

Little's latest edition on American and Middle East relations extensively covers the period from the Second World War to the near conclusion of the George W. Bush administration in 2007 with occasional, perhaps overindulgent at times, references to relevant events before. Little establishes that "many Americans remain frustrated by the slow pace of social change, disturbed by the persistence of political autocracy, and appalled by the violent xenophobia of groups such as al-Qaeda emanating from a part of the world whose strategic and economic importance remains unsurpassed" following September 11th, "and that the particular blend of ignorance and arrogance that characterized U.S. policy would effectively prevent Americans from truly understanding the region and its people" (2). Little goes on to argue in his central thesis that "the U.S. relationship with the Middle East as the byproduct of two contradictory ingredients: an irresistible impulse to remake the world in America's image and a profound ambivalence about the peoples to be remade" (3). This is extremely similar to argument that Schaller makes in his work on United States and China. Except in this theatre of geopolitics, the United has much more power and influence to shape the culture, society, and economy of the Middle East

Little concentrates the first third of the book on establishing the American-Middle East relations, perceptions, and actions. First, he explored American public perception. Following the First World War, the modern Middle East was first firmly thrust into the American consciousness. Prior to this, the only perceptions of this region by the American public were solely through literary works such as the King James Version of the *Holy Bible*, *Arabian Nights*, and possibly Mark Twain. This perception was very unnuanced, viewing the region locked into an eternal struggle between Muslims, predominately represented by the Ottomans, versus Christian and Jews, despite common antisemitism among the American public. Little argues that

Americanization began with missionaries during the “Gilded Age” of the turn of the twentieth century, with a growing Zionist movement shortly following World War I. This movement was officially endorsed through the Balfour Declaration of 1917 by the British, hence setting the stage for a deep Anglo-American connection in the Middle East for the next century, bringing existing Arab-Jewish conflicts to the national media in the process. Social Darwinism and growing film industry and media also perpetuated negative Arab stereotypes in 1930s, typically depicted as crazed and violent fanatics. also brings Arab-Jew conflicts to the national media. Presidents held these stereotypes at least through the Johnson administration. Especially during the Six Day War of 1967, comparisons between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Viet Cong comparisons were frequent. Following the Second World War, Little concludes that the American public held a David versus Goliath paradigm, yet this Holocaust guilt did not necessarily reflect true foreign policy. These attitudes and perceptions remained the same following 9/11 despite W. Bush’s front of tolerance.

Little next dives into the effect of oil on American activity in the Middle East. The opening of American business in the Middle East occurred when oil was discovered in present-day Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. U.S. Corporations were able to operate outside of strict antitrust laws, maximized revenue, and practiced own their diplomacy by taking advantage of “Open-Door” economic policy before World War II. The only regulation of these companies was forged with the help of the British in 1928, known as the Red-Line Agreement, to organize oil reserves following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Over the next several decades, these nations, especially Saudi Arabia, become extremely wealthy because of the exuberant amounts of money American multinationals poured into them. During World War II, oil needs greatly made connection and cooperation among in this region extremely crucial, as the war quickly became a

fight over control of the resource. Because of this, following the war, protection of these reserves from Soviet interference became just as crucial. As such, Little argues that the White House frequently bent antitrust laws to accommodate these multinational oil corporations in the name of national security during the Cold War. These oil corporations were extremely unregulated until the creation of OPEC and the nationalization of Middle Eastern oil reserves in the mid-1960s. This became crisis in the early 1970s as the United States became weary of their dependence on OPEC and the resulting leverage over the remaining American multinationals. American public reaction and memory is still strong; therefore, administrations have continually sought to change American oil policy, especially after 9/11.

To conclude the first third of Little's work, he discusses the special relationship between United States and Israel, which is rare in American foreign policy with Great Britain being the only other nation to have one with the United States. The U.S. recognized a Jewish-Zionist Israel under President Truman in 1948. Truman went against some of his top advisors to do so, as Little argues that Holocaust guilt and non-Jewish Zionist supporters influenced him. As a result of all of this, Israel developed a special relationship with the United States, but the handling of the Israel's neighbor, the Islamic Palestine, has complicated this relationship from the start. For example, the implementation of the UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) partition proved to be more difficult in practice than in committee. As a result, Arabs and Israelis lost confidence in Truman. This estrangement continued well into the Eisenhower administration, despite hopes and attempts to bridge this divide. Eisenhower refused to give preferential treatment based on religion, attempts at diplomacy with Palestinians, and U.S. failure to mediate the Suez crisis, Little argues, deepened this divide. Reconciliation did come under Nixon, but the administration had to weigh Israel viability as asset against the liability of a

special relationship, putting the relationship in jeopardy yet again. Israel soon proved to be an ally versus USSR and their allies and interests in Middle East, especially during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Since this time, the Camp David Accords and the Global War Terror strengthened these bonds, fortunately moving on from a Soviet-focused and dependent relationship.

For the next third of Little's book, the Middle East theatre of the Cold War is examined. Four presidential doctrines of the Cold War contained communism but spawned brutal nationalist regimes in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Libya and "inadvertently created a breeding ground for terrorist groups like al-Qaeda" (155). The Truman doctrine declared that the United States must support free peoples' resistance to external or minority pressure. When applied to the Middle East, this policy would require an enhanced relationship with Great Britain. The Eisenhower doctrine, Little argues, expounded upon the Truman doctrine further by transforming the military into an instantly mobilizing force under the direct control of the executive branch. The president gained control of every facet the armed forces from Congress, especially financing and areas of operation, essentially being given a blank check. The Nixon doctrine reformed U.S. foreign policy as a result of the failures of the Vietnam War and reflected his intentions to exit that war. Later known as the "Vietnam Syndrome," the U.S. adopted a very isolationist policy of leaving the defense of nations to those nations with nuclear involvement being the only exception. The Carter doctrine continued this semi-isolation but had to form a hybrid of the previous three following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The United States would adopt an explicit promise to protect its interests but in an extremely efficient manner, not looking to wage a multi-million strength force again.

Next, Little examines the new Cold War “front” that emerged in the Middle East when Egypt’s monarchy was overthrown by the socialist Gamal Nasser in 1952. This began as an “traditional” anti-Soviet containment of socialist Nasserism through political and economic reform, similar to post-war Europe. The United States, however, had to stay loyal to its ally of Great Britain, standing by as they fought the end of colonialism and for the control of the Suez Canal. The bullish attitude of the Eisenhower doctrine and its architect Secretary of State John Dulles prevented greater cooperation during this time, but an increasingly positive relationship grew under new leadership on both sides.

To wrap up the Cold War section, Little argues that a conservative nationalism, inspired by Nasserism, leaked out across the region. Exemplified by the Ayatollah revolution and Revolutionary Command Council of Iraq led Saddam Hussein in the late 1970s and the subsequent conflicts of the Iraq-Iran War in the 1980s, and Hussein emerging as a strongman for the region despite a non-victory shaped the Persian Gulf Wars of the turn of the twenty-first century.

Douglas Little wraps up his work with a third dedicated to the post-Cold War state of the Middle East, albeit it is incomplete due to the publication date. Little examines first the motives and results of the first Persian Gulf War. George H. W. Bush implemented an evolved Carter doctrine to protect American oil interests in Kuwait. Using a highly technologically advanced, Reagan-built military arsenal, Bush shook the isolationist “Vietnam Syndrome” attitudes of both the American government and public. The extremely efficient and precise operations of Desert Shield and Desert Storm prompted a re-entry of the United States after a nearly two-decade hiatus that culminated with George W. Bush’s questionable return to Iraq following September 11th against the warnings of advisors. This re-entry under the auspices of the “New World

Order,” the end of the Cold War, and the U.S. being the only surviving superpower, Little argues, allowed the initiation of peace between Arabs and Israelis. While agreeing upon the neo-Wilsonian policy of national self-determination, talks failed under the new American President Bill Clinton when he and the Israelis blamed the Palestinians for being unwilling to compromise. As a result, Little argues, that Palestinian violent resistance soon became labeled as terrorism and linked to Al-Qaeda following 9/11.

Douglas Little concludes his work on the Middle East with the argument that President George W. Bush had the intention of depose the Hussein regime of Iraq well before the events of September 11, 2001. Little cites the warnings of Bush’s military and diplomatic advisors, the American public opinion against the war in Iraq as it dragged on into the later 2000s, and the failure to provide adequate justifications connecting the War in Iraq to the Global War on Terror to display the return of “Vietnam Syndrome” sentiments. Little implies that the events of September 11th gave Bush the justification to invade Iraq and depose Hussein to make the Middle East a stronghold of democracy.

Douglas Little’s thesis of the ignorance and arrogance of American foreign policy in the Middle East is well argued and supported by nearly a century of evidence. The United States was inconsistent in policy between administrations and nations, while at the same time attempting to force the American way of life upon the Middle East. The publication date of 2008 (writing completed in the fall of 2007) does perhaps hinder his argument as the Obama administration brought the end of the Iraq War, the Great Recession, the elimination of Osama bin Laden, and the rise of the Islamic State’s effect on Middle East relations. Overall, however, I concur with Little’s argument and position.

Bibliography

Little, Douglas. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*.
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