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Name

Samirah Jaigirdar

Title of Paper

Revitalizing US Grand Strategy in the Maghreb

Class Year

Junior

Date Research Undertaken

Fall 2020

Citation Style Used

Chicago

Affiliated Course

US Foreign Policy (GOV 252)

Faculty Name

Professor Eric Fleury

Student Major

International Relations & Global Islamic Studies double-major, Applied Statistics minor

Narrative Questions

- 1. Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?**

As part of the coursework for GOV 252, students were required to write a research paper outlining a new grand strategy for the US to pursue in a region of interest. 'Grand strategy' refers to the coordination of diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural assets toward an overarching national interest. We had to identify an American national interest in a region of our choice and design a grand strategy to advance it. I chose the Maghreb (North-West Africa) as that region receives little attention in US foreign policy. Initially this worked against me as I could not readily find peer reviewed articles or books to help me start my research. Hence, I sought help from the research librarians, and through their assistance was able to find a 2015 US Senate report on US foreign policy in North Africa. Additionally, I used OneSearch to find a book in the Federal Documents Section of Shain Library. Published by the US House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1980, it provided extensive background knowledge on the Madrid Accords which would later pave the way for the Western Sahara Conflict that defines the present politics of North-West Africa.

- 2. Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: “Ebsco,” being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the “library database” is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)**

Given the relative dearth of information specifically related to US foreign policy in the Maghreb, I used OneSearch’s advanced search feature by typing in general terms such as “US and North Africa” and then slowly, I refined the results more and more to focus on existing US foreign policy in the countries of my choice, especially Morocco and Western Sahara. I did this by introducing terms such as “migration”, “Western Sahara”, and “energy and trade”. I applied the same strategy to Google Scholar and Political Science Complete. This helped me find journal articles as well as an e-book about the Western Sahara that proved useful for background information. The research librarians also showed me the CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. This enabled me to read numerous memos from the White House about ongoing US foreign policy stances on issues in the Maghreb from the 1960s to 2014. While I did not directly use any of the information from the CIA Electronic Reading Room as it did not help me formulate policy recommendations, it gave me an excellent insight into how the Maghreb was perceived by different US administrations, especially during the Arab Spring. OneSearch was consistently the most useful research tool. I found key journal articles from databases including JStor, the U.S Institute of Peace, and Chatham House from which helped me put together detailed policy proposals. Additionally, OneSearch helped me find articles from lesser known political science non-profits such as the Middle East Policy Council which helped me formulate a grand strategy rooted more in diplomacy, whereas government sources tended to reflect a prevailing bias toward counterterrorism. As I synthesized my bibliography, I prioritized peer-reviewed sources from non-partisan entities. However, I had to rely on the New York Times and sometimes Politico for developing news stories so that my grand strategy would be based on current events.

3. Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?

The most important aspect of this paper was designing a feasible grand strategy that reconciled the policymaking process in the US with the regional realities of the Maghreb. Hence, I could not directly use the two US government documents I had found during pre-research as they were published in 1980 and 2015. While Congress's last Hearing on North Africa was useful for my pre-research process, it did not help me formulate a grand strategy directly as it primarily focused on Libya and Egypt and failed to address either the Western Sahara Conflict or the budding economic problems in North-West Africa. I prioritized sources that were published since 2017 which took into account the effects of the Arab Spring on North Africa as a whole. Moreover, while writing the paper, the US government recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, becoming the first UN Security Council member to do so. With details of the story emerging as I wrote the paper, I consulted the New York Times to give me insight into how this latest move would affect both the Maghreb and the US's positionality there. To complement my sources on the Western Sahara, I looked for sources on the policies I was designing for the region. For instance, I relied on the US Institute of Peace's sources on Track 2 Diplomacy, journal articles about peace theory from my Government senior seminar about conflict resolution, and Politico's Migration Symposium where they asked migration experts and European policymakers about policies targeting the reduction of African migration across the Mediterranean. I constructed my policy paper by gathering facts about the political situation and combined it with the literature on the types of policies I thought were appropriate while ensuring my sources did not bind me to the existing limits of the American foreign policy perspective.