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Introduction by Janice J. Terry

**Peter L. Hahn.** *Missions Accomplished? The United States and Iraq since World War I.* Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-19-533338-1 (paperback, \$24.95).

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Introduction by Janice J. Terry, Eastern Michigan University

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**M***issions Accomplished? The United States and Iraq since World War I*, with its sly allusion to George W. Bush's triumphalism, is a short overview of the ups and downs of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq over the past century. Reviewers Nigel J. Ashton, James Goode and Mary Ann Heiss have generally favorable assessments of Hahn's dispassionate and straightforward account. Heiss in particular praises Hahn's "use of declassified documents...for the conduct of research on recent history topics." On the other hand, Roland Popp is much more critical, finding Hahn "unduly sympathetic to the views of U.S. policymakers."

Both Goode and Heiss note the book's design for use by undergraduate students; in this regard the book's short length and concise narrative should make it an ideal text for classroom use. Each chapter in this straightforward chronological account is introduced with a short vignette of an individual American involved with Iraq; although Popp is not enthusiastic about the vignettes, U.S. publishers often encourage the use of such personalized accounts or so-called zingers as an effective means to engage students with the materials. Reviewers also note the welcome inclusion of numerous maps. Heiss also mentions several ways in which the book can be used in the classroom as a means "for exploring the pantheon of weapons in the U.S. foreign policy arsenal."

Hahn emphasizes that the book is a consideration of U.S. diplomatic not cultural involvement with Iraq. Thus missionary and archeological exchanges are absent from the narrative although Goode and Popp bemoan their exclusion. Certainly a future work that intertwines the two threads would be welcome. Given that Iraq was largely viewed as a British sphere of interest until the Cold War, U.S. involvement with Iraq was minimal prior to the 1950s; thus it is not surprising that the majority of Hahn's account and certainly the most detailed and controversial chapters focus on U.S. policies from the 1990s to the present day.

Popp questions Hahn's conclusions regarding the Qassem regime, in particular, the extent to which the U.S. was involved with the various coups and ultimate overthrow of Qassem and the purges against Iraqi Communists. Both Ashton and, to a greater extent, Popp note that U.S. policies during the 1950s to the 1970s were not predicated solely on anti-Communist stances but on other considerations, particularly a general hostility to pan-Arab nationalism as embodied by Nasser and to a lesser extent Qassem's regime in Iraq. The Eisenhower administration actually had far more nuanced policies than some Cold Warriors would have it and ironically, more than that of the neo-cons and Bush administration some fifty years later.

Ashton highlights Kissinger's role in engaging with the Kurds during the Nixon administration as well as their abandonment after the 1975 Algiers agreement. Heiss expands on the vagaries of U.S. policies toward the Kurds, noting that Washington turned a blind eye to Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. Ashton correctly marks the Iranian Revolution as the major factor in tilting U.S. policy makers

toward adopting more favorable stances toward Saddam Hussein. Ashton also praises Hahn for his “fair historical balance.” Given the fraught emotions that continue to swirl around the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the American failure to plan for the aftermath of Saddam Hussein’s overthrow, Hahn’s dispassionate narrative is unusual for neither justifying the neo-cons’ world view and George W. Bush’s policies nor condemning U.S. policies in their entirety.

Ashton and Goode note Hahn’s clarification of April Glaspie’s exchanges with Saddam Hussein and discussion as to how she became a “scapegoat” following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Certainly, it is high time that the reputation of a respected and loyal diplomat who consistently implemented U.S. policies as formulated in Washington be rehabilitated. Whatever Glaspie said to Hussein there can be no doubt that she was the messenger of U.S. policy, not its creator.

The extent to which U.S. policies encouraged or deterred the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait remains unclear although Hahn and Ashton both emphasize that the currently-opened declassified documents do not support theories that the U.S. lured Hussein into the aggression against Kuwait or gave a “green light” for the invasion. However, the role of Kuwait’s hostility against its neighbor after the Iran-Iraq war is not adequately addressed. During the Iran Iraq war I asked the Kuwaiti Minister of Defense what would happen regarding the loans made to Iraq. With a wave of his hands he smilingly replied, “Oh, that is all between brothers.” Yet when the war ended, Kuwait belligerently demanded the return of the money with interest. Others including, but not limited to King Abdullah II of Jordan I in *Our Last Best Chance* and Said K. Aburish in *Saddam Hussein: the Politics of Revenge*, have noted Kuwait’s obduracy.<sup>1</sup> Why Kuwait chose to kick sand in the eyes of the 500 pound gorilla to the north remains unanswered. Yet many still consider that tiny Kuwait was at least tacitly, if not overtly, encouraged by its Gulf neighbors and by extension the United States.

As the reviewers note, Hahn is generally positive about George H. Bush’s policies toward Iraq; he gives him full credit for his carefully crafted diplomatic efforts prior to the first Gulf war. Hahn also gives high marks for the containment policies of both the Bush and Clinton administrations during the 1990s; Ashton stresses that Hahn views “the abandonment of the earlier strategy of containment ... [as] a clear mistake.” Heiss concurs with this analysis.

However, Goode and Popp judge that Hahn’s assessments of George W’s policies are overly positive. Popp, in particular, points out some errors in maps and labels and also disputes some of the statistics, or lack thereof, cited by Hahn with regard to casualties in both Gulf wars and by Hussein’s forces during Kurdish and Shia uprisings.

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<sup>1</sup> King Abdullah of Jordan, *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace In A Time of Peril*. New York: Viking, 2011, 68-71; Said K. Aburish, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge*. London: Bloomsbury, 2001, 276-283.

Oddly, neither Popp nor the other reviewers pay adequate attention to the effects of over a decade of sanctions on Iraq's general ability to wage war against the world's only superpower or the general exhaustion of its population. In tracing the many failures of planning for the occupation and U.S. policies during the subsequent insurgency, Hahn omits any discussion of the looting of the Iraqi national Museum with its priceless treasures or of the destruction of dozens of archeological sites. He also discusses the "abuses" at Abu Ghraib but avoids the use of the perhaps more appropriate word, "torture."

Popp reserves his strongest, and most vehement criticisms, for the last two chapters in which Hahn assesses the adoption of regime change by the second Bush administration, the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its failures during the subsequent occupation. In particular, Popp lambastes what he describes as Hahn's "gung-ho narrative of the U.S. military victory over Iraq in 2003." While Hahn emphasizes the Bush administration's failures to plan for the occupation and the intra-agency fighting that occurred during the occupation and subsequent insurgency, Popp argues that Hahn pays inadequate attention to materials that indicate that the Bush administration was determined to attack Iraq and overthrow Hussein whether or not he possessed weapons of mass destruction.

Hahn is to be lauded both for addressing the ongoing issues of U.S. foreign policy in a quite fair-minded fashion and for his use of recently declassified materials. Given the controversies and diverse opinions about U.S. motivations and actions in Iraq, Hahn's narrative was bound to elicit differing and strongly held reactions but he has provided a narrative that opens the door for further debates and research by scholars that will undoubtedly continue for some time to come.

### Participants:

**Peter L. Hahn** (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) is a professor of history and department chair at Ohio State University. He is the author of *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (1991); *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961* (2004); *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (2005); and numerous other publications including *Missions Accomplished?* Hahn is also the Executive Director of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

**Janice J. Terry** is Professor Emeritus of modern Middle East History at Eastern Michigan University and an Adjunct Professor at Marietta College, Ohio. Her publications include *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Role of Lobbies and Special Interest Groups* (2005). She is an editor and contributor of the 8 vol. *Encyclopedia of World History* (2008) as well as a co-author of *The Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (2008) and *World History*, 2 vol. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 2012. She is also a former editor of *Arab Studies Quarterly*.

**Nigel J. Ashton** is Professor and Chair of the International History Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life*, (2008), *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence* (2002), and *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-*

*American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (1996). He has also edited *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers, 1967-73* (2007).

**James Goode** received his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1984. He teaches the history of American foreign relations and of the Middle East at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is the author of *The United States and Iran: In the Shadow of Musaddiq* (1997) and *Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919-1941* (2007). He is currently writing a study of the Iranian intervention in Oman during the 1970s.

**Mary Ann Heiss**, associate professor of history at Kent State University, holds a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Her publications include *Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil, 1950-1954* (Columbia University Press, 1997); co-edited volumes on the recent history/future of NATO, U.S. relations with the Third World, and intrabloc conflict within NATO and the Warsaw Pact; and numerous essays in edited collections and professional journals, including the *International History Review* and *Diplomatic History*. Her current research explores the issue of colonialism as a factor in Anglo-American relations, particularly against the backdrop of the United Nations, in the period 1945-1963.

**Roland Popp** is Senior Researcher at the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich. He specializes in current Middle East politics, the history of U.S. relations with the Middle East and the history and theory of nuclear proliferation. His historical research has been published in *Cold War History*, *Middle East Journal* and *The International History Review*.

Preparing a short, single volume study of a topic as controversial and complex as the contemporary history of American involvement in Iraq is a considerable challenge for any historian. In *Missions Accomplished?*, Peter Hahn has done an admirable job of setting the story of the 2003 American invasion of the country in longer term historical context. Hahn comes to this project with excellent credentials, as one of the foremost scholars of the contemporary American role in the Middle East. In earlier works such as *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961* Hahn has shown an ability to navigate the treacherous shoals of the contemporary history of the region in a dispassionate and scholarly fashion. The challenge of applying this approach to U.S. involvement in Iraq is arguably even greater than that posed by his earlier work studying U.S. engagement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. But, although Hahn does not eschew offering his judgement on the strengths and weaknesses of different phases of U.S. policy, he does so with due regard to historical context.

In his opening chapter looking at “Legacies of Empire,” Hahn resists the temptation to write the U.S. role in the country further back into history than is warranted by the evidence. U.S. interests in Iraq remained secondary to those of Britain until the 1958 revolution at least. Even after the revolution, as U.S. fears increased significantly about the possible advance of Soviet influence within the Cold War context, Eisenhower Administration officials continued to admit their relative lack of knowledge about Iraq. Pondering the possibility of some form of U.S. intervention during a National Security Council meeting on 15 January 1959, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles commented that “we were simply not sufficiently sophisticated to mix into this complicated situation...”<sup>1</sup> In comparison to the remarkable degree of hubris which marked much of the pre-invasion thinking of the Bush Administration during 2002-3, Dulles’s relative humility when faced with the complexities of Iraqi politics and culture is striking.

During the period between the fall of the monarchy in 1958 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, U.S. engagement with Iraq was no more than episodic. The Cold War provided the unifying thread to link up the junctures at which Washington took a more activist approach. So, as fears about the advance of Soviet influence in Iraq ebbed during 1960 so did the degree of attention devoted to the country. During 1961, the Kennedy Administration essentially stood on the sidelines as Britain took the lead in deploying troops to Kuwait to forestall a putative Iraqi threat to the independence of the emirate. (46-7) Thereafter, Hahn notes rightly that declassified documents offer no evidence of U.S. complicity in the Baathist coup which overthrew Iraq’s post-revolutionary leader Abd al-Karim Qasim in 1963. (48)

The first clear juncture at which significant U.S. interference in the internal affairs of Iraq took place came under the Nixon Administration in the early 1970s. Against the backdrop

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Council, 393<sup>rd</sup> meeting, 15 January 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-60, Vol. XIII*, pp.375-7.



of closer relations between the Baathist regime and the Soviet Union, which culminated in a Treaty of Friendship in 1972, and galvanized by the prompting of the Shah of Iran, President Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger approved a top secret CIA operation to support Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq through the provision of arms and economic aid. Ultimately, the rug was pulled from under the Kurdish rebels and the CIA operation by the Shah's unexpected decision to cut a deal over the disputed border along the Shatt al-Arab with Saddam Hussein, by this stage Iraq's Vice-President, during an OPEC summit in Algiers in March 1975. (58) But the foundation had been laid for subsequent U.S. involvement in Iraq.

It was the Iranian Revolution, coupled with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 which dramatically changed the strategic landscape for the United States in the Gulf. In the space of a year the Shah, on whom successive Administrations had relied as the 'policeman' of the Gulf in the wake of British withdrawal at the beginning of the decade, had been overthrown, while the Afghan invasion seemed to confirm longstanding fears about a potential Soviet drive to the south. Although the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq in 1980 could be seen as serving U.S. purposes in helping to contain the new revolutionary regime in Tehran, Hahn is right to note that there is no firm evidence to support the Iranian contention that the Carter Administration encouraged Saddam Hussein, by this stage Iraq's President, to invade. (73)

In fact, new sources have become available since Hahn completed his manuscript to help us to judge the factors influencing Saddam's decision to invade Iran. As a result of the capture of Iraqi materials following the U.S. invasion of 2003, a large trove of documents and tapes has become available to scholars at the National Defense University (NDU). Coupled with the even larger collection of Baath Party materials which are stored at the Hoover Institution affiliated to Stanford University, these materials have the potential to give us a unique insight into the inner workings of Saddam's regime. A transcript of a conversation between Saddam and his inner circle in the final days before war broke out released by the NDU for a conference on the Iran-Iraq War at the Woodrow Wilson Center in October 2011 shows that calculations about the opportunity presented by Iranian military weakness loomed largest in Saddam's decision to invade. There is no suggestion he was acting on the basis of a "green light" from Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The fortunes of war did, however, bring about a significant change in the U.S. stance towards Iraq. While the public posture of the Reagan Administration remained one of neutrality, from the early summer of 1982, as the war turned decisively against Iraq, the Administration moved covertly to bolster the Iraqi position. Battlefield intelligence was supplied to Iraq which helped it subsequently to thwart the Iranian onslaught. While the nature, extent, level of detail and channels of delivery used to provide this information remain shrouded in some uncertainty, its provision was indicative of the future course of U.S. policy towards the war.

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<sup>2</sup> Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC) Record Number: SH-SHTP-D-000-847  
<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/index.cfm?secID=179&pageID=4&type=section>

From November 1984 onwards, with the restoration of formal diplomatic relations which had been broken off in June 1967, the overt as well as covert position of the United States became increasingly sympathetic to Iraq. There were, of course, certain notorious exceptions to this rule, most notably in the shape of the Iran-Contra affair which came to light in November 1986.(79) Once again, the recently released files at the NDU shed some light on Saddam's private response to the news that the U.S. had been covertly supplying weapons to Iran. For Saddam, an incorrigible conspiracy theorist, Iran-Contra served as tangible proof of his view of the world: "This is nothing new. It is new in regards to their depravity, in the level of moral decay of the Americans and specifically their president. It is close to what we expected...."<sup>3</sup> But, despite his apparent sangfroid, Iran-Contra served dramatically to reinforce Saddam's view of the U.S. as a fundamentally hostile, treacherous power.

One narrative technique which Hahn employs to good effect in this concise study is that of beginning each chapter with a tableau of a pivotal incident. The chapter on the Gulf crisis of 1990-1 begins with the ill-fated meeting between U. S. Ambassador April C. Glaspie and President Saddam Hussein on 25 July 1990, a week before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Glaspie, as Hahn acknowledges, was a trail-blazing diplomat, whose impeccable record of service had led her to be appointed as the first female U.S. Ambassador to an Arab country. Subsequently she was scapegoated for comments she made to Saddam during the meeting which could be read as implying no direct U.S. interest in how the Iraqi President chose to solve his dispute with Kuwait. Given that Saddam himself did not take the final decision to invade until as late as four days before the operation, the U.S. intelligence establishment could be forgiven to some degree for its failure to predict the invasion.<sup>4</sup> But more generally, the strategy of seeking closer relations with Baghdad in order to moderate the regime's behavior, which was pursued during the later stages of the Iran-Iraq War and in its aftermath, seems to have failed spectacularly. One might, though, take issue with the tone of Hahn's description of the Administration's approach as being one of making friendly gestures to win Saddam's cooperation "with their vision of regional peace and stability."([93) Preserving the status quo has always been the goal of hegemonic powers. The status quo looked far less satisfactory when viewed from Baghdad. A more hard-headed characterization of the U.S. approach than that implied by the use of such terms would be in order here.

Hahn's treatment of the Bush Administration's response to the Iraqi invasion is generally sympathetic. Faced with Saddam's blatant breach of international law and the threat of further Iraqi aggression, a response was essential. The marshaling of an international coalition against Iraq, the shaping of U.S. domestic public opinion and finally the waging of a successful military operation to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait were all significant

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<sup>3</sup> CRRC Record Number: SH-SHTP-A-000-556  
<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/index.cfm?secID=179&pageID=4&type=section>

<sup>4</sup> F. G. Gause, 'Iraq's Decision to Go to War, 1980 and 1990', *Middle East Journal*, 56/1, 2002, pp. 53-4.



successes for the President. For Hahn, “Bush deserves acclaim... for his carefully measured response to the invasion of Kuwait.” (109) Likewise, despite subsequent controversy about the failure to overthrow Saddam at this juncture, Hahn rightly judges the president’s decision to halt operations after the liberation of Kuwait as having been “clearly reasonable and sound given the international context in early 1991.” (110)

The containment regime bequeathed by Bush to the Clinton Administration comprised international sanctions designed to prevent Saddam rebuilding his armed forces and his WMD capability, an international inspection regime designed to dismantle existing WMD programs, and a pair of no-fly zones covering northern and southern Iraq intended to help protect Kurdish and Shia opponents of the regime. While containment did not hold out the immediate prospect of the overthrow of the Saddam regime, it did avoid the awkward choices which might have resulted from military backing for the Kurdish and Shia rebellions against Saddam. The possible splintering of the Iraqi state held out the prospect of Turkish intervention in the north to contain the Kurdish “problem” and the advance of Iranian influence among Shia co-religionists in the south. Indeed, containing revolutionary Iran formed the second pillar of what came to be termed a “dual containment” strategy under Clinton. (119)

In the face of sanctions, international isolation, inspections and periodic military retribution, Saddam Hussein’s regime proved remarkably durable during the 1990s. Hahn argues that it was not until the final phase of his Administration that President Clinton turned towards more direct attempts to overthrow Saddam. He sees the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 as a watershed in this respect. However, direct presidential backing for attempts to overthrow Saddam pre-dates this juncture. During 1995-6, the CIA supported covert coup plans developed first by the Iraqi National Congress (INC) led by Ahmed Chalabi, and later, more significantly, by the Iraqi National Accord (INA) led by Iyad Allawi. In terms of the INA coup plans, it was the personal intervention of President Clinton during a meeting in the Oval Office in September 1995 which persuaded King Hussein of Jordan to allow his country to be used as the base for the operation.<sup>5</sup>

The final two chapters of Hahn’s book are devoted to the Bush Administration’s campaign to unseat Saddam Hussein between 2001-3, and the disastrous aftermath involving the occupation of Iraq between 2003-10. There is never a perfect time to choose to write about any historical event, but it is arguably unfortunate that Hahn has had to break off the tale before the more obvious cut off point presented by the withdrawal of American armed forces at the end of 2011. Nevertheless, he is able to cover the key events during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Looking back over U.S. policy towards Iraq during this period it is a struggle to decide which term best sums up the whole sorry tale. Hubris, duplicity, myopia and incompetence all spring to mind when considering the Bush Administration’s justification for the invasion and its planning for the aftermath. But beyond that, the dearth of strategic thinking when

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<sup>5</sup> N. J. Ashton, *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life* (2008), pp.341-2.

compared to almost any previous administration is quite striking. While George H. W. Bush and Clinton had both tried to frame policy towards Iraq within the broader framework of the balance of power in the Gulf, the George W. Bush Administration was afflicted by a form of Saddam tunnel vision. The emergence of Iraq in the wake of the American occupation as a Shia-dominated state in which revolutionary Iran exercises the key external influence represents the negation of the strategy pursued by every administration from Carter to Clinton.

In Hahn's view the abandonment of the earlier strategy of containment was a clear mistake. He writes that "the maintenance of the containment approach into the new century had a fair chance of preserving essential U.S. interests in the Middle East during the lifetime of Saddam Hussein at a small fraction of the costs incurred in the alternative approach implemented by Clinton's successor in the Oval Office." (132) While acknowledging the profound effect of the 9/11 attacks on the American psyche, Hahn criticises the Administration for its march to war with insufficient political planning and troop strength, and for ignoring experienced voices raised in warning such as those of James Baker and Brent Scowcroft. (161)

Hahn highlights the human toll of the ill-planned invasion by beginning his chapter on its aftermath with the tale of one soldier killed in action during the 2007 'surge' of U.S. forces in Iraq, which was designed to quell the raging insurgency that had overtaken the country from late 2003 onwards. He documents the neglect of post-invasion planning, the Administration's studied ignorance of the political and social conditions in Iraq and its initial reliance on the slippery figure of Ahmed Chalabi to provide local leadership. Whether or not there was a post-invasion window of opportunity to secure an orderly transition in Iraq remains a matter of debate. (169) But in the face of what Hahn terms "poor leadership" in Washington and "monumental shortcomings" on the ground in Baghdad the situation rapidly deteriorated as the death toll, both Iraqi and American, rocketed. (196)

Hahn does give President Bush some credit for finding a way "eventually to achieve a modicum of stability in Iraq" through the 'surge' of U.S. forces during 2007. (196) But otherwise, the balance sheet he presents is almost wholly negative. By the end of 2010, 4,300 American soldiers had been killed, 32,000 were wounded, 100,000 Iraqis (a conservative estimate) had died and two million were displaced. The war had drained \$1 trillion from the U.S. Treasury and contributed to a relative decline of the U.S.'s share of global gross domestic product between 2000-10 from 32% to 24%, "a rate of relative national economic decline surpassed in world history only by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991." (197) Furthermore, the Iraqi imbroglio diverted U.S. troops from the war in Afghanistan and the hunt for Osama bin Laden. It galvanized Islamic militants, extended Iranian influence in the Gulf and diverted U.S. attention from other key foreign policy challenges, especially the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also damaged considerably the international standing of the United States.

"Missions Accomplished?" makes an excellent starting point for students and other readers interested in understanding the roots of the United States' greatest foreign policy

misadventure of the post-war period. Perhaps, to make the irony of the title fuller, Hahn might have opted for the singular “Mission Accomplished?” to reflect the banner behind a beaming George W. Bush on the front cover of the book. But, in this, as in every other aspect of the book, Hahn is scrupulously concerned to maintain a fair historical balance.

Peter Hahn has set out “to measure the degree to which” various American missions to Iraq were accomplished over the past century, approximately from the end of World War I to the present. (xii) At the end of his analytical synthesis, the first of its kind on the subject, he observes, not surprisingly, that “U.S. leaders enjoyed some successes and some failures.” (205) Although this conclusion may seem predictable, students of American foreign relations should find this lucid account of considerable value as they try to understand the intricacies of the history of U.S.-Iraq relations.

There are a number of features in *Missions Accomplished?* which I find attractive. Hahn has designed the book for use by undergraduate students and for those who seek a brief, clear, and uncomplicated history of relations between the United States and Iraq. The length of the book and its layout are sure to please those audiences. It is a reasonably short text, barely 200 pages, including eleven maps and many more images. I mention the number of maps because all too often publishers omit this key element to cut costs. Each chapter opens with a vignette of an American who has experienced an encounter with Iraq. This device is sure to appeal to students and the general public alike. More than three quarters of the book is devoted to the period since the late 1960s when the Baath party came to power in Baghdad. For much of that time, of course, Saddam Hussein directed Iraq’s affairs. This is a sensible allotment of space, for prior to 1967 US relations with Iraq were episodic and rarely captured headlines. I enjoyed reading the accounts of U.S. policy in recent decades. Hahn has drawn on a wide variety of sources. One is pleasantly surprised at the great volume of primary and secondary material that is already available to scholars on this subject. This includes “liberated” Iraqi documents, showing how disconnected from reality Saddam Hussein had become by 2003, when he apparently assumed that it would be quite possible for his forces to defeat those of the United States. Hahn writes well, explaining complicated developments with considerable skill. He provides good, clear explanations of the various changes in U.S. policy toward Saddam Hussein over his long rule, when Washington often sacrificed its principles to maintain relations with the Iraqi dictator. He clarifies the record concerning Ambassador April Glaspie, who has become something of a scapegoat since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. He concludes that she accurately reflected divided opinion within the George H. W. Bush administration as to how to proceed on Iraq. He emphasizes the fact that the U.S. turned a blind eye toward Saddam Hussein’s human rights violations during the earlier Iran-Iraq War. He provides an excellent discussion of policy toward Iraq during the Clinton administration and follows this with an explanation of how President George W. Bush came to embrace military action there, concluding that Bush “started a war that many considered unnecessary and failed accurately to anticipate the consequences.” (160) Bush did not prepare, for example, for the postwar occupation. Advisors such as Paul Wolfowitz had likened Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, pointing out the dangers of modern-day appeasement, and few challenged this assumption. (Every president since FDR, of course, has used the Munich analogy to support foreign ventures at one time or another.) Hahn strongly condemns the U.S. failure associated with the events at Abu Ghraib prison, which he refers to as “the grotesque abuse

of prisoners.” (178) Given recent accusations of similar behavior by US Marines in Afghanistan, one cannot condemn such action strongly enough.

Hahn makes clear that Bush administration policymakers possessed little understanding of relationships in the Middle East. How else could they have linked Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, who stood at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Likewise, they let themselves be influenced by Iraqi exiles, such as the scholar Kanan Makiya and Ahmed Chalabi, whom one top U.S. official referred to as “the George Washington of Iraq.” (175) (There should be a warning sign at Foggy Bottom: “Always question advice from exiles!”)

It is good to read of Paul Knabenshue, the underappreciated U.S. Minister in Iraq (1932-1942), who in addition to the account provided here also gave sanctuary to numbers of European civilians during the 1941 coup, for which action he later received commendations from their respective governments. Although U.S. interests were decidedly thin during the interwar years, arguably the most important one, archaeological expeditions sponsored by leading American institutions, surprisingly is not mentioned. Archaeologists such as the University of Chicago’s James Breasted enjoyed close ties with Republican policy makers, meeting frequently with secretaries of state and presidential advisers. Diplomats such as Knabenshue cooperated with them, recognizing the importance of their work for U.S.-Iraq relations. This omission might be the result of Hahn’s decision to “take a traditional approach to the study of U.S. foreign relations history.” (xiii) Thus he has decided to leave out discussion of “cultural features of the U.S. relationship with Iraq.” (xiii) I find this troubling given the fact that so much recent scholarship has focused in this area. Also, he argues that his “is the first study to place the relationship in a balanced, long-term historical perspective.” (xii) Without any reference to cultural relations, Hahn has compromised this claim. The omission becomes more problematic when we move forward to the American invasion of 2003. When U.S. forces occupied Baghdad, they made little attempt to protect the Iraq Museum, a national treasure. The looting that followed has had lasting impact on Iraqi views of the United States. And yet, this incident does not receive a single sentence here. This is an unfortunate oversight. If we expect undergraduates to understand the broad range of American foreign relations, such a synthesis must lay it out for them. It may be the only exposure students receive.

Regarding the Iranian hostage crisis, which the author mentions briefly, Ayatollah Khomeini did not so much “provoke” the crisis as shrewdly take advantage of it once the students had seized the U.S. embassy. (71) He gave his blessing after the fact and then used the situation as a litmus test for gauging support for the revolution within Iran. Concerning the war that followed between Iran and Iraq, one might point out that the area Saddam’s forces invaded in the southwest was the homeland of Iran’s Arab minority, whose members may have been expected to rise up in support of the invader. They did not. Actually, this foreign attack strengthened support throughout Iran for the revolution; one is reminded of similar results in France in 1792, and Russia in 1918. Still on the subject of the war, it is not clear whether the eight-year conflict weakened Saddam Hussein. On the one hand, we are told that “the regime was at least as politically strong coming out of the war as it was going in,” (74) but on the other hand Hahn argues that “Saddam Hussein confronted serious internal challenges” as a result of the war. (89) This apparent contradiction makes it

difficult to assess the war's impact on Saddam's later policies, especially his invasion of Kuwait.

Hahn credits the Bush administration for setting up democratic elections "that reflected Iraq's ethnic diversity," (196) which he views, I think, as a positive development. Any study of U.S. policy in Iraq should take note of the fact that inter-communal tensions, especially those between Sunni and Shia, became much worse after the US invasion and occupation. The Sunni minority (which Hahn refers to as an "ethnic" minority," 14, 172) had exercised political dominance for centuries; that was about to change. But the policy of the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer (and his successors), of imposing proportional representation in elections for each ethnic and religious community, discouraged the emergence of broadly-based political parties that could serve as unifying institutions. From the outset American officials ignored the reality of frequent intermarriage among the major Muslim sects; instead, they repeatedly emphasized Sunni-Shia divisions until this became almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, one must question whether U.S. policy has helped "shape Iraq's . . . identity." (204) If anything, it appears only to have added to the confusion. Iraqis have yet to determine who they are as a nation. Considering the above, Hahn's verdict on the Bush administration's policies in Iraq seems more positive than is perhaps warranted. When he writes that "it ultimately bequeathed a situation with considerable potential for a satisfactory outcome," (197) readers might reasonably conclude that the sad news coming out of Baghdad these days challenges this assessment.



Over the past several decades Iraq has periodically been a prominent feature of the U.S. consciousness, most notably during three high-stakes crises that prompted direct U.S. involvement: the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s; the Gulf War of the early 1990s; and the U.S. invasion and occupation of that country from 2003 on. If U.S. media reports have provided considerable coverage of these events, the general public has been less exposed to what might be termed the non-crisis U.S. interactions with Iraq, as well as that country's own historical evolution. For historians generally, and particularly for specialists in the history of U.S. foreign relations, this is an incongruous state of affairs that privileges surface knowledge of crisis events at the expense of the crucial background and context needed to fully understand those events. Peter L. Hahn's pithy and highly readable *Missions Accomplished? The United States and Iraq since World War I* is designed to redress the regrettably shallow grasp of Iraq and its relations with the United States that prevails for most of the U.S. public. Like Hahn's previous published work on U.S. relations with the Middle East, *Missions Accomplished?* is marked by careful research and measured analysis.<sup>1</sup> Designed "primarily for undergraduate students and for citizens interested in the history of a complicated foreign policy issue," the self-styled "analytical synthesis" accomplishes much in just over two hundred pages of text, and Hahn is to be commended for providing what must certainly be considered the go-to source for readers seeking to understand contemporary Iraq and its relations with the United States (xii).

The book's title, of course, is a play on President George W. Bush's triumphal—and, it turned out, decidedly premature—1 May 2003 pronouncement on the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* that the United States had accomplished its mission in Iraq. Although Bush made clear in the speech that accompanied his precipitate pronouncement that "we have difficult work to do in Iraq," as Hahn notes, the president gave no hint that the job of "securing and reconstructing" Iraq to come would be difficult or costly (1). Indeed, his very words suggested the opposite—that the tough job had already been accomplished and that Iraq would advance linearly and quickly out of the darkness of dictatorship toward a brighter democratic future. Subsequent events have revealed the folly of Bush's roseate declaration and generated no small amount of uncertainty about precisely what the United States was trying to do in Iraq beginning in 2003. Without question, that same uncertainty can be applied to U.S. policy toward Iraq in general, and the idea of "missions" as a way of framing an examination of U.S. policy toward Iraq thus serves as the perfect organizational scaffolding for Hahn's book. Ultimately, he identifies five such missions, each of which is worth exploring in some detail.

Washington's first U.S. mission in Iraq, which occupied policymakers from the emergence of the modern Iraqi state in the wake of World War I to its republican revolution in 1958,

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<sup>1</sup> See Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005).

was forging an effective bilateral relationship. Largely created to serve British national interests, Iraq was cobbled together from three former Ottoman provinces (Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul) populated by three distinct groups (Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds). In this way it was similar to the nations formed out of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire in the wake of World War I or the artificial nations carved out of the crumbling European empires in Africa forty years later, with borders that were drawn to serve the needs of an outside power. (This development, of course, would result in untold difficulties in the decades to come.) Iraq was a British mandate until 1932 when it attained independent statehood, the first League of Nations mandate to win independence and the first Arab state to join the League. For the next decade and a half, as Iraq struggled to develop as an independent state, it was subject to significant British domination. After World War II, as was the case elsewhere, Britain's position in Iraq faced serious challenges, thus providing the opening for a larger U.S. interest and role in the country. The Cold War was a major spur to increased U.S. interest in Iraq after 1945, as officials in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations came to place strategic importance on the Middle East's oil resources and geostrategic location. As those administrations discovered, though, interest did not necessarily translate into influence. U.S. aid and alliance programs, specifically the technological assistance program known as Point Four and the Baghdad Pact, achieved only short-lived successes at best and failed to cement any sort of lasting relationship with Iraq; indeed, the latter generated popular discontent and fueled the 1958 coup. U.S. support for Israel, which earned the ire of Iraq and the rest of the Arab world, was one reason a solid U.S.-Iraqi relationship failed to thrive. Another was mounting pan-Arabism, and the anti-American sentiment that it engendered. When Iraq's royalist pro-Western government was overthrown in a July 1958 coup that coincided with upheaval throughout the Middle East, U.S. officials were forced to admit that their first mission in Iraq, anchoring that nation firmly to the anti-Communist West during the Cold War, had failed.

Over the course of the next two decades, the U.S. mission in Iraq morphed into a campaign to promote domestic stability in that country, check its propensity for regional mischief making, and prevent its alignment with the Soviet Union. The overarching framework for U.S. policy toward Iraq—and by extension, throughout the world—during this period was the East-West Cold War, which colored the way U.S. policymakers viewed Iraq's domestic development and international position. Domestically, popular discontent among the nation's minorities (especially the Kurds) and a series of political coups dashed U.S. hopes for a rapid normalization of Iraqi politics and fed fears that instability would lead to communist inroads. A Ba'ath Party coup in 1968 provided some modicum of stability but also served as the vehicle for Saddam Hussein's entry into government. As the new regime's second-in-command he proved to be brutal and ruthless in crushing dissent and engaged in a megalomaniacal cult of personality that suggested higher political aspirations. Internationally, Iraq flexed its muscles in a 1961 rhetorical showdown with Great Britain over Kuwait, which had historically been part of the Ottoman province of Mosul and should thus, from the Iraqi perspective, have been included within the new Iraqi nation from its birth. Although the standoff was resolved peacefully (with the United States backing Britain), it strained U.S. relations with Iraq and served as a harbinger of things to come. Tying Iraq to the West in the Cold War also proved difficult. U.S. support for Israel continued to cost Washington credibility with Iraq (and other Arab states), particularly

after the 1967 Six Day War, and thus worked against Washington's overall goals. Iraq, in fact, severed diplomatic relations with the United States in June 1967 over the issue of Israel, only resuming them in 1984 during the Iran-Iraq War. Strident U.S. opposition to neutralism in the Cold War was also anathema in Iraq, which like Egypt and India wished to eschew outright alliances with either side in the conflict. The second U.S. mission in Iraq came to an end when Saddam Hussein seized control of the Ba'athist government in 1979, leaving officials in Washington to wonder how U.S. goals would fare under a new and more dictatorial head of state.

The third U.S. mission in Iraq, achieving rapprochement with Saddam Hussein's regime, was ironically among the most successful of Washington's five disparate initiatives vis-à-vis Baghdad, and for a decade bilateral relations between the United States and Iraq were on a relatively even keel. Iraqi politics held stable as Saddam Hussein consolidated his control and established a totalitarian state. That stability, of course, came with a high price for the Iraqi people, who lacked basic free speech and other rights and were subject to extremely brutal punishment for opposing the regime. Saddam Hussein was especially vicious when it came to his treatment of Iraqi Kurds. Although his domestic policies hardly squared with traditional U.S. rhetoric about freedom and democracy, U.S. officials seemed willing to turn a blind eye toward them after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran brought to power a government headed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that was inveterately hostile to the United States. A variety of factors pushed Saddam Hussein to invade Iran in September 1980. Although the United States initially pursued a policy of neutrality, fears that Iran might emerge victorious eventually nudged the administration of Ronald Reagan closer to Iraq. Over time, the United States provided Saddam Hussein's regime with military, intelligence, and economic assistance. The Reagan administration also acquiesced, at least informally, on Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran, demonstrating how easily human decency could be subordinated to national security and calling into question the sincerity of future U.S. objections to the use of such weapons. Motivated by their own geostrategic concerns, U.S. officials dismissed Saddam Hussein's deviations from U.S. norms just as they did with countless right-wing dictators during the Cold War. Even his use of chemical weapons against Iraq's Kurdish population failed to dim their ardor. Politics, it seems, truly does make for strange bedfellows. As subsequent events made clear, however, the U.S.-Iraqi rapprochement during the 1980s was little more than a marriage of convenience built on faulty assumptions that would be torn asunder by Baghdad's grasp for regional hegemony.

Washington's fourth mission in Iraq, which began with Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait in 1990 and continued through the administration of William J. Clinton, sought to contain Baghdad's regional ambitions. Motivated by both long-standing Iraqi claims to Kuwait and more immediate concerns, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, apparently under the mistaken impression that the United States had no objection. On the contrary, the U.S. response was swift and firm. In a stunning feat of international coalition-building, the administration of George H. W. Bush assembled a multi-national force consisting of military personnel from almost thirty countries to pressure Iraq to withdraw. When that did not occur, a U.S.-led air campaign and then a ground invasion secured the liberation of Kuwait and a near total Iraqi rout. True to the UN-sanctioned

mission of containing Iraq rather than destroying it, President Bush did not take the war forward in a way that would have led to Saddam Hussein's removal from power, a decision that Hahn assesses as "clearly reasonable and sound given the international context in early 1991" (p. 110). Because Saddam Hussein remained in power, both the Bush and Clinton administrations were forced to develop strategies for minimizing his impact, inside as well as outside Iraq. Internally, both administrations supported humanitarian aid programs for Iraqi Kurds as well as U.S.-led military enforcement of a "no-fly" zone to prevent Iraqi air assaults on Kurdish-populated areas in northern Iraq. Internationally, both Bush and Clinton insisted that economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in the wake of the 1990-91 Gulf War would remain until it complied with international expectations regarding its weapons development programs and treatment of Kuwait. Firmness, in other words, was the name of the game when it came to post-Gulf War U.S. policy toward Iraq. Although President Clinton remained personally committed to the multipronged containment regimen, it did little to moderate Saddam Hussein's rhetoric or posture. With U.S. public support for what came to be dubbed "regime change" in Iraq mounting, he thus assented to the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-338), which authorized the U.S. government to work toward the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Hahn judges the Bush and Clinton efforts to limit Saddam Hussein's reach, both domestically and regionally, as an overall short-term success in preventing further Iraqi destabilization of the Middle East and shielding the Kurds and Iraqi Shiites from harm. He judges the decision to adopt regime change as a goal of U.S. policy toward Iraq much more harshly, concluding that it derailed the containment effort and irrevocably muddied the policy waters, particularly after the 2000 presidential election brought George W. Bush to the White House and gave neoconservative supporters of regime change virtually free rein to shape U.S. policy.

The fifth and most recent U.S. mission in Iraq, implemented in the spring of 2003, put the policy of regime change approved by the Clinton administration into action. Convinced that the Iraqi government was pursuing a weapons program that could threaten regional stability in defiance of previous UN resolutions and that it was complicit in the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bush administration acted decisively to remove Saddam Hussein from power. A five--hundred-hour military campaign was all it took to end Saddam Hussein's twenty-four year hold on Iraq, its stunning success spawning the President's 1 May proclamation of victory. His own admission that work still remained to be done in Iraq seemed an afterthought, suggesting that the administration had assumed that liberating Iraq from Saddam Hussein's grip would be a panacea for the nation's problems. (A simple recall of the nation's heterogeneous population and history of minority Sunni domination would have suggested otherwise.) Subsequent events certainly proved the folly of such thinking, as the consequences of the administration's woeful lack of planning for the post-Saddam Hussein era continue to reverberate even now. "The United States was ill-prepared to face the complicated political challenges that would follow the downfall of Saddam Hussein," Hahn laments, unable "to restore law and order in the aftermath of wartime dislocation" let alone work toward "governing a war-torn, fractious, and unstable country" (160-61, 166). Administration figures, particularly the President, Vice President Richard Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, ignored advice that ran counter to their own stubbornly held positions to the point of basing U.S. military

intervention in Iraq on suspect information and outright falsehoods, were slow to recognize the factional tensions that gripped Iraq even before Bush claimed that the U.S. mission there had been accomplished or to adopt constructive tactics for mitigating them, and repeated a mistake that has plagued U.S. foreign policymakers throughout the twentieth century, to wit, the use of military solutions for what are essentially political problems. And despite President Bush's belated decision to transform the discredited security-rooted effort to destroy Iraq's capacity for warfare and terror into an altruistic campaign to bring democracy to that nation for the first time in its history, the fact remains that the administration "grossly misrepresented intelligence" when making the case for war to the U.S. public—and to the outside world (179).

Hahn's composite judgment of the various U.S. missions in Iraq is mixed. That nation did not develop into a staunch pro-Western U.S. ally in the Middle East during the Cold War. On the contrary, it pursued neutralism and openly flirted with the Soviet Union. Its political situation was rarely stable, U.S. efforts notwithstanding. Coups and domestic factionalism were the norm. Saddam Hussein was hardly a paragon of democratic leadership. Repression of the Kurdish population and minority Sunni domination of society at the expense of the Shi'ite majority flew in the face of cherished U.S. political values. Removing Saddam Hussein from power did not lead magically to a brighter Iraqi future. Nor did the Iraqi people seem as grateful for U.S. intervention in their internal affairs as U.S. officials had hoped. Miscalculations and even outright misrepresentations were rampant. And so was almost total disregard for Iraq's history or the right of its people to determine their own futures.

Despite the uniqueness of the U.S. relationship with Iraq as Hahn explicates it, I believe that *Missions Accomplished?* helps to highlight two enduring points about U.S. foreign relations. First off is the tendency among policymakers to focus on short-term over long-term gains. Repeatedly over the course of the ninety years he chronicles, Hahn notes the short-term or immediate success of a U.S. initiative only to add later that in the long term success was illusory. Point Four and the Baghdad Pact early on are examples of this phenomenon. So are the efforts to contain Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War and the 2003 invasion that removed him from power. If all of those endeavors generated short-term gains, none led to advances that could be sustained. In this way, it seems to me that U.S. policy in Iraq resembles the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or the CIA-sponsored coup that overthrew the government of Mohammed Mosaddeq in Iran in 1953. Judged immediate or short-term successes, both initiatives had untoward consequences that ultimately generated questions about their efficacy. The same is true of many of the many individual policy initiatives that made up the U.S. missions in Iraq. Second, the book also reinforces a theme in the literature regarding the propensity of U.S. foreign policymakers to disregard the domestic records of allies or potential allies in the name of national security concerns.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century, and particularly during the Cold War, the United

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<sup>2</sup> For this idea see, most notably, David F. Schmitz, *Thank God They're on Our Side: The United States and Right-wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and idem, *The United States and Right-wing Dictatorships, 1965-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



States pursued close relations with a host of unsavory foreign leaders, from the shah of Iran to South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem to Cuba's Fulgencio Batista, to name just three, despite their questionable—reprehensible, even—domestic policies. Washington's tacit alliance with Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War was another instance of this phenomenon in action, as U.S. officials chose for base geopolitical reasons to support Saddam Hussein's war against the Ayatollah's Iran, including his use of chemical weapons, and later looked the other way when he used those same weapons against dissident Iraqi Kurds.

Because Hahn sees undergraduate students as one of the primary audiences for *Missions Accomplished?* it is reasonable to consider the ways the volume might be used in the classroom. To my way of thinking, there are many. One that comes most immediately to mind is to use it to illustrate the growing U.S. interest and involvement in the Middle East over the course of the twentieth century by way of a case study that often gets short shrift in coverage of the region. Indeed, *Missions Accomplished?* is a welcome reminder that there is much more to U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East than the Arab-Israeli conflict and relations with the regional standards Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. A second is to use the book as a vehicle for exploring the pantheon of weapons in the U.S. foreign policy arsenal. Indeed, the various U.S. missions to Iraq that Hahn explicates reveal the use over time of such tools as foreign aid (both economic and military), alliances, economic sanctions, international supervision, conventional diplomacy, military intervention, and nation-building initiatives. Consideration of the U.S. use of each of these tools can stimulate discussion as to why certain approaches were employed in certain circumstances, whether the best tools for the job, as it were, were ultimately chosen, and how different approaches might have yielded different results. A third way to use this volume is to consider the gap that often appeared between U.S. goals in Iraq and actual accomplishments with a particular focus on the often unintended or unexpected consequences of U.S. policy choices.

In a resounding affirmation of the adage, there is much more to *Missions Accomplished?* than meets the eye. It may be brief and designed for undergraduates and the general public, but there is a great deal here for scholars as well. Most of the material detailing the period before the Iran-Iraq War, when the general public first became acquainted with Iraq, will no doubt be new to all save specialists in the Middle East. The skillful—exemplary, even—use of declassified documents is a model for the conduct of research on recent history topics. And the incorporation of public opinion data augments the primarily policy oriented narrative with a useful reminder of the context in which foreign relations are conducted in a democratic state. Without question Hahn has certainly succeeded in laying bare the evolving U.S. missions in Iraq in a most accessible fashion. Careful readers will thus be well prepared to ponder the appropriateness of those missions as they contemplate the overall place of the United States in the world.



Using the long-term effects of the withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces from Iraq at the end of 2011, Boston University professor and former U.S. Army officer Andrew J. Bacevich confirmed the historical importance of his country's nine-year war in Iraq and defined its main strategic outcome as the depletion of the moral and political capital the United States had once held: "Not casualties but consequences define the significance of this lamentable episode. There it ranks ahead of Korea and Vietnam — neither marking a decisive historical turn — and even alongside World War II." For Bacevich, the Iraq War marks the beginning of the end of the American century.<sup>1</sup>

Even if one does not agree with Bacevich's pessimistic appraisal, there is no doubting the historical significance of the United States' military adventure in Iraq. Despite the final withdrawal and the ultimate abandonment of (modified) plans of the Obama administration to transform the new Iraq into an asset for U.S. strategic interests, and despite the distractions due to the new dynamics in a region galvanized by the "Arab Awakening", the decision by the George W. Bush administration to use the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as a rationale and pretext to invade Iraq and the subsequent carnage will remain a defining moment and a difficult legacy for all future U.S. relations with the strategic region of the Middle East. Given the momentousness of the Iraq War, the decisions leading up to the invasion in 2003 have been the subject of a growing body of scholarship, albeit so far with only marginal participation by historians of U.S. foreign relations. Accordingly, in a 2006 *OAH Magazine* roundtable on U.S. involvement with the Middle East, Nathan Citino expressed his surprise that "[...] while there are numerous books about the Gulf War and Saddam Hussein, historians have yet to publish any archival based studies focused on U.S.-Iraqi relations"<sup>2</sup>

This lacuna promises to be filled with the publication of Peter L. Hahn's overview of U.S.-Iraqi diplomatic relations since World War One. Hahn, author of an excellent monograph on Anglo-American relations with Egypt in the early Cold War and, *inter alia*, of another monograph on U.S. policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, seems uniquely qualified for this task.<sup>3</sup> In his introduction, Hahn expresses his intention to provide the readers with the "first analytical synthesis of U.S. diplomacy toward Iraq" with the aim of placing the bilateral relationship of the two countries "in a balanced, long-term historical perspective"

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, "The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq marks the end America's great expectations," *Washington Post*, 12 Dec 2011, accessible at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-withdrawal-from-iraq-marks-the-end-of-american-supremacy/2011/12/12/gIQAStpTyO\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-withdrawal-from-iraq-marks-the-end-of-american-supremacy/2011/12/12/gIQAStpTyO_story.html).

<sup>2</sup> Nathan J. Citino, "Out of the Blue? Historical Scholarship on U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *OAH Magazine of History* 20, no. 3 (May 2006), 11.

<sup>3</sup> *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991; *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

(xii). Concentrating predominantly on power politics inspired by a traditional understanding of diplomatic history, the book –targeted at undergraduates and non-specialists – provides the reader with a systematic account of U.S.-Iraqi relations in seven well-structured chapters, covering various phases of the Cold War, the Gulf War of 1990-1991, post-Cold War adjustments by the Clinton administration, and two current history chapters on the most recent U.S. war against Iraq.

On one level, Hahn certainly delivers what he promises in the introduction. Altogether, *Missions Accomplished?* provides a reliable compilation of the main events and controversies relating to the U.S.-Iraqi relationship over nine decades. The first two chapters in particular, which deal with U.S.-Iraqi history until 1979, strongly benefit from Hahn’s expertise on the international history of the Middle East during the early decades of the Cold War and American involvement in the region. Every chapter is introduced with a story about one individual American involved with Iraq. On the one hand, this plot device is quite effective, but on the other hand, it gives the impression, reinforced by the actual text, that the other half of the equation, the Iraqis themselves, don’t really matter much (more about this below). Hahn’s stated intention is to explain the various missions pursued by the U.S. vis-à-vis Iraq over the decades and to “assess the consequences and effectiveness of U.S. policies” (5).

For anyone new to the field, Hahn’s book certainly contains a wealth of new information, assembled in very approachable terms. Apart from some rather questionable use of language (see below) and a tendency to underemphasize U.S. interventionism, the Cold War chapters are reliable and crisp depictions of main events. Given the scope of the book, Hahn cannot really deliver an archival-based assessment of U.S.-Iraqi relations. He uses a number of archival documents in the early chapters, apparently collected for his earlier works. He covers the 1960s and early 1970s based on the *FRUS* series. The chapter on the 1980s is mostly based on an excellent document collection by the National Security Archive, still the best resource by far for getting access to documentary evidence on U.S. foreign relations. From 1990 on, however, Hahn predominantly relies on the memoirs of former officials and U.S. media reports, an approach that works adequately for the accounts of the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations (though he misses important literature based on actual primary evidence for both chapters),<sup>4</sup> but severely diminishes the quality of the last two chapters on the most recent Iraq War.

In searching for an explanation for the growing U.S. involvement in Iraq, we find the rather bland assessment that the U.S. “has generally pursued a basic goal of promoting stability and U.S. security interests in that country” (5). Defined in such undetermined and all-encompassing terms, U.S. strategic interests and objectives in Hahn’s narrative seem to be the result of quasi-natural forces. Reading his account, it is difficult to identify the actual agency behind American actions. Indeed, U.S. involvement in the region after World War Two appears to have been mostly in reaction to the menace of Soviet expansionism.

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<sup>4</sup> For example Christian Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand: Why We Went back to Iraq*. New York: Doubleday, 2006.

Officials in Washington “also feared that internal problems threatened the region”, problems that might have evolved into openings for Soviet-backed Communism (24). I think that Hahn knows better than this and is unduly sympathetic to the views of U.S. policymakers and their alleged inability to distinguish between nationalist movements and Communist ones. In fact, recent research by Salim Yaqub, Ray Takeyh, and others has proven that Eisenhower, Dulles, and others understood this crucial difference and fought Nasserism and other appearances of anti-Western stirrings as threats in their own right that were seen as being separate from, as well as going beyond, purely Cold War-related concerns.<sup>5</sup>

Concentrating first on minor issues, Hahn doesn't give the impression of being on firm ground regarding the Middle East beyond the confined area of expertise of diplomatic politics in the twentieth century. The designation of the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, as the “grand sheriff of Mecca” might be taken directly from British documents, but to use it is nonetheless rather unfortunate. I don't think Britain ever “removed” (14) the Hashemite Abdallah from Baghdad before making him emir of Transjordan. And who could the “9<sup>th</sup>-Century Shiite Caliph Ali” be in whose name Khomeini issued edicts, according to Hahn? (71).

There are also a number of mistakes and inaccuracies for the period after World War Two. The United States remained the world's greatest oil producer for much longer than only “the early 1940s” (18). Hahn claims that ‘British *and U.S. forces*’ (32, my emphasis ) moved into Amman in 1958. This may refer to some American logistical support for the British intervention in Jordan, but seems quite a stretch. The Baath party (p.41) was not established in the early 1940s, and al-Arsuzi shouldn't be omitted from its founders. If I read him correctly, Hahn seems to think that over one million Iraqis and Iranians were killed in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s (74), a claim that is repeated again and again in popular accounts. If so, this would be incorrect – the actual number is about 350,000 altogether. The claim that Israel's raid on the Iraqi reactor at Osirak in 1981 succeeded in “effectively halting” (75) the Iraqi nuclear program may be a constant feature in neoconservative commentary, but is widely rejected by actual experts. Hahn seems to actually believe (90) that Saddam Hussein had completed the development of a Super-Gun “that could launch 1,000-pound bombs, with conventional or unconventional payloads, more than 600 miles.” Scary indeed, but thankfully also pure fiction.

Additionally, the editors added some mistakes of their own. The map on 4 is incorrect, displaying an independent Eritrea during the Cold War and designating South Yemen as “Aden”, a label sometimes used in public utterances during the 1970s and 1980s but nonetheless incorrect. Similar errors are on the map on 59. Also, the transliteration of Arabic and Farsi names is inconsistent.

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<sup>5</sup> See Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006; Ray Takeyh, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: The US, Britain, and Nasser's Egypt, 1953–57*. New York: St. Martins, 2000.

Given the scope of the book and the complexity of the topic, such smaller mistakes should be forgiven. But this reviewer also has other, more major, misgivings about the book. While somewhat limited, there is in principle nothing wrong with adhering to a realist understanding of international politics with its emphasis on balances of powers, security interests, and so on, and modeling the interaction between states according to some kind of billiard ball mechanics. Using this approach, as Hahn seemingly does with his constant references to power vacuums, regional hegemony, and so on, however, is inconsistent with the use of normative and moralistic language. For Hahn, “British officials [...] liberated Syria from the Vichy regime” (21), while “Soviet expansionism seemed to imperil Western interests” (33); Saddam Hussein “would lead his country on two wars of aggression” (70), “Iraq crept to another war of aggression” and “another war of conquest” (89), while “Kuwait was liberated” (p104, 106) and “the GIS liberated” Baghdad (167), and so on. There is talk of German, French, Russian/Soviet, and Iraqi “expansionism”, but the U.S. (and the UK) actions are never tagged with such labels. Apparently, the latter are not trying to achieve regional hegemony and expand their power base like the others, but are just forces of good fighting evil. But it is not only this questionable use of language that makes for a rather tendentious approach.

There is also a discernable tendency in Hahn’s narrative to blur or omit any kind of action by the U.S. that would make American motives appear in a less than favorable light. There are sporadic instances for apologetic inclinations in the early chapters. For example, he uses an observation by Nathan Citino about the refusal of U.S. authorities to declassify significant documents on suspected covert operations (44 and Citino’s article cited in footnote) against Iraq during the Qasim period (1958-61) to claim that “Declassified U.S. government documents offer no evidence to support these suggestions” (48) and similarly in the conclusion to this chapter: “U.S. covert operations to overthrow regimes in Baghdad, although widely rumored at the time and in some secondary sources, remain unproven in declassified government records”(61). These assertions may be factually correct, but I also find them misleading. Furthermore, declassified Eisenhower documents indeed corroborate the initiation of some activities, as did the Church Committee hearings, which detailed an attempt to assassinate an Iraqi “Colonel”, perhaps referring to Qasim himself. Circumstantial evidence corroborates this. Richard Bissell, soon to be named the CIA’s deputy director for plans, summarized somewhat ominously during deliberations in the NSC: “[...] if no further assassination attempts were made against Kassem, there was a strong possibility of a growth in Communist power.”<sup>6</sup> And contrary to Hahn’s suggestion that “it cannot be proven on the basis of available primary sources” (44) that the Eisenhower administration had foreknowledge of the attempt on Qasim’s life in October 1959 (one of the assassins was the young Saddam Hussein), this information is actually provided in the relevant *FRUS* volume.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from 428th NSC Meeting, 10 Dec. 1959, *FRUS* 1958-60, XII, 494.

<sup>7</sup> 420th NSC Meeting, 1 Oct. 1959, *FRUS* 1958-60, XII, 489 n6.

Hahn uses the same argument in arguing against any U.S. involvement in the mass killings of real and suspected Communists in Iraq after the coup of 1963 that toppled Qasim. There is at least circumstantial archival evidence that these actions were welcomed by the U.S. Also, it should not be forgotten that similar accusations regarding the aftermath of a coup attempt in Indonesia in 1965, when about 100.000 people were killed, have been found to be correct, information that prompted the CIA to try to prevent the publication of the *FRUS* volume in question.<sup>8</sup> It is true that the Indonesia parallel doesn't prove anything in the Iraqi case, but it should at least prevent a careful historian from coming to premature conclusions.

Furthermore, throughout the book, Iraqis are treated as mere objects of history, and second-ranked ones at best. In narrating the story of the Gulf War of 1990/1991, while mentioning that "the United States achieved the liberation of Kuwait at a cost of 148 U.S. combat fatalities" (104) together with a picture of the carnage created by U.S. air attacks on the so-called "Highway of Death", Hahn avoids giving the reader the number of Iraqis killed during this war (estimates range from 40,000 to 200,000). But he is quick to give an exact number of people killed in the Kurdish and Shiite uprisings by Saddam Hussein's soldiers (Hahn claims 350,000 deaths, about five to six times higher than estimates accepted by most experts on these events). Hahn's gung-ho narration of the U.S. military victory over Iraq in 2003 ("phenomenally successful", 137; "They decisively defeated a numerically superior adversary that fought defensively on its own terrain", 160; "smashingly successful", 203) as an example of courage and heroic "thunder runs" against superior opposition, celebrating the new tactical approach, sprinkled with a rather offensive quote on Iraqi soldiers on 153 ("[...] Iraqi soldiers 'turned out in hundreds, literally lining the route, seemingly waiting their turn to die as martyrs. The Americans obliged.'"), is highly questionable. He quickly backs down, detailing some of the actual reasons for the quick defeat, but that hardly helps to tone down the previous boast. Anyone looking for a more objective assessment on the actual military achievement should be steered towards more sober assessments like that of Kenneth Waltz in *Foreign Affairs*: "For a giant to defeat a pygmy hardly tests a country's military prowess or validates a 'new way of war'."<sup>9</sup>

By far the weakest part of the book, however, are the last two chapters dealing with the decision to launch another war against Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent fight against the insurgency. Some might argue that trying to write about these events from a historical perspective is impossible in the first place, given the inaccessibility of archives and the general lack of information. And I would tend to consent to this view. But then again, the question remains as to how historians should try to remedy such a situation. They can use media reports, published government documentation, memoirs of former officials, and perhaps interviews with the latter, while always being aware of the fact that all these

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<sup>8</sup> National Security Archive, "CIA Stalling State Department Histories", 27 July 2001, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB52/>

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Waltz, letter to the editor, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2003); <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59196/kenneth-n-waltz/giants-and-pygmyes>



sources will only provide a very blurred perspective on the actual decisions and events on which one tries to shed light. And, at first sight, Hahn's treatment of the decisions leading to the Iraq War seems to adhere to the same view, as he bases his account predominantly on published memoirs by former officials. But, astonishingly, he does not really juxtapose the information derived from these personal accounts with other information that has become available on many of the main decisions. In Hahn's retelling, U.S. officials really believed that Iraq possessed WMD.<sup>10</sup> Bush, additionally swayed by a feeling of insecurity in the aftermath of 9/11, became convinced that war "was a necessary measure for the national defense against another, even more devastating terrorist attack" (160). Therefore, the Iraq War was primarily a consequence of the post-9/11 atmosphere, motivated by sincere fears about a thriving Iraqi WMD program and Saddam Hussein's intentions in combination with terrorist groups. As a secondary objective, the Bush administration intended to liberate the Iraqis and bring the democracy and freedom. And the idea failed primarily because of sloppy preparations for the war, not because the whole concept as such was deficient. And so on.

This is exactly the kind of conclusion one would draw from reading the memoirs of Bush, Tony Blair, and Douglas Feith, on which large parts of Hahn's account on the actual motifs behind the war are based. But it is impossible to understand why at the same time, he ignores practically all evidence that has since become available, which flies in the face of these purported assumptions leading to the decision in favor of attacking Iraq and the claims made by the protagonists in their memoirs. In order to make this reasoning credible, Hahn only mentions in passing (and then blames the intelligence services) the whole and quite central story as to how pre-war intelligence was "cooked" and manipulated to make this rationale for war credible for the wider public. Despite the paucity of sources, Hahn ignores a number of excellent collections by the National Security Archive, reports by the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence, and similar investigations, or the British war inquiries such as the Butler Review and the Chilcot Inquiry (with dozens of actual documents on their websites providing insights into many American pre-war decisions as well). While Hahn is meticulous in avoiding any expression of his personal opinion with respect to the claims of the protagonists, his reliance on extensive quotes from memoirs in combination with the omission of any kind of contrary evidence, despite its availability, ultimately results in a tendentious, incomplete, and highly questionable account.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A caveat is in order here: Other readers might point out that Hahn always tries to present all perspectives and that my criticism is based on a partial reading of an argument which is in fact much more balanced. I can only encourage readers to read the relevant passage of the book themselves. This reviewer thinks that Hahn's thesis constitutes a feigned *argumentum ad temperantiam*. While he intermittently seems to concede that intelligence had been "grossly misrepresented" (179 – but, crucially, this admission only refers to one of the most bizarre instances, the so-called Niger-Yellowcake-affair), by and large his narrative unequivocally comes down to the position that U.S. officials, and Bush in particular, really believed in the sincerity of a WMD threat from Iraq. Hahn obviously buys into the "honest mistake" thesis, that American (and British) officials sincerely believed in the substance of a serious nuclear (as this is the only 'real' unconventional one) threat from Iraq.

<sup>11</sup> For an example of what a critical analysis of autobiographies by Bush administration officials should look like (by a political scientist) see Robert Jervis, "War, Intelligence, and Honesty: A Review Essay," *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 4 (2008/09), 645-75.



Unsurprisingly, Hahn cannot bring himself to call the invasion of Iraq an ‘aggression’, his favorite label for similar actions by others, but uses the fine Orwellian misnomer of “preemptive belligerence” (160; what exactly was preempted?). While Bush is castigated somewhat for his general disinterest in information before taking decisions, he is later treated to a heroic depiction for initiating and seeing through the ‘surge’ in Iraq (another topic that is treated in a highly questionable manner in the book, but cannot addressed here because of lack of space).

Both Bush and Blair have openly stated since then that they would have attacked Iraq even had they known the actual state of the WMD program before 2003. There is no analytical treatment of U.S. officials’ claims in Hahn’s book – instead, he relies from time to time on quoting an opponent of the war, but always balances these with quotes from war supporters. Instead of hearing from someone like Lawrence Wilkerson, aide to Secretary of State Colin Powell, who has argued that “the argument ‘weapons of mass destruction’ was just a camouflage, just subterfuge for their real goals and reasons of the war”,<sup>12</sup> readers instead are presented with long quotes from the likes of Charles Krauthammer (twice employed as witness for arguing the justification of the war) and William Kristol. As the old adage goes, it takes a thief to catch a thief.

The Iraq War of 2003 is a fascinating event. Scholars will debate for decades why it occurred and what the underlying motivations for this “war of choice” really were.<sup>13</sup> Analysts will explore questions of the political economy of oil, extra-regional hegemonic control, domestic interest groups, and much more in order to unearth the real reasons for this major strategic blunder. Instead of critically analyzing the available evidence, though limited, for the real reasons behind the war, *Missions Accomplished?* gives undue credence to the assertions of U.S. officials. Instead of exploring the mindset that made this war possible, the book itself seems to be an expression of the same mindset.

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<sup>12</sup> Wilkerson, interview with *Der Spiegel*, March 2008.

<sup>13</sup> The best treatment so far has been the fascinating article by Middle Eastern area specialist Raymond Hinnebusch, “The US *Invasion of Iraq*: Explanations and Implications”, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2007), 209-28.

Author's Response by Peter L. Hahn, Ohio State University

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I wish to extend my very sincere thanks to Nigel J. Ashton, James Goode, Mary Ann Heiss, and Roland Popp for investing their time in reading and commenting upon *Missions Accomplished*. Each of the reviews provides unique insights and interesting perspectives that stimulated my thinking about a variety of issues and that will no doubt benefit readers of this forum. Peer review and focused scholarly conversation are remarkable tools for improving the quality of scholarship both individually and collectively. The hard work of my esteemed colleagues has sharpened my abilities as an historian and contributed to a richer collective understanding of the topic at hand.

I acknowledge with gratitude the reviewers' corrections and observations that enrich the content of my book. I am now mindful of Professor Ashton's evidence that the Clinton Administration embraced regime change before the passage of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. I appreciate Professor Goode's additional details on Minister Paul Knabenshue's activities in Baghdad during World War II, his corrective on the role of Ayatollah Khomeini in the origins of the Iran Hostage Crisis, and his insights on the sectarian divisions among the Iraqi people. Even though I deliberately steered away from an interpretation based on culture and cultural discourse (an approach, as I explained in my preface, that I encourage among other scholars who are trained in such methods), I recognize the validity of Professor Goode's observation that the destruction of the museums in Baghdad in 2003 deserved mention in my analysis of the post-invasion turmoil. I also appreciate Professor Popp's catching of such factual errors as my misplacing Caliph Ali of the seventh century in the ninth century. I take some relief, by contrast, in Professor Ashton's citation of Iraqi government documents released by the U.S. National Defense University in late 2011 that corroborate my argument regarding the reasons behind Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran. If I should be invited to prepare a revised edition of the book, I will be in the debt of the reviewers for these observations.

I am grateful to the reviewers for providing cogent summaries of and thoughtful reflections on my book. Professor Heiss, in particular, captures the broad contours of my presentation. I admire her insights about how my book affirms two broad tendencies in the making of American foreign policy over the long term, as well as her three recommendations about the book's instructional applications. Professor Heiss and the other reviewers encourage my hope that the book might provide an effective means of instructing students in the basic historical narrative as well as provoking thoughtful and informed evaluations, competing interpretations, and lively classroom discussions about the origins, impact, wisdom, and justification of American diplomacy.

The reviewers also touch upon the challenge of writing a history of recent events. Professor Ashton correctly notes the misfortune that my book moved toward publication before the natural watershed of the late 2011 withdrawal of American soldiers from Iraq. Truth be told: I delayed completing the book for about two years after the original publisher's deadline in part to gain better perspective on the outcome of the surge and the U.S. presidential election of 2008. My editor and I talked about additional delays to enable

retrospective analysis of the impending 2011 troop withdrawal. However, we agreed to send the work to the presses on the basis of other considerations— including my calculation that the U.S. occupation of Iraq was in its denouement, even if the curtain had not yet been lowered, as well as a personal desire to wrap up my labor (especially before some other author scooped the story!). I acknowledge the possible validity of Professor Goode’s parting observation that my assessment of the ultimate outcome of the U.S. invasion of Iraq might prove to be more positive than will be warranted by future events. I will be first to acknowledge that the passage of time—which will determine the “final chapter” of events in Iraq, pry open the archives of classified government records, and provide opportunity for considered scholarly discourse and reflection—will enable historians working in the future to reach conclusions on sounder footing than I could gain while analyzing current events in real time.

Some of the comments made in the reviews deserve elaborate responses. Professor Ashton faults my depiction of George H.W. Bush’s policy toward Iraq at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, suggesting that my description of the U.S. quest for “regional peace and stability” is deficient. He also asserts that “preserving the status quo has always been the goal of hegemonic powers.” While I appreciate the general suggestion here, I also note that my use of “regional peace and stability” was intended to capture the Bush administration’s policy goals—as enunciated in the sources. I also summarized Bruce Jentleson’s critique of the Bush approach in order to reveal its shortcomings. Moreover, I am puzzled by Professor Ashton’s suggestion that hegemony always bolsters the status quo, noting that the second Bush administration sought quite dramatically to alter the status quo.

While appreciative of the insights of all four reviewers, I was left considerably puzzled and unpersuaded by the relentless and extensive critique offered by Professor Popp. Frankly, his review seemed to engage in considerable nit-picking, much of it unfounded or inaccurate. Allow me to address the most egregious of his small points:

First, I do not understand why Popp considers it “unfortunate” that I used a title for an Arab emir as it was rendered in contemporary documents. Second, British ground troops and U.S. military aircraft were deployed in Jordan in 1958. I stand behind my concise summary that “British and U.S. forces . . . moved into Jordan.” Third, “casualties” means losses through death, wounding, illness, and capture. As he suspected he might be doing, Professor Popp indeed misunderstood the term and thus misread my discussion on the casualties of the Iran-Iraq War.

Fourth, Professor Popp derides my conclusion that the Israeli air raid on Osirak effectively halted the Iraqi nuclear program as “a constant feature in neoconservative commentary” that is “widely rejected by actual experts” (who remain unnamed and uncited). My conclusion rests on a CIA assessment of June 1983 (cited on p. 84, n. 17) that stated that while Iraq continued to have nuclear ambitions, “we see no identifiable nuclear weapon program in Iraq;” as well as on the inability of international inspectors to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the 1990s and of American officials to find them after occupying the country in 2003. Professor Popp’s description of my conclusion as

“neoconservative commentary” does not make sense in light of the neocons’ subsequent allegations of Iraqi nuclear capabilities as a cause for war in 2003.

Fifth, Professor Popp declares my mention of Iraq’s so-called Super Gun to be “pure fiction.” I am left wondering if he checked my endnote, which cites Bruce W. Jentleson’s detailed and document-based discussion of the Super Gun and other high tech weapons that Saddam Hussein developed in the late 1980s and includes evidence that a Super Gun prototype was displayed at an exhibition in Baghdad in 1989 (Jentleson, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush, and Saddam, 1982-1990* (New York, 1994), 105-123). United Nations weapons inspectors later published a detailed report of the Iraqi efforts to build the Super Gun and UNSCOM’s post-Gulf War discovery and systematic destruction of such components as its barrels, propellants, projectiles, and guidance systems. See UNMOVIC, “Compendium of Iraq’s Proscribed Weapons Programmes in the Chemical, Biological, and Missile Areas,” June 2007, 514-533 ([http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/compendium/Chapter\\_IV.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/compendium/Chapter_IV.pdf); last accessed Feb. 22, 2012).

Sixth, Despite Professor Popp’s claim to the contrary, I provide the grim statistics of the casualties inflicted on the Iraqi people by the U.S. invasion of 2003 and describe other unfortunate repercussions including what I call “the scandalous maltreatment” and the “grotesque abuse” of Iraqi prisoners (pp. 176, 178). In my view, Professor Popp would have better served the readers of this roundtable by limiting his commentary to legitimate issues rather than piling on so many observations of limited or no credibility.

More important than his picking these nits is Professor Popp’s thematic critique of my work as unduly pro-American. I recognize that every book has an identity and every author has a set of values. I aimed to be as even and balanced as possible and would like to think that I achieved such goals as much one could expect reasonably. I am also fully cognizant that those readers with other identities and values will interpret my ideas from their own perspectives and that some will be unhappy with my arguments and observations. While I aimed to write a book from a centrist perspective, I anticipated that I might take criticism from the Left and the Right. Despite my best efforts, Professor Popp suggests that I landed on the Right. That is his prerogative and we can agree to disagree. I note only that to someone on the Left, the Center is to the Right.

That said, I believe that Professor Popp’s charge that my work is too sympathetic to the United States rests on slippery grounds. With regard to his observation that I favored U.S. containment policy in the decades following World War II, I acknowledge that I write that U.S. officials gave top priority to their anti-communist containment strategy. I further concede that I write that U.S. officials occasionally eyed Arab nationalism as a handmaiden of international communism. But I also recognize that U.S. officials understood the local origins of anti-western nationalism and sought to mitigate it with various progressive policies. I also identify the flaws in various U.S. containment initiatives including the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Professor Popp's obvious disdain for my interpretation on the Iraq War (in chapters 6 and 7) is striking. He faults me for relying on memoirs of U.S. officials and overlooking "important literature based on actual primary sources." Professor Popp mentioned one secondary source that I did not cite but seemingly overlooked the 30 secondary books—all listed in the bibliography—that I read while preparing these two chapters.

Professor Popp's assertion about my "questionable use of language" is also overstated. First, it is flawed by his imbalanced and selective citation of evidence: my words include "British imperial forces also invaded and occupied Mesopotamia" (11); "Bush summoned General Franks to a video conference and ordered him to start a war" (150). Second, his critique suggests that he believes that there was a moral or legal equivalency among national governments and leaders. I use conventional language when I describe Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait as "aggression" and the U.S.-led international action to reverse that attack as "liberation."

I also find puzzling Professor Popp's criticism of my methodology regarding classified sources pertaining to reported covert operations. To address but one example, he finds fault with my statement that reports that U.S. officials knew about the assassination attempt against Qassim in October 1959 or perhaps even armed the gunmen are "credible" but "cannot be proven on the basis of available primary sources." By contrast, Professor Popp apparently would be satisfied only by my declaring that the United States knew about, sanctioned, or actually carried out the attack. In my judgment, however, the evidence that Professor Popp cites to bolster this claim is tantalizing but inconclusive. The documents that he cites indeed reveal a discussion among National Security Council officials of "rumors" and "numerous reports" of an impending assassination attempt but also an observation that such reports "may, however, be Communist provocations" (FRUS, 1958-1960, XII: 488-90). I am also unpersuaded by Professor Popp's assertion that U.S. complicity in an assassination conspiracy is evident in Richard Bissell's statement in December 1959 that "if no further assassination attempts were made against Kassem, there was a strong possibility of a growth in Communist power." The same document also records that "Mr. Bissell felt that there could be further assassination attempts and that each of these attempts could present serious policy problems in Washington" (FRUS, 1958-1960, XII: 494). To my mind, these sources affirm the possibility that U.S. officials were involved in an assassination conspiracy, but they do not prove it and they also contain contrary evidence (like Bissell's statement that such activity could harm U.S. interests). I continue to stand behind the conclusion reached in my book: that the allegations of U.S. complicity are "credible" but "cannot be proven" at this time. I will agree with Professor Popp's observation that "a careful historian" should avoid "coming to premature conclusions."

I also reject Professor Popp's allegations that I exude a neoconservative perspective. According to Popp, my very act of quoting such conservatives as Charles Krauthammer and William Kristol is problematic. Also, my reading of and reporting on the memoirs of George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and Douglas Feith apparently compromised my ability to think freely and allowed these conservative war hawks to shape my interpretation. Such inane suggestions really do not deserve a serious reply, but nonetheless I will offer one.

Krauthammer and Kristol represented a substantial vein of American public discourse that favored the invasion of Iraq and applauded Bush's surge strategy. My presentation of their views is balanced by my presentation of the views of Bush's critics, including Andrew Bacevich, Richard Haass, and numerous other scholars and journalists. My discussion of Bush's memoir includes his own admissions of mistakes (and other errors that I attribute to him). I exhibit a healthy skepticism of Feith's arguments. My goal, as I revealed in the preface, was to capture a complicated discourse among the American people in a dispassionate, balanced, and objective manner. I reject the notion that my book is a captive of the neocons.

My thanks, again, to Nigel J. Ashton, James Goode, Mary Ann Heiss, and Roland Popp for their insightful and provocative comments and to the readers of this roundtable for indulging my perspective. I hope that our audience has found this discussion interesting and informative.



I feel it necessary to respond to some of the points in Peter Hahn's response.

I note in passing that I am surprised at the limited amount of discussion about the origins and the historical context of the Iraq war on H-Diplo as well as outside of the list. Diplomatic historians seem to have only a peripheral interest in the topic - at least compared to social scientists- and I am at a bit of a loss in explaining this disinterest. It may well be that there is indeed a lot of research going on and I just don't know about it. Perhaps an avalanche of historical research about U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf is approaching and my assessment about the dearth of actual interest will be proven wrong. For now, however, I am puzzled. This war has been fittingly described as the 'Rashomon of wars' (George Packer) because of the many contradictory explanations forwarded to explain its causes. There have been some attempts such as the one by Lloyd Gardner to explore the permissive causes of this war but to my knowledge there hasn't been much debate to date. And that's what distinguishes this war from the Vietnam War, at least in historiographical terms.

Now to the argument itself: In his rejoinder, the author accuses me of "considerable nit-picking, much of it unfounded or inaccurate." He selected some of the points I made where he claims my criticism is either unsubstantiated by the facts or driven by a political agenda. I have once again looked at all the issues raised. I stand by every single critique I made and I will submit a separate posting to detail my critique of the chapters on the 2003 war as a tendentious narration of the decision-making by US policymakers. For a start, let me just take a central aspect of Professor Hahn's rejoinder to illustrate my fundamental concern: the portrayal of the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in June 1981.

I wrote:

The claim that Israel's raid on the Iraqi reactor at Osirak in 1981 succeeded in "effectively halting" (75) the Iraqi nuclear program may be a constant feature in neoconservative commentary, but is widely rejected by actual experts.

This elicited a strong reaction in Professor Hahn's rejoinder:

Fourth, Professor Popp derides my conclusion that the Israeli air raid on Osirak effectively halted the Iraqi nuclear program as "a constant feature in neoconservative commentary" that is "widely rejected by actual experts

(who remain unnamed and uncited). My conclusion rests on a CIA assessment of June 1983 (cited on p. 84, n. 17) that stated that while Iraq continued to have nuclear ambitions, "we see no identifiable nuclear weapon program in Iraq;" as well as on the inability of international inspectors to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the 1990s and of American officials to find them after occupying the country in 2003. Professor Popp's description of my conclusion as "neoconservative commentary" does not make sense in

light of the neocons' subsequent allegations of Iraqi nuclear capabilities as a cause for war in 2003"

In order to prove his point that the Israeli attack succeeded in "effectively halting" (75) the Iraqi nuclear program, Professor Hahn here explicitly makes the assertion that his conclusion rests on "the inability of international inspectors to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the 1990s and of American officials to find them after occupying the country in 2003." The argument is that the Osirak raid ended the Iraqi nuclear program once and for all. However, more than sufficient evidence is available to conclude that this assertion is simply incorrect. Quite to the contrary, as most scholars agree, the raid had the opposite effect.

There have been quite a number of studies on the effects of the Osirak raid:

- Jeremy Tamsett, "The Israeli Bombing of Osiraq Reconsidered: Successful Counterproliferation?" *Nonproliferation Review* 11:3 (Fall/Winter 2004): 70-85.
- Shai Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq-Revisited," *International Security* 7:2 (Fall 1982): 114-142.
- Dan Reiter, "Preventive Attacks Against Nuclear Programs and the 'Success' at Osiraq," *The Nonproliferation Review* 12:2 (July 2005): 355-371.
- Richard K. Betts, "The Osirak Fallacy," *The National Interest*, Spring 2006.

While there is a debate on whether the Israeli strike delayed the nuclear weapons programme, none of these authors supports Professor Hahn's view that the programme was "halted" and that "international inspectors" were unable to "find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the 1990s". On the contrary, one central effect of the raid had been that it prompted the Iraqi leadership to abandon its attempts to reach nuclear latency under the guise of a civilian programme and instead to establish a covert nuclear weapons programme based on an alternative technical route, enrichment of uranium. According to the U.S. strategist Richard Betts:

Contrary to prevalent mythology, there is no evidence that Israel's destruction of Osirak delayed Iraq's nuclear weapons program. In fact evidence about decisions and actions inside Saddam Hussein's government uncovered since demonstrates that the attack accelerated it."<sup>1</sup>

The opposite of what Professor Hahn claimed in his response is therefore true. Instead of "halting" Iraq's NW programme, there was an accelerated effort by Iraq to build nuclear weapons. And contrary to what Professor Hahn claimed, the inspectors in the 1990s

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Betts, *American Force: Dangers, Delusions and Dilemmas in National Security* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 137; Betts makes the same point in the 2006 article mentioned above.

unearthed “a huge infrastructure for nuclear weapons development that had been mostly unknown to Western intelligence before the war.”<sup>2</sup> (so much for the ‘proof’ of the 1983 CIA assessment). At the time of the Kuwait War, Iraq stood on the threshold of a nuclear weapons capability (and initiated a crash programme to achieve one during the war). The latest comprehensive assessment of the whole debate comes to the conclusion that Iraq had not yet decided on initiating an operational nuclear weapons programme before the Israeli raid (these non-decisions are indeed typical for NW programmes). And regarding the proliferation danger resulting from the construction of the Osirak reactor: “the design characteristics of the Osirak reactor and the fact that it was subject to IAEA safeguards placed significant constraints on the feasibility of using this reactor for the purposes of a nuclear weapons program.”<sup>3</sup>

Professor Hahn mentions “[...] the inability of international inspectors to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the 1990s and of American officials to find them after occupying the country in 2003.’

On the contrary, Inspectors found plenty of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ in the 1990s, chemical and biological as well as an elaborate NW development infrastructure (several thousand personnel). The Electromagnetic Isotope Separation (EMIS) plant at Tarmiya was near completion and they were working on a NW design.<sup>4</sup> Once it was detected and due to the primary goal of getting sanctions lifted, Saddam Hussein decided to terminate the NW programme and destroy chemical as well as biological weapons. This and not the Israeli raid on Osirak explains why no WMD were found after 2003.”<sup>5</sup> I hope that this demonstrates that my criticism is not “nit-picking” - rather, I only highlighted points which are central to the understanding of recent Iraqi history.

I also stand by all my other criticisms in the roundtable review:

1) Intervention in Jordan 1958: Professor Hahn’s rejoinder: “British ground troops and U.S. military aircraft were deployed in Jordan in 1958. I stand behind my concise summary that “British and U.S. forces . . . moved into Jordan.” I find this questionable. U.S. planes helped with logistical support for the British (and Brits only) intervention force in Amman. In the book it is claimed that “British and U.S. forces also moved into Jordan for the same

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, “Revisiting Osirak: Preventive Attacks and Nuclear Proliferation Risks,” *International Security* 36:1 (2011): 101–132, here 111.

<sup>4</sup> Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (Duelfer Report); accessible at [https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq\\_wmd\\_2004/index.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq_wmd_2004/index.html)

<sup>5</sup> Regarding what the whole question has to do with neoconservative beliefs, again contrary to Professor Hahn’s argument, see CIA veteran Paul Pillar here <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/what-ends-nuclear-weapons-programs-6146>

purpose”; and the latter refers to the previous sentence: “to stave off a copycat revolution there.” (referring to the task of U.S. Marines in Lebanon). U.S. forces did not move into Jordan to intervene in the Hashemite kingdom - there were only some U.S. planes delivering supplies to the British (who were actively intervening), no “U.S. forces moving into Jordan”. Nowhere in the literature is there ever talk of an “Anglo-American intervention in Jordan” in 1958. According to Nigel Ashton: “Even before the British intervention, Eisenhower and Dulles had expressed concerns as to British intentions. Subsequently, Dulles was to assert that ‘we had not wanted the British to go in ‘and that they were ‘foolishly exposed in Jordan’. These sentiments translated themselves into an American refusal to supply ground forces to stand alongside the British troops in Jordan.”<sup>6</sup> (that was the initial U.S. position, they later helped with supplies). And the same author: “Although these operations were contemporaneous they were neither combined nor in any significant sense “interdependent.” In fact, British dependence was once again on display in the form of Macmillan’s pleading for U.S. assistance, first in facilitating British overflights of Israel, and then in meeting the resupply needs of British forces.”<sup>7</sup> Claiming an Anglo-American intervention in Jordan in 1958 would be a major revision of conventional wisdom.

2) “9th-Century Shiite Caliph Ali”; I took issue not with the wrong century given but the naming of Ali ibn Abi Talib as “Shiite Caliph Ali” which betrays a questionable understanding of the Sunna-Schia-split in early Islam.

3) ‘Grim statistics’: “Despite Professor Popp’s claim to the contrary, I provide the grim statistics of the casualties inflicted on the Iraqi people by the U.S. invasion of 2003 [...]”. My critique (“Hahn avoids giving the reader the number of Iraqis killed during this war (estimates range from 40,000 to 200,000”) referred (again) to the war of 1991, not the one in 2003. For 1991, only U.S. losses are mentioned in the book (“the United States achieved the liberation of Kuwait at a cost of 148 U.S. combat fatalities” (104)), neither Iraqi victims or battle losses. I also don’t recall any reference to coalition losses.

4) The ‘Super-Gun’ issue, Professor Hahn’s counter-criticism:

“Fifth, Professor Popp declares my mention of Iraq’s so-called Super Gun to be ‘pure fiction.’ I am left wondering if he checked my endnote, which cites Bruce W. Jentleson’s detailed and document-based discussion of the Super Gun and other high tech weapons that Saddam Hussein developed in the late 1980s and includes evidence that a Super Gun prototype was displayed at an exhibition in Baghdad in 1989 (Jentleson, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush, and Saddam, 1982-1990* (New York, 1994), 105-123). United Nations weapons inspectors later published a detailed report of the Iraqi efforts to build the Super

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<sup>6</sup> Nigel J. Ashton, “A Microcosm of Decline: British Loss of Nerve and Military Intervention in Jordan and Kuwait, 1958 and 1961”, *Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997), 1074f.

<sup>7</sup> Ashton, “Harold Macmillan and the “Golden Days” of Anglo-American Relations Revisited, 1957-631”, *Diplomatic History* 29, No. 4 (2005), 706.

Gun and UNSCOM's post-Gulf War discovery and systematic destruction of such components as its barrels, propellants, projectiles, and guidance systems. See UNMOVIC, "Compendium of Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programmes in the Chemical, Biological, and Missile Areas," June 2007, 514-533 ([http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/compendium/Chapter\\_IV.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/compendium/Chapter_IV.pdf); last accessed Feb. 22, 2012)."

Again, I regard this as a questionable response to my criticism ("Hahn seems to actually believe (90) that Saddam Hussein had completed the development of a Super-Gun 'that could launch 1,000-pound bombs, with conventional or unconventional payloads, more than 600 miles.' Scary indeed, but thankfully also pure fiction.") The story about the Iraqi Super-Gun is well known and made it even into pop culture accounts. My criticism was directed at the unsubstantiated claim that Iraq had actually developed such a weapon. Such a super gun would have been 'scary' indeed.

It could have replaced ballistic missiles, it would have been much more precise than these and much more economic as well. This would have potentially changed the military balance in Iraq's favor (leaving out the obvious weaknesses of such a weapon.) Thankfully, and that's why I wrote about 'pure fiction', this was always a pie-in-the-sky idea sold by a Canadian engineer (later murdered in Brussels) to the Iraqis. Therefore this claim by Professor Hahn in the book is incorrect: "As the scholar Bruce W. Jentleson notes, a military hardware exhibition in Baghdad in April 1989 revealed that Hussein had developed advanced weaponry including the so-called Super Gun that could launch 1,000-pound bombs, with conventional or unconventional payloads, more than 600 miles." The Iraqis had developed nothing of that sort as it was and is technically impossible. A student reading this book would have come away with the impression that Hussein had a working Super-Gun at his disposal ready to launch WMD shells into pro-Western countries. In his rejoinder, Professor Hahn now adds that only a prototype had been shown at the Baghdad exhibition, a fact left out in the book - In the book it was claimed that "it was revealed that Hussein had developed" such a weapon. I stick to my criticism that the claim that Saddam "had developed" a 'Super-Gun' is "fiction". Jentleson by the way nowhere claims in his book that the weapons has been developed but clearly gives the impression that it was just a grandiose idea sold to the Iraqis by Bull.<sup>8</sup>

##### 5) US Interventionism in Iraq 1958 to 61

Professor Hahn: "By contrast, Professor Popp apparently would be satisfied only by my declaring that the United States knew about, sanctioned, or actually carried out the attack." I nowhere expressed such a claim. I actually don't believe this at all as it would have been incompatible with the established 'wait and see' policy followed by the U.S. at this time.

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<sup>8</sup> See Bruce Jentleson, *With Friends Like These*, New York 1994, 114. The CIA wondered later why the Iraqis pursued such a hare-brained project in the first place. See CIA, Project Babylon: The Iraqi Super-Gun, November 1999, accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/wmd05.pdf>.

What I criticized was the general tendency in the book to downplay U.S. interventionism during this important phase in bilateral relations between the two countries. In the book, page 61: "U.S. covert operations to overthrow regimes in Baghdad, although widely rumored at the time and in some secondary sources, remain unproven in declassified government records." That reads quite differently than Professor Hahn's rejoinder. The problem with this phase is that declassified documents give the strong impression of U.S. intervention but the lack of operational records does not establish what exactly was done back then, i.e., the jury is still out. My interpretation is that the U.S. closely watched the situation after the revolution of 1958, initiated limited covert operations against Iraqi Communists and might have played a rather unfathomable role in the mass killings of Iraqi Communists in 1963. The account in the book should have at least mentioned the assassination attempt against a high ranking Iraqi official as established by the Church Committee and admitted by the CIA. The target, according to the recollections of some, might well have been Qasim himself. The suspicion that the US might have tried in the past to kill an Iraqi head of state may have been worth mentioning in an account of the relations between the two countries.

While I could continue to mention several other serious omissions I will leave it at this for now.

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