

Notes on Middle East for Government 35, World Politics

1. Important to note that there is much more diversity of opinion regarding Palestine in Israel than there is in the United States. For example, according to *Haaretz*, a leading English language newspaper's recent poll, 64% of Israelis believe direct negotiations with Hamas should be undertaken, which is contrary to the opinion of the Israeli and U.S. governments.
 - a. Decades ago, articles by noted Jewish intellectuals Hans Morgenthau and Hannah Arendt, in *Commentary Magazine*, argued that the consistency of American Jews' support for Israel was based upon guilt that they lived in a relatively peaceful America, while Israeli's peaceful existence was under the constant threat of war and terrorism. Then, the magazine was considered an organ of the American Jewish Committee. Now, *Commentary Magazine's* website, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/>, lists its importance to the neoconservative movement in American politics.
2. The main lobbying organization for Israel over the years has been the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which some believe was initially funded by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, although not so today so far as we know.
 - a. The site can be found at: <http://www.aipac.org/>
 - i. (You can note that it lists itself as "America's Pro-Israel Lobby.")
3. Recently, another group has been formed to counter some of the influence of AIPAC: Jstreet
 - a. The site can be found at: <http://www.jstreet.org/>
 - i. (You can note that it lists itself as "A new pro-peace, pro-Israel political voice.")
4. We hear a lot in the U.S. media about rocket attacks against Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian land, along with the occasional terrorist act within Israel's traditional boundaries. We also hear a lot about Israeli responses in retaliation against Hamas in Gaza, now, or the Palestinian territories in general. Further, the popularity of the film, *Munich*, exposes the seamier side of Israeli assassinations throughout the world, as well as terrorist actions against Israeli citizens by militant pro-Palestinian organizations.
 - a. Lest one think American Jews are only interested in military solutions to these problems, students are invited to visit the web site of an organization based in San Francisco which presents a vision of "the road less traveled:" <http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>.
 - b. The group has recently condemned Israeli bombing of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society in Gaza, with which they have collaborated over many years. Cf: http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/publish/article_995.shtml.

The following are questions you should try to answer as you read Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*.

Introduction:

1. What is the plan of the book?
2. Why do citizens of the U.S. avoid history, especially that of other countries?
3. What do we miss when we do so?
4. Can we take an unemotional approach to understanding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?
5. What are the unacknowledged war aims of the Bush Administration?
6. What crucial roles have Don Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney played in this administration?
7. What are the prospects for the future?

Chapter One: The Legacy of the Western Encounter with the Middle East

1. What is Khalidi's attitude toward pre-emptive war?
2. After the first Gulf War, was Saddam any longer considered a threat by his neighbors?
3. Were these neighbors of Iraq in favor of the war?
4. Would real democracy really lead to better relations between these governments and the United States, given its support for dictatorships, including Saddam's, in the past? Did the "War Party" appreciate the parallel with previous colonial endeavors in the area?
5. What is the connection between some neo-conservatives and Benjamin Netanyahu? Who is he?
6. What was the experience of the Middle East with the European powers and the Ottoman and Russian empires?
7. Why was the U.S. seen as a friend of Middle Eastern peoples for much of the time until 1945?
8. What were the positive effects of the colonial period? For democracy? For efficient government and militaries?
9. What did Middle Eastern intellectuals and the educated urban classes find incongruous about the occupying powers?
10. What were the techniques for control used by the occupying powers? What, for example, were Lord Cromer's reasons for cutting the education budget of Egypt?
11. What was the experience of the British in controlling the Iraqi population? Its favored technique?
12. How much military force was required for the French to maintain control in Syria? In Algeria?
13. What was the reaction in Palestine to the Balfour Declaration, Britain's plan for a Jewish state in a land where 90 percent of the population was Arab?
14. List the reasons Khalidi feels the U.S. had a great reputation, one at odds, with that of the previous occupying powers, even when we cut a deal with Saudi Arabia in the 1930s.
15. Why is the U.S. image in that area of the world tarnished after World War II?
16. How does Khalidi conclude this chapter?

Chapter Two: America, the west, and Democracy in the Middle East

1. Has the U.S. been consistent in its position regarding democracy in the Middle East?
2. Were the Soviet Union's protégés in the Middle East any better?
3. What was the content (intent) of the neo-conservatives' report to Netanyahu?
4. "Has External Intervention Fostered Democracy in the Middle East?"
5. What lessons can be learned regarding democracy spreading by such means?
6. What does Khalidi suggest might be the means appropriate to spreading democracy in the Middle East?
7. Is Islam inconsistent with democracy? What is the principal cause, in Khalidi's view, of the lack of democracy in Arab lands?
8. What have the "nationalist" regimes accomplished? What role has the U.S. played?
9. How is progress to be made, according to Khalidi?

Chapter Three: The Middle East, Geostrategy and Oil

1. What was the early importance of the Middle East?
2. Why did that change?
3. Why was Great Britain interested in oil?
4. When and what were the terms of the final distribution of Western power over the Middle East?
5. Which was the first country to be exploited for its oil?
6. What role did Winston Churchill play as First Lord of the Admiralty?
7. Trace the evolution of British control in Iran?
8. How did Iranians seek to nationalize their oil? What argument did Mossadegh and others use against the British objections?
9. How was Iraq "shaped by oil?"
10. How did dynastic power, religion, oil, and the U.S. shape Saudi Arabia?
11. What did Roosevelt promise in 1933? When was ARAMCO formed?
 - a. Note by Hughes: Who enforced the oil embargo of 1973-4?
12. Has national control over oil in the Middle East been a mixed blessing?
13. Does U.S. intervention in Iraq bespeak a return to foreign control over Arab oil in the eyes of Middle Eastern peoples?

Chapter Four: The United States and Palestine

1. Did Great Britain have qualified experts on the Middle East? Why? Did the U.S.? When did the U.S. establish for the first time a permanent intelligence service?
2. What was the source of most Americans' information about the Middle East? What influence does Khalidi find in the pioneering romance of American culture, which might have been helpful to the Zionist cause?
3. Is there evidence American Jews were less Zionist than Christians, particularly evangelical groups?
4. When does Khalidi say there was a nucleus of a Jewish state in Palestine?

5. What disadvantages did the Palestinian Arabs have in making their case to the U.S. public?
6. Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and al-Qa'ida are lumped together by the Israeli and U.S. administrations, according to Khalidi. What does he suggest makes al-Qa'ida crucially different?
7. Was the U.S. interested in Cold War issues in the Middle East to the exclusion of concern about resolving the Palestine question?
8. What were the crucial issues for the Palestinians, which were largely "off the table" in negotiations from the Madrid conference forward?
9. What does Khalidi, and even last week (4-25) President Abbas, consider the primary ongoing issue that must be addressed?
10. What restraints on Palestinian movements in the occupied territories were strengthened after the Oslo Agreements?
11. What does Khalidi say is a misperception Americans have about the second intifada? What caused it? What was the nature of the ensuing violence? Who appears to have suffered the most loss of human life, by the count of Israeli peace groups as well as the Israeli Defense Force?
12. What are Khalidi's suggestions for resolution of the Palestinian question?

Chapter Five: Raising the Ghosts of Empire

1. Explain Khalidi's critique of US foreign policy. Are there any deficiencies in his analysis? Any strengths?
2. What is different in the nature of the hegemonic rule of Britain and its successor, the U.S.? Why?
3. U.S. power is greater, but is it limited?
4. How were experts on the Middle East used by the British, compared to the U.S. use of such experienced people?
5. What happened to the so-called "Arabists" as opposed to the neoconservatives in the Bush administration?
6. Which "experts" had access to the media?
7. Are there differences between U.S. occupation of Germany and Japan after World War II and Iraq today?
8. What facts should be recognized before any solution to the Iraq debacle is possible?
9. What barriers would the Bush Administration have to surmount in order to deal with these facts?