**2014-2015 NCFCA BLUE BOOK - CASE SUMMARIES**

1. GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES: THE CASE FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

It started out as a necessary reaction to the events of 9/11 -- destroying the enemy that attacked us and shutting down their operations. That mission was accomplished. Today, however, the ongoing war in Afghanistan benefits no one - not the American people and certainly not the Afghan people. This case argues that we need to immediately withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan.

President Obama has announced a draw-down of US forces from Afghanistan to leave a remainder of 9,800 long-term. There are multiple flaws with the policies promoted by the ongoing US military presence in Afghanistan. The goal of a stable democratic government ruling the entire territory of Afghanistan is unattainable, so every dollar spent or life lost in pursuit of that goal is wasted, and the sooner we stop, the better. Our current counter-insurgency strategy, which consists of trying to find a way to make a large mish-mash of angry ethnic groups live together under the direction of foreigners (us), is doomed to fail and is only succeeding at creating terrorist backlash. Imagine how Americans would react to armed Afghans arriving here and reorganizing our government and social institutions, and you can easily see why our efforts to do the same for them can never succeed. And the government we have created for them is hopelessly corrupt, which means our military support for that government is tainted by association.

One of the experts who endorse this plan admit that a civil war would probably break out if US forces leave. But that’s a good thing, not a bad thing, because the countries in the region (like India and Pakistan) who have a stake in Afghan stability would intervene and carve out spheres of influence. Local ethnic groups would create local centers of power, rule over their own people, and leave the others alone. In any case, the results would be better than the war and chaos we have now.

External conquerors have never succeeded at controlling the Afghan people, a fact that led to that country’s nickname as the “graveyard of empires.” Ultimately, the Afghans are going to rule themselves on their own terms, it’s just a question of how many lives and how much money we spend delaying that process. The sooner we leave, the sooner the recovery and self-determination of the Afghan people can begin.

Negatives will argue that US intervention in Afghanistan is key to avoiding a repeat of the events that led up to 9/11. In those bad old days, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan and provided a safe haven for terrorists like Al Qaeda and its chieftain Osama bin Laden. Our current anti-insurgency and antiterrorism strategy in Afghanistan has these bad guys on the run, and if we see it through to the end, we can ensure that the terrorists are defeated. Surrendering on the eve of victory would be a tragic mistake. In addition, military intervention safeguards human rights for a population once terrorized by Islamic radicals, as well as interdicting deadly narcotics that end up killing people on the streets of American cities.

2. TELL IT LIKE IT IS: THE CASE FOR THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTION

Philosopher George Santayana said it best: “Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.” It ought to be obvious that people of good will and moral standing should remember and condemn historical occasions of genocide with a loud and unequivocal voice. Refusing to do so makes us complicit in their crimes, and dooms us to repeat them.

This case argues that there is a great historical event being swept under the rug: the Armenian Genocide. In 1915, as World War I was raging, the Ottoman Empire (later reorganized after WW1 as the modern day nation of Turkey) carried out a massive deportation and ethnic cleansing policy that devastated the Armenian population, solely for the crimes of not being Turkish and not being Muslims. Estimates of the death toll alone, not counting the displaced and refugees, range between 600,000 to 950,000.

Armenians the world over, including Armenian-Americans in this country, keep hoping the United States will stand up and be counted in recognizing this genocide and insisting that Turkey take responsibility for its actions. Forgetting the Armenian genocide is like forgetting the Jewish Holocaust, a second tragedy that insults the victims and survivors and allows the world to repeat the mistakes of the past. There have been repeated efforts over the years to pass a Congressional resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide, but they have never gotten through Congress. One key advocate for a congressional Armenian Genocide Resolution was Senator Barack Obama, who promised he would support and sign one if Congress passed it after he became President.

But today, Obama sings a different tune. His Administration actively lobbies Congress to twist arms in opposition to such a resolution. Negatives know why: Because accusing our NATO ally and key moderate Muslim partner of genocide would alienate them over historical events that are still in doubt and in need of more study. Denial of the Armenian genocide isn’t like Holocaust denial: There are reasonable and reputable scholars who argue that radical Armenian rebels started the bloodletting by killing Turks, and that the Turkish government’s reaction was reasonably moderate in response. In fact, there were a lot of deaths on both sides, both Turkish and Armenian, and a lot of the Armenians who died were killed by rogue forces or as casualties of World War I, not as part of a pre-planned government decision to eliminate an ethnic group. We can agree that “many died” without necessarily agreeing that it was a case of genocide.

3. NO BLOOD FOR OIL: THE CASE FOR REVOKING THE CARTER DOCTRINE

In his State of the Union address in January 1980, Pres. Jimmy Carter announced a foreign policy that continues in effect to this day, more than 30 years later. “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”

The resulting US military commitments and interventions in the three decades since have cost our nation dearly in blood and treasure, in addition to making the problem worse that it was supposed to solve. The Persian Gulf is not more stable today than it was in 1980, the pernicious influence of Iran is far worse, and the cost in dollars and lives has been colossal. The wars we’ve fought over it (for sure Gulf War I and Gulf War II) plus the annual cost of naval patrols and military bases in the region have run into hundreds of billions of borrowed deficit dollars. And the negative view in the region of our outside intervention has been a magnet for terrorism.

Oil doesn’t need US military protection to arrive on world markets any more than any other commodity does. The countries that produce and sell oil have every incentive to find ways to safeguard their product, since they are the ones who profit from it. Removal of the heavy US military footprint from the region will solve one of the main causes of terrorism and eliminate a huge unnecessary expense for US taxpayers.

Negatives will argue that the situation in the Persian Gulf would be far worse without the US military security guarantees created by the Carter Doctrine. Gulf oil facilities are vulnerable to attack, either by terrorists or by Iran. The Strait of Hormuz, where a large percentage of the world’s oil passes each day, could easily be choked or threatened. Even the threat of these scenarios, and even more, their fulfillment, would cause an immediate spike in the price of oil, with big impacts on the US and world economies. In addition, US presence in the region deters Iran from gaining influence and blocks it from bullying its neighbors. Given the dangers of the Iranian regime, including its nuclear weapon building program, now is not the time to be removing the security guarantee that has kept the region stable until now.

4. LET MY PEOPLE GO: THE CASE FOR REFORMING MILITARY AID TO EGYPT

**(Note: Due to the rapidly changing situation in Egypt, be sure to do more research before running this case, to ensure you have the latest information.)**

Egypt was long a military client of the US, receiving billions of dollars of military aid beginning in the 1970s. When despised Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in 2011, many thought it would open the door to a new era of human rights and democracy in that country. Unfortunately, the Egyptian military is suppressing human rights and promoting anti-American propaganda, even as they accept our aid!

The US has been cooperating with, training, and financially aiding the Egyptian military as a reward for Egypt agreeing to sign the Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1979. We give $1.3 billion/year in military aid, without saying anything to Egypt about how their military uses what we give them.

A former military general (as of the time this article is being written) is currently running the country, after some abortive attempts at establishing democracy after the fall of Mubarak. Advocates for military aid reform argue that holding up the aid is the only way to get Egypt’s attention and to restore US leverage. They also argue that other countries with questionable civil rights records are also watching how we deal with Egypt. If our statements about the importance of human rights are not taken seriously in Egypt’s case, other countries will also be bolder about ignoring them. This plan suspends all US military aid to Egypt until they reform on human rights.

Negatives can point to a number of foreign policy experts who say that our military aid policies with Egypt should not be based on human rights standards because it simply won’t work. We’ve tried in the past to use the aid for leverage to influence Egypt and it never works. In addition, the US promised Egypt the aid as part of the Camp David deal. Signing the Camp David treaty to make peace with Israel was a dangerous thing to do at the time (it got Egyptian President Anwar Sadat assassinated a couple years later), and the promise of US aid was part of the incentive needed to make it happen. Egypt may well reconsider renouncing peace with Israel if we drop our aid.

5. ENOUGH ALREADY: THE CASE FOR ENDING SANCTIONS ON IRAN

A wise man once said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Our sanctions policy on Iran dates back to 1979, before a lot of the people reading this book were born[[1]](#footnote-1). But year after year we sanction Iran and we keep sanctioning Iran, and then we increase the sanctions on Iran, but the policy fails and even makes things worse. After 35 years of sanctions, without success at changing the direction of the Iranian regime, maybe it’s time to try something else.

This case offers five justifications for ending sanctions. First, they don’t work. Iran continues to develop its nuclear program despite years of sanctions and has no intention of giving it up. Second, it justifies human rights violations. The Iranian regime uses sanctions as an excuse to declare emergencies that require suspension of human rights. Third, stability in the Middle East would be the likely outcome if Iran did develop a nuclear weapon, so sanctions are useless. Nuclear-armed Iran and nuclear-armed Israel would practice nuclear deterrence and the conflicts and threats would settle down. Fourth, sanctions hurt the common people. Anytime a nation is sanctioned, the elites who rule it never go hungry or suffer that much. It’s the common people who can’t get food or medicine or luxury items they want. Since the elites are the ones making the decisions, sanctions are not effective at forcing changes in foreign policy. And finally, large nations evade the sanctions, including some of our allies. If other nations trade with Iran, our sanctions can’t be expected to accomplish much.

Negatives will argue that a recent tightening of sanctions was very successful: It helped elect a more moderate leader and brought the Iranians to the negotiating table, leading to new opportunities in the nuclear program negotiations. Now isn’t the time to abandon what’s working and what might solve the nuclear crisis. The alternative is terrible: Iran with a nuclear bomb would lead to all kinds of bad consequences in the Middle East. We have to try everything, including sanctions, to stop that from happening.

6. TAKE AWAY THE KEYS: THE CASE FOR CUTTING MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s nephew Jonathan Ben-Artzi said it best in 2010: “If Americans truly are our friends, they should shake us up and take away the keys, because right now we are driving drunk, and without this wake-up call, we will soon find ourselves in the ditch of an undemocratic, doomed state.” [[2]](#footnote-2) . This case argues that rather than strengthening Israel, US military aid harm them, and cutting this aid is the best way to help Israel find its true path and fulfill its destiny.

The US gives Israel $3 billion/year in “Foreign Military Financing,” a fancy phrase for military aid. We give military aid to lots of countries, but Israel is always at or near the top of the list. The rules of FMF require Israel to spend 75% of that aid on military equipment purchased from the US. (For other FMF aided countries, it’s 100%)

Is that aid helping Israel? The first question is, do they need any help? Israel has by far the most powerful military forces in the region and arguably faces no significant military threats. Traditionally the biggest military threat in the region was Egypt, but they have signed a peace treaty and are now internally fragmented and divided. Egypt is no threat. Jordan has also been a threat to Israel in time past, but they too have signed a peace treaty and have nothing to gain by attacking Israel, and would not win such a conflict if they tried. Iran is the most powerful enemy Israel faces, but Iran’s threat is also limited. It shares no land border with Israel, so it cannot invade. If it develops a nuclear weapon, it would either be deterred from using it by Israel’s own nuclear weapons (in which case, no threat) or it would go ahead and nuke Israel and accept the consequences, in which case US military aid could not prevent such an outcome. And with sky-high US deficits, one can argue that US taxpayers need that $3 billion more than Israel does.

The second question is, does aid help or hinder Israel? Even some Israelis argue that aid weakens Israel by making them dependent on the US. They could develop their own military, set their own budget priorities, and develop their own military systems better without the dependency and the strings attached to US aid. And US aid arguably enables Israel in oppressing the Palestinians in the occupied territories, harming the Palestinians themselves and the US image abroad, by making America complicit in human rights violations.

Negatives will argue that the aid is more than dollars, it is symbolic. It cements the US-Israel alliance, and it’s the alliance that we need, where the net benefits of the alliance exceed the cost of the aid. The US derives billions of dollars in benefits from shared Israeli intelligence. And having a stable ally in the middle of a dangerous region is an extremely valuable asset in a world where alliances and regimes can shift overnight.

7. UNPAK: THE CASE FOR ENDING THE ALLIANCE WITH PAKISTAN

Only three years after establishing the US military alliance with Pakistan, President Eisenhower in 1957 said it was “perhaps the worst kind of a plan and decision we could have made. It was a terrible error...”. Time has proven him right, and this case argues that we need to get out of that mistake.

The most obvious focus of US-Pakistan relations today is the war in Afghanistan. While Pakistan’s government claims to be an ally in that war, and receives US military aid toward that end, it turns out that they are also our enemy. After all, where was Osama Bin Laden hiding for 10 years but in Pakistan near a military installation? Too, the Pakistani version of our CIA (for them it’s the ISI, Inter-Services Intelligence) is well known to be supportive of some of our enemies on the ground in Afghanistan. When we try to cooperate on joint operations with Pak troops, we don’t share intelligence (because we don’t trust them and they don’t trust us), so mistakes happen and friendly fire takes its toll. The mistrust is well-placed: Some Pakistani troops have been discovered aiding our enemies, according to the NATO commander on the ground. With friends like that, who even needs enemies?

In addition, US military operations inside Pakistan are causing death and destruction. Drone attacks are supposed to kill bad guys, but they often kill innocent bystanders. That’s bad in itself, but it also inflames the population against America, and you can hardly blame them. An alliance that causes more death and destruction and aids our enemies is an alliance we need to get out of, and fast.

Negatives will argue that, in fact, Pakistan is doing its best to fight the same Islamic radicals in the region that we are fighting. They have done a lot to aid our war effort in Afghanistan (like opening supply routes), and losing their help might cost us success in that war. In addition, Pakistan faces a lot of internal security issues, and without our support, the country could be destabilized.

8. THAT MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN: THE CASE FOR CUTTING AID TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

In the classic movie, Dorothy’s dog Toto pulls back the curtain to reveal a fool shouting into a microphone, pretending to be the Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz. “Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain,” he yells, but it’s too late, the game is up. Today we pull back the curtain and reveal what’s really going on in the deceptive world of Palestinian politics. We’ll show you how a happy and peaceful Palestinian unity government appears on the outside, but a dangerous terrorist organization is calling the shots behind the curtain.

The recent formation of a “unity government” for the Palestinian Authority (PA) may sound good because it tries to unite the two warring Palestinian factions (Hamas and Fatah). But it’s really bad news, because involving Hamas (a group officially listed as a terrorist organization by the US State Dept.) in the PA means increasing its influence for evil. Hamas regularly conducts terrorist attacks on Israel, refuses to negotiate any peace settlement with Israel and even refuses to recognize Israel’s right to exist (which may explain why it refuses to negotiate – if someone doesn’t exist, you can’t negotiate with them).

After the announcement of the unity government, the Obama administration announced it would continue providing hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid to the PA, despite the concerns of Israelis and Americans that our money would be funding terrorists. This plan stops aid to the PA until Hamas is no longer involved in the PA government.

Negatives will argue that Hamas is not, in fact, in the government, so there is no problem to be solved. The new PA government consists of cabinet members who are accepted and approved with the agreement of Hamas, but are not themselves members of Hamas. The fact that Hamas agrees with the government doesn’t mean our dollars are funding Hamas. We need to wait and see what the PA does before we reach any quick judgments. Meanwhile, our dollars are needed to ensure stability and security in the Palestinian territories. Allowing the PA to collapse without adequate funding would create a humanitarian disaster.

9. DEAL WITH THE DEVIL: THE CASE FOR REFORMING THE ALLIANCE WITH SAUDI ARABIA

Some call it a “Faustian Bargain,” in other words, a deal with the Devil. President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated an alliance in 1945, and every President since has maintained it. But our “ally” acts more like an enemy, and commits terrible abuses against its own people. This case argues it’s long past time for us to end our alliance with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia until they implement democratic reforms (which in all likelihood will be never).

Saudi Arabia, named for the Saud family that has ruled it since the 1930s, has an awful track record on human rights. They have no interest in democracy, since the ruling family gets to control billions of dollars per year in oil wealth as long as they remain in power. And their strict Wahhabi religious views mean they have no interest in the ordinary human rights we take for granted in the West. There is no freedom of religion, and women in particular are oppressed in numerous ways.

Yet, the US supports them. The deal has always been: The US guarantees military security for the House of Saud, and the Saudis guarantee the flow of their oil at reasonable prices onto world markets. The Saudis have traditionally had a large enough stock of oil that their production could ease shortages, spikes and shocks; or, their refusal to produce could take enough oil off the market to create them. US Presidents know how angry voters get when gas prices go up, so they will do just about anything to avoid upsetting the Saudis.

This case argues that the time has come to stop playing that game. The Saudis are abusive supporters of radical terrorism who are no friends of ours, and we would be better off without them. The last time the US pressured the Saudis into reform, it worked. But that was during the Kennedy administration (before even Coach Vance was born). The reform that worked then: The Saudis finally got around to abolishing slavery in 1962. ‘Bout time.

Negatives will argue that the disadvantages far outweigh the benefits. While there may be bad things about the Saudis, their Kingdom is just too strategic, too important for us to abandon. Their alliance is key to solving or mitigating various regional problems. And fasten your seat belts if they get mad and reduce the flow of oil onto world markets. Prices will skyrocket and the economy will tank.

10. ALREADY HAPPENING: THE CASE FOR INCREASING AID TO SYRIAN REBELS

We had a really cool case all written and ready to go, advocating increased US aid to Syrian rebels. Congress passed such a plan in September, 2014, just a few days before Blue Book was going to be published. We’ll replace it later in the season with a new plan and put it online for you. The evidence in this brief ended up in the Negative brief to the next case…

11. SEVEN OTHER SPIRITS: THE CASE FOR ENDING AID TO SYRIAN REBELS

The current situation in Syria reminds us of a parable Jesus gave, when he said: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."[[3]](#footnote-3)

Our current policy of aiding rebels to overthrow evil Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad might sound like we’re getting rid of the Devil himself. But the rebel groups that want to replace him will be seven others more wicked than Assad, and the final state of Syria will be worse than it is today. The groups we’re aiding are massacring Christian minorities, destroying churches, and committing so much mayhem that leaders of Syrian Christian communities are begging us to stop.

US officials are trying to aid only the “moderate” rebels, but that’s a dangerous and relative term. And rebels move from group to group, depending on who’s paying them. The aid we give to one group can easily be diverted to others, so ultimately we will be responsible for all the atrocities these groups commit, since our aid will be fueling it one way or another. If these groups fail, they will merely prolong the Syrian civil war at great expense in lost lives. If they succeed at overthrowing Assad, then the last state of Syria will be worse than under Assad, when a radical Islamic government takes over and begins massive persecution of Syria’s diverse ethnic and religious minorities.

Negatives will argue that Assad in power is the worst possible outcome. We need to get on the right side of history and try to gain some influence with the moderate groups that are vying to replace him.

12. LET’S MAKE A DEAL: THE CASE FOR A FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY

In 2013, the Prime Minister of Turkey met with Pres. Obama and asked him for a Free Trade Agreement. Pres. Obama responded by setting up a discussion committee instead. But quickly opening more freedom for people to trade would be good for both countries, especially in view of impending US/European trade negotiations that could leave Turkey on the sidelines. Free Trade Agreements (FTA) reduce or eliminate customs duties and tariffs on goods traded internationally, with the intention of reducing costs to end consumers and increasing the volume of trade.

Turkey is not a member of the European Union (despite its repeated requests to join), but it is a member of a customs union with the E.U. Goods that are imported into the European Union flow directly into Turkey without payment of additional customs duties or tariffs. The E.U. is in process of negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. If that effort succeeds, the U.S. could export goods without tariffs to the E.U. and then into Turkey (because of the customs union). But Turkey would still face tariffs when their goods show up on our shores (because there’s no FTA between Turkey and the US). This unfair result could damage Turkey’s economy by making it harder for their goods to be exported, and the increased volume of imports puts local Turkish producers out of business.

This case argues that the U.S. should accept Turkey’s request and set up an FTA with Turkey immediately. Doing so would benefit the economies of both nations. (Note: The plan doesn’t fiat any action by the Turkish government, since they have already said they want to do the plan, so no problem with extra-topicality going outside the United States government for solvency.) We can use the recent US/South Korea FTA as a model and achieve with Turkey the same benefits we derived from the US/SK FTA.

Negatives will argue that the US/SK FTA is a good example of why we don’t want to do this plan. The S. Korea agreement has cost jobs and hurt the US economy, just like other big FTAs, like NAFTA in the ‘90s (between the US, Canada and Mexico). And we get nothing from boosting our relationship with Turkey, since they are an unreliable and worthless ally.

13. SHOOTING OURSELVES IN THE FOOT: THE CASE FOR ENDING YEMEN DRONE STRIKES

A former Yemen exchange student who studied in America and deeply respects our country said it best in 2013:  "If America is providing economic, social and humanitarian assistance to Yemen, the vast majority of the Yemeni people know nothing about it. Everyone in Yemen, however, knows about America and its drones."[[4]](#footnote-4)

Yemen is a dangerous and unstable place. It has a fragile government besieged by several rebel groups and Al Qaeda lurking in the hills plotting mayhem. The US has a policy of attempting to aid the government while at the same time using CIA drones to blow up real or suspected bad guys in various locations in Yemen. But the policy is backfiring. We’re killing so many innocent bystanders that we create more terrorists than we eliminate, as the population turns against us. Not to mention that it’s just wrong to blow up innocent people.

The President of Yemen authorizes our drone strikes, but the parliament of Yemen is a big plan advocate. This plan cancels US drone strikes in Yemen. Why Yemen only and not the rest of the Mid-East or the world? First, the rest of the world is extra-topical. Second, adding more countries opens up more potential Negative arguments – they could use disadvantages from multiple countries, or find someplace where drones are effective and argue that the plan cancels the “good” drones along with the bad. The advocacy for this plan is specific to Yemen, and the case forces Negatives to deal specifically with Yemen in their disadvantages, which may be a harder task.

Negatives will argue that drones are an effective tool in the war on terror, and that Yemen is a hot bed of Al Qaeda activity requiring our urgent attention. Drones occasionally have collateral damage, but all wars do; drones happen to have a lot less of such damage than most other forms of war. Instead of condemning them, we ought to imagine what would the damage be if we carried out the war on Al Qaeda by any other means.

1. Coach Vance joined his high school debate team that year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0401/Peace-for-Israelis-and-Palestinians-Not-without-America-s-tough-love [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew 12:43-45 New King James Version. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Farea al-Muslimi, quoted by Conor Friedersdorf, 24 Apr 2013 THE ATLANTIC, “This Yemeni Man Loves America, Hates al-Qaeda, and Says Drone Strikes Make Them Stronger” http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/04/this-yemeni-man-loves-america-hates-al-qaeda-and-says-drone-strikes-make-them-stronger/275248/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)