### 1 – Suez Canal DA

#### Lack of Strike Protection limits Suez Canal Strikes now.

* Edited for Ableist Language

Cunningham 14 Erin Cunningham 4-11-2014 "From Cairo to Suez, Egypt workers defy government with labor strikes" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/from-cairo-to-suez-egypt-workers-defy-government-with-labor-strikes/2014/04/11/674171d0-a713-494d-a76b-b33f5d4bc505_story.html> (American University of Paris, BA in international and comparative politics)//Elmer

**Military involvement In Suez** province, **a critical** **industrial center and strategic hub of global maritime trade**, the **military** has been particularly **involved in suppressing factory workers’ strikes**, labor rights activists say. Those actions could indicate how a military-supported Sissi presidency would deal with the ongoing labor unrest. In August, military police stormed a worker sit-in at the privately owned Suez Steel Company. The workers accused management of failing to honor an agreement that granted them hazard pay, health care and a share of the company’s profits. Last month, a senior army commander in Suez helped eliminate the union leadership at a local factory belonging to international ceramics and porcelain producer Cleopatra Ceramics, according to workers. On March 3, Maj. Gen. Mohamed Shams summoned 23 of the union’s first- and second-tier leaders to the area’s army headquarters and threatened to have Egypt’s secret police investigate them for terrorism if they did not sign resignation letters and leave the company, Cleopatra workers and labor activists said. Factory owner Mohamed Aboul Enein — and former Mubarak heavyweight ally — had been locked in a years-long struggle with workers over a 2012 agreement for better salaries, overtime pay and food allowances. In a telephone interview, Enein said he was forced to sign the contract under duress, after employees barricaded him inside the factory overnight. “These people belong to the Muslim Brotherhood,” Enein said of the workers. The Egyptian government has banned the Muslim Brotherhood and declared the group a terrorist organization. But there is no evidence the union was acting on behalf of the Islamist group. “They always ask for money,” Enein said of the workers. “They are criminals.” But company labor leaders said Shams’s and Enein’s close advisers threatened to bring the leaders’ wives and children to the military base until they promised to leave. A spokesman for the Egyptian armed forces did not respond to requests for comment. “They kept saying that if we did not sign, we would go to prison,” said Ayman Nofal, one of the union members who was pushed out. **The move has [stunned**] ~~paralyzed~~ **worker organizing** there, current employees said. “Like any entity in power, **the military does not want strikes**,” Ramadan said.

#### Suez Strikes eviscerate Global Trade – expanding the scope and length of Strikes through legal protection makes their impacts unthinkable.

Rohar 11 Evan Rohar 2-10-2011 "Suez Canal Strike Could Rattle Egypt’s Regime" <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2011/02/suez-canal-strike-could-rattle-egypt%E2%80%99s-regime> (Former Dock Worker at the Suez Canal)//Elmer

**Workers in** the critical **Suez Canal** Authority have taken perhaps the most important action of all, **launching** a **6,000-strong sitdown strike** that began Tuesday evening. While their demands center on pay and working conditions, the **sheer force of** their **leverage** has implications for the entire Egyptian uprising. The action appears to be a wildcat strike. The **Suez Canal** **enables ships to travel from Asia to Europe by way of the Red and Mediterranean Seas**, bypassing a journey around the Cape of Good Hope at the tip of Africa that would take more than a week. The canal **handled 559 million tons of cargo** in 2009, nearly three times the tonnage handled by the Port of Los Angeles, the busiest port in the U.S. The canal handles cargo **amounting to** about **8 percent of global** maritime **trade**. It also transits up to 2.5 million barrels of crude oil each day, with oil-exporting countries using the canal to move their crude to market and to import refined petroleum products. The canal is of further importance for U.S. military interests; the U.S. navy counts on it for rapid deployment of vessels from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. So far, most industry analysts insist that canal traffic is either minimally affected or unaffected by the strike actions and will remain so. Many, such as the Journal of Commerce and Logistics Week, quote Egyptian government officials who have an interest in keeping a lid on the effectiveness of any protest. If canal workers affect traffic, or if the strikes spread, enormous international pressure would come down on the Mubarak regime to get the cargo flowing again. **Reports contradicting** the **official line** are **starting to appear.** Egypt’s state-controlled newspaper Ahram Online reported on Tuesday that “**disruptions to shipping movements, as well as disastrous economic losses, are expected if the strike continues**.” By Wednesday, the article had been changed to state that no delays are expected. Regardless, the waterway’s strategic and economic significance amounts to a massive bargaining chip for the pro-democracy protesters if leveraged correctly, and its importance won’t end with the uprising. If democracy prevails and the people of Egypt take power, the new regime could use the canal for any number of political and economic purposes. Egyptian authorities are beefing up security around the canal, claiming that Hamas and Hezbollah plan to dispatch saboteurs to aid the rebellion. Maybe they're acting on real intelligence, or maybe they're afraid of what the workers could do for themselves and for their revolution.

#### Collapse of Trade causes Hotspot Escalation – goes Nuclear.

Kampf 20 David Kampf 6-16-2020 “How COVID-19 Could Increase the Risk of War” <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28843/how-covid-19-could-increase-the-risk-of-war> (Senior PhD Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies at The Fletcher School)//Elmer

But that overlooked the ways in which the risk of interstate war was already rising before COVID-19 began to spread. Civil wars were becoming more numerous, lasting longer and attracting more outside involvement, with dangerous consequences for stability in many regions of the world. And the global dynamics most commonly cited to explain the falling incidence of interstate war—democracy, economic prosperity, international cooperation and others—were being upended. If the spread of democracy kept the peace, then its global decline is unnerving. **If globalization and** economic **interdependence kept** the **peace, then** a looming global depression and the **rise of** nationalism and **protectionism are disconcerting**. If regional and global institutions kept the peace, then their degradation is unsettling. If the balance of nuclear weapons kept the peace, then growing risks of proliferation are disquieting. And if America’s preeminent power kept the peace, then its relative decline is troubling. Now, the pandemic, or more specifically the world’s reaction to it, is revealing the extent to which the factors holding major wars in check are withering. The idea that war between nations is a relic of the past no longer seems so convincing. The Pessimists Strike Back More than any other individual, it was cognitive scientist Steven Pinker who popularized the idea that we are living in the most peaceful moment in human history. Starting with his 2011 bestseller, “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined,” Pinker argued that the frequency, duration and lethality of wars between great powers have all decreased. In his 2019 book, “Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress,” he wrote that war “between the uniformed armies of two nation-states appears to be obsolescent. There have been no more than three in any year since 1945, none in most years since 1989, and none since the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.” Optimists like Pinker held that, rather than the world falling apart, as a quick glance at headline news might suggest, the opposite was true: Humanity was flourishing. More regions are characterized by peace; fewer mass killings are occurring; governance and the rule of law are improving; and people are richer, healthier, better educated and happier than ever before. In their book, “Clear and Present Safety: The World Has Never Been Better and Why That Matters to Americans,” Michael A. Cohen and Micah Zenko argued that the evidence is so overwhelming that it is difficult to argue against the idea that wars between great powers, and all other interstate wars, are becoming vanishingly rare. Even when wars do break out, they tend to be shorter and less deadly than they were in the past. John Mueller, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, also reasoned that the idea of war, like slavery and dueling before it, was in terminal decline, while Joshua Goldstein, an international relations researcher at American University, credited the United Nations and the rise of peacekeeping operations for helping win the “war on war.” But in recent years, a range of critics have begun to poke holes in these arguments. Tanisha M. Fazal, an international relations professor at the University of Minnesota, contends that the decline in war is overstated. Major advances in medicine, speedier evacuations of wounded soldiers from the field of battle and better armor have made war less fatal—but not necessarily less frequent. Fazal and Paul Poast, who is at the University of Chicago, further assert that the notion of war between great powers as a thing of the past is based on the assumption that all such conflicts resemble World War I and II—both are historical anomalies—and overlooks the actual wars fought between great powers since 1945, from the Korean War and the Vietnam War to proxy wars from Afghanistan to Ukraine. Meanwhile, Bear F. Braumoeller, an Ohio State political science professor, analyzed the same historical data on conflicts used by Pinker, Mueller and Goldstein, and found no general downward trend in either the initiation or deadliness of warfare over the past two centuries. What’s more, Braumoeller contends that the so-called “long peace”—the 75 years that have passed without systemic war since World War II—is far from invulnerable, and that wars are just as likely to escalate now as they used to be. Just because a major interstate war hasn’t happened for a long time, doesn’t mean it never will again. In all probability, it will. And by focusing solely on interstate wars, the optimists miss half the story, at least. Wars between states have declined, but civil wars never disappeared—and these **internal conflicts** **could easily escalate into regional or global wars**. The number of conflicts in the world reached its highest point since World War II in 2016, with 53 state-based armed conflicts in 37 countries. All but two of these conflicts were considered civil wars. To make matters worse, new studies have shown that civil wars are becoming longer, deadlier and harder to conclusively end, and that these internal conflicts are not really internal. Civil wars harm the economies and stability of neighboring countries, since armed groups, refugees, illicit goods and diseases all spill over borders. Some 10 million refugees have fled to other countries since 2012. The countries that now host them are more likely to experience war, which means states with huge refugee populations like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey face legitimate security challenges. Even after the threat of violence has diminished in refugees’ countries of origin, return migration can reignite conflicts, repeating the brutal cycle. A Yugoslav Federal Army tank. Perhaps most importantly, recent research indicates that civil wars increase the risk of interstate war, in large part because they are attracting more and more outside involvement. In a 2008 paper, researchers Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Idean Salehyan and Kenneth Schultz explained that, in addition to the spillover effects, two other factors in civil wars increase international tensions and could possibly provoke wider interstate wars: external interventions in support of rebel groups and regime attacks on insurgents across international borders. Immediately after the Cold War, none of the ongoing civil wars around the world were internationalized. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, there were 12 full-fledged civil wars in 1991—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Peru, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and elsewhere—and foreign militaries were not active on the ground in any of them. Last year, by contrast, every single full-fledged civil war involved external military participants. This is due, in part, to the huge growth in U.S. military interventions abroad into civil conflicts, but it’s not only the Americans. All of today’s major wars are in essence proxy wars, pitting external rivals against one another. Conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya are best understood not as civil wars, but as international warzones, attracting meddlers including the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, France and many others, which often intervene not to build peace, but to resolve conflicts in a way that is favorable to their own interests. These internationalized wars are more lethal, harder to resolve and possibly more likely to recur than civil wars that remain localized. It is not that difficult to imagine how these conflicts could spark wider international conflagrations. Wars, after all, can quickly spiral out of control. As Risks Increase, Deterrents Decline To make matters worse, most of the global trends that explained why interstate war had decreased in recent decades are now reversing. The theories that democracy, prosperity, cooperation and other factors kept the peace have been much debated—but if there was any truth to them, their reversals are likely to increase the chance of war, irrespective of how long the coronavirus pandemic lasts. Democracy is often considered a prophylactic for war. Fully democratic countries are less likely to experience civil war and rarely, if ever, go to war with other democracies—though, of course, they do still go to war against non-democracies. While this would be great news if democracy and pluralism were spreading, there have now been 14 consecutive years of global democratic decline, and there have been signs of additional authoritarian power grabs in countries like Hungary and Serbia during the pandemic. If democracy backslides far enough, internal conflicts and foreign aggression will become more likely. Other theories posit that **economic bonds between countries** have **limited wars** in recent decades. Dale Copeland, a professor of international relations at the University of Virginia, has argued that **countries work to preserve ties when there are high expectations for future trade**, **but war becomes** increasingly **possible when trade is predicted to fall.** If **globalization brought peace**, the recent wave of far-right nationalism and populism around the world may increase the chances of war, as tariffs and other trade barriers go up—mostly from the United States under President Donald Trump, who has launched trade wars with allies and adversaries alike. The coronavirus pandemic immediately elicited further calls to reduce dependence on other countries, with Trump using the opportunity to pressure U.S. companies to reconfigure their supply chains away from China. For its part, China made sure that it had the homemade supplies it needed to fight the virus before exporting extras, while countries like France and Germany barred the export of face masks, even to friendly nations. And widening economic inequalities, a consequence of the pandemic, are not likely to enhance support for free trade. This assault on open trade and globalization is just one aspect of a decaying liberal international order, which, its proponents argue, has largely helped to preserve peace between nations since World War II. But that old order is almost gone, and in all likelihood isn’t coming back. The U.N. Security Council appears increasingly fragmented and dysfunctional. Even before Trump, the world’s most powerful country ratified fewer treaties per year under the Obama administration than at any time since 1945. Trump’s presidency only harms multilateral cooperation further. He has backed out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, reneged on the Iran nuclear deal, picked fights with allies, questioned the value of NATO and defunded the World Health Organization in the middle of a global health crisis. Hyper-nationalism, rather than international collaboration, was the default response to the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. and many other countries around the world. It’s hard to see the U.S. reluctance to lead as anything other than a sign of its inevitable, if slow, decline. The country’s institutionalized inequalities and systemic racism have been laid bare in recent months, and it no longer looks like a beacon for others to follow. The global balance of power is changing. China is both keen to assert a greater leadership role within traditionally Western-led institutions and to challenge the existing regional order in Asia. Between a rising China, revanchist Russia and new global actors, including non-state groups, we may be heading toward an increasingly multipolar or nonpolar world, which could prove destabilizing in its own right. Finally, the pacifying effect of nuclear weapons could be waning. While vast nuclear arsenals once compelled the United States and the Soviet Union to reach arms control agreements, old treaties are expiring and new talks are breaking down. **Mistrust is growing**, and the **chance of an** unwanted **U.S.-Russia nuclear confrontation is** arguably as **high** as it has been since the Cuban missile crisis. The theory of nuclear peace may no longer hold if more countries are tempted to obtain their own nuclear deterrent. Trump’s decision to abandon the Iran nuclear deal, for one thing, has only increased the chance that Tehran will acquire nuclear weapons. It’s almost easy to forget that, just a few short months ago, the United States and Iran were one miscalculation or dumb mistake away from waging all-out war. And despite Trump’s efforts to negotiate nuclear disarmament with Kim Jong Un’s regime in Pyongyang, it is wishful thinking to believe North Korea will give up its nuclear weapons. At this point, negotiators can only realistically try to ensure that North **Korea’s** **nuclear menace** **doesn’t get** even **more potent**. In other words, by turning inward, the United States is choosing to leave other countries to fend for themselves. The end result may be a less stable world with more nuclear actors. If leaders are smart, they will take seriously the warning signs exposed by this global emergency and work to reverse the drift toward war. If only one of these theories for peace were worsening, concerns would be easier to dismiss. But **together**, they are unsettling. While the world is not yet on the brink of **World War III** and no two countries are destined for war, the odds of avoiding future conflicts don’t look good. The pandemic is already degrading democracies, harming economies and curtailing international cooperation, and it also seems to be fostering internal instability within states. Rachel Brown, Heather Hurlburt and Alexandra Stark argue that the coronavirus could in fact sow more civil conflict. If this proves accurate, the increase in civil wars is likely to lead to more external meddling, and these next **proxy wars** **could** soon **precipitate all-out international conflicts** if outsiders aren’t careful. **With** the **usual deterrents to conflict declining** around the world, **major wars could soon return**.

### 2 – Oil Strikes DA

#### Egypt Oil Worker Strikes cause mass Oil Shipping disruptions – particularly the SUMED pipeline.

Platform London 11 10-5-2011 "Egyptian oil workers strike over conditions" <https://platformlondon.org/2011/10/05/egyptian-oil-workers-strike-over-conditions/> (Platform is different. We combine art, activism, education and research in one organisation. This approach enables us to create unique projects driven by the need for social and ecological justice. Platform’s current campaigns focus on the social, economic and environmental impacts of the global oil industry. Our pioneering education courses, exhibitions, art events and book projects promote radical new ideas that inspire change.)//Elmer

**Egyptian oil workers at** the **SUMED** **pipeline** terminal **on the Red Sea went on strike** and protested demanding better employment rights this week, **showing** their **power to slow** the **transit of crude from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean.** The **striking workers help dock and unload** very large **tankers** **that use** the **SUMED** Red Sea-Mediterranean **pipeline** to bypass the Suez Canal. The workers began demonstrating in February 2011 after Mubarak’s ejection and won an agreement to improve pay and conditions. This happened in a context where **thousands of oil workers had gone on strike**, demanding an end to abusive management practices, reinstatement of sacked workers, salary increases, an independent union, impeachment of the corrupt oil minister Sameh Fahmy, and an end to gas exports to Israel. But by October the failure to meet promises has led to **a renewed strike** – which **could bring** the **2.5 million barrels** **pumped through the pipeline daily to a halt**. Al-Ahram reported that: Workers at Arab Petroleum Pipelines Company (SUMED), operator of the Suez to Mediterranean pipeline, have resumed their campaign for equal employment rights after months of calm. The morning shift of 60 employees, from a total sub-contracted payroll of 230, held protests on Sunday at the SUMED terminal, located south of El Sukhna port on the Red Sea. Worker demands spring from their ambiguous employment position. Though they are workers for SUMED, they are actually employed with Maridive via temporary contracts — a situation that has lasted, in the case of some workers, for more than 30 years. “Our demand is to get the same rights as the permanent workers, as stipulated by article 79 of the labour law ,” says Atef El-Sayed Mohamed, head of the independent union whose workers are contracted to Maridive. According to article 79, if an employer entrusts another firm to carry out work in its own workspace, then the firm must ensure employment conditions for the latter company’s own workers and those sub-contracted are equal. Workers contracted to Mardive began protests immediately after Mubarak’s ousting in February, leading to an eventual agreement between them and the administration An agreement was concluded between the contracted workers and SUMED administration in the presence of representatives of the military, assuring the employees they will continue working when SUMED launches its new tender offer — whichever company it eventually contracts. Employees’ anger increased recently when they discovered that the new sub-contractor won’t raise their salaries as much as they were expecting. The administration’s decision on Sunday, to move Atef El-Sayed, head of the union they formed after the revolution, to SUMED premises in Alexandria increased their discontent. After hearing the decision, morning shift workers started protesting at the Ain Sokhna port, bringing a rapid response from the maritime unit of the army. Workers claimed forces tried to disperse their protests. The situation with SUMED employees is relatively unusual, in that many of the subcontracted workers are skilled labourers. “Security workers have contracts while workers at the port don’t have. A marine chief, risking his life to do the work in the middle of storms or whatever the weather situation is, gets LE1,600 per month after 34 years of work, while the security guard gets LE,4000”, union head Atef El-Sayed Mohamed explained. Though **the SUMED strike** is limited in scope**,** it **could** **potentially** **have a larger economic impact**. Some analysts believe that **a disturbance at the port might have a bigger effect on oil** and shipping **markets** **than a shutdown of the canal** itself. SUMED mainly **controls** the **route for crude oil from the Arab Gulf** **to** be transported to **refining centres in the West**. The Suez to Mediterranean pipeline has a carrying capacity of 2.5 million barrels. SUMED serves the largest oil tankers unable to navigate the Suez Canal fully loaded. They send part of their cargo via the pipeline at the canal’s Red Sea entrance and then re-load the oil at the Mediterranean end. SUMED is a joint venture of Egyptian General Petroleum CORP (50 per cent), Saudi Aramco (15 per cent), International Petroleum Investment Co., Abu Dhabi (15 per cent), three Kuwaiti companies (15 per cent) and Qatar Petroleum (5 per cent).

#### SUMED Oil Disruptions cause Oil Price increases.

Paraskova 21 Tsvetana Paraskova 3-24-2021 "13 Million Barrels Of Oil Could Be Affected By Suez Canal Blockage" <https://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/13-Million-Barrels-Of-Oil-Could-Be-Affected-By-Suez-Canal-Blockage.html> (Journalist and Editor at Oil Price)//Elmer

As many as **10 crude tankers** **carrying** around **13 million barrels of oil** could be **affected by** the **disrupted traffic in the Suez Canal**, which was blocked early on Wednesday when a huge container ship ran aground, oil analytics firm Vortexa said. The approximate rate of backlog is around 50 vessels per day, and any delays leading to re-routings will add 15 days to a voyage between the Middle East and Europe, Vortexa noted. Some **12 percent of global trade, and** about **9 percent of** total seaborne traded **petroleum**, including crude oil and refined petroleum products, **passes through** the Suez Canal and **SUMED Pipeline,** according to EIA estimates. The top three exporters of crude oil and oil products via the Suez Canal so far in 2021 were Russia with 546,000 barrels per day (bpd), Saudi Arabia with 410,000 bpd, and Iraq with 400,000 bpd, according to Vortexa. The top three importers of crude and petroleum products year to date were India with 490,000 bpd, China with 420,000 bpd, and South Korea with 380,000 bpd. “If tankers start diverting towards the Cape, any increase in tonne-miles will increase tanker utilisation and support rising freight rates in the short-term,” Vortexa said. The 400-meter (1,312-foot-long) container ship Ever Given, which is basically a ship the size of a skyscraper, ran aground in the Suez Canal and remained stuck sideways in the narrowest path of the canal, leaving other ships and tankers—both north- and south-bound—unable to pass. The **traffic blockage at** **one of the busiest oil trade routes sent oil prices rising early** on Wednesday, after another massive sell-off on Tuesday. Just before the EIA weekly inventory report on Wednesday, both benchmarks were rising by more than 3 percent, with WTI Crude nearly back to $60 and Brent Crude prices up at $62.75.

#### Oil Prices are low now.

Gaffen 11-3 David Gaffen 11-3-2021 "Oil falls to near 4-week low after big build in U.S. inventories" <https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/oil-prices-fall-industry-data-shows-big-build-us-inventory-2021-11-03/> (Reporters at Reuters)//Elmer

NEW YORK, Nov 3 (Reuters) - **Oil prices fell to a near four-week low** on Wednesday, **after** **U.S. crude stocks rose more than expected**, as gasoline inventories in the world's largest oil consumer hit a four-year low. Brent **crude** futures **fell** $2.73, or 3.2%, **to** settle at **$81.99** a barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell $3.05, or 3.6%, to settle at $80.86. That was the **biggest daily percentage declines for both benchmarks since early August** and the lowest closes for Brent since Oct. 7 and WTI since Oct. 13.

#### High Oil prices cause Global Conflict.

Bunzel 18 Theodore Bunzel 5-3-2018 “Do High Oil Prices Mean More International Conflict?” https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/05/30/do-high-oil-prices-mean-more-international-conflict/ (Worked in the political section of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and in international economics at the U.S. Treasury)//Elmer

As oil prices reach three-year highs, history tells us that we should expect more interstate aggression. When asked in a recent interview about his famously sympathetic gaze into Russian President Vladimir Putin’s soul in 2001, former President George W. Bush argued that rising oil prices had fundamentally changed his interlocutor: “When I looked into his eyes and saw his soul, Russia was broke . . . [t]he price of oil goes up and Putin changed.” Does the relationship between oil prices and Russian behavior to which Bush alluded hold true? The higher the price of oil, the more aggressive Russia becomes? And what about other petrostates? Might it be true for those as well? We may soon have more evidence for the proposition. Oil prices are brushing off 2016 lows and hitting three-year highs. Brent crude has been hovering above $70 a barrel since April, up from lows of around $30 in early 2016, fueled by OPEC production cuts and rising geopolitical tensions (over issues like the Iran deal). Though nuances, complications, and exceptions abound, the academic and historical evidence on balance tells us that, as we transition from a lower to a higher oil price regime, we can generally expect a darker geopolitical outlook. As rising oil revenues gives Russia, Saudi, Iran, and other oil-exporters an added sense of confidence, it may at least selectively inflame interstate tensions and lead to more aggressive behavior. That possibility, alongside an increasingly hawkish U.S. national security team and a President who appears to feel rather “unchained” of late, points to a potentially combustible mix just ahead. It is generally taken for granted that aspects of geopolitics can function as a key input into oil prices. Trump’s mere threat of a U.S. strike in Syria, for example, caused oil to spike by 2 percent on April 11. In addition to short-term effects, geopolitical competition can influence prices in other ways. To give just one general example, as Soviet power spread into parts of the Third World after the independence era, some states felt safer nationalizing their oil industries to escape Western company control (Iraq in 1961, for example), and prices rose as a consequence. But the relationship may also work the other way around: Oil prices can also be a key input into geopolitics. Many studies have demonstrated that oil prices have a direct effect on the domestic stability of petrostates. This makes ample intuitive sense: Higher prices fill public coffers, allowing governments to palliate needy populations and potential elite opposition groups by dispensing more largesse. Some regime elites may reason that a firmer grip on power may free them to carry out more assertive foreign policies without fear of being undermined at home. There are, however, several complications to this general intuition. Some states already have sufficiently buoyant revenues relative to their small populations to satisfy their publics and feed clientelistic networks. Providing largesse can also backfire if prices drop; taking away something valuable that people have grown used to is a dangerous game, especially when elites aren’t ready to play it. And then of course there is the famed “oil curse”: For all sorts of reasons, from “Dutch disease” economic distortions to the derangement of normal citizen-state relationships, oil riches can in time undermine regimes, weakening and even destroying them. That said, a more recent body of research has empirically demonstrated the intuitive twin of this conclusion: Higher prices cause greater interstate aggression by oil-producing countries. Why would this be the case? Greater oil revenue flushes petrostates with confidence and also cash that they can put toward military spending or foreign adventures. To take one obvious example, we need only look to Iran’s using its oil revenue to fund proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Furthermore, military spending by one regional oil producer can beget spending by others, fueling regional arms races that can make aggression and conflict by miscalculation more likely. The onset of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980 may be a prime example of that dynamic. Most prominent among the empirical studies is Cullen S. Hendrix’s 2014 paper, which shows a statistically significant relationship between higher oil prices and “dispute behavior” (military actions short of actual war) by oil-exporters. (Hendrix also summed it up nicely in this Washington Post piece.) He found that “all things being equal, a one standard deviation ($18.60) increase in the price per barrel of oil from the sample mean ($33.81) is associated with a 13 percent increase in the frequency of [dispute behavior]” in oil-exporting states. He also found that, above $77 a barrel, oil-exporters are significantly more dispute prone than non-oil exporters. Hendrix also explores the potential complication of reverse causality: Could dispute behavior by oil-exporting countries be driving prices higher, rather than the other way around? A key analytical consideration here is timing. We can all agree that geopolitical activity affects prices in the short-term (such as the Syria example mentioned above), but is this reverse causality true on a sustained basis? Parsing out long-term signal from short-term noise, Hendrix examines whether elevated aggregate dispute behavior affects oil prices at the yearly—rather than daily or weekly—level, and finds that this relationship does not hold. His explanation here is that other players typically step in to redress markets: “While dispute behavior may drive prices changes in the short term . . . the strategic significance of oil prices and oil-exporting states encourages major powers to act in ways that stabilize markets, either through market intervention . . . or direct, armed intervention.” Jeff Colgan of Brown University has also touched on this topic, finding through his research that oil has fueled—in some way—one quarter to one half of interstate wars since 1973**.** He also notes that oil-producers are 50 percent more likely to engage in conflict than non-oil producers. Colgan identifies eight, non-mutually exclusive causal mechanisms for how oil fuels international conflict, most of which are implicitly exacerbated by higher prices. They are: “(1) resource wars, in which states try to acquire oil reserves by force; (2) petro-aggression, whereby oil insulates aggressive leaders such as Saddam Hussein or Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from domestic opposition and therefore makes them more willing to engage in risky foreign policy adventurism; (3) the externalization of civil wars in oil-producing states (“petrostates”); (4) financing for insurgencies—for instance, Iran funneling oil money to Hezbollah; (5) conflicts triggered by the prospect of oil-market domination, such as the U.S. war with Iraq over Kuwait in 1991; (6) clashes over control of oil transit routes, such as shipping lanes and pipelines; (7) oil-related grievances, whereby the presence of foreign workers in petrostates helps extremist groups such as al-Qaeda recruit locals; and (8) oil-related obstacles to multilateral cooperation, such as when an importer’s attempt to curry favor with a petrostate prevents multilateral cooperation on security issues.” Though he doesn’t substantiate statistically that higher prices lead to more conflict through these channels, he implies it heavily. For example, he writes that, “the low oil prices of the 1990s have given way to higher and more volatile prices, increasing the magnitude of the consequences one can expect from oil-conflict linkages.” While the emerging academic evidence may validate the claim that higher oil prices lead to more aggression, the historical and anecdotal evidence is somewhat mixed, and understandably so. Oil price is clearly only one of many inputs into foreign policy decision-making, and an indirect one at that. No leader thinks, “Now that oil is at $X, I’m going to invade my neighbor.” Context obviously matters, too: No one imagines that Ecuador or Norway is going to invade or try to blackmail a neighbor just because spot prices rise 15 or 30 percent in a given six-month period. Price levels seep into decision-making more subtly, affecting interlocking beliefs about strategic behavior generally and specific cases more particularly; they may fuel self-confidence by shoring up budget outlooks and funding the tools of more aggressive behavior in contexts where such behavior could conceivably make sense. Moreover, there are many contravening (and occasionally countervailing) complications. Prominent among these is the fact that low oil prices can incentivize states to “wave the flag” in order to distract from domestic difficulties—so the impact of low oil prices might lead to more aggressive behavior in some cases. That suggests that neither high nor low prices per se may be the trigger affecting behavior, but rather notable changes in price that become politically salient in one way or another. And there’s also the tricky issue of timing: Over what timeframe does increased oil revenue fuel aggression? Is it in anticipation of higher prices, in direct response to the current pricing levels, or is there more of a lag in effect as oil revenue slowly shores up—or is expected to shore up—budgets and military spending over time? The answer might depend on specific cases and leadership cadres. There is also a scaling problem. If a 20 percent rise in oil prices makes a more assertive foreign policy more likely in a given country, does a 40 percent rise make it twice as likely? Or put differently, how much of a difference in price, and presumably in expected revenues, does it take to cross a threshold where it might have an impact on decision-making? Are there multiple thresholds? Russia exemplifies these issues. Taking the same long view as George W. Bush in his interview, it seems self-evident that rising oil prices and higher government revenues over the course of the 2000s gave Putin confidence, funded military expansion and modernization, and helped enable Russia’s most revanchist tendencies. Between 2003 and 2013, Russian military expenditure doubled as the price of Brent crude rose from a low of around $20 a barrel in 2001 to a high of more than $140 a barrel in 2008. Russia, as the saying goes, is a gas station with nuclear weapons; a higher pump price thus means more weapons, nuclear and otherwise. But when you cross reference this conclusion with specific acts of Russian aggression over the past roughly twenty years, the picture gets much more complicated. When Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008, oil was above $100 a barrel. Same with Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014. But Russia also dramatically intervened in Syria in September 2015, when oil had dropped to around $50 a barrel and the economy was sputtering due to both low energy prices and Western sanctions. Here, many analysts plausibly described these interventions as a way of rallying Russians to the flag and distracting them from domestic hardship. More likely, Putin saw an emergency in Syria that simply had to be dealt with, no matter the cost or risk; the Assad regime was in danger of collapsing, and Syria is Russia’s only ally offering ports and bases in the Mediterranean basin. So Russia is a bit of a mixed bag, but on balance its behavior—especially over a long timeframe—appears to support the thesis. Saudi Arabia’s role in the 1973 Yom Kippur war also illustrates the tricky question of timing. Saudi funding of the effort was enabled by a financial buffer created by a rise in revenues from the late 1960s, and was likely justified by an expected rise in revenues due to an oil price increase that was anticipated, in part, because of the very war it was in the process of financing. Its reserves had already grown so large that, for the first time, Saudi Arabia could ride out a supply (and revenue) disruption and still finance a war. But the Saudis helped finance a war that they themselves did not participate in. So if rising oil prices led to greater interstate aggression, it did so in this case in a particularly indirect way. These are all interesting and important nuances that attenuate any direct causal connection one might be tempted to draw between oil prices and conflict. So it would be nice to know if historical studies have shown any significant statistical relationship between fluctuations in key sources of government revenue (and what memoirs and archives tell us about how those situations were perceived) and interstate behavior. It would be even nicer to drill down into such studies to find cases where specific lucrative commodities—for example, European colonial profits such as from British opium sales in China, or cotton grown in Egypt—made any difference in the behavior of the relevant governments. Alas, such studies do not exist. But regardless of the timeframe and mechanism, academic and historical studies alike do suggest that higher oil prices have generally lead to more aggressive, or at least riskier, behavior in recent decades—whether in anticipation of higher prices, immediately in their wake, or only after sufficient revenue stores are built up. So are we at a point in the energy price cycle where, all else equal, we should expect greater interstate conflict? We’re close to Hendrix’s $77 a barrel threshold, above which oil-exporters are significantly more dispute-prone than non-oil exporters. But given the nuances just described, this specific price threshold is probably too cute. The more realistic argument to make is about the effect of a higher-price vs. lower-price paradigm over a multi-year horizon (particularly in light of the timing issue and potential lag). And if the period of the past two years (when Brent largely hovered between $40 and $60) was a lower-price paradigm, 2018-19 is potentially gearing up to be a higher-price paradigm driven by continued supply cuts by OPEC, tight global inventories, and—in a coincidental way—heightened geopolitical risks. We’ll see how these factors play out, but if oil prices remain elevated we may begin to subtly feel their effects on behavior by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and perhaps others. None of this is to say that oil prices are the most important factor in the geopolitical outlook over the near, medium, or long-term. The reputed hawkishness of Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, the effect of the upcoming mid-term elections on Trump’s decision-making, and reactions to potential exogenous shocks (for example, a major clash in Syria between U.S. or Israeli and Iranian or Russian forces) will play a much more direct and important role in shaping the geopolitical landscape. But a higher oil price regime (if it holds) could well make petrostates like Iran, Saudi, and Russia more aggressive—either in challenging the United States and Europe in the case of Russia, or by exacerbating ongoing proxy conflicts in and around the Middle East in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Given these and other dynamics, we should expect a bumpy ride ahead.

### 3

#### Counterplan Text: The United States of America should lift all sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran and both governments should abide by this treaty.

#### Solves escalation

1AC Silverstein 4/23 “Iran-Israel tensions: The threat of nuclear disaster looms large,” Richard Silverstein [writes the Tikun Olam blog, devoted to exposing the excesses of the Israeli national security state], 23 April 2021 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/iran-israel-tensions-threat-nuclear-war-looms-large> SM Recut Ngong

Israel had a near-miss of potentially catastrophic proportions on Thursday. As it has done hundreds of times in the past decade, the Israeli air force attacked Iranian bases inside Syria. In response, Syrian forces fired anti-aircraft missiles of a rather primitive Soviet model, one of which overflew its target and landed some 30 kilometres from Israel’s Dimona nuclear reactor. Israel said recently that it was bolstering its defences around Dimona for just such an eventuality. Although an Iranian general taunted Israel, implying that Iran had some responsibility for the attack, that doesn’t appear to be the case. But the missile landing inside Israel does show that if Iran wanted to attack Dimona, it has the capacity. And despite Israel’s best efforts, an Iranian missile could hit its target. With that, one of the worst nuclear disasters in the region’s history could unfold, including a Chernobyl-type radioactive leak that could endanger not only all of Israel, but also many of its neighbours.A US general has assured a Senate committee that the Syrians weren’t intending to attack Israel. Rather, a misguided missile meant to target an Israeli warplane overshot its target. He blamed it on “incompetence”, as if that was supposed to be somehow reassuring; rather, it only reinforces how easy it is even for a mistake to cause a nuclear disaster.Campaign of terror Certainly, if either Israel or Iran wanted to bomb each other’s nuclear facilities, they could do so successfully. An Israeli attack would probably cause less catastrophic damage, but only because Iran’s nuclear programme is not nearly as developed as Israel’s. An Iranian direct hit on Dimona would cause incalculable damage due to the plutonium reactor at the facility. Nor does this happen in a vacuum: Israel has maintained a decade-long campaign of terror attacks on Iranian military bases and nuclear scientists. Most recently, it bombed the Natanz nuclear facility, destroying the power generation source and damaging older-generation centrifuges. It also attacked an Iranian Revolutionary Guard spy ship off the Yemeni coast this month. Iran has responded in its own limited way, restrained by its need to maintain good relations with nuclear-deal signatories. For Israel, the attacks are a low-risk proposition. It defies US opposition (if there is any) with a wink and a nod, and the attacks look good on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s résumé. To weather his corruption trial and retain public support, he needs external enemies (and internal enemies, but that’s a different story). Iran provides these in spades.Eliminating Israeli leverage The US could exert control over this scenario by eliminating Israeli leverage. If it agreed to lift sanctions in exchange for Iran’s return to low levels of uranium enrichment, as designated in the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration, Israel’s rejectionist approach would become moot. The problem is that US President Joe Biden is running scared from Republican opposition to any nuclear deal with Iran. Besides, he has designated the Middle East a low priority for his administration. There is some faint hope in the US announcement that it is ready to lift a partial set of sanctions. However, the list on offer is quite limited, and will certainly not satisfy the Iranians. Such half-measures present an example of the limitations of the Biden approach. He should instead make a full-throated commitment to end this dithering once and for all. Israel is mounting a full-court press this coming week as it sends its Mossad and military intelligence chiefs, along with its army chief of staff, to Washington in an attempt to influence nuclear negotiations as they enter what may be a final stage. According to Haaretz, army chief of staff Aviv Kochavi “will also raise other issues, including Iran’s military expansion in Syria and the instability of Lebanon. Israel is concerned about the possibility that Hezbollah will try to … [foment] conflict with Israel.” The hypocrisy of Israel’s refusal to acknowledge its own massive military interventions in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and even Iraq, while decrying Iran’s involvement in Syria, is almost breathtaking. There is next to no chance that any of this will enter into the considerations of negotiators in Vienna. Unlike Israel, they are interested in doing a nuclear deal, not engaging in wishful thinking. Combustible Middle East mix Returning to the Biden administration’s global goals, the Middle East doesn’t care about presidential priorities. It contains a combustible mix of corrupt elites and overbearing dictators who do not shirk from causing mayhem in their domains. And one of them, perhaps a desperate Israeli prime minister or an ageing ayatollah eager to preserve his honour and legacy, could inadvertently (or intentionally) set the entire region aflame. If Biden doesn’t act quickly and decisively, there is a sizeable risk that another missile from one country or the other will hit a target and cause devastation. That would mark a point of no return, like the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, which led to World War One. The difference is that in 1914, armies fought with guns, bayonets and artillery. Today, they will fight with F-35s, ballistic missiles and possibly nuclear weapons.