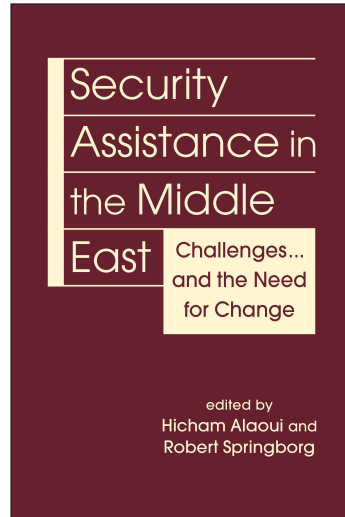# Security Assistance in the Middle East: Challenges . . . and the Need for Change

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First, Do No Harm: Curing What Ails Security Assistance to the Middle East

Hicham Alaoui and Robert Springborg

HIPPOCRATES'S ADMONITION IS RELEVANT TO SECURITY ASSISTANCE (SA) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Considerable evidence suggests that SA is part of the problem of the region's insecurity, rather than a solution to it. By virtually all relevant per capita indicators, ranging from battle deaths and displaced persons to military personnel and expenditures, the region is the world's most insecure and militarized. Of the 10 most militarized countries of the 151 ranked on the Global Militarization Index, 6 are in MENA, as are 10 of the top 20.[1] Five of the 20 least peaceful countries of the 163 ranked by the Global Peace Index are in MENA.[2] Polling data reveals that worries about security typically rank among the very highest concerns of the region's residents. MENA is also the region that receives the greatest absolute amount of security assistance and the highest ratio of it in overseas development assistance (ODA). Between 2000 and 2018, 55 percent of all US aid to MENA was military-related assistance, compared to one-third for all US foreign assistance.[3] The first foreign affairs budget of the Joe Biden administration raised security assistance's proportion of total aid to MENA to 76 percent.[4] Afghanistan illustrates the profound disproportion between ODA and military assistance. In 2019, Afghanistan received $114 per capita of the former, while in the following year the United States spent $1,060 per Afghan on its military intervention there.[5] The negative correlation between ODA and the growth rate of gross domestic product

(GDP), which obtains globally, is particularly strong in MENA, possibly reflecting the preponderance of SA.

If the relative overweighting of SA to MENA exerts a drag effect on the region's economic development, it might also contribute indirectly to the securitization and growing authoritarianism of the region. The region's comparatively low economic growth rate for a generation, coupled with it having the world's second-highest rate of population expansion, has placed huge pressure on virtually all the region's governments, which have responded in lockstep by imposing ever greater repression, thereby stimulating spirals of state-society violence. The region's abysmal human rights record and its democratic backsliding reflect this trend. In the latter case MENA may reflect the global trend of countries with formal or implied security assistance agreements with the United States, of which there are forty-one, accounting for 36 percent of all democratic backsliding and only 5 percent of cases of increasing democratization. In US-allied countries, the quality of democracy declined by almost double the rate in nonallied countries.[6]

In addition to the indirect effects of retarding economic growth and contributing to repressive governance, SA also seems to be "doing wrong" in direct ways. Provision of equipment to suppress demonstrators and monitor social media is the most visible but not the most substantive contribution of SA to authoritarian governance. The imbalance of civil-military relations in favor of the latter in most MENA nation-states is one such wrong. As recipients of the preponderance of aid provided to their countries, militaries, which in virtually all cases receive such assistance directly rather than through and with oversight by civilian institutions such as parliaments, necessarily outgun those institutions. In many cases SA has facilitated expansion of military influence over domestic economies and even direct involvement in them by military-owned enterprises, thus tilting the balance of financial power away from civilians and their institutions toward officers and theirs. The relative prosperity of militaries has contributed to their popular appeal, in part because of well-financed public relations, rendering militaries the most trusted institution in virtually all MENA countries, whatever the magnitude of their economic and political indiscretions.

MENA states' external relations appear also to have been negatively impacted by SA, which, as with domestic civil-military relations, has tilted those relations toward militaries. The most obvious manifestation of that imbalance is the MENA arms race, the most intense of any global region. Absorbing the greatest share of weaponry in world trade, the region is armed to the teeth, including with technically advanced, expen-

sive manned and unmanned aircraft; surface-to-air, sea, and surface missiles; and both underwater and surface naval vessels, including aircraft carriers. The arms race exacerbates the region's fissiparous tendencies, which are reflected in its dearth of effective regional integration associations, whether economic, political, or functionally specific in such areas as telecommunications, electricity, tourism, and so forth. The primary causes of national autarchy in MENA result from pursuit of the political and economic interests of the political elites who have captured its states and established limited access orders. Such orders thrive off autarchy and are threatened by integration, which can render polities and economies more competitive.[7] Arms races exacerbate the problem by magnifying the security dimension in interstate relations, thus impeding the emergence of effective functionally oriented associations. The centrality of military power to interstate relations also inflates officers' roles in foreign policy decisionmaking. The power-projection capacities of contemporary weaponry, including aircraft carriers, submarines, and ballistic missiles, expand the geographic range of national security interests, which for many MENA countries now extend well beyond the traditional borders of the region into the Horn of Africa and the Sahel and throughout the southern and eastern Mediterranean.[8]

The plague of proxy wars afflicting MENA is also due, in considerable measure, to SA. Libya, Syria, Yemen, and to some extent Iraq are presently experiencing conflicts that have sucked in military advisors, combatants, and weaponry from global and regional actors. While proxy wars have long occurred in MENA, not only have they become more common, but the roles of external actors have expanded. The UN special representative to Libya, Ghassan Salame, for example, observed that during the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1989, the principal combatants were Lebanese themselves, although Syrian and Israeli troops became directly involved in 1982. By contrast, in Libya, within a few years of the fall of Mu'ammar Gadhafi, most frontline fighters were foreigners, including Turks, Russians, Egyptians, Emiratis, and mercenaries drawn from Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and elsewhere.[9] MENA is becoming truly Hobbesian, with internal conflicts sucking in outsiders willing to provide SA in pursuit primarily of their own region-wide or even global objectives, whatever the consequences for the host country and its citizens.

This does not imply, however, that security assistance is adequately serving those objectives of its providers. Indeed, back-of-the-envelope cost/benefit analyses of it in the United States suggest it is not. Popular dissatisfaction with forever wars that have ended in defeats, provision

of taxpayer dollars to Middle Eastern autocrats rather than needy Americans, and growing challenges from China and Russia making ever greater claims on US security and other resources has produced the rare outcome of a Washington policy consensus between Republicans and Democrats. That consensus is to scale back American SA commitments in the region, although disagreements remain over where, how, and to what extent that should be done. The European Union and relevant European states, aware of the likely US drawdown, are debating how to respond, so far without reaching a definitive conclusion. For their part virtually all MENA states, including Israel, have, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, doubled down on hedging strategies adopted in response to the anticipated US drawdown, thereby calling into question whether Western security assistance was securing their loyalty. In sum, security assistance—which, as recently as the early years of the new millennium, appeared to offer substantial benefits coupled with reduced costs to providers—is no longer almost universally viewed in the United States as an appropriate alternative strategy to boots on the ground in MENA. The emerging preference prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was for few boots and little SA, if any of either, a preference yet to be noticeably impacted by that invasion.

Were Hippocrates still with us, he might have concluded that SA certainly risks "doing wrong" to its recipients, while providing inadequate benefits for its providers. But as a wise Greek, he might also have observed that it has the potential to do good and at lower cost. Assuming that to be so, the question becomes not whether but whither SA—that is, not should it be discontinued, but how can its costs be reduced and its benefits enhanced? That question is central to this book, which assumes that SA as provided by Western powers can benefit both them and recipients, but given new regional and global contexts and changing weapons technologies, changes will be needed if the cost/benefit ratio is to be substantially improved.

Impacts of Regional Context

Benefits claimed for Western-provided SA typically rest on assumed "stateness" of recipients linked together in a Metternichian system of interstate relations, whether conflictual or consensual. The postcolonial MENA did indeed replicate the nineteenth-century European prototype and structured Cold War competition in the region between the superpowers. The United States and USSR competed for favor and influence

within the MENA state system, with weapons supplies constituting but one component of their all-embracing SA and their bilateral relations more generally. Other aspects of those relationships included economic aid, efforts to facilitate adoption of either communist- or capitalist-inspired development models, cultural exchanges, inclusion in super-power-instigated and -centered alliances, membership in trading blocs, and so on. SA thus was intended by providers to serve a mix of military and nonmilitary purposes in pursuit of the overall objective of influence over states and their policies, the hoped-for apotheosis of which was integration of the recipient state into the relevant superpower's camp. While development of military capacities was important to providers, it was not the only measure of success of SA, which included intangibles such as access to decisionmaking elites, linking them to elites of other friendly states, and conveying positive public images of the provider, as well as more military-relevant, tangible measures, such as interoperability and complementarity, although even in these cases those objectives were both political and military. They were intended to recruit and retain states in the respective blocs. As for actual combat, all parties assumed it would pit states against states. The Cold War–model military, replete with main battle tanks, bomber aircraft, and vast standing armies, was thus directly relevant and could be transferred intact through SA to recipients.

All of this has changed. Despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine, if a new Cold War ensues, it will not replicate the original. Russian reassertion is on a narrower front than when the USSR was seeking to remake the region along communist lines. Western objectives have also become more modest. For both, SA is becoming less strategic and more tactical in nature, with weapons sales assuming greater, even central importance. The MENA state system is under duress, with some of its members having already transited through fragile to failed status. Virtually all are consumed with containing domestic threats to their existing, shaky orders. Nonstate actors, which other than the Palestinian Liberation Organization played no significant role in regional affairs during the Cold War, have arisen in geopolitical spaces abandoned by retreating states and, as in the case of the Islamic State, assumed near-statehood. Accordingly, the salience of interstate warfare has diminished, while that of intrastate conflict has increased.

The military impact of this "de-statification" is reinforced by the emergence of new weapons technologies, some of which are embedded in so-called hybrid or asymmetric warfare, also known as grey zone operations. As states have been more thoroughly penetrated and

borders between them become more porous, so has the black-and-white clarity of major land battles between states given way to the ambiguity of grey zone warfare, which relies on fifth column elements, permits deniability, utilizes asymmetric weaponry, incorporates means of disruption such as cyberwarfare and disinformation, and assumes that outcomes are unlikely to be definitive and sudden (such as in the Six Day War of 1967) but instead will be achieved gradually and incrementally. The war in Ukraine has further illustrated the potency of new, relatively inexpensive weapons, ranging from antiship and handheld antiaircraft and antitank missiles to armed drones, many of which are already in MENA armories.

MENA, in other words, has entered a stage of permanent, if intermittent, low-level conflicts, accompanied by shifting tactical alliances and hostilities between states and nonstate actors. This Hobbesian world has rendered the SA of the Cold War era largely irrelevant and ineffective. As Anthony Cordesman notes in Chapter 2, the United States no longer has a comprehensive strategy for the ever more complex MENA. Instead, it pursues its interests on case-by-case, country-by-country, or, at best, subregional bases. While the complex regional context may dictate this tactically driven US approach to security assistance, the absence of an overarching strategy renders more difficult both the upstream of policy formation and the downstream of its implementation. Moreover, as Zeinab Abul-Magd argues in Chapter 6, US and Western influence more generally over military, security, and foreign policies in even once critically important Egypt has receded in tandem with the decline since the early 1980s in security and development assistance as a proportion of that country's defense budgets, government revenues, and GDP. The SA operational consequences of that declining influence are illustrated in this book by General F. C. Williams, whose lengthy, multirole career in delivering SA to Egypt made him an ideal observer of the ebbing away of American influence in Cairo.

Yet it does not follow that reduced US or other external actors' leverage and even influence results in SA doing less harm. Two chapters in this book directly address the distortions that SA can inflict on MENA militaries and overall political economies in countries with strong connections to the West. Sean Yom describes how in Jordan the monarch's dependence on SA to sustain the loyalty of his core East Bank constituency has helped sustain authoritarianism, impede national integration, undermine economic development, and even militate against improvements that would enable the Jordanian Armed Forces effectively to project power or even adequately defend Jordan's borders.

Similarly, Noureddine Jebnoun traces the ripple effects in Tunisia on its military and state-society relations of the concentration of SA on counterterrorism and border control. The latter has disrupted long-established localized political economies based on cross-border inter-actions, while the former has posed obstacles to consolidating the on-again, off-again democratic transition, which came to a complete, if hopefully temporary, halt with Kais Saied's assumption of ever-greater personal power from July 2021.

Implications for Tactics and Strategies

Regional, technical, and economic changes have given rise to funda-mental questions about SA. A key tactical one is whether Western SA should "go over to the dark side," meaning whether it should more sys-tematically emulate grey zone approaches utilized by Iran and Russia, which have undeniably met with considerable success. Until now the West as the status quo power in MENA has sought to reinforce the region's states and to bolster relations between them. While that has in many cases necessitated shifts in SA focus from interstate battles to counterterrorism, the primary concern with institutionalized state mili-tary capacities, replicating those of the SA provider, has endured. West-ern military contractors, for example, remain tethered to that model rather than becoming equivalents to Russia's mercenaries or Iran's sponsored militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen.[10] Although Iran-ian operatives have been assassinated, including through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, and cyberattacks have been launched against Iran's nuclear facilities, major Western SA efforts to contain Iran remain devoted primarily to developing Arab state military capacities. Emulat-ing grey zone activities could provide operational dividends, but possi-bly at the cost of further undermining already weakened states and the informal alliances in which some are enmeshed. Moreover, grey zone warfare might further erode rule of law and formal institutions, so begs the question of whether tactical successes might be offset by strategic costs to stateness, which theoretically at least underpins rule of law and institutionalization of governance.

The accompanying strategic questions are if and how the West should try to resolve the incongruity of it providing SA to authoritarian states, which by their nature are more akin to other authoritarian states, such as Russia or China. The salience of this inherent contradiction is enhanced by reflecting on Cold War precedents, during which efforts

were made by the superpowers and their allies to convert recipients of SA to their prevailing ideologies and models. Presently there are few, if any, such underpinnings to provider-recipient relationships in SA or even attempts to establish them. The strength of relations between Western providers of SA and MENA recipients would be stronger if the latter were democratic or at least aspire to being so and considered themselves normatively allied with Western democracies in their intensifying global competition with authoritarian, antidemocratic states. The unwillingness of all key MENA states to openly side with the West against Russia's invasion of Ukraine illustrates the problem. As MENA states continue their drift toward greater authoritarianism, they presumably will find more common ground with other authoritarian states, whether developmental, as in China, or stagnating but aggressive, as in Russia. While major ruptures in relationships that bridge the democratic-authoritarian divide may not occur, irritations and interruptions are likely to increase, as they have presently, for example, in the Saudi-American relationship. The absence of substantial ideological and systemic underpinnings for relationships between Western providers and MENA recipients pushes the region ever closer to being simply an arms bazaar, with buyers and sellers motivated more by immediate material and security benefits than by long-term strategic objectives.

These questions are not just academic. They lie at the heart of current debates in Western countries about the provision of SA to MENA. The tactics of grey zone warfare are controversial, as debates about the appropriateness of the US assassination of Qassem Suleimani and alleged support for Israel's killing of Iranian nuclear expert Mohsen Fakhrizadeh reflect.[11] A closely related issue is whether, by engaging in grey zone activities, security providers invite retaliation, such as by Iranian use of cyberattacks against European and American targets in reaction to the Stuxnet and other cyberattacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. At a more general level, the issue of grey zone warfare's possible contravention of Western legal codes, to say nothing of underlying morals and ethics, is also pertinent. One position in these debates is that if the West must stoop to such methods to compete in MENA, it would be preferable to abandon the region to its fate, whatever it might be. The same logic has been applied to the question of whether support should be given to authoritarian states, as evidenced by strong criticism in the United States against provision of SA to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Since the occasional withholding of SA has not induced policy or structural changes in these states, the implied and sometimes stated answer is to terminate the relevant SA.

The contributors to this book are skeptical of the democratization potential of even a revised SA, which historically has supported MENA authoritarianism but is not its only cause. They do believe, however, that SA could assist democratization at least indirectly, primarily by impacting the quality of governance, especially within the defense sector. Yezid Sayigh's analysis of civil-military relations sees civilianizing defense institutions as a possible initial step on the path to developing capacities for control of militaries. Given the central role of militaries in MENA states, infusing their institutions with meritocratic norms and professionalizing their armed forces might have spillover effects on other institutions of governance. Florence Gaub and Alex Walsh in Chapter 7 and Kevin Koehler in Chapter 8 describe multilateral SA as provided by the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), respectively, as focusing on this type of soft military-capacity building.

Western SA to MENA has come to a crossroads. Enmeshed in what is essentially a revised but still dated model that has proven ineffective even in confronting the old Cold War enemy Russia, it is neither popular at home nor particularly effective in the region. It is based heavily on the questionable assumption that a Metternichian state system, which is structurally inherently favorable to the West, still obtains. Both tactical and strategic changes to SA seem necessary. That some changes envisioned are profound reflects widespread frustration with the current state of Western SA. Accelerating the present drift toward grey zone warfare implies adopting tactics relevant to modernized total war, likely inconsistent with at least idealized Western norms, practices, and aspirations. Elevating concerns for democracy, governance, and human rights in recipient countries over calculations of threats to their stability and contributions to Western geostrategic interests amounts to abandoning traditional justifications and methods of SA. While tactical and strategic changes of this magnitude are unlikely, that they are on relevant tables for debate indicates how deeply felt and widespread the need for change to SA is.

Truth in Packaging Security Assistance

Terminology reveals, conceals, and confuses. One person's security assistance is another person's support for terrorism. Detailed clarification of the SA vocabulary would be a useful endeavor but is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, we shall fall back on American usages

despite the inclusion of the non-American, European and MENA SA providers. We do so primarily because the United States is the elephant in the room of SA, the amount it provides to MENA dwarfing all others combined. But it is not just quantity that is determinative. While other providers' objectives and practices of SA do differ from the American model, they must all take account of it, and many emulate it.

This is not to say, however, that the US SA lexicon is standardized. Even the term *security assistance* can be seen as misleading—or at least its common usage as departing from the official definition. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff define SA as "a group of programs, authorized under Title 22 authorities, by which the United States provides defense articles, military education and training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, cash sales, or lease, in furtherance of national policies and objectives."[12] *Security cooperation*, which might be seen as a politically more acceptable term, covers a broader range of activities, as it "encompasses all Department of Defense (DOD) interactions, programs, and activities with foreign security forces (FSF) and their institutions to build relationships that help promote US interests; enable partner nations (PNs) to provide the US access to territory, infrastructure, information, and resources; and/or to build and apply their capacity and capabilities consistent with US defense objectives."[13] Relevant academic and policy-oriented literature uses both terms more or less interchangeably. We have chosen to use *security assistance* as it seems to more correctly characterize flows of resources and the actual nature of the relationship between providers and recipients, at least in MENA.

As one wades further into the topic, yet more terminological ambiguities arise, as Simone Tholens notes in Chapter 10. She argues that the characterization of SA as a relationship between provider and recipient—also referred to as principal and agent or even patron and client—is misleading, especially in MENA. There, complex intraregional interactions, which increasingly involve extraregional actors, "challenge binary logics of patron-client, international-local, or state-nonstate." Her preferred term is *entanglement*, which may better describe current MENA complexities than the commonly used provider-recipient or principal-agent dyads, which rest on the primacy of bilateral rather than multilateral relationships. These complexities are illustrated by the hedging strategies in reaction to the war in Ukraine of both MENA states nominally allied with the West (e.g., Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt) and even, to some degree, Iran and Turkey, the former closely associated with Russia and the latter enmeshed with

it in bilateral cooperative undertakings such as in Libya and in some measure Syria. But as in the cases of security cooperation and security assistance, we have chosen to employ current usage of the terms *principal* and *agent* precisely because it is current and because our interest is, through comparative case studies, to focus on SA effects and to explore how they might be rendered more positive for both parties.

Building partner capacity (BPC) is another term whose use can structure how activities are conceptualized and conducted. It "refers to a broad set of missions, programs, activities, and authorities intended to improve the ability of other nations to achieve those security-oriented goals they share with the United States."[14] It is frequently used as a synonym for *security assistance* or even the officially broader term *security cooperation*. This sematic confusion could be dismissed as irrelevant if it did not have actual consequences. John Zavage's detailed treatment of assessments, mandated by Congress and the US Department of Defense, of BPC in those MENA theaters where he was deployed points to such consequences. While he focuses on the limitations of empirical, check-list assessment mechanisms, as opposed to more in-depth evaluations that take into account context and extend over longer periods, he also highlights the costs of the narrow focus of BPC assessments. Building a partner's capacity is typically only one objective of a US SA program in any given MENA country. Most others can be subsumed under the generic label of *relationship building*; they range from such objectives as access and trust, which imply a weak or nonexistent power dimension, to leverage, in which power is substantial and manifest. These important objectives, however, are not susceptible to measurement or even consideration by the official assessment tools created in order to be accountable to Congress and ultimately the American public, as the cases of BPC in Iraq and Afghanistan so amply demonstrate. Sean Yom's analysis of BPC in Jordan suggests it is more a point of entry for US geostrategic interests in the country and region than a principal objective.

The failure of formalized assessments to capture the multiple objectives of SA and thus their potential to provide more optimistic accounts than warranted is not a new development. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's obsession with empirical assessments of performance in the Vietnam War resulted in misleading metrics such as body counts and pacified villages, enabling the US military to claim success almost to the moment of defeat. That the misleading metric approach subsequently became embedded in the Department of Defense is suggested by a similar outcome in Afghanistan. Virtually until the end of that war, the metric of territory held painted a profoundly misleading picture of

the actual balance of power between the Taliban and Western-backed Afghanistan government forces.

The terminology of security assistance, in sum, is not neutral and needs to be employed with awareness of its implications and consequences. MENA is a particularly arduous testing ground for this lexicon. When is security assistance better described as support for terrorism? Is the former reserved for Western providers and the latter for, say, Iran? When is security assistance better characterized as military intervention? Behind these terminological matters lurk not only political commitments and preferences but history. The West has been providing SA to MENA for some two centuries, whereas local providers, such as Iran, Turkey, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have been doing so for about a generation at most, with Israel having recently joined that list. Moreover, the assistance they provide tends to be more tactical, limited in scope, concentrated on kinetic rather than institutional capacity building, more likely to be provided to nonstate actors, and short-lived. Clearly there are substantial differences in SA as provided by regional as opposed to external actors. We leave it to the reader to grapple with the relevance of these terms for SA extended by different providers, concentrating here instead on conveying relevant information, most especially in the chapters by Zoltan Barany on security assistance by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and Simone Tholens on SA extended by Iran and Turkey.

Purpose and Organization of the Book

This book addresses the debate over the future of Western SA to MENA. It does so by investigating the key challenges facing SA as presently conceived and delivered. It then draws upon this information to evaluate alternative ways and means to improve SA by reducing the harm it causes, while increasing the benefits to both providers and recipients, the latter being not just states but their citizens as well.

The book consists of five parts preceded by two stage-setting introductory chapters by Anthony Cordesman and Glenn Robinson. The former addresses the challenges of providing SA not only in the face of regimes' perceived needs, as subsequently analyzed in more detail by Glenn Robinson, but also in light of rapid, dramatic changes that have occurred since 2011 in the various dynamics of the region. After reviewing the region's security context in that year, Cordesman notes that "none of those things are true. The Arab Spring has . . . turn[ed] the

MENA region into a fragmented mess." After describing that mess, he takes up the challenges it and rapidly developing symmetric and asymmetric weapons technologies pose to providers of SA, the ever-greater number of which further complicates matters.

Cordesman's chapter is followed by Robinson's analysis of how demand for SA and the effectiveness of its utilization are shaped by regime needs in three types of MENA states: oil monarchies, repressive republics, and flawed democracies. Only in the last type of state is SA used reasonably effectively. In oil monarchies SA serves primarily as insurance premiums for US support, while in repressive republics it is primarily sought to assist coup-proofing.

The classic bugbear of SA, which is the principal-agent problem consisting, according to Stephen Biddle, of "interest misalignments between the provider and the recipient, difficult monitoring challenges, and difficult conditions for enforcement," is the topic of Part I.[15] Noureddine Jebnoun focuses in Chapter 4 on the "interest misalignment" resulting from the US preference for Tunisian security efforts to concentrate on counterterrorism and border control in the face of the Tunisian military's desire to develop broader capacities and the state's need for economic and other support for democratization. The Lebanese Armed Forces, analyzed by Aram Nerguizian in Chapter 5, paradoxically illustrate that a military more or less quarantined by the jealous and fearful political elite that controls the state has been able to develop considerable capacities despite severe limits imposed on its procurement of weaponry. But its operational abilities remain constrained by that state and the confessional balance that underlies it. Unlike, say, Egypt and Algeria, where it can be argued that the states are extensions of their militaries, the Lebanese Armed Forces constitute a symbol, not the backbone, of the nation-state. In Chapter 6 Zeinab Abul-Magd documents the limitations to a principal's influence over an agent resulting from the declining relative monetary value of assistance provided by the US to Egypt.

Part II investigates multilateral, European, and regional providers of SA. Florence Gaub and Alex Walsh show in Chapter 7 how EU SA efforts are confined mainly to enhancing soft power, whereas those of its member states concentrate on building hard power. Whether this division of labor creates the basis for more effective SA, because a considerable portion of the European total is necessarily devoted to defense institution building coupled with military professionalization, is a question that concerns both them and Kevin Koehler. In Chapter 8 he describes the limitations faced by NATO in seeking to provide SA in MENA, the key one being that it is driven by demand from recipients,

thus reducing input from providers, who are in any case hampered by conflicting interests with their own governments. Zoltan Barany's Chapter 9 on GCC states describes their varying degrees of effective utilization of SA, while also investigating how the UAE and Saudi Arabia simultaneously serve as providers of SA, or possibly only as interveners, in the region. Simone Tholens's Chapter 10 contextualizes Iran and Turkey's efforts to expand their influence in MENA through SA and military intervention. She evaluates the comparative advantages and disadvantages of SA provided by these actors, noting their disruptive impacts on bilateral models of SA as well as the normative dimensions of SA lexicons.

Part III takes up the impact of SA on civil-military relations in recipient countries. Sean Yom's analysis of US SA to Jordan in Chapter 11 reveals that it has failed to create a proficient military, but combined with a massive amount of financial aid, it has reinforced the coercive apparatus and the underlying tribal socioeconomic base upon which the authoritarian client state rests. Lindsay Benstead's Chapter 12 draws upon public opinion data, most notably in Tunisia, to assess causes of relatively high popular support for militaries, including the impacts of security assistance. In Chapter 13 Yezid Sayigh addresses the causes and consequences of SA providers' belief that their assistance can upgrade, even transform, recipient's capabilities without an equivalent shift in the recipient's political, institutional, and social frameworks. He speculates on the consequences of SA for civil-military relations and notes that it provides inadequate support for defense institution building, valuable in its own right, but also as a model for better governance more generally and possibly even as an initial step on a path to democratization.

Part IV presents practitioners' perspectives on providing security assistance. US Air Force General F. C. Williams (Ret.) and US Army Colonel John Zavage (Ret.) present their insights as longtime participants in delivering US SA to MENA countries. General Williams describes a range of principal-agent problems in the US-Egyptian relationship and offers recommendations as to how they might best be dealt with. Colonel Zavage draws upon his experience as a military advisor in Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen/Saudi Arabia in demonstrating the limits of evaluation tools mandated by Congress and the Department of Defense, while offering suggestions on how to improve those tools.

In the conclusion in Part V, Hicham Alaoui and Robert Springborg draw upon the preceding chapters to address the question of whether SA in MENA may be inherently harmful or ineffective and thus best

replaced or supplemented by other policies, such as the United States withdrawing completely from MENA, engaging in offshore balancing, conducting coercive diplomacy, or intensifying grey zone activities.

In sum, this book provides multidimensional analyses of the costs and benefits to American, European, and regional providers of SA and assesses the impacts of that SA on various MENA actors, key among them being the Arab states. By so doing it provides empirical and analytical bases upon which recommendations are made for reducing harm caused by SA while increasing its benefits to both providers and recipients.

Notes

1. Global Militarization Index (http://gmi.bicc.de).
2. Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Peace Index 2021*.
3. Zuaiter, "The Middle East's Addiction to Foreign Aid."
4. Binder, "Report."
5. Hausmann, "How Afghanistan Was Really Lost."
6. The data is produced by V-Dem, a Swedish NGO, cited by Fisher, "U.S. Allies Drive Much of World's Democratic Decline."
7. On limited access orders in MENA and their negative consequences for regional integration associations, see Springborg, *Political Economies in the Middle East and North Africa*.
8. Lynch, "The End of the Middle East."
9. Salame made this comparison in his address to the Mediterranean Dialogue Conference of the Italian Institute for International Studies.
10. Marten, "Russia's Use of Semi-state Security Forces."
11. On the latter, see Bergman and Fassihi, "The Scientist and the A.I.-Assisted Remote Control Killing Machine."
12. *Security Cooperation* (Joint Publication 3-20), 5.
13. Ibid.
14. Congressional Research Service, "What Is 'Building Partner Capacity'?"
15. Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff," 89–142; Biddle, "Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations," 126–138.