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Introduction by Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Matthew Jacobs, Arlene Lazarowitz, Douglas Little, Benny Miller

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

In *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East—from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Patrick Tyler incorporates personal experience from covering the Middle East for the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, interviews of major participants, and research in the published literature and declassified documents. The reviewers agree that Tyler has written a vivid account of American presidents from Dwight Eisenhower through George W. Bush and their continuing efforts to deal with the complex problems of the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict runs throughout Tyler's study, although he does include related issues such as the Iranian revolution and its impact, the wars with Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and the challenges posed by al-Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalism.

Tyler's account offers a significant comparison with William B. Quandt's studies that focus on the same period.¹ In contrast to Tyler, Quandt spent most of the 1970s as a staff member on the National Security Council (1972-1974, 1977-1979) and was actively involved in the negotiations that led to the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Tyler and Quandt are critical of U.S. policymakers, although Tyler advances a more intense, overall criticism of most U.S. presidents and their advisers. Tyler also frequently notes what he considers an excessive American deference to Israeli policy and an unwillingness to oppose Israeli actions and settlement expansion after 1967 that have contributed to the continuing strife in the Middle East.

In addition to appreciating Tyler's ambitious effort to cover fifty years of U.S. involvement in the Middle East, the reviewers raise some questions about Tyler's overall thesis on U.S. policy, the degree of bias in his assessments, and his views on specific American presidents. Tyler's detailed response to each reviewer reflects the depth of his engagement with Middle Eastern problems and leaders on all sides of the contentious issues.

- 1) Douglas Little questions Tyler's central thesis that "it remains nearly impossible to discern any overarching approach to the region such as the one that guided U.S. policy through the Cold War." Through fifty years of conflict, "American leaders have been unable to agree on a firm set of principles, a consistent set of goals, or a course of action that could bring peace and stability to the Middle East. What stands out is the absence of consistency from one president to the next, as if the hallmark of American diplomacy were discontinuity." (13) Little, however, suggests that a focus on U.S. interests and objectives during the period—"an unflinching commitment to retaining secure American access to Middle East petroleum," Israeli security, containment of communism and the Soviet Union in the Middle East—shaped a general continuity in U.S. policy despite different tactics. Matthew Jacobs also notes

¹ Quandt's relevant books include: *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, (Brookings, 2005, third edition); *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, (Brookings, 1986); *Decade of Decisions: American Foreign Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976*, (University of California Press, 1977).

the importance of these U.S. concerns. Tyler certainly demonstrates the importance of these considerations as well as fourth one, the domestic political ramifications of relations with Israel. The importance of Middle Eastern oil to the U.S., its European allies, and Japan shows up in every U.S. administration. (p. 14) Dwight Eisenhower, for example, as a military strategist recognized the importance of oil and lines of communication in the Middle East; (p. 24) Richard Nixon, despite not having the Middle East on his agenda, hoped to protect the flow of oil to the West and contain the Soviet Union with regional allies, Iran and Israel; (pp. 112, 147-148) and George H.W. Bush and his advisers pointed to the threat that Saddam Hussein posed to the oil resources of Saudi Arabia with his seizure of Kuwait. (p. 367)

- 2) The impact of domestic political considerations with respect to relations with Israel and the lobbying activities of Israeli officials and the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) receives significant attention from Tyler throughout his study.² Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the middle of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 found themselves under pressure from Senate supporters of Israeli to escalate an American resupply to Israeli. According to Tyler, Nixon ordered Kissinger to warn Israeli officials to back off on the criticism coming from U.S. Senators. (pp. 150-151)³ Later in 1977 Jimmy Carter came under intense criticism from Israeli supporters for issuing a joint statement with the Soviet Union calling for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East with an Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and recognition of Palestinian rights. Carter quickly retreated. (pp. 190-191) Later in 1991 President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker engaged in a difficult battle in Congress over a request for American loan guarantees to finance immigration and housing for recent Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel. Despite pressure from the Israeli government and AIPAC, Baker and Bush didn't want to undermine the movement to a Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid by aiding the Israeli plan to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank. (pp. 389-390)
- 3) Does the Cold War shape a degree of continuity in U.S. policy regardless of which President is being evaluated? Although Tyler doesn't stress this assessment, he does frequently suggest that the Cold War had a negative impact on U.S. policy in the Middle East. Cold War concerns about the possibility of Soviet moves into the Middle East certainly concerned Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the Suez crisis of 1956, and may have contributed to Eisenhower's determined effort to roll-back the British-French-Israeli attack and occupation of the Sinai and Suez. As Tyler points out, Eisenhower also responded with the Eisenhower Doctrine to aid states in the Middle East against communism: "Eisenhower seemed to have posed a classic non sequitur: the problem was the

² For an H-Diplo roundtable on this subject, see the roundtable on John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, September 2007) which is available at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/IsraelLobby-Roundtable.pdf>.

³ See also Noam Kochavi, "Joining the conservative brotherhood: Israel, President Nixon, and the political consolidation of the 'special relationship', 1969-1973," *Cold War History* 8:4 (November 2008): 449-480 which explores the considerations that prompted Nixon's shift to support for Israel.

Israeli invasion; America would respond by fighting communism.” (p. 59) Tyler points out that the Eisenhower Doctrine “failed woefully to address the deep-seated grievances of the region. Middle Eastern leaders did not share America’s perception of a Communist threat but rather seethed over borders, broken promises, lost resources, and development dreams.” (p. 62) Another example of the negative impact of the Cold War emerged with Nixon and Kissinger’s dealing with the Middle East and their refusal, despite the détente strategy, to cooperate with the Soviet Union on a settlement. In June 1973 Nixon met with Leonid Brezhnev at the Western White House in San Clemente, California. Brezhnev proposed a joint Soviet-U.S. effort to establish principles for a Middle East settlement to head off another war which the Soviet leader knew from his involvement with Egypt and Syria was an increasing possibility. Nixon, with Kissinger’s support, refused to proceed with Brezhnev’s offer. Tyler considers this “a tragic failure of American diplomacy, strategic perception, and communication between the superpowers.” (pp. 122-130) In the ensuing Yom Kippur war, Nixon initially favored cooperation with Moscow to limit the conflict, but Kissinger pushed to aid an Israeli victory and isolate the Soviet Union from the ensuing negotiations. (pp. 157-175)

- 4) Does Tyler have a somewhat unbalanced perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict? Arlene Lazarowitz suggests that by relying extensively on interviews with Saudi Arabian Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who served as the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. from 1983 to 2005, Tyler articulates a perspective and critique of U.S. policy that “encompasses more disapproval of Israeli policies than those of Arabs.” (1) Tyler is not noticeably critical of Saudi policy but is quite critical of Gamal Nasser’s leadership. Iran’s post-1979 leaders and Saddam Hussein receive little respect from Tyler and groups like Hamas and Hezbollah are depicted as destructive terrorist organizations. Perhaps a critical test is Tyler’s treatment of Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Arafat’s origins, ambitions, willingness to use terror tactics, and unreliability are all presented by Tyler. When evaluating the sources of Arab-Israeli conflict, Tyler presents both sides, such as in the 1996 Israeli intervention in Lebanon. Tyler indicates that Hezbollah fired rockets and mortars across the northern border from Southern Lebanon which Israel occupied and Israel retaliated with artillery on suspected Hezbollah bases as well Beirut neighborhoods and power plants. In conclusion, Tyler suggests that “Israel was not to blame for defending its population, though Israel’s excessively destructive military policy in Lebanon was conducted wantonly and with the aim of punishing a civilian population....” (pp. 460-465) Tyler is most critical of Israeli expansion after 1967 and the government’s encouragement and support for settlements in the occupied territories. Although Tyler recognizes security concerns given the geography and neighborhood, he has little sympathy for expansion claims based on historic, religious claims that contribute to escalating conflict versus compromise settlements. Consequently, Tyler is far more sympathetic to the leadership of Yizhak Rabin than Ariel Sharon or Benjamin Netanyahu.
- 5) The reviewers have different views about Tyler’s treatment of individual U.S. presidents and their advisors. Benny Miller, for example, questions Tyler’s

emphasis in the Yom-Kippur War on Kissinger's biases in favor of Israel and his willingness to manipulate Nixon, who was preoccupied with Watergate, and encourage Israel to keep up its military operations against Egypt despite a negotiated cease-fire. (pp. 112-113, 141-145), 175) Miller points out that memoirs of Israeli decision-makers emphasize that Kissinger took a hard line against further Israeli advances and in the step-by-step negotiations to reach an interim agreement between Israel and Egypt. (3) Lazarowitz suggests that Tyler's analysis of "Lyndon B. Johnson's response to events in the Middle East is vastly over-simplified" as Lazarowitz's suggests that LBJ gave increasing attention to the area and didn't rely on the views of Mathilde and Arthur Krim, personal friends who supported Israel. Lazarowitz approves of LBJ's support for Israel with the outbreak of war whereas Tyler criticizes Washington for not heading off the war and for not insisting after the war, as Eisenhower did in 1956, that Israel withdrawal from all occupied territory. (2, and pp. 89, 105) In response to Tyler's extensive criticism of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush on the Middle East, the reviewers endorse his assessments on Reagan and Bush but not on Clinton. In two chapters on Lebanon and Iran-Contra, Tyler criticizes Reagan's "muddled thinking", his failure to follow Ike's example from 1958 in Lebanon, and his plan on Arab-Israeli negotiations which Tyler dismisses as a throw-back to Secretary of State William Roger's plan in 1969. "Reagan was propelled by events as a courtly blunderer," concludes Tyler on the Lebanon crisis, "who was simply unable to formulate the questions that might lead him to sound judgments and wise policies. And he was too weak to impose order on his own advisers." (p. 288) Jacobs does not disagree with Tyler's assessments on U.S. leaders, but Lazarowitz suggests that Tyler is too critical of Clinton for not achieving a settlement as a result of his lack of discipline, his unwillingness to be firm and to use force when necessary, and his excessive empathy that "mired him in sentimentalism." Lazarowitz emphasizes that neither the newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu nor Yasser Arafat were prepared to make an agreement. (3) Miller, Little and Lazarowitz agree with Tyler's brief critique of Bush with Miller suggesting that Bush "represents, even if in the extreme, some of the major recurring problems" with U.S. policy. (3) Little takes a different critical slant in suggesting that Bush represented a significant departure from past U.S. policy with his "misguided attempt to combat 'Islamofascism' through a preventive war designed to make the region safe for democracy." (3) Jacobs would have welcomed more analysis on George Bush as well as the inclusion of Harry S. Truman who initiated the basic U.S. posture in the Middle East. (4)

Participants:

Matthew Jacobs earned his Ph.D in History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2002, where he trained under Michael Hunt in the field of U.S. foreign relations with a specialization in U.S.-Middle East relations. He currently teaches courses in the history of U.S. foreign relations, U.S.-Middle East relations, and twentieth century international history at the University of Florida. He has published in *Diplomatic History*, and his book manuscript, tentatively titled *Imagining the Middle East: Sacred and Secular Knowledge and*

Mission in U.S.-Middle East Relations, 1918-1967, is currently under publisher review.

Arlene Lazarowitz earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1982. She is Professor of History at California State University, Long Beach. Her most recent article is “Different Approaches to a Regional Search for Balance: The Johnson Administration, the State Department, and the Middle East, 1964-1967,” *Diplomatic History*, January 2008. “Ethnic Influences on American Foreign Policy: American Jewry and President Jimmy Carter” will appear in the Winter 2011 issue of *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. She is currently working on two articles: Senator J. William Fulbright’s accusations of American Jewish and Israeli control over American foreign policy in the Middle East, and Senator Hubert H. Humphrey’s support for Israel.

Douglas Little received a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1972, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in 1975 and 1978, respectively, from Cornell University. As a historian at Clark University, teaches American diplomatic history as well as courses on 20th century America and United States relations with the Middle East. He has published a number of articles as well as *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008, Third Edition), and *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States, Great Britain, and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Cornell University Press, 1985). His current research focuses on the U.S. response to radical Islam between the 1967 Six Day War and the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Benny Miller received a Ph. D. from the University of California at Berkeley and is a member of the Department of International Relations, School of Political Sciences at the University of Haifa. He is the President of the Israeli Association for International Studies. Among his publications: *When Opponents Cooperate: Great Power Conflict and Collaboration in World Politics* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2nd ed., 2002) and *States, Nations and Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press—Cambridge Studies in International Relations, 2007). He also published numerous articles on international relations theory and international and regional security. Miller’s current project focuses on explaining changes in US grand strategy since World War II.

Academic historians and journalists writing works of history often approach their work with very different objectives. The academic historian is concerned most fundamentally with constructing an argument or interpretation based on a reasonable reading and appropriate citing of the available evidence. Journalists, on the other hand, often focus their efforts on telling a good revealing story—frequently based on unnamed sources—and retaining their “objectivity” by simply reporting “the facts” and allowing the reader to decide what it all means. Sure, members of both groups can read and enjoy books written by their counterparts, but there always remains a seemingly unbridgeable gap between the two.

Happily, Patrick Tyler tells a good story while also going farther than many journalists in meeting the standards of the academic historian in his new work on the history of U.S.-Middle East relations, *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East—from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. To be sure, there are some problems with the book that we will discuss in due course, but it is on the whole an engaging read and insightful take on some of the United States’ most problematic relations in the international arena. Tyler’s overall argument is that U.S. presidents and their subordinates have pursued inconsistent and reactive policies that have compounded America’s problems in the region over time. The three primary characteristics of these policies have been an increasing partiality towards Israel in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a concern with Iran that has bordered on obsession, and an inability to discern when and how best to apply the different forms—economic, political, and military—of the United States’ considerable power to secure not only the country’s interests but also to bring real peace and improvements in daily living to the people of the region. Tyler contends the United States remains “the indispensable power in the Middle East,” though its “leadership . . . has measurably declined.” It will take tremendous effort to undo the mistakes of the past and “to reestablish America’s standing as a benevolent and magnanimous power capable of engendering trust and exercising leadership—with continuity” (18).

A World of Trouble follows a basic chronological structure, with a chapter on the Eisenhower years, one on Johnson, two each on Nixon, Carter, and Reagan, one on Bush the elder, two on Clinton, and one on Bush the younger. In that sense, the organization works well, as it permits Tyler to demonstrate through sheer weight of evidence the inconsistent and reactive nature of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. It also allows him to focus on the missed opportunities and failures of president at particular moments, each one seemingly increasing U.S. problems in the region. Johnson’s unwillingness to force Israel to give up the spoils of the 1967 war in exchange for peace was “a costly failure whose consequences would bleed through decades marked by further outbreaks of war and unending strife” (98). The 1973 war, Kissinger’s handling of it in Nixon’s time of Watergate-induced weakness, and Israeli pressure on Congress to convince Nixon to undertake a massive airlift of weapons and supplies to help defeat Soviet-sponsored Arabs served as a missed chance to work with the Soviets to impose a solution to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict while also suggesting to the Israelis “that a well-targeted campaign in the U.S. Congress

could change the mind of an American president, and the implications of this development were profound for Israeli military operations in the future” (173). The deployment and subsequent withdrawal of U.S. Marines in Lebanon and the internal policy debates regarding those events in the early 1980s—“the shame of Lebanon” (the title of the relevant chapter)—revealed that “Reagan had burnished the image of the tough ideologue, but as president he had shown a banker’s caution, a deacon’s humanism—everything but the resolute leadership of a commander. He carried a set of contradictions that seemed uniquely Reaganesque. He could not confront a friend as close as Weinberger. He lacked the intellect to formulate policy options or chart an onward course. Reagan imagined himself as a leader who wanted to ‘blow the daylight’ out of America’s enemies, but when his imagination was thwarted, as in a Hollywood script change, he adjusted his presidential role and moved on” (301). The Iran-Contra affair represented “the nadir of muddled thinking that was the hallmark of his approach to the Middle East” (309). And Clinton seemed to be the biggest disappointment of all. Mired in personal and ethical scandals, he “exuded remarkable characteristics of empathy and understanding, but his approach was missing the most essential ingredients: trust that he would do what was necessary, unwavering principle, and political discipline” (524).

Tyler’s focus on particular moments in each presidency also grants him opportunities to recount in vivid and thoroughly engrossing detail numerous anecdotes and accounts of meetings and conversations that shed light not only on the making of policy and the outcome of events, but also on the personalities of many key individuals. These depictions are enriched by Tyler’s access to peripheral figures as much as they are by access to the central players. See, for example, his discussion of Johnson’s reaction to the coming of war in 1967, seen through the eyes of Mathilde Krim. Krim—“a former member of the Irgun, the Jewish underground, and wife of Arthur Krim, the head of the entertainment conglomerate United Artists and Johnson’s top fund-raiser” (65)—was staying in the White House the night the war started, and received an early morning visit from the President, who informed her that the war had started. Similarly, consider his description of the extent of U.S. assistance to Iraq in its war with Iran in the 1980s, filtered through the lens of Colonel W. Patrick Lang, the Defense Intelligence Agency analyst charged with implementing the policy (334-36).

The heroes in the story—if one may call them that—are relatively few and far between. The two most obvious are President Dwight Eisenhower and Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan. Tyler consistently uses Eisenhower’s handling of the Suez Crisis as the standard by which he judges later presidents. According to Tyler, it “was Eisenhower’s finest hour as president in the sense that every public step he took anchored America firmly within the principles of the United Nations Charter. He maneuvered cautiously and shrewdly, at times brutally, when he withheld oil shipments and loans, which Britain desperately needed, until Eden agreed to withdraw and restore Egypt’s rights.” In short, Eisenhower showed real leadership and a commitment to defending U.S. interests while also adhering to solid principles that the people of the Middle East recognized and accepted. But even here things were a mixed bag, as “Eisenhower emerged once again as the unrivaled Western leader, but his strategy of anchoring his Middle East policy to the fight against international communism was not enough, for it failed woefully to address the deep-seated grievances of

the region” (62). Only two U.S. presidents approach Eisenhower in Tyler’s estimation. Jimmy Carter’s “tactics may have been flawed, he may have bungled the handling of American Jews, whose support he needed, but no other president had ever plunged forward into the details, the drafting, and the hard choices of peacemaking. It was Carter, the obsessive technocrat who wore his idealism like a crucifix and his pragmatism like a slide rule clipped to his waistband, who was most determined to solve the equation and who persevered” (247). The elder George Bush also made his mistakes, but he was more comfortable with foreign policy issues than every other president except possibly Eisenhower, had a clear sense of U.S. interests around the world, and was unafraid to make the hard decisions necessary to pursue and protect those interests.

Prince Bandar is the closest thing to a regular character in the story, making his first appearance during the Carter administration as a liaison between the White House and the Saudi royal family and remaining the United States’ most trusted Middle Eastern contact up to the present. According to Tyler, every U.S. President, Secretary of State, CIA director, and special envoy/negotiator from the late 1970s onward not only had to go through Bandar, but came to rely on him to solve problems big and small. Two events came to symbolize this relationship (and reliance). The first occurred in September 1993, when President Clinton demanded that Bandar “save” him (which Bandar managed to do) from being on the receiving end of a kiss from none other than Yasser Arafat during the White House signing ceremony for the Oslo Accords, an image that would be sent around the world (402-07). The second took place at Prince Bandar’s palace in Saudi Arabia in 2004, where CIA director George Tenet had an alcohol-induced meltdown over having to take the fall for the intelligence failures leading up to the war in Iraq (3-12). At the foundation of both events was a trust and closeness that developed over nearly three decades, more than two of which Bandar spent as the Saudi Ambassador to the United States. Though Tyler never explicitly states the point, it is clear that he agrees more with Bandar’s views regarding U.S.-Middle East relations — both their potential and their problems — than with anyone else about whom he writes.

While “villains” might be too strong a word, the list of U.S. policy makers subjected to Tyler’s criticism is long, and Henry Kissinger’s name appears at the very top. Kissinger, in Tyler’s rendering, was so obviously tied to Israeli positions on almost every major issue, so concerned with his own self-preservation and advancement, and so hard-wired with a Cold War mindset that he abused his power and failed to see what were the United States’ real interests in the Middle East. Tyler’s scathing summary critique of Kissinger’s role in negotiating a cease fire in the 1973 war between Egypt, Syria and Israel encapsulates all of these issues: “The Americans had not gone crazy, but their government had been manipulated from within in a manner that raised profound constitutional questions: Hadn’t the American secretary of state, throughout the day, arrogated to himself the prerogatives of the president without apparent consultation or instruction? Hadn’t Kissinger withheld pertinent intelligence from the president and his National Security Council relating to Israel’s deliberate circumvention of the cease-fire and the briefings he was receiving from the Israeli ambassador on the progress of the Israeli plan to deliver a crushing blow to Egypt, a blow that Kissinger apparently believed would topple Sadat? Hadn’t Kissinger signaled to Dayan and Meir, without any instruction, that the United States would

acquiesce in an Israeli decision to keep fighting? Hadn't Kissinger's actions fomented the confrontation with the Soviet Union, which he and Haig then exploited for domestic political gain in Nixon's dark hour?" (171-72). Other advisors, such as Nixon Chief of Staff and Reagan Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Clinton-era CIA Director John Deutch—"an arrogant and vain MIT scientist"—also come in for heavy criticism (439). Still others, such as Colin Powell, receive a more neutral treatment, or even a favorable review, as is the case with the first Nixon-era Assistant National Security Advisor and the first President Bush's National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft.

A World of Trouble is engaging, provocative, and insightful, but there are of course some problems with it. Let me begin by raising questions about how the book was put together. While Tyler clearly has an argument that runs throughout the chapters, and he does spend a few pages of the prologue on a broadly critical view of U.S. policy toward the Middle East, he could do much more — particularly at the end of the book — to tell us what it all means. In short, the book would benefit greatly from the addition of a conclusion.

Moreover, the basic chronological structure helps convey Tyler's argument about U.S. policy being essentially reactive and inconsistent over the years, but it also raises questions about coverage. Why not begin earlier? The Truman administration's policies were important in helping to create some of the situations, such as the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with which every other president has had to deal and on which Tyler spends so much time and effort through the remainder of the book. Similarly, the U.S. role in the rise of the oil industry in the Middle East is an important topic that sets up much of Tyler's discussion of oil politics, to which he devotes a great deal of attention throughout the book? Both Truman and the early oil years do get some coverage, but only in brief form and only when they are directly relevant to a specific more recent event or issue. Tyler never explains this choice. Perhaps even more curious, why did he devote so little attention to Bush the younger (one chapter of just thirty pages, though to be fair the first ten pages of the prologue also deal exclusively with the Bush years), whose policies and decisions have certainly had as significant an impact on U.S.-Middle East relations as any previous president? In addition, that chapter reads more like a think piece that glosses over events than a sustained development of a specific argument about U.S. involvement in the Middle East during the Bush years. Here, I can only assume that Tyler believed his readers would be familiar enough with the key issues and events of the last decade to not require the same sort of attention to detail that he provides in earlier chapters. The only other possible explanation is that after 554 pages of text and another fifty pages of notes the book's length became an issue.

The structuring of individual chapters can also make them difficult to read as a whole. Again, as is often the case, academics and journalists have different ways of writing books. Each of the twelve chapters—ranging from twenty-seven to sixty-seven pages in length—is constructed of several sections: some as short as two paragraphs, most between five and ten pages, and some as long as fifteen or twenty pages. Each of these sections is engagingly written, and many contain insightful analysis, but often the flow within them is not obvious, and transitions between them are generally non-existent. They appear almost as loosely

connected vignettes, and thereby highlight once again the need for an introduction and conclusion at both the chapter and book levels to tie things together.

Tyler also often writes in the style of a bygone era, both in terms of an implicit larger argument that great powers should exercise their power to impose decisions when necessary or possible and in his descriptions of places and references to various participants in the story. His two-paragraph description of Cairo in 1973 (107-08) reminds one of the Orientalist framework critiqued by Edward Said and others, as do references to the “Oriental style of the Saudi royal court” (375) and the “Oriental court of the House of Saud” (531). All are obvious attempts to convey to readers both a sense of exoticism about the Middle East and the notion that it is a place that is fundamentally different from the United States and Europe. Similarly, Tyler writes of “the ‘Arabist’ tradition in the foreign service” (120) without explaining what that term might mean, or even without any apparent awareness of the highly contested nature of such an assertion.

From an academic standpoint, by far the most frustrating aspect of the book is the inconsistent footnoting. Of course, we expect journalists to protect their confidential sources with vague references to an author interview with a “participant” in a meeting, and of these there are plenty. See, for example, notes 14, 15, and 16 to chapter 12, on p. 604, where Tyler cites “a person who heard the conversation,” “a person who was present during the conversation,” and “a person who participated in the conversation,” respectively, all in reference to a series of meetings during a summer 2001 crisis in U.S.-Saudi relations over the Bush administration’s unwillingness to involve itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But the problems go much deeper. Indeed, some conversations and quotations are footnoted very specifically, while some of Tyler’s strongest assertions about particular moments lack any documentation whatsoever. During the 1973 war between Egypt, Syria and Israel, Tyler informs us that Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir “put Israel’s nuclear forces on high alert,” with one jet “ordered to sit on the end of its runway, standing by for an order to execute a nuclear strike against the Syrian or Egyptian front” (141). That assertion is not necessarily surprising, but oddly, the paragraph containing it is the only one in a stretch of fifteen paragraphs for which Tyler decided not to offer a citation. A few pages later (161-63), Tyler recounts Kissinger’s unwillingness to deliver a message from President Richard Nixon to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev when Kissinger was in Moscow negotiating over how best to bring about a ceasefire in the Middle East. There, Tyler does cite a memo to Kissinger from his assistant Brent Scowcroft, and then includes another reference regarding one specific point in Kissinger’s memoirs (without page numbers, however), but does not indicate from where he derived the assertion that Kissinger never delivered the message. As it turns out, Kissinger does discuss the incident in some detail in his memoirs, but one would not know that from reading Tyler’s footnotes.¹ Similarly, in a discussion of a Clinton-era covert operation to overthrow Saddam Hussein in which Ahmad Chalabi was to play a major role, Tyler refers to an explosive meeting between U.S. policy makers, including National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, and even directly quotes a message to a CIA operative in the field, yet the next footnote merely defines the term *peshmerga* (436-37). The point here is that these are just a few examples of the citation

¹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982), 545-552.

problems that run throughout every chapter of the book, which makes it very difficult for anyone wishing to follow up on Tyler's arguments, insights, and information.

Tyler also makes a claim about the extant literature on U.S.-Middle East relations and his contribution to it that is highly problematic. He unnecessarily justifies the need for another work on U.S.-Middle East relations by understating the value of current literature and overstating what his own work accomplishes. He writes, "many historians have produced insightful portraits of postwar American leaders, but even the best of them lack extensive familiarity with the Middle East and its personalities. This book attempts to join the two worlds by showing that it is not enough to perceive Eisenhower's or Nixon's or Clinton's Middle East outlook without also understanding Nasser's zeal for the Arabs, Ayatollah Khomeini's rage against the West, Saddam Hussein's ruthless ambition, or Osama bin Laden's alienation from the modern world" (17). The first part of that statement is simply unsustainable unless "familiarity" is taken to mean the ability or opportunity to interview a very few key players such as Prince Bandar. Otherwise, scholars such as Rashid Khalidi have long since demonstrated their "familiarity with the Middle East and its personalities." The second part of the statement suggests that he somehow has unique sources to understand Nasser, Khomeini, Hussein, or bin Laden. Perusing his footnotes for the chapter on Eisenhower and Nasser, however, reveals heavy reliance on well known and widely used published sources (largely American, British, or Israeli documents, memoirs, or scholarly works). Indeed, of the sixty-seven footnotes in a chapter that helps us understand "Nasser's zeal for the Arabs," there are only two references (notes 29 and 48, respectively) to even English language translations of Egyptian or Arabic documents. In and of itself this is not bad, except when the author explicitly states that he is taking us beyond what we already know and the sources we already use.

Finally, and this is less a comment on Patrick Tyler than it is on his publisher and copy editor, there are far too many errors: factual, spelling and grammatical. The three most obvious are: a suggestion that Carter had been president for two years when Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat made his shocking trip to Israel in November 1977—Carter had been in office for just ten months; stating that Camp David is in the "Cactocin Mountains" (Catoctin is correct); and referring to General David Petraeus as "General Daniel Petraeus" (176-77, 201, and 548, respectively). I admit that pointing such things out is nitpicking, as no author, editor or publisher is perfect, but when the number of such errors approaches double digits it does detract from one's overall appreciation of the work. Indeed, in combination all of these issues keep what is an otherwise good book from being even better.

Overall, Patrick Tyler is to be commended for writing a history of U.S.-Middle East relations covering half a century that is accessible and engaging for both the academic specialist and the generally well-educated and interested average American. Despite its problems, I found it difficult to put down as I read every word and worked my way back and forth through the book. His thick description of particular moments and anecdotes was, quit simply, riveting. Moreover, I commend Tyler for going further than many journalists by not only reading the relevant memoir literature, but also consulting some of the academic

scholarship, as well as doing some archival research. Indeed, he bridges the gap between academic and journalist far better than many of his peers.

In this wide-ranging book, Patrick Tyler offers a sharply critical analysis of ten American presidents and their Middle East policies over the past six decades. A veteran foreign policy correspondent who has written for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, Tyler maintains that American policy toward the Middle East, beginning in the early Cold War years, is devoid of “a firm set of principles, a consistent set of goals, or a course of action that could bring peace and stability,” a predicament he characterizes as “discontinuity.” (13) He laments the “loss of continuity from one president to the next.” (256) Instead, from Dwight D. Eisenhower’s concern over a Communist threat that overlooked questions of “borders, broken promises, lost resources, and development dreams” (62) to George W. Bush’s failure to comprehend the roots of Islamic anger toward the West, these policies lack a coherent strategy. The detailed notes reveal extensive reading of memoirs, archival materials, and documents newly released through the efforts of the National Security Archive at George Washington University, as well as the interviews and personal observations that reflect thirty years of reporting from the region. One exception, however, stands out. Recollections and opinions of Saudi Arabian Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Ambassador to the United States from 1983 to 2005, are represented throughout the book. Considering Tyler’s extensive use of American sources and his numerous contacts in Arab countries, extensive reliance on interviews with a single source undoubtedly with Saudi interests in mind when he spoke with Tyler affects the author’s assessments. In addition, the subtle slant of Tyler’s case against the United States also encompasses more disapproval of Israeli policies than those of Arabs.

Tyler places much of the blame for “the world of troubles” on the policies and actions of American presidents. The exceptions to this pattern, although not free of shortcomings, are the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. Eisenhower earns praise for his decisive actions in the Suez Crisis. But Tyler’s dismissal of Eisenhower’s anxiety about Soviet involvement in the region as an “escalatory dance of arms under the framework of the cold war” (p. 63) diminishes Eisenhower’s genuine, if exaggerated, concerns about the possibility of Soviet intervention in the region. Although John F. Kennedy is acknowledged for his balanced view of the conflict, Tyler does not mention that Kennedy modified the American relationship with the Israelis by assuring them of assistance were Egypt to invade, as well as authorizing the sale of defensive Hawk anti-aircraft missile systems to them.

Although Tyler’s observation that Lyndon B. Johnson was constrained by “American domestic politics,” that is, lobbying by organized American Jewish groups, is appropriate, his analysis of Johnson’s response to events in the Middle East is vastly over-simplified. He correctly argues that Johnson showed little interest in Egyptian President Gamal Nasser’s power or Arab nationalism. Early in the administration, the region might have been “low on Johnson’s list of priorities,” (p. 71) and he lacked Kennedy’s understanding of colonial nationalism, but his attention in the region increased. To contend that Johnson’s relationship with Mathilde and Arthur Krim, ardent supporters of Israel, along with the Democratic elite, influenced his decisions is to ignore the extensive record of Johnson’s

attention to and understanding of events. It is unclear what Tyler means when he writes that “[l]iberalism had converted Johnson to the Zionist cause.” (p. 67-68) Even before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Johnson authorized the sale of conventional weapons to Israel, and he lauded a proposed cooperative agreement to build desalinization plants there. Through the spring of 1967, Johnson observed escalating tensions between Israel and Egypt with increasing dismay. Tyler disagrees with the claim that “some historians” (p. 97) have made, an apparent reference to William P. Quandt and others, that Johnson did not seek to send a green or yellow light to launch a war, the results of which “were so unpredictable” (*ibid*). When hostilities broke out, Johnson sided with Israel, convinced of a threat to Israeli security and the necessity of military action. It is unclear why Tyler argues that the war “should not have been fought,” (p. 72) since he later acknowledges that Nasser “threatened to blow any Israeli ship out of the water that attempted to pass” his blockade of the Strait of Tiran (p. 81). Israel’s decisive victory solidified a special patron-client relationship with Israel that began to evolve during the Kennedy years, one that recognized Israel as an important strategic Cold War asset to counter Soviet interests in the region.

Tyler’s analysis of the Nixon administration’s decision to airlift military supplies to the Israelis in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which took Israel by surprise, is mostly credible. Richard M. Nixon is depicted as unstable and distracted by the Watergate scandal. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger manipulated to gain control over negotiations that he portrayed as even-handed, but which actually aided Israel.

Jimmy Carter entered the White House determined to realize a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Tyler explains the conditions--from Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s overtures to the Israelis to pressures from the American Jewish community--that frustrated Carter. He captures the grueling thirteen days of negotiations at Camp David. He correctly points out that the accords that resulted from the meeting between Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin put “Egypt firmly and inalterably in the American orbit (p. 209) and “proved that compromise and peace were possible.” (p. 247) But his suggestion that a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East “might have been possible if Carter had won a second term” (p. 464) ignores the likely overwhelming obstacles Carter would have encountered in getting Israel to accept a separate Palestinian state. That issue would continue to trouble his successors.

As Tyler points out, Ronald Reagan, Carter’s successor, did not grasp the consequences of neglecting this issue, as well as Israel’s invasion of Lebanon. He reserves singular scorn for Reagan’s handling of the truck bomb attack on the American embassy in Beirut, which made the United States appear weak, squandering American credibility in the Middle East. On the other hand, Tyler’s dismissal of Bill Clinton’s efforts is excessive. He blames “Clinton’s lack of discipline” and “his prodigious capacity for empathy that mired him in sentimentalism” (p. 322) for his failure to seize the chance to make peace. This argument mistakenly assumes a degree of American control over Israelis and Palestinians and their leadership. Newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposed concessions. While admitting that Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat was a “skilled liar,” Tyler stretches plausibility when he credits him for personally pulling and tugging the PLO “into a political process that he hoped would lead to peace.” (p. 523)

Arafat was as much of a problem as Netanyahu, another example of Tyler's leaning toward the Arab perspective. Israelis, other than those on the right, for example, had reason not to trust the peace overtures Arafat made in the Oslo Accords.

In a brief final chapter, Tyler appropriately dismisses President George W. Bush as lacking the "perception" (p. 553) to bring about peace in the Middle East. He holds out hope for the United Nations to act as negotiator and peacemaker in the Middle East, and he faults the United States and Israel for their strong criticism of United Nations policies, without mentioning Arab obstructions to peace in the region.

This important book surveys the inconsistencies of American policies in the Middle East over the past half century. Despite its shortcomings, it is a valuable reminder of the need for a coherent American policy toward the Middle East.

Review by Douglas Little, Clark University

In this immensely readable new book, Patrick Tyler makes a compelling case that George W. Bush's chief diplomatic legacy is "a world of trouble" from Gaza to the Persian Gulf. Critics of the global war on terror will be quick to agree that Dubya's "know-nothing approach" to the Middle East (p. 547) did more harm than good. Tyler's characterization of half a century of American policy after the 1956 Suez Crisis as reactive and rudderless, however, downplays some basic continuities from the Eisenhower through the Clinton eras and inadvertently minimizes the second Bush administration's sharp break with past practice after the 9/11 attacks.

"It remains nearly impossible to discern any overarching approach to the region," Tyler remarks in his prologue. "What stands out is the absence of consistency from one president to the next, as if the hallmark of American diplomacy were discontinuity" (p. 13). Relying on a mountain of recently declassified documents and an impressive array of personal interviews, Tyler contends that when viewed from the perspective of the White House, U.S. policy in the Middle East has amounted to little more than managing one crisis after another. He gives Ike high marks for head-butting the British, the French, and the Israelis at Suez but flunks the Eisenhower Doctrine for failing to come to terms with Arab nationalism during the late 1950s. After a passing glance at JFK's even-handed approach to the Middle East, Tyler argues that Lyndon Johnson was distracted by the deepening quagmire in Vietnam, spellbound by charismatic friends of Israel like Mathilde Krim, and ultimately overtaken by events in the run-up to the 1967 Six Day War. Richard Nixon's well-known affinity for *realpolitik*, by contrast, led him and his ruthlessly self-promoting national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, to treat the Middle East as a diplomatic sideshow until October 1973, when the Arabs and the Israelis hot-wired their regional rivalry to the global main event and helped derail détente with the Soviet Union on Gerald Ford's watch. Jimmy Carter emphasized human rights and distanced himself from longtime American partners like Israel and the Shah's Iran only to watch Ronald Reagan tilt toward Tel Aviv in the 1982 Lebanon war and swap arms for hostages in Tehran four years later.

The collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 dramatically altered the diplomatic landscape in the Middle East. George H. W. Bush, with help from Secretary of State James Baker and NSC chief Brent Scowcroft, made the most of the opportunities afforded by the end of the Cold War to expel Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait and to bring Israelis and Arabs together at the peace table in Madrid. Bill Clinton, on the other hand, was too volatile and undisciplined to stay focused on the Middle East, and as a result he "wilted" (p. 487) when the CIA had Osama bin Laden in its sights in May 1998 and then overplayed a strong hand at the Camp David summit in July 2000. Adopting as his mantra "ABC" (Anything But Clinton), George W. Bush soon showed how easy it could be to rhyme feckless with reckless from the Holy Land to the banks of the Euphrates.

Viewed this way, American policies in the Middle East do seem episodic, personality-driven, and disconnected. Indeed, Tyler insists that his research confirms a basic truth: "History arises chaotically from the scrum of human events, where the tactical

maneuvering of leaders, local politics, and the seemingly random eruptions of war, revolution, and natural disaster drive the human narrative more profoundly, and unpredictably” (p. 15). One might just as easily argue, however, that by constructing a narrative revolving around what has to be one of the world’s largest collections of alpha males and by relying heavily on entertaining anecdotes provided by “insiders” like Saudi Arabia’s Prince Bandar, Tyler has reduced U.S. policymaking in the Middle East to the chaotic scrum of the rugby pitch.

If one zeroes in on American interests in the Middle East from V-J Day in 1945 down through the 9/11 attacks of 2001, there is actually a great deal of consistency in the U.S. approach to the region. Take oil. From the moment that Harry Truman bent IRS regulations for ARAMCO through Kissinger’s arm wrestling with OPEC to the Carter Doctrine and Operation Desert Storm, the White House has revealed an unflinching commitment to retaining secure American access to Middle East petroleum. Of course tactics varied from administration to administration, but the objective remained constant. Likewise, since the creation of Israel in 1948, the United States has consistently accorded the security of the Jewish state a very high priority, even when the men in the Oval Office disagreed vehemently with such Israeli leaders as David Ben Gurion and Bibi Netanyahu. Until the Soviet Union landed in the ash heap of history in 1991, the specter of communist inroads in the Muslim world haunted U.S. leaders, who all too frequently turned to Arab autocrats like Prince Bandar’s uncles in Riyadh to combat the red threat. And precisely because every American president during the Cold War was fixated on oil, Israel, and containment, too few U.S. policymakers paid serious attention to radical Arab nationalism or Islamic extremism until it was too late.

In short, had Patrick Tyler chosen to frame his account of U.S. relations with the Middle East from the Suez Crisis to the 9/11 attacks as a tale of strategic continuity and tactical variation, the radical changes that the second Bush administration wrought following the fall of the Twin Towers would stand out in much sharper relief. Tyler kicks things off with a marvelous story from early 2004 of George Tenet, his tongue loosened by too much Johnnie Walker Black and his days as Dubya’s director of central intelligence clearly numbered, stripping to his skivvies, leaping into the swimming pool of Prince Bandar’s palace in Riyadh, and nearly drowning (pp. 3-8). Having zero interest in becoming the “fall guy” for George W. Bush’s failed policies in the Middle East, Tenet blasted the neo-conservative “assholes” and “crazies” in Washington for making the green threat of radical Islam the twenty-first-century equivalent of the Cold War red threat. He bitterly resented them for forcing the CIA to cook the books on Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction in order to make a preventive war appear preemptive. And he growled that their plan to export democracy to the Muslim world at gunpoint was almost certain to backfire at the expense of Arab autocrats like his hosts in the House of Saud, who had proven over the years to be America’s most reliable partners.

Far from marking the culmination of fifty years of disjointed U.S. policies in the Middle East, Dubya’s misguided attempt to combat “Islamofascism” through a preventive war designed to make the region safe for democracy signaled a dramatic departure from the past. If Patrick Tyler’s *A World of Trouble* replaces Bernard Lewis’s *What Went Wrong?* on the

White House “must read list” in the weeks and months ahead, one can be certain that Barack Obama will find it hard to put down. To be sure, he may cringe at some of Tyler’s purple prose (e.g, “Hubris clung to [Paul] Bremer like vicuña to a vamp,” p. 545), and he may quibble with some of Tyler’s verdicts (e.g., Did Bill Clinton really hope to distract attention from his affair with Monica Lewinsky by offering Bibi Netanyahu a formal defense treaty? pp. 483-84). That said, here’s hoping that President Obama will also be wise enough to appreciate that, more often than not, what appears at first glance to be a chaotic scrum turns out, upon sober reflection, to resemble more closely the pick and roll.

Will President Obama be able to bring peace to the Middle East (ME)? The administration seems to be committed to this objective despite a very loaded agenda with major troubling economic and also foreign policy issues. The Administration has already declared its strong commitment to the two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the withdrawal of most U.S. forces from Iraq in the next 2 years or so and to open a dialogue with Iran on a range of issues, including its nuclear program and other regional security issues and also potentially a dialogue with Syria with an eye on the promotion of the Israeli-Syrian peace.

Will the Obama administration be able to accomplish this ambitious agenda with regard to regional security in the ME? Although the global and regional situation in 2009 is quite different from the way it was a decade or a few decades ago, we might learn some insightful lessons by looking at the past record of the U.S. in the ME. In this context the publication of *A World in Trouble* by Patrick Tyler provides us with a potentially useful opportunity to re-examine the American record in this troubled region and to see what kind of lessons we have with regard to U.S. ability to promote its objectives and interests in the ME and particularly to advance its often stated goal to advance regional peace and security.

A World in Trouble tells the story of the U.S. involvement with war and peace in the ME since the Eisenhower Administration and until almost the end of the George W. Bush administration. The book does it in a very vivid and stimulating way, combining some well-known facts with some new information which enlighten the dramatic events of the last six decades with some new perspectives and evidence. Even if quite a lot is already known, reading this book is like reading a thriller with so many suspensions and arresting moments.

So what does the record tell us based on Patrick Tyler's story? On the whole the record is mixed, though not very encouraging for ambitious plans like Obama's, especially if such plans aim to bring about reconciliation in the holy-land and in the region in general.

There were some significant diplomatic successes -- even if only partial: Carter and Camp-David and the Egyptian-Israeli peace; Baker's diplomacy and the post-Gulf War Madrid Conference; and also some initial advances in the peace process under Clinton until the failure of the Camp David talks at the end of his presidency.

However, there were some major catastrophes as well: the pre-1973 Kissinger and Nixon policy; the fall of the Shah and the Islamic Revolution in Iran; and the 2003 intervention in Iraq, while Arab-Israeli peace was overlooked almost until the very end of the Bush Administration.

Focusing on the first of these failures, Tyler advances a somewhat surprising -- and potentially controversial -- reassessment of the Nixon-Kissinger ME strategy. This reassessment highlights the domestic constraints on U.S. ME policy which jointly with some

personal biases in favor of Israel (such as that of Kissinger according to Tyler) limit the ability of the U.S. to play the “honest broker” in the region. Such limitations, according to Tyler, lead to de-stabilizing consequences for regional war and peace and sometimes—like in the 1973 War—also for the world economy (the Arab oil embargo) and world peace (the US-Soviet confrontation at the end of the war, including a U.S. nuclear alert).

A conventional view of the Nixon-Kissinger policy is to see the pre-1973 strategy as a failure, which contributed, even if inadvertently, to the eruption of the Yom-Kippur War, while the post-1973 strategy is usually viewed as a major success in respect of both the promotion of Arab-Israeli peace (most specifically Israeli-Egyptian peace) and the improved standing of the U.S. in the region due to the Egyptian realignment from the Soviet to the American camp. Tyler, however, portrays their overall policy as problematic due to domestic factors and Kissinger’s biases in favor of Israel. Thus, the long-term effects were not as positive as they are widely seen but rather contributed to the endurance and perpetuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The pre-1973 U.S. policy: The administration did not try to push forward the Arab-Israeli process, thus frustrating both the Soviets and the Arabs, notably Egypt’s Sadat. The Soviet frustration culminated in the June 1973 summit meeting in San Clemente between Nixon and Brezhnev a few months before the 1973 War. Tyler describes very vividly Brezhnev’s attempts to form a joint US-Soviet position, which will create the conditions for the promotion of the Arab-Israeli peace process. But Nixon and Kissinger used delaying tactics to avoid any meaningful progress. Kissinger’s idea was to show to the Arabs that they can’t win any Israeli concession due to Soviet support—diplomatic or military. When the Arabs learn that the Soviet are of no help, they will, according to the Kissinger’s plan, turn to U.S. help and thus realign with Washington and reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East. But Sadat frustration with the lack of diplomatic progress eventually led him to initiate the 1973 War with all its devastating effects, including on the international economy and the superpower relations, helping to jeopardize détente.

During the War: Kissinger was much more supportive of Israel than Nixon and, in fact, went far beyond the President in supporting a major airlift to Israel which would make it superior also for a long time after the war. Kissinger also opposed a joint US-Soviet military or diplomatic intervention to stop the war, and especially encouraged Israeli violations of the cease-fire—to buy additional time for Israel to win further victories on the battle-field, most specifically to destroy the Egyptian Third Army, a blow that Kissinger apparently believed, according to Tyler, would topple Sadat. Tyler seems to make the argument that Kissinger didn’t hesitate to even manipulate the President in order to promote his pro-Israel agenda almost at the expense of the U.S. national interests. Most alarming, the continuous Israeli military offensive, encouraged by Kissinger, led to the dangerous confrontation with the Soviets on Oct. 24 in which the U.S. military was put on world-wide alert of DEFCON 3. The crisis was then exploited by the Administration for domestic gains at the height of the Watergate crisis.

This supposed behavior, esp. vis-à-vis Israel, is going against quite a bit of evidence, including memoirs of key Israeli decision-makers at the time of the war, that Kissinger was

willing to exert heavy pressures on Israel to comply with the cease-fire resolution and stop its advances. The claim Tyler makes (for example on p. 175) that Kissinger always followed Israel's policies—in contrast to the U.S. national interest seems to underestimate the very heavy pressures that Kissinger exerted on Israel both at the end of the 1973 War as well as during the reassessment crisis in 1975 during his step-by-step diplomacy designed to reach an important interim agreement between Israel and Egypt, which constituted an important cornerstone of the Egyptian-Israeli peace process.

(There are some factual errors, for example, on p. 173: Rabin was not elected in 12/73 — Golda Meir was elected then, while Rabin only succeeded Golda Meir a few months later after she resigned due to public pressures; then no elections were held but the internal bodies of the Labor Party elected Rabin as Golda's successor and, in contrast to what the author says, Rabin's government was not a more hard-liner than Meir's; that would happen only in the elections of May 1977 when Begin's hard-line Likud party won and he was elected as prime minister, but ironically he is the one who eventually made peace with Egypt—even if with the crucial help of President Carter).

The last president, which Tyler covers—George W. Bush— is presented as a major failure both with regard to the Arab-Israeli peace process and the general relations with the Islamic world, culminating with the mistaken and mismanaged invasion of 2003 Iraq.

George W. Bush represents, even if in the extreme, some of the major recurring problems with U.S. ME policy as highlighted by Tyler:

- Bias in favor of Israel both because of electoral politics but also personal preferences and beliefs
- Lack of coherence and continuity, manifested by ABC— “All BUT Clinton”, thus avoiding the peace process in the ME until almost the end of his administration in order to distinguish himself from Clinton and his eventual failures in the peace process despite considerable investment of time and effort, by the Administration and the President himself.
- Poor planning and inadequate strategies and policies
- Lack of familiarity with the Middle East and its complexities, although some leading Middle East specialists such as Professors Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami favored the 2003 invasion

The reasons for the 2003 Iraq invasion (see, for example, p. 539) that Tyler highlights are to finish the job Bush's father started for long-term security and also domestic political gains.

The author understates somewhat the influence of the post-9/11 naïve belief in spreading democracy as the best way to resolve Middle East conflicts and as the most effective long-term mechanism to address the terrorist and WMD threat to the US. Even though this belief was completely misplaced and executed in an extremely amateurish way, it was derived from unique and deep-rooted American beliefs in the transformative powers of democracy and liberalism. The author somewhat overlooks that in the post-9/11 context, these beliefs

could become dominant in U.S. politics and lead the U.S. to invade a faraway country even though it didn't pose an immediate security threat to the U.S. and even if it was not ripe for democracy.

The failure of Bush ME policies—both in Iraq and in the Arab-Israeli peace—seem to reinforce Tyler's inclination to transform U.S. grand strategy in the ME toward engagement and multilateralism and a minimal use of force. These positions seem to be shared by the Obama Administration and thus are going to be tested very soon both with respect to the Iranian nuclear option and the promotion of ME peace. The record of the last eight years seems to vindicate these directions. However, the record of the preceding decade (the 1990s) seems to suggest also the limitations of such an orientation due to the complexities and intricacies of the forces acting in the Middle East game, including power competition; security fears; fragmented societies; challenges posed to states and boundaries by transborder ties among ethnic, sectarian, religious and national groups, religious radicalism, nationalism and unstable and illegitimate regimes.

Despite some limitations and inaccuracies, this is a very interesting and informative and extremely readable book for anyone interested in the crucial role the U.S. is playing in the ME. Indeed, despite all the many failures of U.S. policy and the many difficulties and constraints it confronts in the region, it is still by far the most important external actor which can advance regional peace and security.

Response by Patrick Tyler

Douglas Little makes a very good point about some basic “continuities” in American foreign policy toward the Middle East. Oil and the security of Israel are consistent themes in the debates that surrounded every president since Truman. Access to oil, as I state in *A World of Trouble*, determined the course of World War II and the fact that both Roosevelt and Churchill beat a path to Suez to meet with the King of Saudi Arabia after the Yalta Summit is vivid enough proof. It is also true that the United States has expressed a consistent concern for the security of the Jewish state once it was established in May 1948. So it would be possible to state that access to Middle Eastern oil and the security of Israel are two pillars of U.S. policy, and therefore my argument that American efforts in the region are marked by “discontinuity” is an exaggeration that undermines the reality of U.S. interests.

But I disagree. Indeed, one has only to review history in detail -- the scrum of events -- to see that neither oil or the security of Israel were uppermost (even close to uppermost) in the minds of most American presidents most of the time when they were dealing with crises there. For Eisenhower, there was no subconscious angst about guaranteeing American access to oil, or about the threat to Israel when the president discovered that Israel, France and Britain were conspiring to invade Egypt and overthrow President Nasser after the nationalization of the Suez Canal company in 1956. Indeed, it was Israeli aggression and British duplicity that had Ike cursing like a sailor in the halls of the West Wing. The Suez Crisis, which was the seminal strategic event in the Middle East after the founding of Israel, had almost nothing to do with oil, except in two respects: first, David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, believed there was oil in Sinai and that Israel could snatch it away from Egypt and, second, Eisenhower withheld oil from Britain (its own supplies were cut by the closure of the Suez Canal) in order to squeeze the British leadership to withdraw its army and stop acting like a colonial brute. I don't think Mr. Little was referring to either of these aspects of oil policy.

A decade later, the Six-Day War was fought because as Arab military power grew, Israel seized an opportunity (Nasser's provocation) to destroy the army of its largest enemy. Oil was not a factor and the United States -- President Johnson and Dean Rusk, his secretary of state -- believed that Israel was far stronger than all of its adversaries combined, that the war was unnecessary and that it could have been defused by diplomacy, or a display of U.S. naval power. LBJ referred to Levi Eshkol, the Israeli prime minister, as an “old coot” who jumped the gun with a preemptive war while Johnson was pushing hard on diplomatic and naval interdiction fronts.

By the time the United States got deeply involved with supplying Israel with weapons to match the Arab buildup, the Jewish state already was a nuclear power with the most potent and sophisticated conventional military in the Middle East, much of it supplied by the French. It would be true, in my view, to argue that beginning with the post-1967 period, the United States was consistently engaged in supplying Israel with modern weaponry to maintain parity or better with the Arabs, but here the focus was to convince Israel that is

was so overwhelmingly powerful in the region that it could afford to make peace. Israel's internal politics were sliding toward a "Greater Israel" ideology that would lead to further war. That seems the inverse of Mr. Little's argument. It was not so much Nixon's concern that Israel would be overrun or destroyed, it was that the triumphalism of 1967 had introduced a new and powerful actor in the Middle East. Nixon feared the Israelis had become so arrogant as a result of their 1967 victory that he was at pains to draw Golda Meir into a diplomatic negotiation that would prevent further rounds of war. He failed and with the 1973 war, the West suffered a catastrophic disruption of oil supplies with scant effort to head it off. Kissinger ridiculed the oil weapon and authorized Richard Helms to conspire with the Shah of Iran on how Saudi oil might be seized in any future crisis. Again, in Nixon's view, the paramount concern in the wake of the Yom Kippur War was not any threat to Israel, but the need for superpower collaboration to orchestrate a settlement in the Middle East. Nixon's mantra was that four wars in the Middle East were enough. It was time to get a settlement. Oil was an important factor for the period 1974-77, primarily because the United States needed to demonstrate to the Arab world that it was seeking a permanent settlement based on UN Resolution 242, which called for the return of occupied territories and security for Israel.

As oil became a commodity subject to price fluctuations, it was part of the landscape, but not the driver or pillar of U.S. policy. Consider the Iranian Revolution. The U.S. response to the upheaval in Iran, which introduced another period of oil scarcity in 1979-81, was not focused on access to oil, it was on the containment of a virulent form of Islamic extremism. When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980, thinking that he could carve out the most oil-rich region of Iran to build his own empire, the United States did not intervene to stop him. Indeed, over time, the U.S. sought to use Saddam's energy to enervate the Khomeini revolution. Even when Saddam invaded Kuwait a decade later in 1990, threatening to take over the richest oil fields of the Persian Gulf, the policy of the next three presidents was not to destroy Saddam Hussein because he threatened Western oil supplies. Rather Saddam became the target because he was a regional hegemon bent on taking over the Middle East entirely. He was preparing to employ unconventional weapons and threaten stability and Western interests across the board. Now you can argue that oil and Israel are the most important factors in the anti-Saddam calculation, but they are not. They are two of many factors. Neither is paramount. And to suggest that President Clinton was acting out of concern for U.S. access to oil when he unleashed the CIA to topple Saddam strains logic and reason. Saddam sought to line up the Arab world against the United States, he sought to peel away key allies such as Egypt and Jordan and to transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into an organizing vehicle for an Iraqi-led pan-Arab military bloc. Israel would be one of the targets, but the big target was American power in the Middle East.

To use a baseball analogy, here is the way I would explain it: oil and Israel's security are two factors among many that a president must sift in making policy decisions in the Middle East; as such, they have admission to the stadium, but only occasionally to the best seats.

I agree with Benny Millier's observation that recent history has brought us to a point at the outset of the Obama administration where American policy in the Middle East is founded on a consensus -- in part out of reaction to the George W. Bush presidency -- that U.S. grand

strategy in the Middle East needs to be transformed toward engagement and multilateralism, emphasizing a minimal use of force. He says that the record of the last eight years seems to vindicate this direction, but he warns, ominously as if things might soon change, that the record of the preceding decade, the 1990s, demonstrated the limitations of what is fashionably called “soft power.” He refers to the threat from “power competition; security fears; fragmented societies; challenges posed to states and boundaries by transborder ties among ethnic, sectarian, religious and national groups, religious radicalism, nationalism and unstable and illegitimate regimes.” (4)

He is correct I suspect, and his point reminded me that one of the themes in my book on American presidents dealing with the region since Eisenhower: America suffers from a discontinuity of policy from one president to the next. If that is so, we must look to the discontinuities, good or bad, that can be applied to the Bush - Obama transition. Just as George W. Bush sought to be un-Clinton in every way upon entering office, Obama, incited perhaps by the nature of American presidential campaigns, has lurched in the un-Bush direction. Thus it is possible that the eight years of Bush unilateralism, faulty intelligence and unnecessary war might well lead to over-reaction, a dangerous retrenchment by the Obama foreign policy team. Obama and his advisers might misperceive the scope or intensity of some new threat, such as the Iranian nuclear weapons program, and find themselves surprised by the first post-cold war nuclear attack.

Maybe. It has to be considered. But so must many other factors, including the nature of the Iranian regime and the fundamentals of deterrence. The crude and brutal reality of deterrence guarantees that if the religious leaders in Tehran actually build and employ a nuclear weapon against another state, Israel for instance, they would get a ten fold response that would wipe out major cities and tens of millions of Iranians.

Benny Miller lives in a country where rockets and projectiles come across the border all the time from Hezbollah or Hamas militants seeking to kill civilians. Israel is faced with how to respond without triggering a harsh international criticism to the inevitable collateral damage that befalls civilians adjacent to its frontier or even beyond. Conflict of this nature could expand. Egypt’s aging leadership could collapse; the Saudi royal household could implode and the forces of extremism could swell to enormous new proportions.

The deepening of the Islamic insurgency in the Muslim world has now been a feature of Middle Eastern life for at least three decades and in the post 9/11 world it is difficult to muster an argument in favor of engagement, diplomacy and military restraint as effective tools for dealing with the rift between worlds.

But as I have argued in *A World of Trouble*, Eisenhower, in the wake of the century’s most frightful war, understood that in the Middle East -- a place roiled by seething animosities, post-colonial grievances and Islamic resurgence -- the battle was for hearts and minds. It still is, in my view. Ike wasn’t much of a talker; in the new media world of today he would be deadly dull. President Obama seems to have a voice that reaches out to that world. Given his determination, we have little choice but to see if he can succeed.

I played a game in my mind when I read Arlene Lazarowitz's review of *A World of Trouble*. In spite of the many interviews cited in the reference notes, in spite of the oral histories of American officials, the numerous interviews with Israeli officials, Arab officials and the extensive Israeli, American and other literature cited, she came to the conclusion that because I interviewed Prince Bandar bin Sultan, an intimate of five American presidents from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush, that I have soiled my ability to make "assessments." The game I played was to substitute in her formulation the names of other sources to whom I devoted as much or far more weight in reflecting the opinions of the day: Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, Shimon Peres and Ariel Sharon, whom I consulted in person, through associates or via their memoirs during many hours spent in Israel and elsewhere doing the research for this book.

I fail to see how anyone can read my reconstruction of the Suez Crisis, of the Six-Day War decision making, of the Nixon-Brezhnev failure on Yom Kippur, of the Iranian Revolution or of Reagan's debacle in Lebanon and somehow divine that my assessments were stilted because I took advantage of interviewing a Saudi envoy who had extensive contacts with the White House from the late 1970s until 2006.

During part of my career as a Middle East Bureau Chief, I lived in Cairo, Egypt exposed myself extensively to the Egyptian view of the region and the world, I spent many hours in Jordan in the court of King Hussein. Later, I moved in with a family in Tel Aviv to better bond with the Israeli outlook, I took Katharine Graham, publisher of *The Washington Post*, to meet President Hafez al-Assad in Syria. Did I compromise myself in doing so? I truly do not understand how a serious reviewer could look at the sum of that experience and suggest that my diligence in interviewing one of many actors tainted my assessment. The fact is that I relied very heavily on Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk for a reconstruction of the Clinton years of diplomacy. A mistake? No, for they were there, as witnesses and players. I spoke extensively over the years with diverse sources such as Brent Scowcroft, Colin Powell, Richard Armitage, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and Ahmad Chalabi. This was all foolish risk-taking when it came to my standing for assessment in Lazarowitz's review.

The striking quality of Ms. Lazarowitz's review is that it is very straightforward and perceptive much of the time, and then she drops in, unsupported, lines like this one: "[T]he subtle slant of Tyler's case against the United States also encompasses more disapproval of Israeli policies than those of Arabs." I would very much be interested to learn whether she could name one example of what she refers to; otherwise this charge is impossible to address.

One episode where Ms. Lazarowitz's approves of my assessment seems counterintuitive, given her criticism. She argues that I correctly portrayed Henry Kissinger's efforts during the Yom Kippur War "to gain control over negotiations that he portrayed as even-handed, but which actually aided Israel." In reality, I reviewed more than 20,000 pages of Kissinger telephone transcripts and memoranda of conversation. This record was the foundation of the Nixon period reconstruction, and one could argue that Kissinger's almost overwhelming documentary record colored my assessment, yet as a journalist, as a

historian and a textual analyst with many years of experience, I was driven by the academic impulse to understand. Ms. Lazarowitz impugns this impulse unfairly.

Based upon Matthew Jacobs' review, one has the impression that apparently there are academics and there are journalists and they drink from different wells when it comes to sources, with academics adhering to the ground truth found in archives, while journalists flit among the wildflowers pollinating their work from stories, anecdotes, gossip and mythology. Maybe the formulation is valid in some cases, but I would be prepared to argue that the nation's libraries are salted with as many poorly grounded and misguided works by academic historians as they are of distorted tracts by journalists and their unnamed sources. Since Mr. Jacobs used this comparison of the two approaches to the evocation of history to compliment my work in "A World of Trouble, a history of American presidents and the Middle East, stating that it was a "riveting" blend of academic and journalistic experience that he could not put down, perhaps my counter-assertion seems a little churlish. But I can only defend my reaction by stating that it is impossible for any serious student of American foreign policy not to wince at the condescension that inhabits his analogy.

Notwithstanding his favorable impression, I am compelled to correct his summary of the "overall argument" of my book. He states that the book includes a thematic assertion that American policy has shown an "increasing partiality towards Israel in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

The book makes no such assertion; in fact, I argue that the most striking feature of American policy has been its discontinuity among the presidents since the founding of the Jewish state in 1948. In other words, it is discontinuity that explains the unsentimental and arms length nature of the Eisenhower, Carter and Bush Sr. administrations when it came to negotiations with Israel, as opposed to the conflicted or anarchic approach under presidents Nixon and Reagan for instance, or the warm, sentimental or strategically aligned approaches of presidents Johnson, Clinton and Bush Jr.

Mr. Jacobs sought some clearer rendering of "heroes" in this history of presidents, and picks out Eisenhower, Carter and Prince Bandar as his candidates from the work. Here I found myself wincing once again, as any full dimensional study of American presidents engaged in the management of foreign relations takes as a given that these leaders are political actors to the core. Each president may be informed by or predisposed to some philosophy, religious belief or ideology with regard to the Middle East, but much of the time each one is seeking to balance their approach to the conflict with domestic constituencies, congressional power blocs and personalities, rival nations with strong interests in the region. And, inescapably, influential aides raise internal policy battles that create a withering level of static for the person in the Oval Office. Approaching history as the ranking of heroes takes one very quickly to the slippery slope that snags many historians and journalists. It is simply out of place in any serious quest to understand the process. One may recreate sympathetic moments when leaders reveal human foibles or admirable traits, but the sum of critical character analysis is complex and, often, contradictory. What is key to the narrative of history is a fair and balanced rendering of the circumstances in which

the leader was operating, one that is hopefully sufficiently readable as to bring as large an audience as possible into close proximity to the living dynamic of governance.

I won't address at length Mr. Jacobs' quibbles about why I began this history with the Suez crisis, or why I did not add an extensive "conclusion" to a work where analysis, interpretation and conclusions are sown throughout. And, given that I included about 1,000 source notes to the text, it was surprising to read Mr. Jacobs' complaint about "inconsistent footnoting." He states that in my reconstruction of an "explosive meeting" involving Anthony Lake, the Clinton national security adviser, the only footnote refers to some arcane definition of Kurdish forces. Yet he fails to discover in his detailed review of the notes that the section begins with a footnote which states very plainly that the reconstruction is based on "Author interviews with Anthony Lake" and his colleagues in the White House and State Department, Bruce Reidel, Mark R. Parris and Martin Indyk. Now, the footnote I refer to is No. 47 and the one Mr. Jacob cites is No. 53. I make this point because Mr. Jacobs concludes that I have made it "very difficult for anyone wishing to following up" on my "arguments, insight and information." The point seems a bit overdrawn given the extensive research material and interviews cited in the text.

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