Two theories emerged as to why they did not meet goals. Those familiar with the inner workings of nonprofits argue the problems were internal disorganization. However, those wanting aid reported Red Cross offices made active decisions to hide and disband these aid programs.

Already under fire for its 9/11 response, the Red Cross's missteps during Katrina caught fire immediately. By December of 2005, Marsha Evans, Red Cross president and chief executive, had stepped down over Katrina response controversies highlighted in the House Committee "Trouble Exposed."¹⁷⁰ By early 2006, governors and county leaders across in the US Gulf South were trying to supplant the Red Cross and their inefficiency entirely.¹⁷¹

International Red Cross employees commented on these events in the *New York Times*. They overwhelmingly evaluated the US Red Cross's emergency plans and execution as poor, in particular, because of their inability to get victims predictable aid items.¹⁷² Mr. Mike Goodhand, head of the British Red Cross logistics division, said, it was clear that "the basic needs of the beneficiaries are not being met."¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Strom, Stephanie. December 30th, 2005. "Senators Press Red Cross For a Full Accounting: Questions Are Raised About Governance." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/30/politics/senators-press-red-cross-for-a-full-accounting.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁷¹ Lipton, Eric. Apr 18, 2006. "State Seeks To Supplant Red Cross." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/30/politics/senators-press-red-cross-for-a-full-accounting.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Strom, Stephanie. September 24th, 2005. "Citing Problems, Georgia County Asks Red Cross to Leave an Aid Center for Evacuees" *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/30/politics/senators-press-red-cross-for-a-full-accounting.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁷² Strom, Stephanie. April 5th, 2006. "From Foreign Experts Who Helped, Poor Marks for Red Cross's Hurricane Efforts." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/30/politics/senators-press-red-cross-for-a-full-accounting.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁷³ Strom, Stephanie. April 5th, 2006.

The Red Cross often supplied irrelevant items. For example, one report of Katrina relief needs, leaked by an ex-Red Cross employee, indicated that juice, Gatorade, household cleaners, feminine products, general hygiene supplies, and insect repellent were the most requested items.¹⁷⁴ The Red Cross warehouse stocked none of these.¹⁷⁵ As Senator Charles Grassley said, “the demand for these items is entirely predictable.”¹⁷⁶ However, the Red Cross did at least stock bananas and bleach. This mindless miscalculation represents much of the immediate Red Cross response to Katrina.

A full year later, the frustration continued. A 2007 New York Times report revealed the inadequacy of the Red Cross’s signature *Means to Recovery* program. *Means to Recovery* paid individuals “up to \$20,000 for building materials, used cars, job training and other unmet needs.”¹⁷⁷ The program served 4,000 families with its \$39 million budget, and it had the capability to serve more. However, the Red Cross never advertised the program for fear of too many applicants despite the specific entry requirements. Kirby Sommers, a dedicated New Orleanian, confronted the Red Cross about hiding the *Means to Recovery* program. Sommers recalled her community’s search for Red Cross aid information, saying “we looked for it, we googled it, nothing ever came up.” Confused by the absence of information, she began calling every Red Cross number.

Eventually she was connected with Jeanne Ellinport, Red Cross Director of Communications for Hurricane Recovery. In their conversation, Ellinport called *Means to*

¹⁷⁴ Strom, Stephanie. April 5th, 2006.

¹⁷⁵ Strom, Stephanie. April 5th, 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Strom, Stephanie. April 5th, 2006.

¹⁷⁷ Strom, Stephanie & Dewan, Shaila. Aug 10, 2007. “Red Cross Faces Criticism Over Aid Program for Hurricane Victims.” New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/10/us/10redcross.html?mcubz=3>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

Recovery a “tool for case managers,” and clarified that it was not a public resource.¹⁷⁸

Despite this disheartening information, another employee sympathized with Sommer’s questions and shared her insider information. This anonymous employee admitted, “[the Red Cross] didn’t want to promote the program,” but it was technically available to individual Katrina victims.”¹⁷⁹ But by August 2006, the program was being disbanded despite no marketing and over 95% of funds still being available.¹⁸⁰ From 2006, families still interested in the *Means to Recovery* individual funds were instructed to join a waiting list. However, these waiting lists appeared a tactic to push victims away. As of 2007, Red Cross had begun disbanding staff and discarding new applications.

The story of the Bush-Clinton Katrina began more optimistic than the Red Cross’s, as no good or bad reputation existed for the new foundation. Though the names on the fund did have their own reputations. Right after Hurricane Katrina, George W. Bush requested former Presidents George HW Bush and Bill Clinton to help raise funds to restore the Gulf Coast region. Humanitarian efforts for the large tsunami that hit Southeast Asia just the year before had already pushed Bush and Clinton, political poles, to put aside their differences during disaster. The fund itself was advertised as addressing the gaps in federal relief.¹⁸¹ In just one day, the foundation brought in \$1 million in online donations. Using Kintera, a new online fundraising platform, over 42,000 donations brought in \$128.4 million for Hurricane Katrina recovery within two months. Of this

¹⁷⁸Sommers, Kirby. July 27th, 2007. “Hurricane Katrina: Where Is the Money? Red Cross Hides Donations from Survivors.” <https://medium.com/@kirbysommers/red-cross-hides-donations-from-hurricane-katrina-evacuees-b818c8f31cf2>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁷⁹ Sommers, Kirby. July 27th, 2007.

¹⁸⁰ Sommers, Kirby. July 27th, 2007.

¹⁸¹ Strom, Stephanie. December 8, 2005. “Former Presidents Announce First Storm Grants.” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/08/us/nationalspecial/former-presidents-announce-first-storm-grants.html>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

total, \$30.9 million came from citizens of foreign countries. As one of the recommended nonprofits, approximately half of the rejected foreign aid offers went to the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund.¹⁸²

Though funds poured in, Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund initiatives did not pour out. President Bush explained on Larry King's CNN segment that they were having trouble deciding on the recipients of this aid. The most serious proposal was to split it up among the US Gulf South state funds put on by each state's governor. Soon after Bush spoke on Larry King, the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund announced a \$7.5 million grant program for residents in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. These grants efforts were to "rebuild schools, rehabilitate and build new housing, help citizens return to work, provide mental health services, and ensure that the area's rich culture and unique heritage remain distinguishing characteristics of the Gulf region."¹⁸³ In December of 2005, \$90 million more in grants were announced. Out of the \$90 million, \$30 million went to US Gulf South universities and colleges, \$20 million went to an alliance of ministers, and the remaining \$40 million was split up between the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama governor funds.¹⁸⁴

However, these funds went to nonprofits, businesses, and governments that increased steps between donation and implementation. By adding middlemen, the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund increased overhead funds. The Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund did not contribute monies to individuals in need per se, they instead forwarded funds to other,

¹⁸² Strom, Stephanie. December 8, 2005.

¹⁸³ "Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund Announces \$7.5 Million in New Grants." September 3rd, 2006. *Philanthropy News Digest*. <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/bush-clinton-katrina-fund-announces-7.5-million-in-new-grants>. Accessed October 16th, 2020.

¹⁸⁴ Strom, Stephanie. December 8, 2005.

small nonprofits and programs with more bureaucracy.¹⁸⁵ This process is seen with the Red Cross as well as monies often bought unnecessary items (including but not limited to the bananas and bleach mentioned above.)

Direct aid programs, on the other hand, would have cut steps and disbursed money faster. At the time, supporters of direct aid included scholar John S. Irons, who argued families of 9/11 victims received direct payment and so should victims of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, Irons argued the US government constructed the infrastructure that failed during Katrina, meaning they were liable for damages.¹⁸⁶ Irons' reasoning echoed the more recent work of Andy Horowitz who claim natural disasters are only disastrous because of man-made infrastructure, laws, and constructs.¹⁸⁷ Yet, if the US Government followed Irons' thinking, they would have implicated themselves in the occurrence of many past and potentially future natural disasters. Also, Irons found limited support for direct aid as critiques claimed victims would waste cash aid.¹⁸⁸ Much literature exists on the classist and racist responses to then-innovative Katrina recovery plans, and this response to Irons' call for direct aid is just another consequence of racist media portrayals and systems.

Ultimately, neither organization moved forward with direct aid programs in the coming years. The Red Cross still holds a similar function in US emergency response to this day. However, the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund was eventually absorbed by the better-

¹⁸⁵ Many nonprofit actions post-Katrina were done by non-locals and ended contributing to gentrification.

¹⁸⁶ Irons, John S. 2005. "Rebuild? Or Give Money to Residents? Yes." Center for American Progress. Accessed April 14, 2021.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2005/10/11/1685/rebuild-or-give-money-to-residents-yes/>.

¹⁸⁷ Horowitz, Andy. 2020. *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*. Harvard University Press.

¹⁸⁸ Irons, John S. 2005.

known Clinton Foundation, an organization that would go on to earn a mixed record of accomplishment and scandal.

A Protagonist Emerges

If the federal government and its major NGO partners were hamstrung by bureaucracy, one nonprofit proved adept imagining a better way forward: Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW). Instead of the special teams set to investigate Katrina crimes via the Justice Department and Department of Homeland Security, CREW used citizen resources to expose corruption. CREW set out to prove federal agency incompetence during Katrina under rights granted in the Freedom of Information Act. Passed in 1967, this legislation gives citizens the right to view all federal agency records unless the intended records are protected in one of nine exemptions.¹⁸⁹ On September 7th, just 8 days after the storm subsided, CREW filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the US National Archives for all federal agency records pertaining to Hurricane Katrina.

Crew's original intent with this request was to view the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA's internal communications.¹⁹⁰ However, as Hurricane Katrina foreign aid donations finally came to a halt and the US government provided no clarification on their intended uses, CREW added the State Department's actions to their growing list of disconcerting federal agency behaviors during Hurricane Katrina. Little did employees at CREW know, that their request would not be completed in full until the end of a lawsuit made against the Department of Homeland Security itself. This hearing occurred almost two full years later on September 25th, 2007. Overseen by

¹⁸⁹ There are nine exemptions in total.

¹⁹⁰ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC*, 514 F. Supp. 2d 36 (D.D.C. 2007)

Washington DC District Judge Richard Leon, *Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington*, represented by Anne L. Weismann, Kimberly D. Perkins, and Scott Allan Hodes brought action against the United States Department of Homeland Security's subcomponent FEMA. Via the Freedom of Information Act, CREW sought the withheld "records pertaining to FEMA's preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina."¹⁹¹

The plaintiffs representing CREW have devoted their careers to government transparency. Weismann, CREW FOIA council, previously worked at the Campaign for Accountability, "a non-profit organization that uses research, litigation, and communication to hold those who act at the expense of the public accountability for their actions."¹⁹² Weismann took to nonprofit transparency work after jobs within the government at the Enforcement Bureau for the Federal Communications Commission and Department of Justice.¹⁹³ Hodes and Perkins are noted on multiple lawsuits against federal agencies after 2005, including *Hodes v. US Department of Treasury*, *Western Values Project v. US Department of Justice*, and *Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington v. National Archives and Records Administration*.

The defendant in the case was Peter Bryce on behalf of the US Department of Justice. He argues the documents are withheld under exemption 5, presidential communications privilege, and the deliberative process privilege. All of which are legal, but perhaps questionable as most of these exemptions withhold sections of documents that include the rationale and discussion in federal agency decisions.

¹⁹¹ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC*, 514 F. Supp. 2d 36 (D.D.C. 2007)

¹⁹² Weismann, Anne. 2020. "Anne Weismann, Author at Just Security." Just Security. Accessed April 14, 2021. <https://www.justsecurity.org/author/weismannanne/>.

¹⁹³ Weismann, Anne. 2020.

First, Bryce argued exemption 5 applied to CREW's document requests. This exemption protects "records exchanged within or between agencies that are normally privileged in the civil discovery context." Due to the Freedom of Information Act Request's wording, only documents within agencies are protected. Through court ruling precedent, exemption 5 was developed to protect these documents as they are passed between agencies. CREW rebutted that the Department of Homeland Security could not use exemption 5 as they brought in experts outside the US Government. However, Judge Leon ruled the exemption 5 still applied, even "when an agency solicits opinions from and recommendations by temporary, outside consultants, those materials are considered "intra-agency.""¹⁹⁴

Next, Bryce argued that the Freedom of Information Act allows the exclusion of "deliberations comprising part of a process by which governmental decisions and policies are formulated" and that many of CREW's requested documents fell under this category.¹⁹⁵ For example, the State Department document discussing the "right" price for oil redacts large sections involving deliberations.¹⁹⁶ CREW argued that many of the documents withheld under this exclusion were "not actually deliberative."¹⁹⁷ But again, Judge Leon ruled in favor of the defendant, saying as long as federal agencies "identify what deliberative process is involved" they can claim the exemption.¹⁹⁸

The only exemption Judge Leon overturned was the presidential communications privilege. He ruled this could only be applied if the records were addressed to the

¹⁹⁴ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC.* 2007. Page 4.

¹⁹⁵ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC.* 2007. Page 4.

¹⁹⁶ "Saudi Oil Advisor on Katrina Relief, Visit of Energy Secretary Bodman, and the 'Right' Price for Oil." September 5th, 2005. *US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Request Database.* Page 1. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC.* 2007. Page 5.

¹⁹⁸ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC.* 2007. Page 5.

President, or his White House advisers or their staff. Most of the records in question were not.

Overall, Judge Leon ruled the defendant's motion for summary judgment was “granted in part and denied in part.”¹⁹⁹ For documents wherein the inner/intra-agency deliberative process privilege and presidential communications privilege could be proven, the Department of Homeland Security could conceal them legally under the Freedom of Information Act protections. However, the defense was denied in part because many of the documents did not actually fall under these categories. This ruling resulted in an ad-hoc process wherein sections with deliberation remain redacted, but unless sent directly to the President, his White House advisers, or their staff, the document itself was released.

The documents released through *CREW v. Department of Homeland Security* lawsuit did result in effective change. CREW used the State Department foreign aid correspondences to develop “the most comprehensive matrix available to date detailing all offers of assistance from around the world in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.”²⁰⁰ This matrix spells out the actions that should be taken next time the United States received foreign humanitarian aid.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ *CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBILITY v. U.S. D. OF HOMELAND SEC.* 2007. Page 7.

²⁰⁰ “CREW: Department of State: Regarding International Assistance Offers After Hurricane Katrina.” 2007. Scribd. <https://www.scribd.com/document/55838839/Related-Documents-CREW-Department-of-State-Regarding-International-Assistance-Offers-After-Hurricane-Katrina-Talking-Points>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

²⁰¹ CREW has a special sections dedicated to the GCC which states, “a few donors have pledged significant funds which may be beyond the absorptive capacity of charities. For these few donors, a special financial arrangement is likely necessary.”

Conclusions

Many Americans struggle to imagine a United States in which disaster victims do not receive immediate, well-planned, and much needed relief.²⁰² That imagery is only affiliated with poor and unethical countries devoid of human rights and liberalism. However, in this chapter's case study, this apocalyptic fear is actualized. This shows the enlightened democratic institutions of the United States either do not promise safety and security or are not truly democratic. During Hurricane Katrina, available international funding was mismanaged, misappropriated, and delayed within US Government channels. Furthermore, these channels are viewed as official, but are, in actuality, quite concealed from public eyes. Some of the State Department's decisions to reject international aid went unknown until CREW's lawsuit settled in 2007. These features are not typical of democratic institutions.

When confronted with the US Government's ineptitude in handling these foreign aid offers, optimists hope the funds that went to nonprofits are better utilized. However, the cycle of poverty in New Orleans today shows that even the incredible amount of donations flowing into nonprofits post-Katrina could not enable recovery in a broken system. At best, New Orleans survived Hurricane Katrina and recovery is still on the horizon.

It is instructive to compare the compounding behaviors of Persian Gulf states and the US in desperate situations like Hurricane Katrina. As oil-rich and wealthy regions (considering per capita adjustments), these governments operate with similar standards. Due to a variety of factors –including at minimum Islamophobia, misinformation, and

²⁰² Of course, historically disenfranchised communities like African Americans and Native Americans have lived experience outside of this generality.

geographic differences – many Americans would never compare their country to Saudi Arabia. In the public consciousness, Saudi Arabia is not a comparable country to the US.

Shared cultures and heritages have many white Americans identifying with France, Germany, or the UK. Perhaps early implementations of Enlightenment thinking related these countries, but since America’s founding, the institutions which used to be similar have evolved to an incomparable level. Most colonial powers of the Columbian exchange, now called the global north, have institutions employing democratic socialism. The United States, however, holds onto the institutions of a constitutional republic like evolutionary vestiges.

In fact, this identity construct went so deep that foreign aid from countries outside the Global North was rejected despite humanitarian tragedy on the scale of the Global South. In the years leading up to Katrina, differences in cultural and community perception even contributed to the conditions that made Hurricane Katrina possible.²⁰³ The imagined community of “America” in 2005 prevented US officials from accepting the international community’s help during domestic tragedy.

Today, I would argue the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United States are more alike because of their shared oil histories, economic global influence, weapon collections, and relationships to their constituents. Acknowledging these similarities examined in the past two chapters can help Americans disassociate from their romanticized notions about the US government and instead criticize and improve their countries’ institutions for the next disaster like Hurricane Katrina.

²⁰³ Horowitz, Andy. 2020. *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*. Harvard University Press.

Of course, some American values facilitate rights like those listed in the Freedom of Information Act and ensure provide safeguards not available in Saudi Arabia. But few utilize these rights. In this history, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics did fight for accountability. But, if the secretive and inaccessible actions of federal agencies continue, the means to demand transparency may fade away. After all, on the Freedom House Democracy index, the democratic institutions in the United States have lessened over the last twenty years.²⁰⁴ Hurricane Katrina is often analyzed as the occasion federal agencies publicly abandoned disenfranchised populations during natural disaster. However, as this thesis posits, it is also a lens to examine the trend of global de-democratization²⁰⁵ beginning at the turn of the millennium.

²⁰⁴ "United States: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report." 2021. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/united-states/freedom-world/2021>. Accessed April 14th, 2021.

²⁰⁵ Tilly, Charles. "Inequality, Democratization, and De-Democratization." *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 1 (2003): 37-43. Accessed April 15, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3108607>.

Epilogue

International spectators saw the connection between American values and Katrina failures. Ambassador John Bruton, one of the European Commission's US delegates, said the United States should learn , "that rugged individualism is not always enough in such a crisis." In one sentence, Bruton has combined American values with their pitfalls. Yet, these realizations go unactualized by some American citizens and the US government itself. By 2005, the neoliberalism America held onto so desperately was being overturned in many countries world-wide. Instead of realist foreign policy, countries were focusing on domestic democratic socialism.

From Katrina forward, the world has seen American individualism, pride, and egocentrism overflow out of the country only to further problems like climate change, COVID-19, and the Iran nuclear agreement. In these actions, the United States has chosen self-interest driven realist foreign policy. However, in a world of increasing globalization, selfish actions impact the entire community. Take for example, the spread of COVID-19. Had Chinese officials immediately admitted a deadly virus had evolved within its borders and taken responsibility, a pandemic could have been avoided. Other authoritarian regimes in the world, like Brazil, continue COVID-19 policies that value their country's economy over stopping the spread.²⁰⁶

Humanitarianism itself existed within these trends. Lillie Chouliaraki calls this post-humanitarianism. She defines post-humanitarianism as the period wherein neoliberalism impacted humanitarianism to be market-driven and individualistic.

²⁰⁶ Ideally, finding a balance between economic and health concerns could be easily determined.

Meaning, humanitarianism itself became an action with market value. And actors not undertaking humanitarianism were valued less. To no surprise, state actors participated in this trend. This can be seen in detail in chapter two when Persian Gulf State actors tie their large aid offers to their geopolitics.

Unimpeded by the international values of human rights until only recently, countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar continually make foreign policy decisions that better their government's priorities. By 2005, humanitarianism became a facet of this realist foreign policy. In fact, some Persian Gulf monarchs have chosen to pursue diplomacy affiliated with US neoliberalism over retaining cultural values. This is perfectly embodied by Bahrain and the UAE normalizing relations with Israel.

Though never hubs of Radical Arab Nationalism, Persian Gulf countries were essential to the 1973 OPEC Embargo against Israel's allies in the Yom Kippur war. Despite over ten years of organizing and the immense oil growth it elicited in the Persian Gulf, Central and South America, OPEC only became fearsome to the general American public during the 1973 Oil Embargo.²⁰⁷ Composed of many Arab countries, OPEC announced oil would not get shipped to any states supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Syria-Egypt coalition.²⁰⁸ This decision established OPEC's pro-Palestine, anti-imperialism stance. However, OPEC also embodied the nationalization of resources that had swept through the Middle East and Latin America, which often hinging on Cold War momentum, meant the end of neo-colonialism in these states. Nationalization was especially prominent in the Middle East because of Radical

²⁰⁷ Favennec, Jean-Pierre. 2011. *The Geopolitics Of Energy*. Paris: Editions Technip, 53-54.

²⁰⁸ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Historical Dictionary of United States-Middle East Relations. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, no. 5. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, XXI.

Arab Nationalist movements led by Nasser and the Ba'ath party. The support for nationalism led to much anti-imperialist organization such as the formation of OPEC among other examples. Specifically, the Arab countries in OPEC were able to organize support for the Palestinian cause in their offshoot OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries). And this support, over the entire period of the 1973 OPEC Embargo, caused oil price inflation over 400% and sent a serious message.²⁰⁹

But now, some of the most oil-rich countries during the OPEC Embargo have normalized relations with Israel. This reflects their realist policies that have continually benefitted these countries economically. For example, as Qatar focuses foreign policy on power and money, it has brought more money into its country. Qatar has been creating economic linkages with Israel since 1996. This has made easier the transfer of goods like Qatar's giant natural gas business or Israeli and American weapons. So, the Qatari economy grows with each realist foreign policy decision (like normalizing relations with Israel) and creates bigger demographic differences between the struggling Arab countries (like Syria or Algeria who are still staunchly pro-Palestine).

In an ironic twist, countries like the UK are switching roles with the Persian Gulf monarchies on the issue of Palestine. Finally cognizant of the human rights violations in Palestine, the UK and other European countries are putting up economic sanctions on certain Israeli exports. Whereas Persian Gulf countries like the UAE and Bahrain have just begun economic relationships with Israel. The United States continues to have normal relations with both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine countries in the ultimate

²⁰⁹ Hahn, Peter L. 2007. Historical Dictionary of United States-Middle East Relations. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, no. 5. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, XXI.

embodiment of realist foreign policy: befriend all the countries or scare them into submission with your bigger guns.

Another point of similarity between the Persian Gulf and United States is specific to the US Gulf South. Oil market disrupters make the Persian Gulf economies, and the US Gulf South economies mirror each other throughout history, particularly in Louisiana. Recessions in both regions are felt in relation to international oil rather than domestic catalysts.

In the US Gulf South, the refineries built in Louisiana snaking up the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain from the Gulf of Mexico have remained essential to maintaining oil production levels as well as accommodating oil tankers indefinitely. This piece of infrastructure, refineries and the pipelines to and from them, is the reason Louisiana has retained a large presence in the US oil industry despite other pieces being centered in Houston. Immovable once constructed, these structures almost 100 years later, still dictate the direction of oil flow. As a result, oil has been Louisiana's main industry since the 1900s.

This has created an interesting political economy for the state and the other oil-dependent areas of the US Gulf South. Unlike other parts of the US, which face economic downturn at the same time, Louisiana, faces constant "dramatic economic turbulence tied to oil price fluctuations" which can be "asynchronous" from "national [or international] economic trends." Louisiana's economy, tied to oil instead of other popular US markets, has survived US-wide recessions better. This has made many Louisianans consider

themselves “recession proof.”²¹⁰ When in reality, as citizens of Persian Gulf States already know, Louisianans are tied to the respirator that is the oil market.

Consequently, the US Gulf South, embodied by Louisiana and Houston particularly, has leaned into these industries.²¹¹ Plagued and profiting as oil capitals of the world, citizens in this region “absorbed much of the pollution generated by the production of energy worldwide markets,” but these unique oil challenges, such as an economy solely-reliant on energy, drove those same constituents to vote in favor of “regional politics [that] favored promotion of energy over its regulation” with preference for the social services possible only through oil’s profits.²¹²

Politicians in these regions draw their power from connections to the oil industry. So, jobs, industrialization, city-planning –all facets of the economy –hang on oil. However, as the incremental corruption shows, the capitalists and leaders of this region (and the US as a whole) have long been seduced by money and oil. So, instead of their constituents, they actually represented the “powerful industry whose interests were increasingly global, not local,” leaving citizens “struggling to assert local political control.”²¹³

²¹⁰ Pratt, Joseph A., Martin V. Melosi, and Kathleen A. Brosnan, eds. 2014. *Energy Capitals: Local Impact, Global Influence*. History of the Urban Environment. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 69.

²¹¹ Pratt, Joseph A., Martin V. Melosi, and Kathleen A. Brosnan, eds. 2014. *Energy Capitals: Local Impact, Global Influence*. History of the Urban Environment. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 188.

²¹² Pratt, Joseph A., Martin V. Melosi, and Kathleen A. Brosnan, eds. 2014. *Energy Capitals: Local Impact, Global Influence*. History of the Urban Environment. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 183.

²¹³ Pratt, Joseph A., Martin V. Melosi, and Kathleen A. Brosnan, eds. (2014). *Energy Capitals: Local Impact, Global Influence*. History of the Urban Environment. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 183.

Relationships between politicians in the Gulf South and other world oil hubs have also contributed to allyships during armed conflict. Saudi Arabia and the United States are a prominent example. Both countries contributed to the decimation of the Middle East. Whether the offensive actions against Iraq, the bombing of Yemen, or shrewd decisions on the Syrian Warfront, these two oil powers will do whatever is necessary to retain their supremacy.²¹⁴

A primary source ill-suited for the main body arguments of this thesis is helpful in summarizing the larger ramifications of this research. To recount the on-the-ground stories of those impacted by this realist policy, visit Riverbend's *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog for Iraq*. From 2003 to 2013, an anonymous Iraqi girl under the pseudonym 'Riverbend' wrote about her experience during the US invasion and following occupation. Her blogs cover what academics describe as, the consequences of American elation over the fast conquest of Iraq which led to violent insurrection across the country. Important for documentation of Iraq's domestic politics during the invasion, Riverbend's *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog for Iraq* is one of a kind. With beautiful writing and a keen eye for detail, Riverbend's descriptions of America during one of its weakest moments help summarize the "American disappointment" felt throughout the world during the Iraqi and Afghanistan invasions and later Hurricane Katrina. Riverbend writes poignantly on being the civilian under a harsh military occupation:

Why does America identify itself with its military and government? Why does being anti-Bush and anti-occupation have to mean that a person is anti-American? ...I hate American tanks in Baghdad and American soldiers on our

²¹⁴ Comically, President Biden is pointing to Saudi Arabia as the embodiment of human rights violations when he could just as well be pointing to himself.

streets and in our homes on occasion ... why does that mean that I hate America and Americans? Are tanks, troops, and violence the only face of America? If the Pentagon, Department of Defense and Condi are "America," then, yes - I hate America.

Riverbend asks the right questions. Does George Bush and his administration's foreign policy represent all Americans? Absolutely not.

Arguably, many US foreign policy decisions made throughout the late 1990s and early 2010s negatively impacted American citizens and other international players. American civilians, however, had very little understanding or impact on the country's overall foreign actions. They were forced to watch and suffer the consequences. First, civilians underwent mass terrorist attacks because the US Government did not address anti-American extremist groups.²¹⁵ Second, US soldiers marched into endless conflicts their leaders were profiting from,²¹⁶ which today rage on. But more than that, not even domestic infrastructure was safe, as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 proved that amidst disaster, Americans would have to fend for themselves. As Riverbend alludes, many Americans in the early 2000s could not have felt more distant from their politician's realist foreign policy concerns. And the international community perceived the US government as weak and corrupt because of them as well. The moral disappointment in the early 2000s had pushed the philosophy of American Exceptionalism to collapse, which of course left other countries, like Saudi Arabia, to take on the United States'

²¹⁵ In the case of bin Laden, they even taught them tactical strategies.

²¹⁶ Bignell, Paul. 2011. "Iraqi Oil Supply Was Considered to Be 'vital' to British Interests." *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iraqi-oil-supply-was-considered-be-vital-british-interests-2270072.html>.

realist and authoritarian example –including the post-humanitarian humanitarianism
Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries offered after Hurricane Katrina.