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Introduction by Salim Yaqub

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Contents

Introduction by Salim Yaqub, University of California, Santa Barbara	2
Review by Nathan J. Citino, Colorado State University	6
Review by Mary Ann Heiss, Kent State University.....	12
Review by Ussama Makdisi, Rice University.....	18
Review by Michelle Mart, Penn State University-Berks	21
Response by Matthew F. Jacobs, Columbia University	24

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Introduction by Salim Yaqub, University of California, Santa Barbara

In *Imagining the Middle East*, Matthew Jacobs explores how the creation and dissemination of knowledge about the Middle East shaped official U.S. policies toward that region. Covering the period from the end of World War I to the late 1960s, Jacobs examines the contributions of an informal network of Middle East specialists—drawn from academia, journalism, business, and government—who were entrusted with interpreting the Middle East for American audiences. While acknowledging considerable variation over time (and from one observer to the next), Jacobs identifies four main themes that pervaded the interpretations over the decades: Islam, secular mass politics, modernization, and Zionism. He argues that members of the network promoted change in the Middle East with respect to each of these four areas, and did so in the belief that Middle Eastern societies were fundamentally backward and opposed to modernity and that the United States was uniquely positioned to help Middle Easterners overcome these handicaps. Jacobs further argues that these imaginings of the Middle East were shaped by a “sacred and secular mission” that had its origins in the experiences and outlooks of American Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century.

The four scholars reviewing *Imagining the Middle East* find much to like in it. All of them praise Jacobs’s broad chronological sweep and his ability to identify recurring patterns over time. They commend his inclination to approach the material critically—to point out, for example, the distorting effects created by assumptions of cultural superiority and by the necessity of developing knowledge for use in the projection of global power. At the same time, the reviewers appreciate the nuance and variation in Jacobs’s treatment and the fact that the author does not paint with too broad a brush. Not every scholar, Jacobs shows, was sold on modernization theory or on the notion that Middle Eastern societies were growing increasingly secular. And the Palestine issue, of course, aroused even greater controversy. Jacob’s monograph “is illuminating on many levels,” Michelle Mart aptly concludes.

Some aspects of Jacob’s treatment, however, do come in for questioning and criticism. Both Nathan Citino and Ussama Makdisi challenge the assertion that the network of experts Jacobs examines was truly “transnational.” Since the claim rests primarily on the presence of some transplanted European scholars, how transnational could the network have been? And where was the Middle Eastern voice in the discourse? Citino argues that a Middle Eastern voice did exist but that Jacobs has neglected it. Prior to 1967, Citino writes, a diverse array of Middle Eastern political leaders, government officials, and journalists got their ideas into circulation in the United States. With the possible exception of Hassan Fathy, however, none of the Middle Eastern figures Citino mentions was a trained scholar. So we are still left with the question of whether, and in what ways, Middle East-based scholars (a category that would exclude immigrants like Philip Hitti) shaped the interpretations on which U.S. policymakers drew. Looking at the period prior to 1967, one can think of a handful of scholars who, while spending much of their careers in the Middle East, influenced the field of Middle East studies as practiced in the United States—the names Walid Khalidi, Constantine Zurayq, and Zeki Velidi Togan come to mind. Rather less

certain is what place, if any, such figures may have occupied within the network of experts Jacobs has studied.

Another set of criticisms and suggestions concerns the issue of Zionism and its role in Jacobs's treatment. While all of the reviewers (and especially Mary Ann Heiss) support the author's decision to organize the material thematically, Citino and Makdisi contend that his particular organization understates the impact of the Zionism debate on the overall relationship between Middle East expertise and U.S. policymaking. The decision to defer discussion of Zionism until the end, Citino writes, "forces the author to keep it offstage throughout much of the book" and thus to obscure its influence on Americans' handling of other issues. Makdisi agrees: "the emergence of a pro-Israel paradigm surely affected the way the U.S. approached the Middle East and the manner in which it viewed Nasser and 'Islam' in the 1950s and 1960s." Similarly, both Makdisi and Mart suggest that Jacobs might have accorded the Zionism issue a more central role in his overall narrative. Just as the missionary-based evangelical outlook gave way to a Cold War-era approach focused on oil interests and modernization, they write, so too did the Arab-Israeli conflict become the defining issue after 1967. Both of these reviewers argue that the network of experts Jacobs discusses was eventually supplanted by a newer, more pro-Zionist network, although Mart seems to detect somewhat more continuity between the two groups than Makdisi does.

Mart and Heiss pose some questions for Jacobs and other scholars working on this and related topics. Mart asks whether similar networks of experts have arisen to create knowledge for U.S. policymakers working in other regions and, if so, how the experiences of those networks differ from those of the Middle East network. She also wonders to what extent "the interpretive frameworks which experts employed in the Middle East [are] a reflection of the history of that region or a reflection of larger themes of American foreign policy." Heiss asks, "how might the United States have 'imagined' the Middle East differently, if indeed that was possible? And if it was, might those 'reimaginings' have led to a different U.S. relationship with the region than the problematic one that exists at present?" Excellent questions all, to which I venture no answers except to say: the more one studies this history, the more one longs for reimaginings of every kind.

Participants:

Matthew F. Jacobs is Associate Professor of U.S. and International History in the Department of History at the University of Florida, where he teaches courses on twentieth and twenty-first century international politics and history, U.S.-Middle East relations, U.S. Foreign relations more broadly, and modern America. His research has focused primarily on U.S.-Middle East relations, and in addition to *Imagining the Middle East*, has been published in *Diplomatic History*. He is currently working on two new projects. The first explores U.S. foreign relations since the late 1960s, and focuses especially on U.S. responses to Islamist movements in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The second pursues a very different path, as it investigates the role of sports in the world and international politics of the last half century.

Salim Yaqub is Associate Professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he specializes in the history of U.S. foreign relations, with a particular focus on U.S. involvement in the Middle East. He is also director of UCSB's Center for Cold War Studies and International History. His first book, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, was published in 2004 by the University of North Carolina Press. Dr. Yaqub is now writing a book on U.S.-Arab relations in the 1970s.

Nathan J. Citino is an associate professor of history at Colorado State University. He is the author of *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa 'ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Indiana University Press, second edition 2010). His current project is titled "The 'History of the Future': The Politics of Modernization in U.S.-Arab Relations, 1945-1967".

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.

Ussama Makdisi is Professor of History and the first holder of the Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. In April 2009, the Carnegie Corporation named Makdisi a 2009 Carnegie Scholar as part of its effort to promote original scholarship regarding Muslim societies and communities, both in the United States and abroad. Professor Makdisi is the author of *Faith Misplaced: the Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (Public Affairs, 2010). His previous books include *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Cornell University Press, 2008), which was the winner of the 2008 Albert Hourani Book Award from the Middle East Studies Association, the 2009 John Hope Franklin Prize of the American Studies Association, and a co-winner of the 2009 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize given by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. Makdisi is also the author of *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000) and co-editor of *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2006). He has published widely on Ottoman and Arab history as well as on U.S.-Arab relations and U.S. missionary work in the Middle East. Among his major articles are "Anti-Americanism in the Arab World: An Interpretation of Brief History" which appeared in the *Journal of American History* and "Ottoman Orientalism" and "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity" both of which appeared in the *American Historical Review*. Professor Makdisi has also published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and in the *Middle East Report*. Professor Makdisi is currently working on a manuscript on the origins of sectarianism in the modern Middle East to be published with the University of California

Press.

Michelle Mart is an Associate Professor of history at Penn State, Berks. She is the author of *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally*, and is currently working on a cultural history of pesticides in the United States from 1945 to the present.

Matthew F. Jacobs opens his important study of American policy-making toward the Middle East with the essential post-September 11 quotation from President George W. Bush: “Why do they hate us?” Bush’s easy answer – “They hate our freedoms” – reveals less about what motivated the terrorists than about the American tendency to regard the Middle East (think of the witch in *Snow White*) as a mirror for reflecting a handsome self-image. For Jacobs, Bush’s query raises a different question: “What do ‘we’ think of ‘them’?” The author seeks to answer this question by examining nearly one hundred years of American ideas about the Middle East. He identifies patterns within an evolving, yet coherent body of expertise tended by an identifiable group of analysts dedicated to the sacred-secular mission of transforming the region. It was this perennial sense of mission that Bush invoked once again in formulating the country’s response to the 2001 attacks.

Jacobs measures the influence of a network of academics, business leaders, and officials “who were ‘paid to interpret’ the Middle East ‘for American audiences’.” (1) He models his approach after David Engerman’s scholarship on Russia experts¹ and argues that Middle East analysts provided a “framework of meaning” for the U.S. regional role, a phrase borrowed from political scientist Timothy Mitchell. “My foremost premise is that the exercise of U.S. power – cultural, economic, military, and political – in the Middle East,” Jacobs writes, “has been enabled, justified, and sustained through the ways Americans have thought about and interpreted the region, the people who inhabit it, and the forces at play there.” (1) He follows Melani McAlister in seeking a “post-orientalist” understanding of the U.S.-Middle East encounter that addresses criticisms directed against Edward Said’s seminal 1978 cultural critique *Orientalism*.² Among the flaws that Jacobs identifies in Said’s study and that he seeks to avoid in his own are essentializing characterizations of western notions about the orient and neglect of historical context. For Jacobs, focusing closely on those experts paid to interpret the Middle East and to craft American policies situates their ideas in particular historical settings and establishes a clear relationship between knowledge and power.

In five thematic chapters, Jacobs follows the development of a network that began with missionaries and Biblical scholars and that came to include oil company executives, State Department Arabists, and academics influenced by the social-science methodologies of modernization theory. One of Jacobs’ important contributions stems from his decision to de-emphasize the cold war and to trace Middle East expertise back to the early twentieth

¹ David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), and *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

² See Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

century. He can therefore show continuities between disparaging descriptions of regional peoples offered by the Inquiry that advised President Woodrow Wilson in 1918 and those found in a 1969 State Department study that concluded Arabs would have to be “de-Arabized” in the course of modernization because their essential characteristics were incompatible with modernity. Analysts cited such essential characteristics to explain U.S. policy failures, rather than re-examining the assumptions on which they based schemes for regional transformation. At the same time, Jacobs charts the evolution of expertise in response to America’s growing economic, political, and strategic stake in the Middle East, theoretical innovations, and domestic political conflicts, particularly over U.S. policy toward Israel. Perhaps his most significant insight is to show how the misperception of Middle Eastern decline and stagnation – a fallacy essential to both missionaries’ sacred and modernizers’ secular fables of redemption – became inextricably linked to an equally ahistorical faith in American exceptionalism. “In combination, these two ahistorical imaginings suggested that the Orient was incapable of changing on its own,” Jacobs explains, “and that the United States was therefore the only legitimate source of change for the region.” (21) While this argument reinforces Douglas Little’s in *American Orientalism*, Jacobs asserts that more sustained attention to the role of ideas is needed to fully understand how Americans’ self-image became intertwined with their perceptions of the Middle East.³

Each of Jacobs’ chapters contains original observations about the relationship between knowledge and power in U.S. Middle East policy. In his chapter on area expertise, he discusses how a gap in regional knowledge was filled by philologists and Biblical scholars writing about contemporary politics, at least until World War Two spawned a new generation of experts. Among the soldiers trained in an army Arabic program set up by Princeton University professor Philip Hitti was future sociologist and first president of the Middle East Studies Association Morroe Berger. Rather than grapple with the diversity of twentieth-century Muslim societies, Jacobs explains in his chapter on Islam, “specialists relied on the much more familiar discourse of totalitarianism, a discourse that carried with it implicit assumptions about the need to remain vigilant against the supposedly emotional and violent Muslim masses.” (77) According to the author, Dwight Eisenhower’s policy of building up King Sa’ud as an Islamic counterweight to the secular, nationalist Egyptian leader Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser revealed contradictions between Americans’ short-term political needs and faith in their ability to redeem the Middle East. Such a policy “seemed to reject transformation in favor of what many analysts believed was a corrupt, ruthless, medieval Islam.” (89) In his chapter on nationalism, Jacobs describes how George Antonius’ classic study *The Arab Awakening* raised hopes that regional movements could align with the U.S. interest in decolonization. However, these hopes did not survive Americans’ encounters with Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and Nasser, leaders whose uncompromising insistence on national sovereignty clearly could not be reconciled with U.S. cold war policies.

³ See Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, 3d. ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

Jacobs portrays the network of Middle East experts as a distinct group with shared concerns but never as monolithic. For instance, his account of modernization theorists distinguishes Manfred Halpern, author of *The Politics of Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (1963) from sociologist Daniel Lerner and economist Walt Rostow. Rather than analyzing developing societies strictly in terms of their progression from tradition to modernity, Halpern focused on the “destabilizing consequences” of modernization and the wide range of political options from which Middle Eastern peoples were forced to choose. (171) Harold Hoskins, who, like his cousin William Eddy came to the network from a missionary and intelligence background, dissented against the modernizers’ now obviously flawed consensus belief that the region was moving inexorably toward secularization. Hoskins advanced a flawed argument of his own, however, when he insisted that Arab nationalism was “a cloak for Mohammedanism.” (91)

Jacobs’ final chapter examines the fierce battles over U.S. support for Zionism and the recognition of Israel by President Harry Truman in May 1948. Middle East experts were joined by non-Zionist Jewish groups and representatives of oil interests in arguing that support for a Jewish state established by force would have negative long-term consequences. With Truman’s recognition of Israel, the State Department, missionary, academic, and other Middle East experts who had counseled against it suffered a “humiliating defeat.” (200) Regional specialists who did so were excluded from policy making roles or had to refocus their efforts on limiting Arab-Israeli violence and ameliorating the political and humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian refugees. Given his emphasis on the network’s arguments and the range of interests arrayed against Truman’s decision, Jacobs provides a more nuanced account of experts’ role in this principal struggle to define U.S. Middle East policy than that offered by Robert Kaplan in *The Arabists*.⁴

The author’s thematic organization, a trait that his book shares with works by Little and McAlister, makes perfect sense in light of the multi-layered nature of U.S. ideas about and relations with the Middle East. Yet Jacobs’ decision to defer until the fifth and final chapter direct consideration of how the Arab-Israeli conflict affected regional expertise creates problems and distorts some of his analysis in earlier chapters. For instance, in the opening chapter describing the network, Jacobs writes that “some of its participants came to see part of their mission as critiquing and working to redirect policies that they believed were wrongheaded.” He claims, however, that “from the vantage point of the late 1940s or early 1950s, such disputes were well off in the distance.” (51) This statement is difficult to reconcile with the primacy he assigns to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the final chapter and with the decisive defeat that he says area experts suffered in 1948. The decision to hold the Arab-Israeli conflict in abeyance until the end forces the author to keep it offstage throughout much of the book. Jacobs describes Philip Hitti’s 1950 offer to provide language expertise to Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee as a bid to capitalize on the cold war and attract government dollars to Princeton. But Jacobs does not mention Hitti’s 1944 Congressional testimony in defense of Palestinian rights in which his views

⁴ Robert Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

were dismissed and Hitti himself was ridiculed.⁵ The network's decisive defeat might have come as early as November 10, 1945, when Truman rejected arguments against supporting a Jewish state presented to him by Director of the Office of Near East Affairs Loy W. Henderson, Minister to Saudi Arabia William Eddy, Minister to Syria and Lebanon George Wadsworth, and Minister to Egypt S. Pinkney Tuck.⁶ By the time of World War Two, expertise about the Middle East was already a highly charged political arena in which area specialists competed against Zionists and sided with oil lobbyists to define the "national interest" of the United States.

The body of literature that Jacobs examines is also too narrow to sustain arguments about the relationship between knowledge and power in America's encounter with the Middle East. The author cites myriad policy-oriented books and articles, declassified State Department and CIA reports, transcripts of Council on Foreign Relations study groups, and has obviously read extensively in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. But he does not delve into historiographical and methodological debates among scholars who moonlighted as policy intellectuals. This is a major difference between his book and Engerman's *Know Your Enemy*, which relates U.S. foreign policy needs to the establishment of university Russian studies programs, flows of government and foundation monies to those institutions, and the evolution of scholarship about imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. To cite one example, Jacobs refers to Niyazi Berkes, a McGill University scholar who participated in the 1955 Harvard conference "Islam and the West," in the context of Americans' idealization of Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Berkes' later study *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* was one of several that adapted orientalist's textual analyses of Ottoman sources to the concerns of cold war-era modernization theory.⁷ In Jacobs' conclusion, he considers the "academic component" of the fracturing of area expertise after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. (244) But he doesn't discuss how academics' revolt against producing policy-oriented scholarship tracked with the decline of modernization theory, the rise of world-systems and other theoretical approaches, or with the emergence of quantitative research made possible by the shift from textual to archival sources. Zachary Lockman's *Contending Visions of the Middle East* offers a broader "post-orientalist" examination of the relationship between knowledge and power in Middle East studies and relates the foreign policy concerns of western powers including the U.S. to scholarly literature.⁸

⁵ "If it is not too personal," Congressman Charles A. Eaton (R-NJ) asked Hitti, "are you an Arab?" Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820-2001* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 183.

⁶ See Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 41-42.

⁷ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964). See also Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 1.

⁸ Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

A final criticism concerns Jacobs' description of the network of experts as "transnational." By this, he means that Americans seeking expertise about the Middle East early in the century relied on commentators such as British journalist Valentine Chirol and that European orientalist including H.A.R. Gibb and Gustave von Grunebaum migrated to American universities after World War Two. But Jacobs neglects those Middle Eastern voices that also tried to influence American audiences about regional issues. Prior to 1967, Nasser, Jordan's King Husayn, and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion all published English-language books and articles for consumption by a U.S. readership.⁹ Members of Jacobs' network also maintained ties with Middle Eastern figures, many of whom shared hopes of transforming the region. John Badeau, president of the Near East Foundation and later ambassador to Egypt, wrote the introduction to the 1959 English edition of Nasser's *The Philosophy of the Revolution*.¹⁰ Harvard Arabist William Polk, who became the Middle East expert on Walt Rostow's Policy Planning Council, enjoyed close relations during and after his official service with the Shah of Iran, Nasser, *al-Ahram* editor Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, the Egyptian development intellectual Hassan Fathy, and Cairo governor Salah Dessouki. Indeed, Polk advocated cooperation with Nasser partly because of the common ideas regarding development that he shared with Egypt's leader and with other Middle Eastern elites. The "intertextuality" that Jacobs says helped to bind the network together actually extended far beyond it. A "transnational" account could be one that traced the exchange of ideas and that explored how the promise of transforming the Middle East could serve competing political agendas. It could analyze the feedback loop linking official attempts to position the U.S. as a model society, the subversion or rejection of such messages by Arab, Persian, or Turkish intellectuals, and the reconstitution of American cultural images of the region's peoples.

Jacobs' well-written book should be required reading for students of the U.S. encounter with the Middle East. It also reflects the limits of an approach concerned strictly with American perceptions. U.S.-Middle East relations does not yet have its equivalent of John Dower's pioneering work on relations with Japan.¹¹ In *War Without Mercy*, Dower incorporated east Asia experts into his account of the "webs of perception" by which one people's positive self-image reinforced another's racist stereotypes.¹² Such an approach to studying the Middle East may come from graduate students now training in regional

⁹ See Abdel Nasser, "The Egyptian Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* 33 (January 1955): 199-211; King Hussein of Jordan, *Uneasy Lies the Head* (London: Heinemann, 1962); and David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: Years of Challenge* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963).

¹⁰ Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Buffalo, NY: Economica Books, 1959), 13-23.

¹¹ See John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), and *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).

¹² Dower, *War without Mercy*, 73.

languages and literatures. Scholarship focused on the transnational exchange of ideas is already being published by historians of the Middle East who, since 2001, have turned their attention to America's regional role. The most important example is Ussama Makdisi's *Artillery of Heaven*, which describes the synthesis between the ideas of American missionaries and those of Ottoman imperial reforms in nineteenth-century Lebanon. In his conclusion, Makdisi writes: "We are, in the end, all implicated in one another's histories."¹³ Put differently, what "we" think of "them" cannot be separated from what "they" think of "us."

¹³ Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 220.

It is not likely that the source of U.S. policymakers' knowledge about the outside world gives most Americans pause or keeps them up at night; they probably believe that policymakers know where to go to learn what they need to know, receive good counsel when they seek it, and heed that counsel as a matter of practice. The interrelated subjects of where policymakers go to learn about other parts of the world and how they use their knowledge when making policy, however, are far from simple, as a variety of recent and not-so-recent studies make clear.¹ Mathew Jacobs' fascinating and insightful *Imagining the Middle East: The Building of an American Foreign Policy, 1918-1967* sheds considerable light on our understanding of how and what U.S. policymakers learned about the Middle East, a region that became increasingly important in U.S. foreign policymaking calculations over the course of the twentieth century and especially after the Second World War. As he makes crystal clear, the patterns of understanding that emerged as the United States first became interested in the Middle East in the wake of World War I operated, for good or for ill, throughout the Cold War and beyond and remain profoundly important even today.

Jacobs' assertion that the foremost premise of *Imagining the Middle East* "is that the exercise of U.S. power—cultural, economic, military, and political—in the Middle East has been enabled, justified, and sustained through the ways Americans have thought about and interpreted the region, the people who inhabit it, and the forces at play there" reminds me of the "Knowledge is Power" slogan popularized, but not originated, by the Schoolhouse Rock videos that graced Saturday morning cartoons when I was growing up (1). (This admission no doubt dates me for readers too young to recall such classics as "No More King," "Elbow Room," and "I'm Just a Bill," to name just three of the series' U.S.-history themed spots. But I digress.) Like the legions of American children who would theoretically be empowered by learning their multiplication tables, grammar fundamentals, and U.S. history and civics basics through catchy tunes and memorable lyrics, the United States as a nation, Jacobs avers, would be empowered in the Middle East if only it could garner enough useful knowledge about the region and its peoples. As *Imagining the Middle East* reveals, this was easier said than done. Acquiring knowledge about the Middle East, a region about which Americans knew little as late as the end of the First World War, required the construction of an informal network of experts from academe, business, journalism, and government whose various understandings of the region's past and present could be placed in service of U.S. policies that could shape the region's future in ways that suited U.S. purposes. Because the collective knowledge the network of Middle East experts generated was occasionally flawed, sometimes misinterpreted, or at other times simply ignored, however, the mere generation or acquisition of expert knowledge did not in the end lead axiomatically to U.S. power in the

¹ See, for example, Lawrence S. Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Robert Schulzinger, *The Wise Men of Foreign Affairs: The History of the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); and, most recently, David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

region. On the contrary, by the late 1960s the U.S. role in the Middle East was much more limited and circumscribed than policymakers had initially expected. Knowledge, it seems, does not always lead inexorably to power.

That the United States should exert its power in the Middle East, Jacobs maintains, was never in doubt. U.S. officials first came to appreciate the region's geographic and strategic location and valuable petroleum supplies during World War I, became increasingly interested in it during the interwar period as oil became ever more significant for both civilian and military uses, saw the region's crucial importance first-hand during World War II, and worked during the postwar period to ensure that control of the region and its resources did not fall to hostile forces, whether in the form of Soviet or communist domination or radical nationalism. Part of the rationale for U.S. involvement in the Middle East came simply from the need to pursue national interests, which were increasingly bound up in oil and non-communism. But part of the rationale was ideological and stemmed from the notion of U.S. exceptionalism, which both dictated the necessity for U.S. intervention abroad and ensured that that intervention was benevolent—or at least that it would be described as such. In other words, U.S. involvement in the Middle East could not help but be a positive one for the region and its peoples, which would unquestionably be better for having been on the receiving end of U.S. attention.

Expanded U.S. interest in the Middle East highlighted the need for knowledge about the region and led linearly to the creation of the information network of experts whose ideas formed the core of American “imaginings” of the region and its peoples that Jacobs ably chronicles. Initially, the network of U.S. experts on the Middle East was dominated by missionaries, academic specialists in Near East languages and religions and other educators, and philanthropists, many of whom had ties to England and the Continent. Schooled as they were in the ancient past and drawing their knowledge from those who came before them, they struggled to come to grips with the contemporary Middle East in ways that would make their advice to U.S. officials relevant to the needs of national policy. To meet the need for a larger group of regional experts after World War II, the U.S. government, or more specifically the Department of State, created a Foreign Service Institute program in Arabic language and Middle East studies to train its own cadre of policy-oriented experts. The dozens of graduates of the program over its almost three-decade existence, Jacobs notes, primarily “considered themselves ‘regionalists,’ as opposed to ‘globalists,’ which meant that while they were committed Cold Warriors they believed the United States had to deal with the Middle East and its issues in their own right, rather than read them through a global lens” (46). This was no mean feat, it seems, as U.S. policy toward the region did indeed take on a decidedly geostrategic cast that privileged “oil and the Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union” over more localized concerns (51). Rather than seeking to understand the region and its peoples on their own terms, in the way an academic seeks to gain mastery over a subject for the sake of knowledge alone, the network strove for practical, usable knowledge that could serve policymaking purposes, a fact that could not help but influence the sort of knowledge that was generated. In other words, the very enterprise of seeking knowledge about the region seemed problematic from its inception.

Employing a topical organizational scheme that allows him to trace the evolution of expert-generated knowledge of the Middle East over time, Jacobs assesses understandings of Islam, regional nationalist movements, modernization, and the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem as four key areas that combined to shape the way Americans in official and unofficial capacities alike understood—or ‘imagined’—the region. Although Jacobs is correct in asserting that the topically organized chapters need not be read sequentially, to my way of thinking the four ideas build on one another so logically that it makes sense to consider them in the order in which they are presented in the book. When it came to the first three areas (Islam, nationalism, and modernization), Jacobs admits that although thinking on these areas was not always uniform among network members, there was enough agreement that it is possible to conceive of a dominant line for each. When it came to the fourth (the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict), however, members of the informal network were much more divided and unable to reach an agreement. They also found themselves at odds with the American public over the issue in ways that had not been true when it came to their thoughts on Islam, nationalism, and modernization.

From the start, the informal network of Middle East experts was interested in understanding Islam and its role in the region, which they generally agreed was profound. In this pursuit they identified several supposed truisms about Islam that helped to shape U.S. policy toward the region. One was that “Islam determined the day-to-day behavior of its adherents,” which assigned to religious ideas a unifying and shaping role in virtually everything that happened in the region (57). A second was that Islam was a “totalitarian regime” that made Muslims “especially susceptible to being controlled by dictators,” a characterization that suggested the need for a U.S. role in helping to ensure that regional states did not fall into the wrong sorts of hands (73). Third, network members traced what they perceived as the Middle East’s traditionalism, even backwardness, to Islam, blaming it for creating “stagnant economic, political, and social structures” in the region and implying that without outside (read, U.S.) intervention the region would remain hidebound and fall behind the rest of world (235). (At the same time, a small number of network members recognized the presence within the Middle East of reformers who sought to move the region toward modernity but admitted the difficulty such an endeavor would present.) Finally, experts believed that “Islam was in decline” as a political force during the postwar period, a grievous error given subsequent developments in Iran and elsewhere (94). Taken as a whole, it would seem that network knowledge about Islam was imperfect at best, and downright inaccurate at worst, contributing very little that was truly constructive for policymakers and in fact laying the seeds of serious policy errors.

Expert thinking about regional nationalism built logically on assumptions about the role of Islam in Muslim societies and particularly the supposed ease with which strong leaders could manipulate or even control local populations. So long as regional leaders pursued benign policies that did not challenge U.S. interests in the region, as was the case with Mustafa Kemal in Turkey and Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia, they could be tolerated. When they sought instead to pursue agendas that served local purposes, as Mohammad Mossadegh did in Iran or Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser did in Egypt, they had to be resisted, lest larger Western or U.S. economic or strategic interests be compromised. Eventually, U.S. thinking came to accept the presence of strong regional leaders who ruled through a cult of personality of

sorts so long as they posed no challenge to “primary” U.S. interests, which “included preventing the spread of communism and maintaining Western European access to Middle Eastern oil. Everything else,” Jacobs relates, “was of secondary importance” (133). In this way, U.S. officials by 1958 had come to an accommodation of sorts with Nasser, whose nationalism threatened neither to open the region to communism nor to compromise Western European access to Middle Eastern oil.

Rather than an admission of defeat or some sort of forced compromise, the new U.S. approach to regional nationalism after 1958 served Washington’s overall goal of modernizing and developing the Middle East, a need that grew more pressing as the twentieth century wore on. U.S. observers from the start depicted the region and its peoples as backward. Geography and climate, the effects of the “long sleep” that supposedly took hold of Arab societies by the mid-thirteenth century, bifurcated regional social structures, negative character traits, and even Islam itself were all to blame, U.S. experts maintained, for the Middle East’s backwardness. Whatever the cause, U.S. policymakers and experts alike agreed that the region had to be developed and modernized, both for the sake of its people and in service to larger U.S. goals in the region. Early efforts to modernize the region were privately directed, with U.S. oil companies active in the Middle East taking the lead. This private approach to regional development, which Emily Rosenberg has termed “liberal developmentalism,” persisted through the early 1950s and posited that U.S. economic involvement in the Middle East and elsewhere could bring both profits to American businesses and positive uplift to local societies, in the end remaking them in America’s image.² These same beliefs guided the more official government-sponsored development and modernization efforts that emerged after World War II, as the United States worked to shore up the region against the sort of poverty and despair that could open the door to communism or foster dangerous anti-Americanism. In this effort, Jacobs proclaims, they “drew on deeply ingrained notions of American exceptionalism, magnanimity, and moral superiority as they imagined their country’s playing a transformational role in the Middle East” (159). Initially, government efforts to develop the region took the form of direct foreign assistance, administered through mechanisms such as the Point Four and Mutual Security Programs. When those initiatives failed to generate sufficiently wide results, officials turned to modernization theory, which sought to harness American social science expertise and foreign aid in an effort to bring about controlled development in the Middle East and elsewhere.³ Undergirding the seemingly benign idea that planned American intervention could spawn modernization was the more sinister conviction that the American model of development could and should be replicated wholesale in other nations, a culturally suspect judgment that nevertheless apparently met with no objections from members of the informal network of

² See Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

³ For an excellent discussion of modernization theory and its implications see Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

experts who helped to shape U.S. policy toward the Middle East. That the idea of grafting a U.S.-designed model of development onto Middle Eastern societies that were very different from the United States in key respects raised no eyebrows among the informal network would seem to suggest how deeply its members bought into the beneficence of American exceptionalism and the good that was bound to come from U.S. intervention in the region, a fact that surely shaped the sorts of knowledge it was imparting to U.S. foreign policymakers.

U.S. “imaginings” of how to deal with Palestine and what became the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict were shaped by ideas about modernization as well as evolving national interests in the Middle East that came to revolve around oil and the Cold War, though not in ways that comported with the advice of members of the informal network. U.S. thinking about whether Muslim Arabs or Jews could better foster modernization and development in Palestine clearly favored the latter. As early as the interwar period, Zionist appeals for U.S. support for Jewish immigration had “presented a Jewish Palestine as the natural modern extension of both a sacred and secular Western civilization in the Middle East,” a position that struck a chord with U.S. policymakers and the public alike. It also left network members’ arguments that introducing European Jews into Palestine unfairly privileged Jewish interests over those of the Palestinian Arabs who were already there and whose land claims were longstanding with little traction (194). The assertion that Jews would be more successful at modernizing Palestine, along with moral appeals to avenge the wrongs of the Holocaust and claims that a Jewish Palestine would be a stronger bulwark against communist expansion than one controlled by Arabs, subsequently drove postwar support for the creation of a Jewish state. To be sure, network members, especially those within the State Department, worked doggedly to drum up support for the Arabs’ position by highlighting the nation’s larger security goals, including continued access to Middle Eastern oil supplies, but to no avail, and they suffered a serious blow when President Harry S. Truman extended U.S. de facto recognition to the state of Israel just moments after it declared its existence. Widespread U.S. support for Israel also made it impossible for network experts to gain a fair hearing for their calls for U.S.-sponsored efforts to settle the resulting refugee question in a way that recognized Palestinian rights or to convince “Israel to pursue a more accommodating policy toward its Arab neighbors” (218). Further regional destabilization, mounting Arab discontent, and a significant loss of valuable Arab support for the United States itself resulted. The 1967 Six Day War, which cemented official U.S. support for Israel, Jacobs avers, marked the final defeat of network efforts to bridge the gap between Israel and its Arab neighbors as members’ calls for support for Palestinian interests increasingly fell on deaf ears.

To my way of thinking, several things are striking about the informal network of experts whose ideas shaped the American imaginings of the Middle East that constitute the core of Jacobs’ book. One is its members’ abject failure to convince both U.S. policymakers and the general public of the complexities of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem. Reflexive support of the Zionist project in Palestine was unmoved by experts’ calls for recognition of Palestinian rights, demonstrating that, in the end, knowledge had to be heeded in order to play a role in shaping policy. A second is the sense of cultural superiority that suffused network depictions of the Middle East, from the biased depictions of Islam, to the self-

serving assessments of regional nationalists, to the one-size-fits-all nature of modernization theory, which boldly assumed that the Middle East could—and should—develop just as the United States had. A third is the way that U.S. interests and needs so often trumped the interests and needs of the peoples and nations of the Middle East themselves, a development that was also true when it came to U.S. involvement in other parts of the world as well. The conviction that the United States needed to influence the region for its own purposes, such as securing access to petroleum, keeping the region out of hostile hands, or supporting the state of Israel, gave those purposes primacy, a life of their own, even, that paid little or no mind to whether the consequences of U.S. involvement in pursuit of its own purposes was in fact good for the region.

Jacobs has certainly provided his readers with much food for thought, not only with regard to the specific case of network-generated knowledge of the Middle East but also with regard to the larger question of how government officials learn about the world around them. Methodologically, this is a very important book that is sure to inspire additional research on a variety of related topics. And substantively, it contributes mightily to a better understanding of both why U.S. policy toward the Middle East has unfolded as it has, particularly in the period since the Second World War, and why the U.S. errand in the region has been less than successful. In the spirit of intellectual inquiry, I'd like to close by posing a question to Jacobs, one that at first blush may seem unfair in that it ranges beyond the scope of his fine book but one that is nevertheless inspired by that book, to wit, how might the United States have "imagined" the Middle East differently, if indeed that was possible? And if it was, might those "reimaginings" have led to a different U.S. relationship with the region than the problematic one that exists at present?

Matthew Jacobs' *Imagining the Middle East* contributes substantially to what is now a burgeoning field of U.S.-Middle Eastern relations. Jacobs' account is a history of the rise of an "informal transnational" (7) network of Middle East specialists based in the United States. This network helped shape how the U.S. government understood the Middle East between 1918 and 1967. Jacobs' history tells two related stories. The first is the shift from a missionary-dominated evangelical interpretation of the Orient toward a secular, "interest" based interpretation of America's place and role in the Middle East. In other words, Jacobs emphasizes a shift from an American obsession with religion to one with resources. The second story narrates how this secular network of Middle East-focused academicians, think-tank figures, and government bureaucrats found itself consumed by the emergence of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Because U.S. policies toward Israel have routinely been far more responsive to domestic pro-Zionist constituencies than to the foreign policy considerations of U.S. government policy planners and experts, members of the network that Jacobs studies found themselves increasingly marginalized and ultimately overwhelmed by the pro-Israel disposition of American politics.

The first four chapters of his book are filled with interesting detail, show evidence of robust archival work, and illustrate the degree to which members of this network debated how to view Islam—whether through a missionary-tainted Orientalist lens or through a Cold War lens that saw Islam as a bulwark against Communism (or both?). Jacobs also illustrates how members of this network vacillated in their interpretation of Arab nationalism, from an initial view of it as benign into a more cynical view of it as a "radical" threat that had to be contained following the emergence of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran and Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt. Jacobs, to his credit, reminds us that throughout the period between 1918 and 1967, there remained a powerful conviction on the part of members of this network, including those heavily influenced by modernization theory, that the Middle East, the Arab world, and the Arabs had to be transformed. Jacobs discusses a fascinating document produced in 1969 by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research that called for the "de-Arabization" (186) of the Arabs! Jacobs does an excellent job tracing the feelings of hubris, and the religious, cultural and political superiority and racism that permeated official and unofficial American thinking about the Middle East across several decades of the twentieth century.

Having said this, I must admit there are parts of the book that were less clear to me. Methodologically, for example, I understand why Jacobs insists that one does not need to know Arabic to undertake this kind of study, since his emphasis is not on how Arabs understood or related to the shifts in American thinking about Islam and the Middle East. I also agree with Jacobs that one can study U.S. involvement in the region from different angles. Nevertheless, I find the notion of an "informal" (4, 48, 52) network somewhat opaque, because its informality leaves me wondering how precisely one defines who is included within this network and on what grounds? I am even less convinced by the repeated invocation in the book of what Jacobs calls a "transnational" network (6,48). Yes,

there were British and other European Orientalists who came to the U.S. and offered their expertise (such as it was) on how to understand and deal with the contemporary Arab world. Most of the evidence that Jacobs deploys, however, does not suggest a “transnational” network as much as transplanted European intellectuals who came to work in the United States. Edward Said, of course, made this point decades ago in *Orientalism* when he drew attention to what he saw as the deleterious influence of men like Bernard Lewis in the framing of an orientalist interpretation of the Arab world. So I am left wondering how and why Jacobs can sustain the argument about there being a transnational network, which would suggest individuals based in Europe and the Middle East collaborating with U.S.-based individuals. Interestingly, in the epilogue, Jacobs refers to his network of specialists as only “somewhat transnational in scope” (235).

I found the fifth chapter the most intriguing chapter. In it, Jacobs argues convincingly that the Arab-Israeli conflict exposed the limits of the influence and function of the network of Middle East specialists. At the same time, although I understand why Jacobs organized his book chapters as stand-alone discussions of different themes (Islam, Cold War, Modernization and Arab-Israeli conflict) that were taken up by American policy makers and specialists, perhaps he might have offered a tighter narrative that relates the final chapter, in which the climax of his story of transformation is reached, to the earlier ones. In other words, the emergence of a pro-Israel paradigm surely affected the way the U.S. approached the Middle East and the manner in which it viewed Nasser and “Islam” in the 1950s and 1960s. Jacobs acknowledges that the network of Middle East specialists was fundamentally altered by the existence of several pro-Israel constituencies. Did not these constituencies form a rival network, or a so-called Israel lobby that is truly transnational in scope? Indeed, by the 1990s unabashedly pro-Israel individuals such as Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk (originally Australian) played crucial roles in making the United States act, in Aaron David Miller’s words, as “Israel’s lawyer.”¹ Rather than mitigating America’s pro-Israel attitude, Indyk and Ross reflected an era when a pro-Israel stance was flaunted in the face of the Arabs. Not uncoincidentally, it is an era that has also seen the most insidious representation (notably by Robert Kaplan in *The Arabists*²) of the “Arabist” as essentially anti-Semitic, or hopelessly seduced by the Arabs. I wonder, therefore, why Jacobs does not grapple more directly with the thesis presented in *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* by Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer about the emergence of what they regard as the powerful and fundamentally distorting influence of the pro-Israel lobby.³

In short, I appreciated Jacobs’ exploration into the bureaucratic and intellectual shifts in the making of an American foreign policy or attitude toward the Middle East. Clearly, a missionary-based evangelical outlook gave way to an actual U.S. foreign policy in the

¹ “Aaron David Miller, “Israel’s Lawyer” *Washington Post*, 23 May 2005.

² Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York: Free Press, 1993)

³ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

Middle East in which “interests” (that is, a determination to secure a pro-Western petroleum order) took center stage during moments of the Cold War in the 1950s. What is most interesting, however, is the story that Jacobs ends with but whose implications he does not fully explore, namely how these Cold War “interests” in turn gave way to, or has become inexorably bound up with, a faith in Israel that is the *sine qua non* of the current American approach to the Middle East. Jacobs’ book tells a truly important story of a momentous set of shifts whose consequences we can see all too clearly playing out in our own time.

Mathew Jacobs' investigation of American foreign relations with the Middle East in the middle of the twentieth century is ambitious in its conceptual framework and in its complex story of intersecting discourses. Jacobs' foremost goal is to demonstrate how the exercise of U.S. power in the region "has been enabled, justified, and sustained through the ways Americans have thought about and interpreted the region." (1) Seeking to address the criticisms that some historians have of cultural diplomacy, Jacobs examines the interpretations of those who were clearly in a position to influence policymaking; but he stays trained on their evolving discursive construction of the Middle East rather than offering a successive description of particular policies. The object of his study is an informal network of analysts, both inside and outside of government, who helped to shape American policy. The resulting book is illuminating on many levels.

Imagining the Middle East demonstrates the concrete power of interpretations by showing how they affected and were affected by specific policies or events. The overlapping of images and events is reflected in the structure of the book which is organized into thematic but not strictly chronological chapters. Jacobs examines, in order, the coalescence of a field of experts on the region whose main concerns were the political and economic interests of the U.S. after World War I when decolonization seemed to present new opportunities. The second chapter details how religion took on the central role of defining the differences between the U.S. and countries in the region. The third chapter focuses on how new political configurations such as nationalism were both celebrated and reviled by American analysts, depending on which Middle Eastern leaders were in power at different points in the twentieth century. Jacobs next looks at the evolving American ideal of a secularized, modernized Middle East; analysts' expectations were ultimately frustrated as they tried to make sense of Arabs and others who did not behave as Americans predicted and desired. Jacobs ends his study with a chapter on the intractability of the Arab-Israeli conflict which revealed wide chasms in the network of analysts and, ultimately, led to its disintegration.

In his examination of the informal network that helped to shape U.S. foreign policy, Jacobs does not try to portray a neat consensus on policy. He describes the contradictions as well as the flexibility of the discourse. For example, Jacobs notes that U.S. support for King Saud in the late 1950s helped provide stability for U.S. policy interests, but "seemed to reject transformation in favor of what many analysts believed was a corrupt, ruthless, medieval Islam." (89) Even when there were disagreements among analysts in the network or when specific policies went against a commonly accepted interpretative framework, Jacobs demonstrates that the influence of the network was greater than that of its parts, including the individuals who comprised it or the specific policies that it addressed.

Although Jacobs argues that the analytical framework used by the informal network was remarkably stable and influential in the mid-twentieth century, he demonstrates that it was not static. It responded to and was reshaped by changing political events. In this way, Jacobs addresses another criticism of cultural diplomacy, especially work influenced by Edward Said. While some have argued that Said's Orientalism was unchanging and

ahistorical, Jacobs argues that the analysts' imaginings of the Middle East were dynamic and historically-rooted.

In his introduction, Jacobs situates his work in an historiographic context of works on the Middle East as well as on American foreign policy more generally. He notes that other historians have grappled with the influence of discourse on regional policy (e.g., Melani McAlister and Douglas Little), and with the influence of informal networks of experts in other regions (David Engerman's work on Russian and Soviet specialists).¹ A consideration of Engerman's work alongside Jacobs' raises an interesting question: how unique was the network that Jacobs discusses? If other historians were to follow in the footsteps of Engerman and Jacobs, would they find that such informal networks existed to shape the framework of our understanding about most regions in which the United States had an interest in the twentieth century? If the answer is yes, are the only differences the level of network development and influence, as well as the cultural interpretations themselves?

Moreover, to what extent are the interpretive frameworks which experts employed in the Middle East a reflection of the history of that region or a reflection of larger themes of American foreign policy? For example, the celebration of the sacred and secular mission to transform the region that Jacobs discusses is similar to the sense of mission which Richard Immerman writes about in the service of spreading liberty.² Jacobs is clearly aware of these questions of broader context, and I hope that his work on the Middle East might be a building block for other historians posing these synthetic questions.

Jacobs' decision to end his study with what he labels the fracturing of the informal network over the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict after the 1967 war makes sense. He clearly illustrates that many of the people in the post-World War II network were anti-Zionist and that the members of the network failed to change the pro-Zionist tilt of American foreign policy, signaling an end to their influence. Yet, perhaps another way to frame these changes is not so much as the disappearance of a network of analysts as its transformation. Just as Jacobs earlier in the book detailed that particular concerns of one era gave way to those of another (e.g. the preoccupation with the religious character of the region before World War II, but the greater concern with modernization after the war), so the focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict takes center stage in the post 1967 period. While some experts were pushed aside, other, pro-Zionist ones took their place, participating in an actively engaged informal network inside and outside of government which shaped the Middle East in the American imagination and policies – and continues to do so to this day. Even if the people in the network changed, as did some of their key goals, the newer network continued to work within the frameworks that had been established earlier in the century,

¹ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley, 2005); Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (Chapel Hill, 2008); David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York, 2009).

² Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton, 2010).

remaining just as committed to a sense of an American mission in the Middle East, and to a region characterized by secular, modern nation states.

Let me begin by thanking Tom Maddux for organizing the roundtable, Salim Yaqub for providing the introduction, and especially Nathan Citino, Mary Ann Heiss, Ussama Makdisi, and Michelle Mart for taking the time and effort to put forth such thoughtful, provocative, and fundamentally fair reviews. I truly appreciate each of their comments, whether they are complimentary or critical. As many readers of this roundtable might expect, most of the issues the reviewers raise are ones that I considered extensively during the process of writing the book. I therefore will use much of my space laying out my rationales and thought processes with respect to four issues the reviewers raise: the costs and benefits of organizing the book into a series of thematic chapters as opposed to following a more explicitly chronological narrative, the limits of focusing on a single side in the U.S.-Middle East relationship, the nature of the network and the relationship between knowledge and power, and last, why I end the book with the late 1960s and do not tackle directly the U.S.-Israeli relationship and the impact of an Israel lobby since 1967.

Before I do so, however, I wish to note the one aspect of the reviews that to my mind does not quite do justice to the book. Each of the reviewers, to a greater or lesser extent, emphasizes my efforts to respond to Edward Said's *Orientalism*.¹ To be sure, those efforts constitute an important aspect of my work. My quibble, however, comes with the fact that the reviewers highlight that feature to a far greater extent than I do in the book. Indeed, in the introduction, I discuss four threads that I believe run throughout each of the topical chapters and serve to connect them into a cohesive whole. I first mention a far broader methodological interest in connecting newer approaches to the study of U.S. foreign relations that emphasize culture and ideas with more traditional approaches that focus on diplomacy, national security interests, and economic concerns, a point none of the reviewers notes. I tend to view these approaches as complementary and mutually supportive, though many scholars write as if they are mutually exclusive. The second connecting thread I articulate centers around the relationship between expertise and authority, or, put differently, knowledge and power, and it is here that I define the network of specialists that many of the reviewers discuss, some at length. More on that issue later. The third thread concerns what I refer to as "the consistent efforts . . . to imagine a transformed or modernized Middle East" (7), which I suggest suffused all aspects of thinking about the region, but specifically its dominant religion, its secular political movements, its socio-economic arrangements, and the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself. Citino responds most fully to this point, though each of the reviewers recognizes that my focus on the drive for transformation extends beyond the formal discussion of modernization theory that takes place in the fourth chapter of the book. Now one might legitimately argue, and I would agree, that each of these three threads separately and in combination contributes to the fourth connecting thread: my effort to move beyond *Orientalism*. Nonetheless, I specifically placed my discussion of Said fourth because while I obviously believe his work to be immensely important, indeed—and as these reviews

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

reveal—to have been a defining force in the field of Middle Eastern studies for more than three decades, I did not want it to overshadow other aspects of my book that I believe are equally, if not more, important. Perhaps I should have made that point more clear when writing the introduction. Regardless, these reviews do not convey the relative importance of the connecting threads, and readers expecting to see lengthy discussions of Said or his opponents throughout the book will find that they appear only briefly in a few paragraphs in the introduction and conclusion.

Let me turn now to the four substantive issues I noted above. All of the reviewers point out that *Imagining the Middle East* moves through a series of thematic chapters, each of which roughly covers the period from the end of World War I through the late 1960s: the evolving process of knowledge production, interpretations of Islam, responses to secular political movements, efforts at transformation and modernization theory, and the relationship between the network and the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I placed the chapters in this order because, with one exception, I felt they logically built upon each other in this manner, especially in the period after World War II. It was important that I explain how the production of knowledge about the Middle East changed over time, and it seemed appropriate to do so before delving into the actual content of that knowledge and its impact on U.S.-Middle East relations. The specialists I discuss focused on Islam more from the mid-1940s through the mid-1950s and then shifted their focus to secular nationalist movements through the late 1950s. Though modernization theory had been emerging and evolving since the 1930s, it found such wide acceptance in the early 1960s in part because it seemed to present a means of responding to nationalist challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere. The order, therefore, flowed logically from the points of emphasis in the sources themselves.

The reviewers generally agree that organizing the book into thematic chapters was wise, though both Citino and Makdisi point out that it does create some problems. I agree, which is why, after I had a working draft of the manuscript organized thematically, I spent several months reworking it into a more traditional chronological narrative. I wanted not only to think through, but also actually to see, the costs and benefits of each way of presenting the material. After that experience, I reached the conclusion that a chronological approach would have afforded me a greater opportunity to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the different themes and may have prevented certain redundancies across chapters. The costs of such an approach were substantial, however, and included an inability to develop each of the themes individually as thoroughly and as convincingly as I hoped, as well as the emergence of another form of rhetorical clunkiness as I repeatedly had to jump back and forth between themes. I ultimately decided the thematic approach was better suited to the ideas and arguments I hoped to convey.

Returning to the thematic structure, however, meant facing two challenges. The first—and by far the most daunting—was what to do about the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the one exception to my earlier point that each of the chapters roughly builds upon those that come before it. My answer was to try to integrate into each chapter discussions of the conflict that were sufficiently detailed to demonstrate its direct impact, but brief enough to avoid redundancy and to still allow me to develop it as a theme in its own right. I will leave

it to individual readers to evaluate how successful I was in that endeavor, particularly since the reviewers seem split on the matter. The second challenge concerned how to draw sufficient connections between the different chapters without causing readers to get bogged down in an endless cycle of references to what appears in other parts of the book. I must say that the external reviewers and the staff at UNC Press were enormously helpful in that regard, and I hope the finished product reveals how fundamentally connected and mutually reinforcing I believe each of themes to be while also maintaining an essential ease of reading.

I do agree to an extent with the concern, expressed most explicitly by Citino, that my work is necessarily limited because I do not focus equally on both sides of the U.S.-Middle East relationship. In fact, I explicitly acknowledge that point in the introduction (11-12). Citino's closing point, that ultimately it is impossible to separate what "we" think of "them" from what "they" think of "us," is also accurate. Sometimes, though, I think it is necessary for people to do some of the basic ground work on either side of the equation, and then for them or others to go back and bridge the gaps that exist.

Moreover, there is also the larger practical (but also intellectual, methodological, and interpretive) problem of how one includes in a single reasonably sized first book an analysis of U.S. thinking about the Middle East and its reverse without being hopelessly simplistic or monolithic. I can say with some certainty that members of the network I discuss recognized differences within and between different countries in the Middle East, but these individuals also identified several significant points of continuity that they believed applied across the region and impacted their analyses regardless of which country was under discussion. At a minimum, the broad regional assessments therefore served both as a starting point and as the boundaries for legitimate discussion about specific cases. It was that broad regional view, rather than a particular case study, that I thought was worthy of exploration. If we reverse the frame, however, is it possible to identify or assert a shared way of interpreting or imagining the United States that extends across the Middle East as a whole, or would we have to focus on groups of countries or individual countries? Would it be possible to do as I have done in reverse, to identify a network of individuals that can serve as a reasonable representation of the views of a particular set of people across the Middle East and then to investigate their thinking and its impact on relations with the United States? The point here is that even if it were possible to accomplish one or more of the above, it would be a very tall order indeed to combine that and what I try to do in a single manageable book.

To push the point further, I will take up Citino's comparison with John Dower's books, a comparison I never envisioned but one for which I am grateful even if my work comes up short in Citino's eyes. Citino deploys Dower as a counterexample of what one can achieve when one is attuned equally to both sides of a relationship. Yet the comparison does not really work, as one reason Dower succeeds so mightily, aside from his obvious and substantial gifts as an historian, is that he takes two full books to examine an admittedly (one might even say uniquely) complex bilateral relationship over a total of roughly two

decades.² That undertaking is very different from what I have tried to accomplish. For Citino's comparison to hold, Dower would have had to have carried out his analysis of a U.S. relationship with all of East Asia, and possibly South or Southeast Asia as well, over half a century. I do believe it is possible to complete a study of U.S.-Middle East relations similar to Dower's work on Japan, but it would have to focus on a single country or on a much shorter period of time.

The third broad concern that emerges from the reviews focuses on what I refer to as a transnational network of academic, business, government and media specialists responsible for interpreting and explaining the Middle East and the U.S. role there to American audiences and the general relationship between the knowledge that network produced and the exercise of U.S. power. Heiss and Mart appear to find the "network" concept acceptable. Citino and Makdisi, on the other hand, see it as problematic, the former because it and the sources I selected to represent it seem too narrow, the latter because it is too vaguely defined, and both because they do not believe I actually make the case that it was as "transnational" as I claim. To follow up on Heiss's childhood entertainment theme (and with no disrespect intended toward any of the reviewers), I'm not sure I could provide a definition that every Goldilocks would find just right. I openly acknowledge in the book that "informal network" is not a term that the subjects of my research applied to themselves, and that there was no membership card that identified one as a member of the network. I am therefore not at all surprised to see the mixed responses here. Yet I have employed it because I believe it appropriately describes the relationships and interactions between the individuals I discuss in the book. In response to questions I received while preparing the book, I tried to remove some of the inherent ambiguities in my usage of the term by defining in the introduction (4-6) several features that characterized this network and comparing it to other acknowledged networks of various size and formality (the freemasons and James Mann's "Vulcans," for example).³

As for the extent to which the network is or is not transnational, I will confess that I was conflicted over whether or not I should use the term. I take very seriously the approaches of global, international, transnational, and world history, and did not want to overstate my case. To that end, I engaged in numerous discussions with a range of individuals about this very point. The consensus among those I consulted was that I should stick with the term while acknowledging the limits of its application in this instance. Makdisi astutely picked up on my state of mind by noting my usage of "somewhat transnational in scope" in the epilogue, which quite frankly I thought I had managed to insert throughout the text but obviously had not. I do believe this qualified language is appropriate, however, as the network I discussed was transnational in that it drew on Americans at home and abroad,

² John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) and *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).

³ Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004).

Europeans (even if many of them, though not all, were transplants, as Makdisi asserts), and even some people from the Middle East, especially Lebanon. Nonetheless, I must also commend Citino for suggesting certain ways in which a transnational approach might be pushed farther than what I have done.

The reviewers also make several observations about how I discuss the relationship between the production of knowledge about the Middle East and the exercise of U.S. power in the region, of which I will respond to two. Mart wonders whether or not the field of Middle Eastern studies was unique in the way it produced knowledge and used it for the exercise of state power. I would suggest that in terms of intent it was not, though perhaps it was in terms of application and its politicization. David Engerman has made similar arguments about the field of Russian/Soviet Studies, and if the dates of origins of the major academic associations for other regions of the world can be used as indicators, the unique aspect of Middle Eastern studies was its comparatively late institutionalization.⁴ The African Studies Association was founded in 1957 as anti-colonial movements were surging across the continent, the predecessor of the Association for Asian Studies was founded in 1941 as tensions between the United States and Japan escalated, and the first academic organization for the study of central and eastern Europe emerged in 1938 as World War II descended on Europe. The only major organization for regional or area studies founded nearly as late as the Middle East Studies Association, which emerged in 1967, was the Latin American Studies Association, which first met the previous year.

On a related note, Citino argues that Engerman and Zachary Lockman do better jobs of examining how changing U.S. policy concerns influenced the historiographical, methodological, and interpretive debates among scholars and of following the money trail from the government and other organizations into academia.⁵ I don't disagree, and would add that others have trod the pathways of the Cold War university as well.⁶ That is I why I did not try to replicate Lockman's work in particular. What I have tried to do, however, is to explore how the knowledge that was produced not only by academics, but also by businesspersons, government officials and journalists on a particular set of politically important issues was worked into an integrated framework of meaning that served to explain the Middle East to U.S. audiences and ultimately helped define the legitimate boundaries of policy debates and discussions about the region. Put differently, and perhaps

⁴ David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵ Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶ See, for example, Noam Chomsky, et al., *The Cold War and the University: toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: New Press, 1997); Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communications Research and Psychological Warfare, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1998).

a bit simplistically, I see Lockman as examining the impact of politics on the production of knowledge, while I then take that knowledge as my starting point and seek to understand its impact on politics.

The fourth major issue I would like to discuss is raised most explicitly by Makdisi, and centers around the question of why I end the book in the late 1960s and do not address directly and at length the existence and impact of an Israeli lobby that one might reasonably see as a direct counter to the network I discuss in *Imagining the Middle East*. For the most part I agree with Makdisi's characterization of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, the impact of the Israeli lobby, and the literature regarding them as they evolved from the 1970s up to today. I would make the case, however, that the situation that has obtained over the last four decades differs from the pre-1967 period. That is not to say that the features Makdisi describes were non-existent before 1967, as we know that is not the case. I would also agree with Mart's point that the ideas that I argue were so critical up to 1967 did not simply disappear at that moment. Rather, they were reworked and layered into emerging and evolving ways of thinking about the Middle East. Still, the environment, both in Washington and in the Middle East, was different after 1967. To be blunt, I do not think Aaron David Miller could or would describe the United States as "Israel's lawyer" before that point. I do not believe this is the appropriate time to engage in a broader discussion of Mearsheimer and Walt's *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, so I will simply say that I agree with many of their points but also find other points over-argued.⁷

Finally, let me finish by responding to the question with which Heiss concludes her review. Heiss asks what she fears might be an unfair question about how the subjects of my study—or the peoples and policy makers of the United States more generally—might have imagined the Middle East differently, and what consequence or impact this imagining would have had in the relations between the two regions? I believe this question is entirely fair, as one of the reasons I wrote *Imagining the Middle East* was to force readers to ask it themselves with respect to the past, present, and future of U.S.-Middle East relations. I would also push the question farther, by adding another question: how might the individuals and members of the network I discuss have imagined the United States differently, and to what impact or effect? I am not naïve enough to suggest that imagining the Middle East in ways that were less culturally, economically, politically, and socially tone deaf would suddenly solve all problems in U.S.-Middle East relations and would have made for a rosy relationship. There were and remain fundamental differences in the concerns, interests, and practices—be they cultural, economic, political, or social—of the multiple participants in this complex relationship. Nonetheless, a greater willingness to engage the peoples of the region on their terms, rather than through the lens of a mythological American exceptionalism, through the pursuit of complementary and fundamentally integrated sacred and secular missions, and through the assertion of U.S. power might have presented more opportunities for discussion and perhaps even cooperation on a range of lower level issues. In turn, acknowledging that the interests of the various countries and

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007)

peoples of the Middle East might not always correlate with those of the United States might have helped create a more favorable environment in which to engage over more vital issues. It is certainly hard to believe that the development of a more sensitive framework of meaning through which Americans might have come to imagine the Middle East would have had a more negative impact than that which actually transpired. As I state in the book, I believe that understanding the origins of how Americans have come to imagine the Middle East is a necessary first step to arriving at a more productive way of thinking about the region and its peoples and, ultimately, to a more fruitful relationship.

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