ANGLO AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

BRITISH COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN OMAN, 1964 – 1975: EXAMINING THE ANOMALISTIC CASE

A thesis submitted to Anglo-American University for the degree of Bachelor in Humanities, Society and Culture

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are properly cited and included in the bibliography.

I hereby declare that no portion of text in this thesis has been submitted in support of another degree, or qualification thereof, for any other university or institute of learning**.**

I also hereby acknowledge that my thesis will be made publicly available pursuant to Section 47b of Act No. 552/2005 Coll. and AAU's internal regulations.

**Josephine Ann D'Urso*

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Introduction

Research Context

This thesis offers a contribution to the debate around the nature of British counter-insurgency by exploring a counter-insurgency campaign in Oman that took place from 1964 to 1975. Many scholars adopt one of two approaches: the first rests on the presupposition that the inherently colonial character of British counter-insurgency imposes its values on the host-nation whose authority it undermines, whereas those who hold the opposite viewpoint contend that British counter-insurgency entails an adherence to time-tested principles and strategic expertise. The present work is situated on an alternate path that seeks to avoid the shortcomings of an overly-binary approach which positions theory above primary-source evidence. The principal aim of the thesis is to understand the case of Oman and draw conclusions about British counter-insurgency, but a secondary objective is to add to the scholarly debate about British counter-insurgency a viewpoint informed by primary-source research and scrutinize the counter-insurgency theory of Andrew Mumford, a scholar who contests the British reputation of exemplary counter-insurgency success.

The importance of an exploration into the British counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign in Oman in the 1960s and seventies lies in the present-day evolution of global conceptions about human rights and warfare that have caused many to question what it means to be successful in a counter-insurgency campaign and whether the means justify the ends. While questions about the intersection of military policy and ethics can be explored through the lens of many historical conflicts, the case of the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman has received relatively little coverage that strays from the dualistic approaches of either viewing the counter-insurgency campaign as outstandingly successful or indicative of neocolonial

maneuvering. These two oppositional attitudes represent two important aspects which have informed much scholarship of the conflict: that British involvement in Oman's counter-insurgency was fueled by the desire to protect oil interests as well as the UK's right to use Oman's Masirah Island for staging military operations farther East and that the COIN campaign has been widely regarded as a "textbook counter-insurgency".[1] By relying on primary data collected from the Arabian Gulf Digital Archive (AGDA), a database launched in the past several years to aid the study of Gulf history, this research examines the case of Oman with a level of depth and nuance made possible by access to extensive British and Omani correspondence and official documents. The objective is to eschew the traditional boundaries of the two contrasting paradigmatic approaches and examine the question inductively.

This thesis carries out an evaluation of Andrew Mumford's theory of British counter-insurgency using the case study of the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman and tests Mumford's claims that an analysis of British counter-insurgency campaigns reveals a failure to learn from past experience and a lack of policy cohesion and that the belief of British counter-insurgency as exemplarily successful is misplaced.[2] Mumford tracks British counter-insurgency practice globally and chronologically, identifying its roots in the COIN operation in Malaya from the late 1940s to 1960s. In the *Counter-Insurgency Myth*, Mumford advances a "Tri-partite Counter-Insurgency Model" made up of the dimensions which he posits determine the success or failure of counter-insurgency campaigns: the insurgent and counter-insurgent dimensions and the international political context.[3]

[1] Andrew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare*, Cass Military Studies 45 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), eBook, chap. 1.
[2] Mumford, chap. 1.
[3] Mumford, chap. 1.

In asking and answering the question of whether Andrew Mumford's counter-insurgency model can be applied to British counter-insurgency in Oman during the 1960s and seventies and what the attempted application reveals about how British behavior in Oman relates to the study of counter-insurgency operations, this thesis focuses on the counter-insurgent dimension and its three inner aspects proposed by Mumford: military effectiveness, political management, and intelligence gathering.[4] The insurgent and international political dimensions have been taken into consideration to avoid assessing British behavior in a vacuum, but the structure of the thesis reflects the concentration on the counter-insurgent dimension. The first chapter explores the efficacy of the military dimension of the counter-insurgency in Oman and concludes that its success correlates to the high degree of Anglo-Omani cooperation which took place in that domain. Chapter 2 focuses on the political side of the Dhofar COIN operation and brings to light the often-undervalued role played by the strategic foothold of Masirah Island in tying the British to the Omani conflict. In the third chapter, archival evidence is presented regarding the counter-insurgents' intelligence system throughout the Dhofar Rebellion, exposing the problems on both the British and Omani sides of operations which stymied intelligence gathering.

The examination of these multiple dimensions, according to Mumford's view, shows a trend of the British inability to learn from past lessons in counter-insurgency.[5] This thesis, however, advances the argument that although Mumford's model provides a valuable framework through which to understand the crucial aspects of counter-insurgency operations, its application to the case of the Dhofar Rebellion demonstrates that the model's explanatory power is limited by overstating British autonomy; counter-insurgency analysis must take into

[4] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[5] Mumford, chap. 1.

account the importance of the relationship between the host-nation government and the intervening government.

Methodology

This research operates within an empiricist framework, starting from the theoretical foundation of Mumford's counter-insurgency model, which this thesis aims to test. The empiricist tradition informs one of the goals of this research: to determine whether there is a cohesive narrative of British counter-insurgency policy or whether it is more a matter of discrete events that scholars have attempted to tie together with theory. The case study of Oman is analyzed from an exploratory position, probing Mumford's model of counter-insurgency as well as the various opposing narratives of British counter-insurgency at large. Primary data is collected from the Arabian Gulf Digital Archives, an online archive which makes the documents of both the UAE's and the UK's National Archives accessible for study and general use. Several document types are relied upon to gain the most complete view of the conflict. These documents consist of informal correspondence, minutes, and formal correspondence which takes various forms from telegrams to maps and sitreps. This thesis takes into account primary documents which recount salient events and occurrences but also those which reveal the thoughts and perceptions of their authors or the figures involved in the Omani conflict.

The research for this thesis is conducted according to historical research methodology. The object of study is both an isolated event, the conflict in Oman in the 1960s and seventies, and a process whereby both Omani attitudes and political leadership as well as British policy and conduct changed. All sources gathered are critically analyzed, both externally, in regard

to context and authenticity, and internally, in order to extract the most useful information from each source.[6]

Using Mumford's framework aids in preventing bias in the interpretation of sources, as the sources and their content are tested against the components of the theoretical model. The archival resources are not mined for meaning according to the researcher's arbitrary internal interpretations but according to the level of fit with the propositions laid out by Mumford. Influencing this research is the Rankean motto to "show how things actually were," something to which this thesis aspires.[7] The desire of many scholars to understand counter-insurgency policy as a cohesive and uniform representation of underlying principles or lack thereof often leads to the exclusion of valuable information and cases which would cast doubt on the general patterns the scholars so desire, yet which illuminate the understanding of the historical period. To investigate the process of counter-insurgency in Oman, the sources for this research are compiled in pursuit of gaining an immersive understanding of the multitude of interconnected factors, which may not support the claims of scholars on either side of the British counter-insurgency debate who want to explain historical realities with theories divorced from context and complexity.

Literature Review

British Counter-Insurgency Policy

On one side of the scholarly discussion surrounding British counter-insurgency policy there are the orthodox thinkers whose theses are in line with the public-facing British military

[6] John Tosh and Seán Lang, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 4th ed. (London: Pearson, 2016), 88–110.
[7] Tosh and Lang, 9–10.

doctrine of winning hearts and minds and using minimum force. One of the most prominent of these thinkers is Thomas Mockaitis whose two works on British counter-insurgency relay a narrative of consistent doctrinal principles with varying degrees of application. The principles, according to Mockaitis, have at least guided the use of force if not completely prevented its excessive form. Another notable claim of Mockaitis' work is that the conflict in Malaya, which took place from 1948 to 1960, marked the solidification of a previously-uncoordinated British counter-insurgency strategy.[8] Thinkers on the other side of the debate, such as Mumford, would argue that British strategy has remained uncoordinated into the 21st century. Mockaitis himself contests his placement within the orthodox school, as he believes his views are more nuanced than those who argue the outright supremacy of British counter-insurgency policy,[9] such as Rod Thornton, a scholar who those on the other side of the debate believe to erroneously subscribe to the British counter-insurgency myth. The name indicates a position which has grown in popularity since the early 2000s: that the notion of British exemplary conduct in counter-insurgency operations is not reflected in practice but only in myth.

David French, a historian who focuses on the modern British Army is a major voice aiming to discredit what he sees as the British counter-insurgency myth. French focuses on the illusion of the 'hearts and minds' tactic, which took root in the public and academic perception of British counter-insurgency but, according to French, is not reflected internally in British policy.[10] The real tactic was that of coercion, of forcefully commanding the local population and communicating that they were to fall in line or be punished.[11] Clive Jones

[8] Raffi Gregorian, "Review of *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era*," *SAIS Review* 16, no. 2 (1996): 192, https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/sais.1996.0027.
[9] Thomas R. Mockaitis, "The Minimum Force Debate: Contemporary Sensibilities Meet Imperial Practice," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (October 2012): 772–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2012.709766.
[10] David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2011), 174–200.
[11] French, 105–38.

echoes a similar statement in his article "Military Intelligence and the War in Dhofar: An Appraisal," where he writes that one aspect of hearts and minds was overt threats and coercion that made clear to those not on the side of the government that their lives and livelihoods were at risk.[12] As for the doctrine of 'minimum force', French asserts that this particular myth of British counter-insurgency developed due to the specific conflicts in which the British Army was predominantly engaged;[13] those conflicts did not warrant maximum force, says French, but the mistake is in thinking that the British were neither prepared nor willing to use maximum force in conflicts where they deemed it necessary.[14]

With regard to the scholarly conversation around British counter-insurgency policy, Andrew Mumford falls in line with those arguing that the notion of British counter-insurgency success is more myth than reality, yet Mumford's approach is different in that he attempts not only to provide a descriptive account of British counter-insurgency but to provide an entirely new framework through which to view British COIN conduct.[15]

The Conflict in Oman: 1964 - 1975

Walter C. Ladwig III and Marc DeVore provide two prominent comprehensive accounts of the conflict in Oman and Britain's involvement there, isolating the various factors which they believe to have led to success. Ladwig shines light on the particular difficulties posed by the poor political and military infrastructure and the challenging terrain of Dhofar. Ladwig's crucial contribution for the scope of this thesis is his exposition of Anglo-Omani relations before and during the 1960s and seventies, which rested on the idea of the "special

[12] Clive Jones, "Military Intelligence and the War in Dhofar: An Appraisal," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 3 (2014): 7, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2014.913743.
[13] John Newsinger, "Review Article: *The British Counter-Insurgency Myth*," *Race & Class* 55, no. 1 (July 2013): 95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396813486609.
[14] Newsinger, 95.
[15] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.

relationship" between the governments of the two countries, which involved a level of mutual respect and autonomy uncommon in British foreign relations with non-Western countries.[16] While Ladwig lauds the counter-insurgency effort in Oman as exemplary, DeVore questions whether the conflict serves as an adequate template for other counter-insurgency operations due to its unique reliance on conventional military methods often not found in irregular warfare. DeVore identifies the conflict's turning point as the arrival of international military aid from non-British allies, whereas Ladwig places importance on the transition of power from Sultan Said, the ruler of Muscat and Oman from 1932 to 1970, to his son, Qaboos bin Said (hereafter, Qaboos or Sultan Qaboos), who ruled from 1970 to 2020. Offering a third perspective, Clive Jones puts forth a view informed by primary-source research that the most integral factor for counter-insurgent success in Oman was the intelligence effort and that the establishment of an adequate intelligence system with British assistance marked the critical point of the conflict.[17]

The dominant accounts of the conflict acknowledge the difference in the counter-insurgency dynamics before and after 1970, but some present contradictory accounts of the tactics which characterized the early period of the conflict in the 1960s. Geraint Hughes attributes the root of early retaliatory measures against tribal populations in Dhofar to Sultan Said who commanded the SAF, including the British officers within the force, to carry out severe punitive measures on the Dhofari civilians who aided the rebels.[18] John Newsinger, a staunch critic of British counter-insurgency policy, offers a contrasting view, identifying the British as the source of the violent reprisals.[19] This divergence illustrates a common tendency

[16] Walter C. Ladwig, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 1 (March 2008): 66, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310801905793.
[17] Jones, "The War in Dhofar: An Appraisal."
[18] Geraint Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965–1975," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2009): 279–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390902743357.
[19] John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, 2nd ed., 2015, 149.

to trace all counter-insurgent action in Oman to the British without taking into account the delicate interplay of the host-nation government and the intervening government, in this case the Sultanate authorities and British personnel, both in Whitehall and the Gulf. Nikolas Gardner criticizes the predominant assumption that the British exercised complete autonomy in Oman under the guise of Sultan Qaboos' leadership; Gardner suggests that Sultan Qaboos' held much more decision-making power than typically thought. Much of the past scholarship on the topic of the Dhofar Rebellion has relied heavily on secondary source materials, but research conducted since the 2000s, as a result of mass declassifications of documents due to the United Kingdom's 'Thirty-Year Rule',[20] has increasingly examined archival sources, an approach adopted by Gardner, Jones, Hughes and DeVore which this thesis aims to develop further.

Background

What came to be known as the Dhofar Rebellion began in 1964 when the remnants of a previous Islamist rebellion reactivated in the form of a series of mine explosions around Oman.[21] Initially, rebel activity was confined to targeting sites related to oil extraction or the British presence in Oman.[22] The rebels, who called themselves the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), operated out of ideological opposition to the rule of Sultan Said bin Taimur whose opposition to modernization and reform perpetuated a poor quality of life for his subjects, particularly those in the geographically-isolated region of Dhofar [see Figures 1 and 2].[23] The

[20] Since 2013, the 'Thirty-Year Rule' has been changed to twenty years. The Rt Hon Lord Taylor of Holbeach CBE, "Twenty-Year Rule on Public Records," GOV.UK, accessed March 18, 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/twenty-year-rule-on-public-records.
[21] J.S.R. Duncan, British Consul General, Muscat to F.D.W Brown, British Residency, Bahrain, Dhofar Mine Incidents, Letter, September 5, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[22] Brown to J.A. Snellgrove, Arabian Department, Foreign Office, London, "Incidents in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman January 1 - November 3 1964," Letter, November 10, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[23] Clive Jones, "Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain's War in Dhofar, 1970-1976," *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (2011): 559; Marc R. DeVore, "A More Complex and Conventional Victory: Revisiting the Dhofar

DLF enjoyed the support of both the local population of Dhofar and the leaders of other Arab countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, who believed that the rebel movement offered a better political plan than the Sultan who refused to engage with other Arab countries and worked closely with the nation whose influence in the Gulf pan-Arab movements sought to eradicate.[24]

Figure 1 Map of Oman[25]

Counterinsurgency, 1963–1975," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 1 (March 2012): 146, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2012.632861.

[24] Sir D. Riches to Foreign Office, "Omani Rebels," Telegram, June 23, 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA; J.A.N. Graham to A.E.D. Chamier, Arabian Department, "Sultan of Muscat," Letter, February 16, 1967, FCO 8/574, AGDA; A.J. Johnstone to J.R. Rich, British Residency, Bahrain, Ghalib Bin Ali's Visit to Damascus, Letter, February 28, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA.

[25] Sufian Abdel-Gadir, "Map of Oman With Key Ports," in *The Role of FDI in Enhancing Oman's Ports Sector - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Oman-with-key-ports_fig1_329062532.

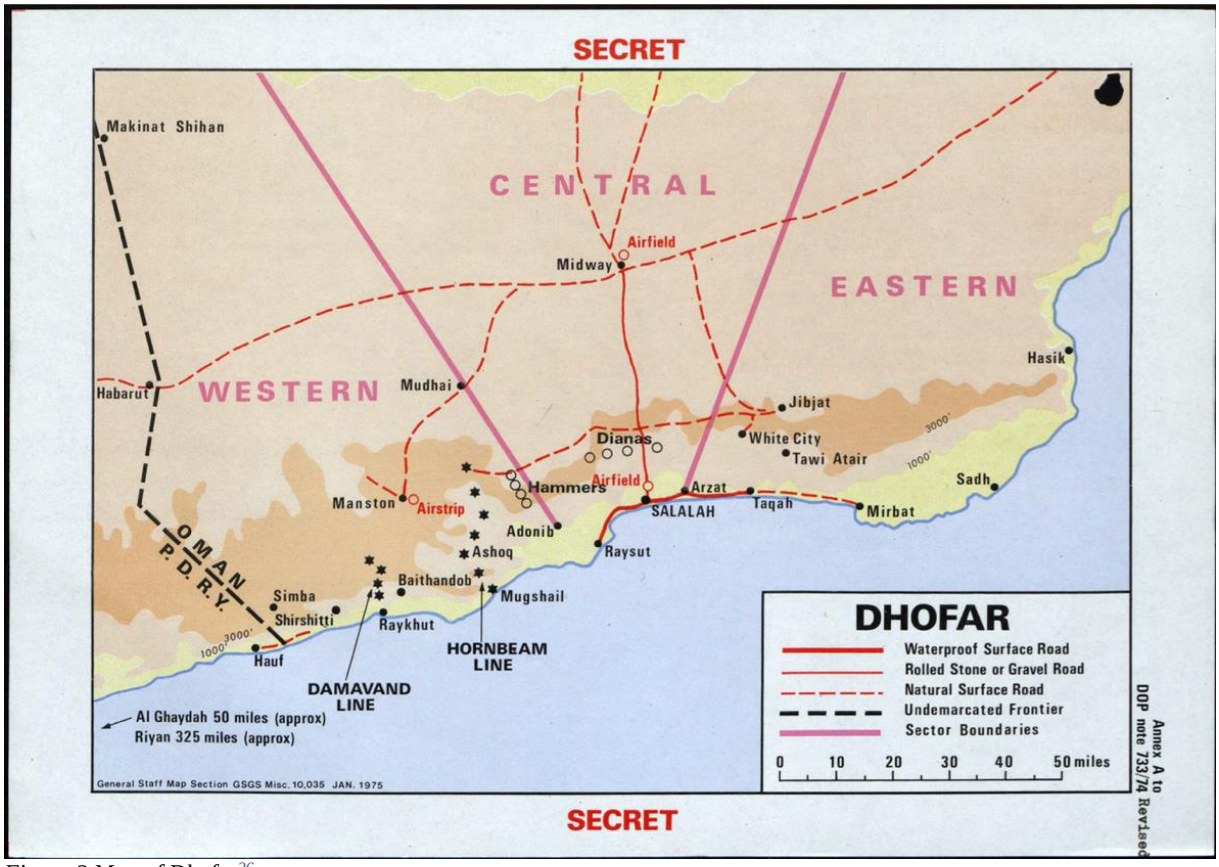

Figure 2 Map of Dhofar[26]

The rebels began staging increasingly sophisticated attacks which culminated in a May 1966 ambush that killed eight members of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and garnered international attention.[27] In 1967, due to political changes in Britain, a policy of withdrawal from 'East of Suez' drastically changed the state of the Dhofar Rebellion, which surged in strength as Marxism gained a foothold in South Yemen in the form of the Chinese- and Soviet-backed National Liberation Front (NLF).[28] The rebels found themselves suddenly flush with a wealth of resources from the two largest Communist powers and a safe haven from which they could operate with practical impunity.[29] However, the new ideology which came with that support would eventually undermine the popular support of the Dhofari

[26] Defence Operational Planning Staff, Operational Deployments in Dhofar, Map, January 1975, FCO 8/2477, AGDA.
[27] Ladwig, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency," 66–67; Sir W. Luce, British Residency, Bahrain to Foreign Office, "Dhofar Rebels," Telegram, May 27, 1966, FO 371/185365, AGDA; W.H.G. Fletcher, Canadian Embassy, (British Interests Section), Cairo to M. Weir, Arabian Department, "Cairo Radio Report on the Dhofar Ambush," Letter, June 2, 1966, FO 371/185365, AGDA.
[28] DeVore, "A More Complex and Conventional Victory," 147–48.
[29] Jones, "Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain's War in Dhofar, 1970-1976," 561.

people that had sustained the rebellion in its early years;[30] nonetheless, the rebels held a decisive edge for several years, changing their name to the Peoples Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PLFOAG) in 1968 and gradually coming to control 80% of Dhofar.[31]

Although the British wanted to remain at a politically-safe distance from the internal politico-military affairs of the Sultanate, fearing a "mini Vietnam",[32] they remained closely involved in defending the Sultanate from the insurgent threat in order to protect their economic interest in Oman's oil production and, more importantly, the strategic military foothold of Masirah Island, which the British were able to use in exchange for maintaining the airfield at Salalah.[33] The British had advised Sultan Said about the strategic avenues at his disposal, but the Sultan frequently disregarded British advice and preferred his traditional methods of ruling to British proposals about civil development or reconciliation with exiled rebels.[34] The Sultan's inactivity ultimately led to his overthrow in a coup long-speculated and recently, as of 2009, confirmed by a BBC investigation to have been orchestrated by the British whereby the former Sultan was replaced by his son, Qaboos bin Said Al Said.[35]

From 1970 onwards, the counter-insurgency efforts were characterized by an increased focus on civil development measures aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the Dhofaris, a policy accompanied by an augmented defense budget and more aggressive

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[30] DeVore, "A More Complex and Conventional Victory," 146–48.
[31] Ibid., 150.
[32] D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat, "Record of a Meeting with His Majesty the Sultan on 17 October," Minute, October 23, 1972, FCO 8/1857, AGDA.
[33] Duncan to Sir W. Luce, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, H.M.G.'s Future Relationship with the Sultanate, Letter, July 15, 1965, FO 371/179819, AGDA; "Annex A to DP 20/73(C)(Preliminary Draft)," Draft Paper, [October] 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA.
[34] McCarthy, "Talks With Oman Rebels," Minute, September 15, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA; D.C. Carden, British Consul General, Muscat to Sir S. Crawford, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, "A Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar," Report, October 8, 1966, FO 371/185365, AGDA.
[35] Mike Thompson, "Document, Britain and the Oman Coup," *BBC Radio 4*, November 23, 2009, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ny7nb; Jones, "Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain's War in Dhofar, 1970-1976," 562.

military action made possible by the military and financial support to the Sultanate from Arab governments with whom Sultan Qaboos had forged diplomatic ties.[36] Despite the advantage being passed back and forth from the insurgents to the counter-insurgents for several years, steady progress at clearing rebels from the Jebel, the mountainous region of Dhofar, and increasing success at meeting the material needs of the peoples of Dhofar brought the counter-insurgents to victory in 1975.[37] On December 11th, Sultan Qaboos declared that the Dhofar Rebellion was over.[38] The methods which brought about this triumph and the role the British played in the campaign are explored in depth in this thesis.

[36] Colonel H. Oldman, Defence Secretary of the Sultanate of Oman, "The Dhofar Rebellion - An Evaluation," Paper, [August] 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA; Secretary of State's Office, "Record of a Meeting Between His Majesty Sultan Qaboos of Oman and the Secretary of State for Defence at Claridges on Tuesday 11th September 1973," Minute, September 13, 1973, FCO 8/2013, AGDA.
[37] Colonel C.E. Welch, Defence Attache Muscat to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," Report, November 29, 1973, FCO 8/2233, AGDA; C.J. Treadwell, British Ambassador to Muscat to Foreign Office, "Dhofar War", Telegram, November 24, 1975, FCO 8/2473, AGDA.
[38] Treadwell, "Dhofar Rebellion", Telegram, December 11, 1975, FCO 8/2473, AGDA.

Chapter 1: Military Effectiveness

The factors which Mumford identifies as crucial to any counter-insurgency campaign provide a useful framework through which to examine the unique type of conflict which is irregular warfare, and Mumford's provision of the categories of military action which are paramount to British counter-insurgency operations guided the research for this thesis. However, Mumford's assertion that his model provides "the major causal and impacting factors contributing to success or failure in counter-insurgency" overstates his framework's explanatory power.[1] Mumford posits that within the dimension of military effectiveness, the integral elements are the doctrine of minimum force, the implementation of past lessons in counter-insurgency, the winning of civilian hearts and minds, and the use of turned insurgents.[2] This chapter argues that while such elements were present in counter-insurgency operations in Oman, there is an unaccounted-for obstacle between the British promulgation of such strategies and their effectuation: the host-nation government.

1.1 Minimum Force

Despite some scholars' contentions that the doctrine of minimum force is part of the British illusion of counter-insurgency proficiency, decisions about the use of force during the Dhofar Rebellion depict a narrative of the British advocacy for restraint which often went unheeded by the Sultans. The question about the agents behind excessive force raises an important issue which runs through this thesis regarding the absence of a monolithic British power. British individuals were involved in counter-insurgency operations to varying degrees and from varying perspectives; there were those British politicians and officials making

[1] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[2] Mumford, chap. 1.

decisions from Whitehall, those in the field in Oman and other Gulf countries, and those within the Sultan's Armed Forces on secondment as soldiers and officers. Inter-departmental differences such as these challenge counter-insurgency operations, something evident in the case of the Dhofar Rebellion. One such example of administrative cleavages can be found in a disparaging remark from the British Middle East Department (within the Foreign Office) which was chastising "the military authorities in Oman" for letting their desire to win the war impinge on their logic.[3]

The behavior in question, which the Middle East Department and the British Ministry of Defence (MOD) were unhappy with, were cross-border operations being undertaken by British loaned-service personnel and a Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF) plan to bomb the Al-Gheida airport in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).[4] The push for cross-border operations and generally more offensive initiatives came from Sultan Qaboos who was facing increasing pressure to adopt a more aggressive approach from the governments financially and militarily backing the counter-insurgency.[5] Arab governments and the United States had begun to criticize the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the British for failing to decisively end the war, which the commentators believed the British had the power to do.[6] Such pressure had, months earlier in September 1973, influenced Sultan Qaboos to directly ask British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, and UK Defence Secretary Lord Carrington for a bombing campaign to be led by the Royal Air Force (RAF).[7] Political

[3] I.T.M. Lucas, Middle East Department, "Oman: Military Reporting," Brief, November 21, 1975, FCO 8/2471, AGDA.
[4] Lucas; Treadwell to Lucas, "Dhofar War," Letter, November 11, 1975, FCO 8/2474, AGDA.
[5] Welch to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," November 29, 1973; D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat, "Review of the Military Situation in Oman November 1973," Memorandum, November 11, 1973, FCO 8/2026, AGDA, https://www.agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/2026/n/84.
[6] Welch to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," November 29, 1973; Hawley, "Review of the Military Situation in Oman November 1973," November 11, 1973.
[7] M.I. Goulding to A.J. Coles, Private Secretary to Lord Balniel, "Conversation With the Sultan of Oman," Letter, September 14, 1973, FCO 8/2013, AGDA; P.R.H. Wright, Middle East Department to A.D. Parsons, "Secretary of State's Call on Sultan of Oman," Letter, September 13, 1973, FCO 8/2013, AGDA; "Record of a Conversation Between the Prime Minister and the Sultan of Oman at 5.15 PM on 11 September 1973 at No 10,"

concerns and the forecasted ineffectiveness of such a campaign resulted in a tactful refusal from the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary.[8]

The reasoning behind the decision not to grant the Sultan his request of RAF assistance in bombing the rebels exposes a central rationale behind the practical implementation in Oman of the British doctrine of minimum force, namely that it was motivated by political apprehension about international backlash for British involvement in such operations. The archives are replete with explicitly-stated opposition to certain military actions on the basis of potential political repercussions for the UK.[9] Despite the underlying reason being the avoidance of British involvement in politically-sensitive operations, the British, nonetheless, consistently advised the Sultan on the utility of minimum force operations, as demonstrated by their remonstrative responses to the Sultan's plans of an RAF-led bombing campaign, cross-border operations, the bombing of the Al Gheida airport, and even the use of Napalm.[10]

1.2 Implementation of Past Lessons

One of Mumford's principal claims is that the pattern of British counter-insurgency behavior "demonstrable from Malaya onwards" is characterized by a failure "to swiftly apply

Minute, September 11, 1973, FCO 8/2013, AGDA; Secretary of State's Office, "Record of a Meeting Between His Majesty Sultan Qaboos of Oman and the Secretary of State for Defence," September 13, 1973.

[8] B.E. Robson, Ministry of Defence, Whitehall to Wright, "Intervention by the Royal Air Force in Support of Operations in the Dhofar," Draft Communication, November 16, 1973, FCO 8/2023, AGDA; Lord Bridges to W.F. Mumford, Ministry of Defence, Possible RAF Intervention in Oman, Letter, November 16, 1973, FCO 8/2023, AGDA.

[9] Robson to Wright, "Intervention by the Royal Air Force," November 16, 1973; R.A. Lloyd-Jones, Ministry of Defence to Robson, "RAF Intervention in Oman," Letter, October 10, 1973, FCO 8/2023, AGDA; Wright to Parsons, "Secretary of State's Call on Sultan of Oman," September 13, 1973; Treadwell to Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, "Napalm," March 1975, FCO 8/2470, AGDA; Hawley to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Foreign Secretary, "Insurrection Trial," Telegram, June 17, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Secretary of State's Office, "Record of a Meeting Between HM Qabus Bin Said Bin Taimur, Sultan of Oman, and Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Defence, in Muscat on 12th April 1973," Minute, April 16, 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA; Treadwell to Lucas, "Dhofar War," November 11, 1975.

[10] Treadwell to Ministry of Defence, "Napalm," March 1975.

lessons learnt from past campaigns".[11] The archival source material, however, refutes Mumford's assertion, as documents show that torpor in implementing past lessons was due to Sultan Said's insistence on operating according to his preferred methods. The British push to make use of their wealth of counter-insurgency experience took the form of conversations between British staff and Sultan Said, who rebuffed their suggestions. Two notable approaches of this kind are exposited here to demonstrate the importance of host-nation and intervening-nation governmental relations in the implementation of past counter-insurgency lessons.

In 1964, as the rebellion showed signs of an increasing seriousness, the British Consul General in Muscat, John Duncan, expressed concern about Sultan Said's inaction regarding the imposition of a collective fine on a Dhofari tribe suspected of involvement with an October mine incident and suggested pressing the Sultan on this matter to convey the importance of "early and firm action".[12] The British use of collective punishment in counter-insurgency was present in their response to the Kenyan Mau Mau insurgency and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, with collective punishment being criticized in both cases;[13] however, the advocacy for a financial penalty rather than mass detentions can be seen as evidence of changes in British behavior resulting from reflection on past lessons. Despite this, there remained barriers to the successful execution of Duncan's suggestion, namely the Sultan's unwillingness to improve intelligence channels between Dhofar and Muscat,[14] the Sultan's aversion to treating affairs in Dhofar with the same level of gravity as those within

[11] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[12] Duncan to Luce, "Salala Security," Telegram, October 28, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[13] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chaps. 3 and 5.
[14] Duncan to Brown, Dhofar Mine Incidents, Letter, September 5, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA; Brenchley to Duncan, Sultan's Response to Musallim Threat, Letter, October 21, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA; Duncan to Luce, Barriers to Addressing Musallim Threat, Letter, October 21, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.

the remainder of his country,[15] and his preference for "his own well-tried means of blackmail, bribe, and threat".[16]

A more explicit reference to lessons gained from the Malayan Emergency came from John Duncan's successor as British Consul General in Muscat, D.C. Carden, the following year. Carden had read Sir Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, a study of British counter-insurgency success written by a first-hand participant in British COIN operations in Malaya and Vietnam, which Carden planned to give the Sultan a copy of, noting that despite differences between the situation in Malaya and the situation in Dhofar, "there were major similarities too".[17] Carden's main conclusion from the book was the importance of civil development works, and he suggested to the Sultan that he might provide the Marbat tribe in Dhofar with veterinary assistance for their cattle and means for increasing agricultural yields, but the Sultan cited the Dhofaris' "devious" character and their mindset that slaves were to conduct agricultural work as reasons why such aid would prove futile.[18] While Carden acknowledged that the Sultan was more culturally aware than he and other British observers, Carden was nonetheless concerned about the Sultan's reluctance to implement any kind of assistance to the Dhofaris.[19] This type of interaction is emblematic of the Anglo-Omani relations which took place during Sultan Said's rule, but perhaps even more illuminating is a quote by Carden himself following his conversation with the Sultan which demonstrates the importance British field staff ascribed to the implementation of past lessons:

> So it looks as though the insurgency will drag on; and if that happens it seems that the best that we can do will be to work for ameliorations such as the amnesty, and the

[15] Brenchley to F.J. Burlace, Ministry of Defence, Request for Aid from UK in Transporting SAF, Letter, October 29, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[16] Duncan to Brown, Punitive Action Against the Bait Kathir, Letter, September 28, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[17] Carden to Crawford, "A Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar," October 8, 1966.
[18] Carden to Crawford.
[19] Carden to Crawford.

> channelling [sic] of some development projects to Dhofar, at the same time hoping that wealth may make the Sultan generally more liberal, or that external events may lessen foreign support for the rebels.[20]

1.3 Hearts and Minds and the Use of Turned Insurgents

Securing indigenous support by winning civilian hearts and minds and encouraging rebels to defect to the counter-insurgent side has been a core tenet of British counter-insurgency theory, but critics call attention to the failed execution of the doctrine of hearts and minds in the history of British counter-insurgency operations.[21] As demonstrated by the previous section, slowness in effectuating the strategies garnered from previous counter-insurgency experience stemmed from Sultan Said rather than the British; Sultan Said perpetuated the same pattern in regards to winning civilian hearts and minds. It is posited here that the British support of Sultan Qaboos' accession to power stemmed from a belief that Sultan Qaboos better understood the value of the policy of hearts and minds and a recognition of the importance of the host-nation government in implementing the COIN strategies which lead to success. The specific civil development operations which led to counter-insurgent success in Oman have been examined in several scholarly works; therefore, this section adopts a broad approach that, in line with the thesis of this research, examines the impact of the Anglo-Omani relationship on the execution of a policy of winning civilian hearts and minds.

In the early years of the rebellion, the British entertained approaches by exiled rebels to their embassies in various Gulf countries, and it became clear that a central issue fueling

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[20] Carden to Crawford, "A Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar," October 8, 1966.
[21] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*; Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*; French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967*.

the rebellion was Sultan Said's refusal to modernize or develop Oman.[22] In that period when the rebellion was fueled by genuine social and political complaints, a concession from the Sultan could have been the difference between a few years of conflict and a decade. When British field staff in Oman questioned the Sultan in 1965 about his plans for civil development, the Sultan's attitude was that of delaying any action until oil revenues were secured, which would mean inaction for two years, likely resulting in increasing civilian discontent and bolstering the rebels' claims to leadership.[23] The British were aware of the importance of hearts and minds at that stage and tried to impress this upon the Sultan while at the same time avoiding incurring his anger or his insistence that the British fund all proposed projects.[24] However, by 1967 when the character of the rebellion changed, there was an increased danger in the Sultan's habit of "finding logical reasons for doing nothing", as one British observer put it.[25] Sultan Said's son, Sayyid Qaboos, on the other hand, demonstrated a keen awareness about the importance of civil development in extinguishing the ideological fire behind the rebels' activity.[26]

Qaboos' stance on civil development was reported by one British observer in 1966 and circulated amongst the various British offices within the UK and abroad.[27] The Sultan's son's thoughts were of particular interest to the British when they discussed the optimal

[22] Johnstone, Notes on Meetings with Exiled Rebels, Minute, July 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA; H.B. Walker, British Embassy, Cairo to McCarthy, Muhammed Al-Harithi's Interest in Visiting London, Letter, November 18, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA; Wright, Notes on Meeting with Talib Bin Ali Al Hina'i, Minute, August 20, 1968, FCO 8/572, AGDA.
[23] Luce, "Record of a Conversation Between the Political Resident and the Sultan in Salalah on 27 March 1965," Minute, March 1965, FO 371/179819, AGDA; Luce to Brenchley, Report of a Conversation with the Sultan, Letter, April 4, 1965, FO 371/179819, AGDA.
[24] Duncan to Brown, Barriers to Addressing Musallim Threat, Letter, October 21, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[25] McCarthy to Duncan, Evaluating the Sultan's Response to Initial Incidents, Letter, September 21, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[26] Carden to Crawford, "A Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar," October 8, 1966.
[27] Carden to Crawford; Brenchley to Crawford, Response to Carden's 'Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar,' Letter, October 14, 1966, FO 371/185365, AGDA.

recipient of British support in the event of Sultan Said's death.[28] By 1968, another similar conversation was reported, this time between Qaboos and D.C. Carden.[29] The then-Consul General recounted Qaboos' thoughtful response about his hypothetical actions in the event of his father's death, and after little deliberation, it was established that the ideal candidate for British support "looks like being Qabus [sic] supported by Tariq".[30] Qaboos' uncle Tariq would indeed go on to become Prime Minister of Oman and Qaboos the Sultan following a coup in 1970. The accession of Sultan Qaboos represented a glimmer of hope for the British that the necessary civil development projects would shortly be underway in Dhofar. The British expectation that Qaboos would prioritize winning civilian hearts and minds can be shown by their orchestration of a counter-insurgency strategist's visit to Dhofar for the strategist, Colonel John Watts, to prepare a five-point COIN plan in anticipation of Qaboos' takeover.[31]

Colonel Watts' strategies would eventually be those which civil development efforts in Dhofar centered around, but the problem that plagued the minds of the British observers was the slow pace at which they were enacted. If the British had indeed been pulling the strings behind the Qaboos Administration, then civil development would have taken a larger role beginning in 1970 and would have progressed at a more rapid rate; however, the trend that emerged was that of small incremental successes combined with a recurring British call for more civil development action.[32]

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[28] Carden to Crawford, "Consequences of the Sultan's Sudden Death," Letter, January 25, 1968, FCO 8/574, AGDA; Crawford to Weir, "Consequences of the Sultan's Sudden Death," Letter, February 14, 1968, FCO 8/574, AGDA.
[29] Carden to Weir, "Talib," Letter, September 15, 1968, FCO 8/572, AGDA.
[30] Carden to Weir; Crawford to Weir, "Consequences of the Sultan's Sudden Death," February 14, 1968.
[31] Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised," 282.
[32] T.M. Creasey, Commander of Sultan's Armed Forces to Commander Dhofar Brigade, "Post Monsoon Operations," Letter, June 19, 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA; Creasey to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, "The Direction of the War," Letter, June 19, 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA; Hawley to Wright, "Visit to Dhofar," Letter, January 21, 1973, FCO 8/2023, AGDA; D.G. Crawford, British Consulate General, Muscat to Wright, "Dhofar," Letter, April 18, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA; Creasey, First Ten Days as CSAF, Paper, September 29, 1972, FCO 8/1865, AGDA.

In June 1971, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf stated that progress in Dhofar necessitated a combination of military force, civil development, and, crucially, Sultan Qaboos' awareness of the importance of winning Dhofari hearts and minds.[33] British officials advised the Sultan on the value of not only providing civil assistance to the rebel's base of indigenous support but of making those efforts widely known.[34] They also counseled the Sultan to consider providing the Dhofaris with some semblance of political autonomy and announcing such a scheme at the celebration of the one-year anniversary of Qaboos' rule, but the Sultan ultimately excised the topic from his speech at the event.[35] Despite the initial period of Qaboos' muted engagement with British advisors on the topic of civil development, his attitude appeared to have drastically changed by fall of 1971. In September, when issues such as increasing the standard of living in Dhofar, granting the Dhofaris some administrative authority, and motivating the *firqat* forces [*firqats* were turned insurgents who held a crucial role in counter-insurgent military strategy, providing intelligence and operating with ease and expertise on the challenging terrain of Dhofar] were raised with the Sultan, he responded with an enthusiastic commitment to set those projects in motion, promising to speed up development projects and grant administrative or military jobs to the *firqats* who achieved the combat goals.[36] Although the years following the Sultan's change in attitude towards civil development saw abundant injunctions from British advisors on the need to further advance civil development works, the rule of Sultan Qaboos was, as the British had hoped, a boon in the mission to win civilian hearts and minds.

Managing the *firqat* forces proved to be a crucial point of cooperation between the British and Omani governments, as the British Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces

[33] Sir G. Arthur, Political Resident, Bahrain to Hawley, Brigadier Semple's Assessment of the Dhofar Situation, Telegram, June 11, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[34] P. Dun, Arabian Department, "Situation in Dhofar," Minute, June 22, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[35] R.D. Hart, Secretary, "Record of Meeting: Dhofar," Minute, August 7, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA; Hawley to Arthur, Response to Brigadier Semple's Assessment, Telegram, June 12, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[36] Arthur, Long Conversation With Sultan Qaboos, Telegram, September 29, 1971, FCO 8/1668, AGDA.

(SAF) was responsible for their organization and leadership, but the Sultan was responsible for incentivizing their participation on the counter-insurgent side, as any semblance of national loyalty felt by the *firqats* was towards him alone.[37] Additionally, the rewards promised to the *firqats* were guarantees like government or military jobs following the insurgency's end, incentives which solely Qaboos had the authority to grant.[38] Despite their combat utility, motivating the *firqat* to fight on behalf of the Sultanate was an issue as was countering the insurgents' propaganda that sought to capitalize on the unsteady loyalty of the *firqats*.[39] Regarding the *firqats*, the British brought their expertise on managing turned insurgents to the table, but implementing such lessons fell to Sultan Qaboos, who needed to provide the *firqats* with an inspiring vision of what their future could be should they fight for the Sultanate.[40] The dangerous possibility which concerned British advisors was that the *firqats* "could become the nucleus of a new rebel movement", a worry which crystallized the importance of effective organization of the *firqats*.[41] In 1972, Timothy Creasey, having assumed the position of the Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces (CSAF), identified civil strategies aimed at raising *firqat* morale as being of primary importance and suggested that once a certain level of stability has been established in a given area, a water source will be developed, the *firqat* will be based in the area, and a team of critical figures will be deployed to meet administrative, medical, educational, and basic needs.[42] These steps, General Creasey believed, would motivate the *firqats* and provide visible signs of development for all citizens on the Jebel.[43]

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[37] Oldman, "The Dhofar Rebellion - An Evaluation," [August] 1971; J.D.C. Graham, Commander Sultan's Armed Forces, "CSAF's Assessment of the Military Situation in Dhofar as at 14 February 1972," Paper, February 17, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA.
[38] Arthur, Long Conversation, September 29, 1971.
[39] Arthur to Hawley, Semple's Assessment, June 11, 1971; Hawley to A.A. Acland, Arabian Department, Impression of the Situation in Dhofar, Letter, October 24, 1971, FCO 8/1668, AGDA.
[40] R.D. Hart, Secretary, "Record of Meeting: Dhofar," [August 7], 1971; R.C. Gibbs, Commander British Forces Gulf, Sitrep on Firqats, Telegram, June 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[41] Crawford to Wright, "Dhofar," April 18, 1971.
[42] Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, "The Direction of the War," June 19, 1973.
[43] Creasey to Sultan Qaboos.

In November 1973, it was reported that the *firqats'* organization and combat ability were more advanced than in the past, due to the establishment of a central command, and in 1975, the *firqats* were expressing independent interest in defending the tribal areas from which they originally came, demonstrating that efforts in motivating them had been ultimately successful.[44] The successful campaign to persuade the *firqats* to fight on behalf of the Sultanate was only possible due to Sultan Qaboos' close cooperation with Creasey to transform the latter's plans into concrete actions. The conclusion which can be drawn from the role of the *firqats* in the Dhofar Rebellion is not only the utility of turned insurgents generally but also the importance of joint effort on the parts of the host-nation government and the intervening government in managing and motivating turned insurgents.

[44] Welch to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," November 29, 1973; UK Defence Operational Planning Staff, "The Progress of Operations in Oman," Paper, February 3, 1975, FCO 8/2477, AGDA.

Chapter 2: Political Management

Regarding the political dimension of counter-insurgency operations, Mumford states: "counter-insurgency operations are inescapably political in their scope".[1] In *The Counter-Insurgency Myth,* Mumford points to the need to understand the political goals that define the reasons for counter-insurgent operations, the process by which the counter-insurgent agents oppose the insurgent group's ideology, and the way in which the civil-military divide is successfully or unsuccessfully bridged.[2] Although the archival documents corroborate Mumford's assertion that political motives underscored British counter-insurgent action in Oman, this section explores the three core political aspects identified by Mumford while addressing the way in which the British relationship with the host-nation government of Oman impacted the process of transforming political goals into concrete COIN operations.

2.1 The Political Aims Behind Military Action

The military staging post on Masirah Island defined British involvement in Oman, but the British needed to continually redefine their goals and actions according to both Sultans' changing attitudes regarding the desired level of British involvement. Not only did the volatile positions of the Sultans necessitate British readjustment, but political changes in Whitehall kept motivations for counter-insurgency involvement constantly evolving. The underlying reason, therefore, for British military, financial, and political support for the Sultanate in the Dhofar Rebellion was preventing the rise to power of a regime which would undermine their access to the strategic foothold of Masirah.

[1] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[2] Mumford, chap. 1.

Per the 1958 Exchange of Letters between the United Kingdom and the Sultanate of Oman and Muscat, the former's Royal Air Force (RAF) retained the right to use Masirah Island in Oman as a staging post from which the RAF could launch operations in fulfillment of British military commitments farther East.[3] In exchange for the use of Masirah, the RAF were required to maintain the airfield at Salalah, thereby reducing the administrative and financial strain on the Sultanate.[4] An agreement that may seem of little importance on the face of it, British involvement in Oman was inextricably linked with this *quid pro quo*.[5] Not only were the British committed to keeping their rights to Masirah Island, but protecting the lives of the RAF personnel who were required to operate the Salalah airfield also generated British support for the counter-insurgency.[6] Although – particularly in the early years of the rebellion – British involvement was related to the protection of their oil interests in Oman, as oil revenues failed to meet expectations, the importance of Masirah remained unchanged and the British responded by increasing financial support.[7] In discussions about British involvement in the Dhofar Rebellion, Masirah is frequently referenced as the key factor with oil interests playing a supporting, but not foundational, role.[8]

Despite the requirement that the British were to operate the Salalah airfield in exchange for the use of Masirah, officials were frequently strategizing about how to get off

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[3] D. Pragnell, "Salalah and Masirah Lease," Minute, January 21, 1968, FO 1016/803, AGDA; A.J.D. Stirling, Arabian Department to A.B. Urwick, Washington, "Masirah," Letter, March 6, 1968, FO 1016/803, AGDA; Parsons to Luce, "Masirah and Salalah," Letter, August 16, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[4] Crawford to Carden, "Staging Post in the Sultanate," Letter, January 19, 1968, FO 1016/803, AGDA.
[5] McCarthy to Crawford, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, British Interests, Letter, November 6, 1969, FO 1016/804, AGDA; "Draft Paper for an Incoming Government: The Persian Gulf, Including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Muscat and Oman and Oil," Draft Paper, [1970], FCO 8/1315, AGDA; Parsons to Mr. Renwick Private Secretary, British Involvement in Dhofar, Letter, January 17, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA; "Visit of Sultan Qaboos," Paper, [September 1973], FCO 8/2013, AGDA; Lloyd-Jones to Defence Policy Staff, "Revised Paragraphs for Annex A to DP 20/73(C)(Preliminary Draft)," Draft Paper, October 5, 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA.
[6] Crawford to Carden, "Staging Post in the Sultanate," January 19, 1968; Luce to Foreign Office, "Salalah Defence," Telegram, October 6, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[7] Hawley, "British Assistance to Oman," Memorandum, October 23, 1972, FCO 8/1668, AGDA; Foreign Office, "Financial Assistance to the Sultanate of Oman," Paper, November 1972, FCO 8/1865, AGDA.
[8] McCarthy to Crawford, British Interests, November 6, 1969; "Draft Paper for an Incoming Government," [1970]; Parsons to Renwick, British Involvement in Dhofar, January 17, 1972; "Visit of Sultan Qaboos," [September 1973]; Lloyd-Jones to Defence Policy Staff, "Revised Paragraphs for Annex A," October 5, 1973.

the Salalah "hook", as they termed it.[9] In 1968, as the British began to execute a broad policy of withdrawal from the Gulf, minimizing the responsibility at Salalah was imperative.[10] But any suggestion of scaling back RAF maintenance of the airfield was bound to cause difficulties with Sultan Said, who would expect that as the British left Salalah, they would also be leaving behind their right to Masirah if the British did not provide an alternate way of upholding the deal.[11] However, in the summer of 1971, the situation in Dhofar had worsened to such an extent that British administrators were discussing the possibility of giving up their prized staging rights to Masirah in pursuance of disentanglement from the internal affairs of the Sultanate.[12] The consideration was short-lived, and reports from the British Ambassador to Muscat, D.F. Hawley, that Sultan Qaboos would perhaps not be as hostile to the idea of a transition of responsibility for RAF Salalah from British hands to Sultanate authorities as some external speculators had feared, reignited plans to jettison the British requirement at Salalah while retaining rights at Masirah.[13] Hawley noted that securing any agreement with the Sultan would likely include the payment of higher rent for Masirah and assistance in reconfiguring the maintenance responsibility, but he observed that the key determinant would be a matter of timing.[14]

Ultimately, the plans that were discussed in 1971 did not materialize, and in 1974 the British political context which had framed their involvement in the Dhofar Rebellion was drastically changed by a Defence Review which generated a broad policy of scaling back

[9] Hawley to Acland, "Dhofar," Letter, January 25, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA; Hawley to Acland, "Dhofar: RAF Salalah," Letter, January 31, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA; R. McGregor, Arabian Department to Acland and D.G. Allen, Arabian Department, "RAF Salalah," Letter, February 8, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA; R.M. Tesh, Defence Department to Lloyd-Jones, "Dhofar: RAF Salalah," Letter, February 14, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA.
[10] Ministry of Defence Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Annex: A. Future of the RAF Station at Salalah," Paper, [December] 1968, FO 1016/803, AGDA; McCarthy to Crawford, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, "RAF Salalah," Letter, January 15, 1969, FO 1016/803, AGDA.
[11] McCarthy to Crawford.
[12] Parsons to Luce, "Masirah and Salalah," August 16, 1971; Luce to Mr. Egerton, "Masirah and Salalah," Letter, August 17, 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[13] Hawley to Acland, "Dhofar: RAF Salalah," January 31, 1972.
[14] Hawley to Acland, "Dhofar," January 25, 1972; Hawley to Acland, "Dhofar: RAF Salalah," January 31, 1972.

global military operations.[15] A draft of a debrief for the United States on the outcome of the UK's 1974 Defence Review stated that: "Britain is in the process of adjusting itself politically and psychologically to a new role as an influential middle-rank power without post-imperial pretentions."[16] The policy change meant that the utility of Masirah had completely evaporated, as the British would no longer need a position from which to launch military operations in the Far East.[17] But the process of extrication was far from simple: announcement of a withdrawal from Masirah and a reduction of the RAF presence at Salalah before the end of the insurgency would have galvanized the insurgents into increased activity and risked jeopardizing the financial support of Saudi Arabia and Iran, which was instrumental to bringing about the insurgency's conclusion.[18] There was tension between the MOD and British figures more closely involved with Gulf affairs as to whether a set date could be pursued for the withdrawal from Masirah, with the latter group advocating for a wait-and-see stance that would respond accordingly as the rebellion progressed.[19]

Between the end of 1974 and mid-1975, there was consensus among British policymakers and field staff that military support for the Sultanate's counter-insurgency campaign would remain unchanged despite the policy of global military cutbacks and the reduced need for Masirah.[20] Finally, a series of military successes signaled the approaching end of the Dhofar Rebellion, and gradual British withdrawal from Oman began, as had been

[15] Defence Department, "The Defence Review: Consultation With the United States," Draft Speaking Note, [December] 1974, FCO 8/2240, AGDA.
[16] Defence Department.
[17] Defence Department.
[18] Defence Department, "Gulf and Oman - Negotiations With the Americans," Draft Paper, [October] 1974, FCO 8/2240, AGDA.
[19] T.J. Clark, Middle East Department to Weir, "Defence Review: Oman," Letter, December 18, 1974, FCO 8/2240, AGDA; J. Callaghan, Foreign Secretary to Hawley, "Defence Review," Telegram, December 13, 1974, FCO 8/2240, AGDA; Lucas to Mr. Whitehead, "Chiefs of Staff Meeting Attendance of HM Ambassador Muscat," Letter, June 24, 1975, FCO 8/2478, AGDA.
[20] S. Webb to Chief Press Officer, Amendment to Defence Brief, Letter, December 17, 1974, FCO 8/2240, AGDA; Lucas to Weir, "Future Military Assistance to Oman," Letter, July 11, 1975, FCO 8/2478, AGDA.

hoped.[21] Sultan Qaboos begrudgingly consented to the end of the British requirement to maintain Salalah, and RAF and Army regiments at Salalah were relieved of their duties as well as other Royal Artillery, Royal Air Force, and loaned service personnel in various positions that were no longer vital for the counter-insurgency effort.[22] What can be gleaned from the narrative of the British attachment to Masirah and its impact on their involvement in the counter-insurgency campaign in Oman is that the political goals of the intervening-nation government which set the context for military action do not remain static throughout a given conflict but must constantly respond to changing conditions in the international political context and in the host-nation government. Furthermore, the maintained provision of military and financial aid to the Sultanate even after the goals that had initially defined involvement dissolved indicates that, not only are political goals being impacted by proximate international adjustments, but perhaps prolonged involvement in a conflict reduces the intervening nation's adherence to their original objectives.

2.2 Proposing a Counter-Ideology

When it came to countering the insurgents' claims of political legitimacy, the counter-insurgents called on British expertise in psychological operations (psy-ops) to ideologically battle the insurgents. Even before the rebellion had begun, British advisors sought to use psychological operations to prevent future rebel activity[23] Such early preventative action being undertaken by the British in Oman contradicts Mumford's contention that a characteristic of British counter-insurgency is a failure to take early and decisive action. The

[21] Qais Al-Zawawi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to H.E. Charge D'Affairs, HBM Embassy, Muscat, "United Kingdom Assistance - Loan Service Personnel," Letter, March 11, 1975, FCO 8/2470, AGDA.
[22] R. Mason, Secretary of State for Defence to H. Wilson, Prime Minister, "British Military Assistance to Oman," Minute, March 13, 1975, FCO 8/2470, AGDA; E.G.M. Chaplin, British Embassy, Muscat to R.A. Kealy, Middle East Department, "Operation Tenable," Letter, April 3, 1975, FCO 8/2470, AGDA.
[23] Sir G. Middleton, British Residency, Bahrain to R.A. Beaumont, Foreign Office, "Oman Operations," Letter, October 29, 1959, FCO 371/14072, AGDA.

hope in 1959 was that sending a British Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) squadron to train in Oman would have a "deterrent" effect on the Omani insurgents who had been involved in the previous Islamist rebellion as well as civilians who were unsure where to direct their influential support by showing both groups that fighting was futile due to the strength of the counter-insurgents.[24] Despite early psy-ops works, the subject would not regain relevance until after Sultan Qaboos' rise to power. With the British having little success when it came to giving Sultan Said politico-military suggestions, perhaps proposing a psy-ops campaign was a moot point. Under Sultan Qaboos, alternatively, a British psy-ops team would go on to utilize the incongruence of Islam and Marxism to demonstrate to the insurgents and the Dhofari civilians that the rebel aim was contrary to their faith.[25]

In 1971, the conflict situation dictated that the Sultanate urgently needed to launch a psy-ops campaign to prevent the insurgents from gaining more fighters.[26] Although countering the insurgents' ideology partially necessitated Sultanate civil development efforts, the psy-ops dimension was entirely British-led and relied on the British SAS squadron, the personnel of which were spread out over various roles under the label of British Army Training Teams (BATT).[27] However, despite the British team taking the initiative, the possibilities available to the BATT should not be overstated; the British Army Psyops Team was not immune from the administrative and financial difficulties in the Sultanate.[28] The responsibilities of the psyops team were "countering PFLOAG propaganda" via the Dhofari radio and "broadcasting propaganda to the enemy: from aircraft (sky shouting) and by means of shells filled with leaflets".[29] The success of such psyops efforts were assessed by the

[24] Middleton to Beaumont.
[25] Jones, "Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain's War in Dhofar, 1970-1976," 565; Jones, "The War in Dhofar: An Appraisal," 636.
[26] Hawley to Foreign Office, "Sitrep No. 2 as at 14 November," Telegram, November 19, 1971, FCO 8/1668, AGDA.
[27] Graham, "CSAF's Assessment," February 17, 1972.
[28] Graham.
[29] "Visit of Sultan Qaboos," [September 1973].

increasing numbers of rebel surrenders each month.[30] Further successes were later reported by the Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces, T.M. Creasey, whose involvement in the psychological side of the campaign demonstrates the presence of the inter-departmental communication that is crucial in a COIN operation.[31] The instrumentality of the psyops efforts in bringing about the end of the rebellion can be exhibited through a comparison of the number of rebel surrenders which totaled 9 in July 1973, when psyops were beginning to take effect, to between 63 and 100 in November 1975.[32] The transformation paints a picture of not only the successes of British psyops in Oman but also the hopeful atmosphere which can be detected in the situation reports of mid- to late-1975.[33]

2.3 Civil-Military Relations: The "Hinge"

Mumford identifies civil-military relations as integral to the British experience of counter-insurgency, as no counter-insurgency can succeed without coordinated efforts in both domains.[34] Specifically, Mumford points to the importance of a "decentralised decision-making structure".[35] In Oman, despite a British push for increased civil-military cooperation and collaborative decision-making on the Sultan's part, the civil-military "hinge", as D.F. Hawley labeled it, remained problematic throughout the rebellion.[36] Under Sultan Said, there

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[30] "Visit of Sultan Qaboos."
[31] Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, Report on Operation Jason, Report, January 4, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, "The Direction of the War," June 19, 1973.
[32] D.R. Gallwey, First Secretary for British Ambassador Muscat, "Dhofar: 'The End of the War,'" Letter, December 4, 1975, FCO 8/2473, AGDA; Treadwell to Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, "Sitrep No. 20," Telegram, November 1975, FCO 8/2473, AGDA; Treadwell to Lucas, "Dhofar War," November 11, 1975; Michael Parks, "Oman Reports Victory Over Marxist Guerrillas," *The Sun*, December 15, 1975, FCO 8/2473, AGDA.
[33] Gallwey, "Dhofar: 'The End of the War,'" December 4, 1975; Treadwell to Ministry of Defence, "Sitrep No. 20," November 1975; Treadwell to Lucas, "Dhofar War," November 11, 1975.
[34] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[35] Mumford, chap. 1.
[36] D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat, "Dhofar," Memorandum, February 26, 1972, FCO 8/1856, AGDA; D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat to M. Weir, Arabian Department, "Comments by HM Ambassador in Muscat on Final Review of the Situation by Major General T.M. Creasey, Commander Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces," Letter, January 12, 1975, FCO 8/2477, AGDA; D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat to Foreign Office, Comments on CSAF's Assessment, Letter, October 12, 1972, FCO 8/1865, AGDA.

was no structure which could be remotely considered decentralized.[37] The Sultan was notoriously hostile to any delegation of authority to other figures in the Sultanate.[38] Although the issue was never fully resolved under Sultan Qaboos, there is value in examining its improvement during his rule as it related to the level of British agency in Oman's COIN operation.

In 1972, D.F. Hawley first expressed his concern about the civil-military divide, yet just two years later would remark on the positive progress made on the subject;[39] so, what happened between 1972 and 1974 to alter the state of civil-military affairs? Hawley thought the Sultan's British Defence Secretary would be the key to improving civil-military relations,[40] but the progress stemmed more from the appointment of T.M. Creasey to Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces (CSAF) in September 1972. Creasey, disappointed in the defense structure he inherited, "persuaded the Sultan to set up and preside over a National Defence Council[…]"[41] But British influence did not end with Creasey, and the Head of Management Services (Organisation) Division of the MOD produced a report for Sultan Qaboos advising him on the optimal composition of the Council.[42] The aim of the Defence Council's establishment was to coordinate the military, intelligence, police, and economic sectors, but it also provided Creasey with more influence on COIN policy.[43] It is at this point that the British control over bridging the civil-military gap seemed to reach its limit, and solidification of the progress that had been made rested on the Sultan.

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[37] British Residency, Bahrain to Foreign Office, "Dhofar Incident," Telegram, August 17, 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA; Foreign Office to British Residency, Bahrain, "Dhofar Incident," Telegram, August 19, 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA; Duncan to Brown, Dhofar Mine Incidents, Letter, September 5, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA; Brown to S.J. Whitwell, POMEC, Aden, Dhofar Intelligence, Letter, August 25, 1964, FO 371/174555, AGDA.
[38] Brown to Whitwell, Dhofar Intelligence, August 25, 1964.
[39] Hawley, "Dhofar," February 26, 1972; D.F. Hawley, British Ambassador to Muscat to Sir A. Douglas-Home, Foreign Secretary, "Oman: Defence Attache's Report for 1973," Letter, January 20, 1974, FCO 8/2233, AGDA.
[40] Hawley, "Dhofar," February 26, 1972.
[41] Hawley to Douglas-Home, "Oman," January 20, 1974.
[42] Hawley to Douglas-Home.
[43] Hawley to Douglas-Home.

Civil administration throughout the Sultanate faced the challenging confrontation between traditional administrative methods and the new demands brought about by civil development [for instance, the Ministry of the Interior was too occupied with civil development work to perform their role of maintaining the loyalty of tribal leaders via "generous grants of land" or "appointments to public office"].[44] A further administrative hurdle was the shortage of adequately educated Omanis to fill governmental and administrative positions.[45] In 1974, it was reported that, despite the National Defence Council theoretically providing a more decentralized decision-making structure, "The Sultan still, however, makes all the important decisions and, apart from his ministerial posts, is Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the National Defence Council and the newly-created Council for Development."[46] Thus, despite the British efforts to decentralize COIN policy decisions, the traditional concentration of power in the Sultan and his authority persisted. That is not to say that the successes that D.F. Hawley and T.M. Creasey noted were chimerical; both figures attributed significant counter-insurgency progress to the improvement of the civil-military dynamic, but this episode demonstrates the limits of British control and reveals the inadequacy of Mumford's identification of civil-military relations as important without providing room in his framework for an analysis of the impact of host-nation and intervening-government relations on bridging the civil-military divide.

[44] Hawley to Callaghan, "The Anatomy of Oman," Report, October 31, 1974, FCO 8/2215, AGDA.
[45] Clark, The Sultan's Call on the Queen, Brief, December 1974, FCO 8/2244, AGDA.
[46] Clark, The Sultan's Call on the Queen, December 1974.

Chapter 3: Intelligence Gathering

Mumford notes that the intelligence effort both builds on the elements of military effectiveness and political management yet aids in their implementation as well.[1] He sees failure to establish intelligence operations as a core attribute of British counter-insurgency.[2] Nonetheless, Mumford uses the case studies of Malaya, Kenya, Aden and South Arabia, Northern Ireland, and Iraq to assert that successful British intelligence-gathering operations must exhibit the following characteristics:

> intelligence networks [being] grounded in the local community, with a reliable system of protection and rewards in place for indigenous intelligence agents; the intelligence gathering system [being] decentralised allowing for localised 'hot' intelligence to be acted upon without being lost in a hierarchy of authority; and […] the police, the military and government intelligence agencies [being] encouraged to share information at a local and national level.[3]

This chapter examines the intelligence effort in Oman through the lens of Mumford's three criteria, focusing on whether such elements were present and the ways in which their establishment was impacted by Anglo-Omani cooperation or lack thereof.

3.1. Insider Intelligence

The utilization of the local population for COIN intelligence in Oman revolved principally around the *firqats*, the turned insurgents who possessed invaluable knowledge of

[1] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[2] Mumford, chap. 1.
[3] Mumford, chap. 1.

the terrain, culture, and the inside of the rebel movement.[4] Before there were *firqats*, however, there were the exiled rebels and their approaches to British embassies in various Gulf countries, a situation which the British quickly incorporated into their intelligence-gathering efforts even before the rebellion's true inception. Despite early action, the archival evidence suggests a possible British failure to put the intelligence to use and make connections at a critical point in the insurgency.

In 1964, exiled rebel leaders from Oman's previous insurgency were approaching British diplomatic posts either themselves or through a proxy in an attempt to reach a favorable agreement about the terms, stipulated by Sultan Said, of their return to Oman.[5] In June, a rebel leader disclosed one of his and other rebels' reasons for wanting to repatriate, stating that they feared imminent foreign influence in Oman if rebel activity and fighting continued.[6] He specifically mentioned Chinese, Russian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, and Algerian powers.[7] Despite this information being circulated amongst several British offices, steps were not taken to investigate the matter further, an absence which hindsight reveals to have been an underestimation of the value of the information being provided.[8] The source of the oversights may have lay in the personnel who were entrusted with communication with the exiled rebels. Being those diplomats and field staff employed within British Diplomatic posts in various Gulf countries, several factors, such as insufficient information about the inner dynamics of the Oman conflict or lack of intelligence-gathering training, could have impacted on their ability to capitalize on the information presented in meetings with exiled rebels.

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[4] Oldman, "The Dhofar Rebellion - An Evaluation," [August] 1971.
[5] See e.g., Riches to Foreign Office, "Oman," Telegram, May 21, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA; Brenchley to Jackson, Conversation About Omani Rebels, Letter, May 22, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA.
[6] Jackson to Brenchley, Conversation With Abdullah Ghazaleh, Letter, June 1, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA.
[7] Jackson to Brenchley.
[8] Jackson to Brenchley; Brenchley to British Residency, Bahrain, "Negotiations With the Omani Rebels," Minute, June 11, 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA.

A later conversation between rebel leaders, their negotiator, Faiz Ajjaz, and British staff demonstrates the vastly different vantage points from which the two groups were operating.[9] Ajjaz was "trying to argue from a position of strength based on the threat to the Sultanate from an Omani rebellion manipulated by [Egyptian president Gamal Abdel] Nasser and using highly trained guerrillas."[10] Meanwhile, the British believed the rebels to be arguing from a position of distinct weakness and stated that despite being prepared for rebel activity in Oman, they did "not consider this a major threat to the security of the State," again showing the British underestimation of the imminent guerrilla threat.[11] Ajjaz conveyed that quick action needed to be undertaken regarding the Omani situation due to recent developments regarding external support for the insurgents from Egypt and the provision of military training for rebels by various Arab countries.[12] Ajjaz forecast that if immediate action was not taken, there would be imminent insurgent violence.[13] The British field staff not only disregarded the potential for the gathered intelligence to contribute to proactive operational measures but also potentially communicated to the exiled rebel leaders the Anglo-Omani unpreparedness for the approaching insurgency.

It would not be until 1967 that the British would begin to more effectively capitalize on the approaches to British diplomatic posts by exiled rebels, such action that may have arisen out of a need to gain intelligence while circumventing the Sultan's intelligence channels which were described as "abysmally bad".[14] The British were intent on maintaining the Sultan's trust, which they believed could be shaken by a decision to station a British intelligence officer in Salalah.[15] Therefore, when Omani and Dhofari exiled rebels sought

[9] Riches to Foreign Office, "Omani Rebels," Telegram, July 11, 1964, FO 371/174554, AGDA.
[10] Riches to Foreign Office.
[11] Riches to Foreign Office.
[12] Riches to Foreign Office, "Negotiations," June 23, 1964.
[13] Riches to Foreign Office, "Negotiations," June 23, 1964.
[14] Duncan to Brown, Dhofar Mine Incidents, September 5, 1964.
[15] Duncan to Brown.

British help, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf [a position established in 1892 as part of Britain's 'Exclusive Treaties' with the Trucial States and Bahrain which enabled British political agents to be the sole international agents allowed to reside in the region without express British permission, granting whoever occupied the position, which remained active until 1971, immense regional authority as the figure through which all diplomatic communication with the United Kingdom needed to pass][16] proposed to other British posts a statement on their unified policy regarding exiled rebel approaches.[17] The proposal explicitly stated that although the diplomats would not attempt to persuade the Sultan to modify his rules regarding treatment of exiled rebels, they should "use the opportunity of approaches to obtain as much information as possible about recent developments among the Omani and Dhofari rebels, and in particular about the inter-relationship of the different groups, and the state of their morale."[18] Intelligence gathered from such approaches enlightened British field staff on the grievances fueling the insurgency and the inner rifts within the rebel leadership.[19]

Intelligence efforts are occasionally mentioned in the archival sources, and, evidently, the Local Intelligence Committee Persian Gulf, which the records suggest to have been an intelligence department within the British Residency in Bahrain, contributed to intelligence operations;[20] however, there is little analysis or discussion of their methods or results except for few non-substantive occurrences. Other relevant intelligence figures were the Desert Intelligence Officer (DIOs), whose role, as well as the pre-1970 intelligence structure in

[16] Uzi Rabi, "Britain's 'Special Position' in the Gulf: Its Origins, Dynamics and Legacy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 353–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200500521123.
[17] Crawford to Carden, Rebel Approaches to British Diplomatic Missions, Letter, December 28, 1967, FO 1016/770, AGDA.
[18] Crawford to Carden.
[19] Crawford to Carden.
[20] Brown to Duncan, "Hamza One," Letter, April 18, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA; Brown to Duncan, Paper by the Local Intelligence Committee Persian Gulf on the Omani Rebel Threat, Letter, March 25, 1964, FO 371/174553, AGDA.

Oman, is exposited in two articles by Clive Jones.[21] In 1971, intelligence reports show an increased use of local intelligence, markedly different from previous years, with intelligence being gathered from captured or defected rebels as well as local civilians.[22] Civil development, which engendered indigenous trust in the Sultanate and SAF, was crucial for gaining intelligence from local civilians. Even so, no single element proved as fruitful for intelligence operations as the *firqats*, who were described in 1971 by Oman's Defence Secretary, Colonel Oldman, as "the keystone of SAF's vastly improved intelligence knowledge of the enemy".[23]

3.2 Inter-Agency Cooperation

While captured and defected insurgents fundamentally changed the state of COIN intelligence operations in Oman, the utility of information derived from them and other intelligence sources was minimal without proper organization and dissemination;[24] this problem ate away at the root of intelligence operations, and leaders within SAF and British field staff posts thought that it could be resolved with British provision of loaned intelligence officers.[25] The urgent need for increased operational performance came from a mass arrest of insurgents known as Operation Jason which took place in December 1972.[26] Extracting information from the arrested rebels and effectively organizing such information was to be a

[21] Clive Jones, "Military Intelligence and the War in Dhofar: An Appraisal," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 3 (2014): 628–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2014.913743.; Jones, "Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain's War in Dhofar, 1970-1976."
[22] Headquarters British Forces Gulf to Cabinet Office London, "Dhofar Incidents," Telegram, June 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA; Headquarters British Forces Gulf to Cabinet Office London, "Dhofar Incidents (Secret)," Telegram, June 1971, FCO 8/1667, AGDA.
[23] Oldman, "The Dhofar Rebellion - An Evaluation," [August] 1971.
[24] Clark to D.E. Tatham, Middle East Department, "PFLOAG," Letter, March 12, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Hawley to Foreign Office, "P.F.L.O.A.G.," Telegram, January 4, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, Report on Operation Jason, January 4, 1973.
[25] Hawley to Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, "Interrogation," Telegram, January 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Hawley to Foreign Office, "P.F.L.O.A.G.," January 4, 1973.
[26] Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, Report on Operation Jason, January 4, 1973.

large task that the local intelligence team was not prepared to address.[27] At the point when British provision of seconded personnel was being discussed, it was reported that the detainees were readily providing information due to the intelligence staff's demonstration of prior knowledge about PFLOAG, but the British Ambassador to Muscat, D.F. Hawley, was concerned that the organizational failures would shatter this façade of the counter-insurgents being already well-informed.[28] Monitoring interviews, collating information, and using gathered information to effectively "re-interrogate" insurgents were three functions that were thought to require additional support.[29] Even though British support aimed to ameliorate the organizational difficulties taking place within the Omani intelligence system, the British personnel were not free from their own inter-departmental disagreements. The episode which erupted about the use of physical coercion in the wake of Operation Jason demonstrates that British assistance in intelligence operations suffered from the same blights as the faulty system they were trying to fix.

Concern about interrogation arose within the Foreign Office after they received reports about Operation Jason and the intelligence goals which counter-insurgents hoped to achieve as a result of the mass arrests.[30] The context within which such discussions about interrogation were taking place were the Omani requests for aid with intelligence-gathering and the provision of British intelligence officers and equipment. D.F. Hawley responded to the FCO's apprehensions, saying that the term "interrogation" had been misused in the previous correspondence and explaining that the British had only been involved in interviewing, as an interrogation center had yet to even be established.[31] Hawley craftily brought the discussion back to the topic of British aid, stating that the lack of an interrogation

[27] Recommendation for Ministerial Approval, Report, January 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.
[28] Hawley to Ministry of Defence, "Interrogation," January 1973.
[29] Recommendation for Ministerial Approval, January 1973.
[30] Douglas-Home to Hawley, "PFLOAG," Telegram, January 5, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.
[31] Hawley to Douglas-Home, "PFLOAG," Telegram, January 6, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.

center was precisely the purpose of his letter, specifically that the British monitoring equipment could aid in its establishment.[32] Hawley made clear that he understood the difficulty arising from a British general, T.M. Creasey, heading the SAF and their interrogation operations, but he stated that Creasey would be tactful and responsible regarding methods used for obtaining intelligence.[33] He further specified that "no physical coercion" had occurred due to the CSAF's "very stringent rules on this form of operation".[34] According to Hawley, the need for seconded British officers to assist intelligence operations and the establishment of an interrogation center hinged on the pressing need to extract more information than they had previously been able to obtain, but the British officers would help in an administrative capacity without any direct involvement in interrogation.[35]

The semantic maneuvering on Hawley's part brings to mind the backpedaling of a flummoxed politician caught in a lie, and the records contradict his story, instead revealing the involvement of seconded British officers in interrogation due to personnel shortages which plagued almost every department of Oman's civil and military forces.[36] The higher-up British officials were not duped by Hawley's reassurances, and the issue reached ministerial level.[37] Debate around the provision of British intelligence officers to Oman and the possibility that they would engage in interrogation procedures was taking place in the shadow of recent British and international outcry at the tactics used by the British military in Northern Ireland. In July 1972, a "Directive on Interrogation" established a Ministerial prohibition preventing British personnel from using any techniques that were used in Northern Ireland.[38] The Directive also included a requirement that Ministerial approval must

[32] Hawley to Douglas-Home.
[33] Hawley to Douglas-Home.
[34] Hawley to Ministry of Defence, "Interrogation," January 1973.
[35] Hawley to Ministry of Defence.
[36] Wright to Coles and Parsons, "Oman's Request for Assistance for Interrogation," Letter, January 9, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Wright to Coles and Parsons, "PFLOAG Interrogation," Letter, February 14, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.
[37] Recommendation for Ministerial Approval, January 1973.
[38] Recommendation for Ministerial Approval.

be sought before British personnel could participate in interrogation of any kind.[39] As conversation around the possible provision of intelligence assistance continued, many British officials in the Middle East expressed their support for the approval of CSAF's request of equipment and intelligence officers, and those same commenters made clear the importance that British personnel be briefed on the prohibitions laid out in the Directive on Interrogation.[40] One British observer's comment on the utility of the Directive on Interrogation illustrates the pervasive fear of the negative publicity that could arise if it became known that the British were participating in interrogation methods in Dhofar of the kind which were so condemned in Northern Ireland:

> I think that what we are authorising would be perfectly defensible politically. Indeed, if we were to take the view that our commitment to the assistance of the Sultan stopped short of a willingness to participate in interrogation procedures which we are ourselves using in Northern Ireland, we should, in logic, be calling in question the permissibility of those same measures in Northern Ireland. If they are permissible there, there is no logical reason deriving from the nature of the measures themselves why we should be unwilling to take part in their application in support of a friend or ally.[41]

With the Directive on Interrogation providing worried Ministers with their desired level of cushion from public and international backlash, the Ministry of Defence approved the provision of equipment and loaned intelligence officers to Oman in January of 1973, and intelligence operations improved from that point onwards, leading to enhanced background

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[39] Recommendation for Ministerial Approval; Wright to Coles and Parsons, "Oman's Request," January 9, 1973.

[40] Wright to Coles and Parsons, "Oman's Request," January 9, 1973; Coles to C.M. Le Quesne, Under-Secretary, Foreign Office, "Oman's Request for Assistance for Interrogation," Letter, January 10, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Parsons to Coles, Instructions for Provision of Assistance, Letter, January 9, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Coles to Le Quesne, Participation of British Seconded Officers in Interrogation, Letter, January 10, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA; Douglas-Home to Hawley, "PFLOAG," Telegram, January 16, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.

[41] Coles to Le Quesne, Participation of British Seconded Officers in Interrogation, January 10, 1973.

and operational intelligence which contributed to the insurgency's end.[42] Yet, what can be learned from this inter-departmental debate about interrogation is that the organizational and administrative challenges permeated every level of COIN intelligence activities from personnel shortages and poor information-sharing at the local Omani level to grappling with the monumental issue of interrogation and military aid at a ministerial level.

3.3 A Decentralized Intelligence-Gathering System

Under Sultan Said, the intelligence system did not allow for the decentralized authority and speedy response times to intelligence leads emphasized by Mumford as crucial in any successful intelligence operation.[43] At the onset of the rebellion, a British agent within the intelligence department of the British Residency in Bahrain stated:

> we are almost blind about events in Dhofar province since we have no Foreign Office representation or Desert Intelligence Officers there, the Sultan's Armed Forces do not operate there, and the Sultan's own authorities work in a water-tight compartment reporting only to the Sultan.[44]

Sultan Said's insistence on being the sole authority in the COIN campaign impacted not only the intelligence dimension but both the political and military dimensions as well, as every decision had to go through Sultan Said from civil development projects to the training of local officers to increase the numbers of Arab servicemen within the increasingly British-dominated SAF.[45] Post-1970, however, an intelligence boon came in the form of Sultan Qaboos' policy of leniency towards surrendered rebels who sought to realign themselves with

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[42] Parsons to Coles, Instructions for Provision of Assistance, January 9, 1973; Douglas-Home to Hawley, "PFLOAG," January 16, 1973; Hawley to Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, "Op. Jason," Telegram, February 17, 1973, FCO 8/2018, AGDA.
[43] Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth*, chap. 1.
[44] Brown to S.J. Whitwell, POMEC, Aden, Dhofar Intelligence, August 25, 1964.
[45] Carden to Crawford, "A Report on the Security Situation in Dhofar," October 8, 1966; Duncan to Weir, "Mr. Duncan Asked Waterfield How Plans Were Going for the Raising of a Third Battalion of the S.A.F.," Letter, April 2, 1965, FO 371/179823, AGDA.

the Sultanate.[46] As shown in the previous section, it was not until 1972 with Operation Jason that the intelligence department had any major successes to its name, and the counter-insurgents came upon the opportunity by chance when they identified a rebel in Muscat and used him to identify other operatives and uncover the insurgents' insurrection plot, leading to mass arrests and a victorious moment for the counter-insurgent side.[47] While the transition of power to Qaboos ultimately heralded a new age of intelligence operations, the system's improvements were gradual, and by 1973 the system was still not decentralized enough to yield major COIN successes.

In early 1973, a new intelligence department was formed, and the year's intelligence goals were professed to be the attainment of information about the insurgent group's "organisation and plans".[48] Within the intelligence department problems arose from the lack of civil participants, recruitment difficulties, and an amorphous leadership structure.[49] Along with the requests discussed in the previous section for provision of British intelligence officers, General Creasey sought the provision of an MI5 team to "make sure the service [was] developing along the correct lines".[50] With the intelligence service in its infancy, clarity about its participants' roles and the hierarchy of authority was crucial if the intelligence goals were to be met.

A description of the role of the 'Defence Attache Muscat' reveals the structure of the information-sharing channels on the British side of intelligence-gathering and provides a potential answer to the question of why the Anglo-Omani divide was so pronounced within

[46] Jones, "Military Intelligence and the War in Dhofar: An Appraisal," 641.
[47] Creasey to Sultan Qaboos, Report on Operation Jason, January 4, 1973.
[48] Hawley to Foreign Office, "P.F.L.O.A.G.," January 4, 1973.
[49] Hawley to Douglas-Home, "PFLOAG," January 6, 1973; Hawley to Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, "CSAF's Operational Situation Report as at 20 March 1973," Telegram, March 1973, FCO 8/2023, AGDA; Welch to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," November 29, 1973.
[50] Creasey, "Review of the Situation," Report, May 29, 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA.

the intelligence dimension.[51] The problem evident in the document's 'Defence Intelligence' section is that the officer's direction was to liaise with other British staff, but he was not commanded to seek and share information with Omani figures, who, despite a fractured information-sharing system, certainly could have provided as well as benefitted from valuable intelligence.[52] One major difficulty in promoting cross-cultural cooperation within the intelligence department was that "the service [was] run by Europeans" and made up of constantly-shifting personnel who, for the most part, lacked the requisite skill to direct the service and relied on "one or two bright stars", as put by the Defence Attaché, Colonel Welch.[53] Nonetheless, the intelligence service had successfully thwarted two subversive threats and established intelligence contacts throughout Oman and internationally.[54] But the department would continue to feel the absence of a clear institution from which the department's authority was derived and the shortage of qualified Omanis, resulting in Europeans filling the positions.[55]

Despite the interesting details which emerge when following Mumford's criteria of a successful intelligence system, his factors, particularly the attainment of a decentralized intelligence apparatus, remained unachieved in the COIN operation in Oman until the rebellion's end. The British lapsed in connecting early intelligence information and taking commensurate action, a failure which, in conjunction with Sultan Said's misguided appraisal of the insurgent threat, may have ultimately prolonged the insurgency. If the military dimension can be regarded as the most successful point of Anglo-Omani cooperation, then one can place the intelligence dimension on the polar opposite end of that spectrum. During

[51] Defence Policy Staff, "Draft Directive to the Defence Attache Muscat," Draft Paper, December 1973, FCO 8/2020, AGDA.
[52] Defence Policy Staff.
[53] Welch to Hawley, "Annual Report for 1973," November 29, 1973.
[54] Welch to Hawley.
[55] Welch to Hawley.

Sultan Said’s rule, his leadership compromised every aspect of intelligence-gathering, from winning civilian hearts and minds to decentralizing the intelligence system. Under Qaboos, development in the intelligence structure took two years to produce noteworthy achievements, and the intelligence gains were blemished by the institutional failings they brought to light.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to apply Andrew Mumford's theory of British counter-insurgency to the case study of the Dhofar Rebellion, where the United Kingdom and Oman joined forces to combat a Marxist insurgency from 1964 to 1975. Mumford's framework offers a novel lens through which to examine a counter-insurgency via its three inter-related dimensions [the counter-insurgent, the insurgent, and the international political context] and the factors within them. Mumford asserts in his book *The Counter-Insurgency Myth* that applying his framework to British COIN operations reveals a pattern of British "strategic inertia" and a failure to implement the lessons learned in past counter-insurgencies. Mumford's position within the scholarly debate about the quality of British counter-insurgency is illustrated by the title of his book; he and other scholars such as David French and John Newsinger label as mythical the notion of the British being role models in the realm of counter-insurgency, a view still adhered to by such scholars as Thomas Mockaitis and Rod Thornton. At the inception of this thesis, this binary between two opposing conceptions of British counter-insurgency was cast aside, and the aim was to let the archival documents speak for themselves. With a focus on the counter-insurgent element and its inner military, political, and intelligence dimensions identified by Mumford, the findings of this thesis indicate that any assessment of British COIN strategy necessitates an evaluation of the relationship between the host-nation government and the intervening-nation government.

Chapter 1 of this thesis begins the application of Mumford's COIN theory to the case of Oman by examining the military facet of the counter-insurgency. The chapter illustrates how British counter-insurgents adhered to the doctrine of minimum force, a policy which critics of British COIN claim exists more in textbooks than on the battlefield, and how they

advocated for restraint even when the host-nation government of Oman pushed for increasing force. Turning to another criticism of British counter-insurgency, Chapter 1 disputes Mumford's contention about the recurring British failure to implement past lessons in counter-insurgency and uses archival evidence to depict how the British attempted to share their wealth of COIN experience with an oppositional Sultan Said. The final sub-chapter regarding the military dimension examines the oft-praised aspects of the Dhofar Rebellion counter-insurgency: the effectuation of a hearts and minds campaign and the use of turned insurgents. The salient conclusion of the sub-chapter is that the high degree of Anglo-Omani cooperation on the two issues resulted in their successful execution.

Chapter 2 then redirects focus to the political dimension of the counter-insurgency, examining the political motives underscoring British involvement in the conflict, the degree to which counter-insurgents were able to counter the ideology of the insurgents, and the process of bridging the civil-military divide, a gap which can weaken a counter-insurgency. The beginning of this chapter demonstrates the importance of Masirah Island in politically spurring British participation in the conflict but also shows that British plans for the level of their involvement were constantly responding to changes within the host-nation government. In the second and third sub-chapters, the inner struggles within the Sultanate's political sphere are shown to have had a significant impact on British-led efforts to ideologically oppose the insurgents and centralize the political decision-making structure within the Sultanate to increase cooperation between the civil and military domains.

The third chapter concerns the intelligence operations in the Omani conflict and appraises them according to criteria put forth by Mumford. Sub-Chapter 3.1 follows the evolution of the incorporation of local intelligence sources into intelligence operations, a process which, in line with Mumford's theory, needed to be effectively set in motion at an

earlier point in the conflict. Research is then presented regarding inter-agency cooperation on intelligence gathering, elucidating the conflicts over COIN policy which took place on the British side of operations and showing that neither government can fully resolve the internal strains of the other when jointly fighting an insurgency. Chapter 3 closes by illustrating how Anglo-Omani discord within the intelligence dimension prevented the achievement of a decentralized intelligence-gathering structure.

Reflecting from a bird's eye view on the research presented in this thesis, the examination of the topic using Andrew Mumford's model of counter-insurgency has resulted in a cohesive narrative about the British counter-insurgency in Oman that took place from 1964 to 1975, but without emphasizing the importance of the relationship between the host-nation government of Oman and the intervening government of the United Kingdom, any assessment of British behavior would have been incomplete. Evaluating British COIN conduct without attending to inter-governmental relations, as most scholars of the topic have done, facilitates easy but inaccurate conclusions regarding the British role in a COIN campaign. Much scholarly focus has been placed on all that the British fail to do, a judgement which rests on a level of British control that archival evidence refutes. Meticulous reading of archival documents that detail the decision-making process within the Anglo-Omani counter-insurgency, the receptiveness of Sultans Said and Qaboos to various British advice, and the factors which impinged upon implementation of British COIN strategies demonstrates that translating theory into practice depended on cooperation with the Omani government and the forecasted impact that each COIN move would have on the Anglo-Omani relationship.

Demonstrating the importance of examining the relationship between a host-nation government and the intervening government in a collaborative COIN operation was not the aim at the inception of this project but was, rather, the unforeseen answer to the question at

the center of this thesis: what does the attempted application of Mumford's counter-insurgency model to the case of Oman in the 1960s and seventies reveal about the study of British counter-insurgency? Ultimately, archival documents within the Arabian Gulf Digital Archives (AGDA) revealed a discernable, yet previously unarticulated, trend that can enrich the narrative of the Anglo-Omani counter-insurgency as well as the study of British counter-insurgency at large. With regard to the latter field, it is hoped that the conclusions of this research establish the need to take into account the relationship between the host-nation government and the British when critically assessing any British counter-insurgency that takes place in conjunction with another government to avoid locating the root of all COIN successes and failures within the intervening-nation government.

Deepening the scholarly understanding of the Dhofar Rebellion, this research moves beyond an attempt to define the counter-insurgency as archetypal but, instead, with the aid of Mumford's framework, exposits the inner nuances of the military, political, and intelligence dimensions that made up the COIN operation without attempting to align with a singular paradigmatic approach. This research corroborates the conclusions of other scholars who stress the importance of the transition of power from Sultan Said to Sultan Qaboos but has added new primary-source evidence that elaborates on the way in which the Sultans were, in different circumstances, obstacles to or conduits for the implementation of British COIN strategies. The findings of this thesis bring to the subject a new emphasis on the British politico-military desire to use Masirah Island, an objective which was a central reason for British involvement in the Omani conflict. Furthermore, the research presented here disputes the common view of a monolithic British power that acted as one and puts forth a view grounded in primary evidence that the force which is often referred to as 'the British' in Oman was, in actuality, made up of many individuals working in different fields with varying goals and beliefs about how peace could be achieved.

Conducting this research inductively in an attempt to examine the subject without the influence of preconceived notions or specific paradigms has allowed the findings to be grounded in historical reality and an approach that aims at maximum objectivity. There is immense value in adding a piece of work to this field of study that does not advocate for one particular view of British counter-insurgency but instead suggests a new aspect that should be incorporated into the process of developing any view of British COIN. The strides to eliminate bias notwithstanding, the limitations on this research must be noted. Due to language barriers, an entire body of Arabic documents from the Omani side of the COIN operation remains unexamined from the viewpoint of Mumford's counter-insurgency model and inter-governmental cooperation or discord. Additionally, many documents, specifically those pertaining to intelligence operations and the participation of Britain's MI5 in the Dhofar Rebellion, remain unavailable to remote researchers who are unable to visit the UK's National Archives in person. Valuable future research could be conducted, building on this thesis, that would investigate the Arabic archival evidence according to Mumford's framework and/or the emphasis on inter-governmental relations, or further exploration of other notable British counter-insurgencies could be carried out with a focus on the impact of the relationship between the host-nation government and the intervening government.

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