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Peter L. Hahn. *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. xii + 398 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2840-3.

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Published on H-Diplo (June, 2005)

Step-Child of American Foreign Policy

Peter Hahn's *Caught in the Middle East* is an analysis of U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1945-1961. He argues that American policymakers wanted to stabilize the region before conflict could harm American interests, but they privileged Cold War policy over Arab-Israeli relations. Professor Hahn moves quickly from the immediate post-World War II period to the heart of the book, the 1949-1961 period. One of the strengths of this work is its use of Israeli, British, and U.S. sources to reconstruct the story of U.S. involvement. Hahn uses both orthodox and revisionist interpretations of Israeli policy to build a complicated picture of relations between Washington and Tel Aviv, and in the process adds a good deal of information about the Israeli lobbying effort to educate and influence popular understandings of Israeli policy.

Hahn works with five themes in his book: presidential leadership styles, Israeli policies, Arab views, U.S. domestic relations, and U.S.-Anglo relations. The strong differences between Truman and Eisenhower are disclosed by their respective decision-making styles, though not by differences in policy. A second theme shows the balance of domestic American conversations, where State and Defense argue geopolitical interests, while the White House and Congress attend to internal popular concerns. U.S.-Israeli relations are discussed, both in terms of the long-view and the details of specific issues (refugees, water, treaties, the United Nations, etc.) under both administrations. Hahn spends some time trying to delineate the fissures in the "special relationship" between Israel and the United States, but he is actually more effective at showing the disconnect between cultural voting patterns and policy needs. He describes U.S.-Arab relations with those countries directly challenging Israel, but only as related to the issue of Israel. His work does not really locate or discuss the Arab political cultures and their changes over time, and thus his depictions of the Arabs lack depth. Finally, there is the evolution of Anglo-American relations: the United States is intent on maintaining the Atlantic alliance while reaching for American national aims in the Middle East, as the balance of power between the two great states continuously shifts.

Upon these foundations, Hahn layers his sub-themes: treaty issues, border and Israeli settlements, Arab refugees, and water. Sub-themes intersect with themes like lines of latitude and longitude; each intersection creates a point of diplomatic engagement. Hahn revisits each intersection at different points in time, to disclose presidential style and policy, and to build complexity in the depiction of the themes and sub-themes. Although I initially found the organization awkward, by the end of the book the interweaving of these points created a texture for understanding policy that was layered and more complicated than I had anticipated. Although initially awkward for the reader, it is effective.

Anyone who follows Middle Eastern policy is already aware of just how many twists and reversals can be documented. Hahn's conceptual map offers a fascinating tool to deconstruct specific issues over time in the region. Hahn also explains the pressures dividing U.S. poli-

cymaking: the geopolitical outlook of the experts in state and defense stood opposed and in conflict with the broad popular understanding of Israel and its policies. The recurring need to steer between what was required by the experts and the popular electoral will created a series of compromises through which Arab perspective was weakened and even, over the long-term, ignored.

Additionally, the importation of Arab-Israeli relations into the conceptual scheme of the Cold War further diminished the nature and complexity of the conflict in the Middle East. To quote James Landis, American Middle East Center Director during World War II, "the Middle East is the stepchild of American foreign policy." A region transitioning from an older imperial tradition into the nation-state paradigm of the twentieth century was given amazingly short attention by policymakers as they placed it within the Cold War construct and ignored all information to the contrary. In this context, the book makes a strong argument that American presidents managed decision-making rather than resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. This key point, with an exceptional period during the early Eisenhower administration, highlights the dilemma of American policy. If the point is to maintain stability, then solutions favorable to the region but poor for the United States must be discarded or ignored. This privileges American policy over human rights, over long-term peace, over the interests of the people of the region and creates a long-term instability that is presently engaging our attention. It is also an extremely imperial policy that leaves little attention to the wishes and desires of the people. This is less documented from the Arab side, but is indicated in the constant attempts by the Israeli government to create information campaigns to educate the American public about U.S. policies that might not be useful to Israel.

The U.S. desire to maintain a neutral Middle East created a need for constant American involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process since neither side could be allowed to move too far ahead of the larger American geopolitical strategy. A number of conditions created U.S. intervention: when peacemaking objectives conflicted with broader aims in the Cold War; when collaboration with the Soviet Union or abandonment of Arab interests was needed on behalf of Israel; and no pan-Arab settlements could be reached if they violated domestic political interests and cultural values. American policy privileged Cold War policies over peacemaking, and it privileged American domestic culture over international human rights.

Although Hahn's book is a strong addition to the field, a few caveats must be mentioned. *Caught in the Middle East* defines its topic from 1945 to 1961, with the implied assumption that the Cold War and its perspectives begin in 1945. Although many might agree with this in the United States, it is not the view in the Middle East. The interlude between 1945 and 1948 is filled with residual wartime issues, and policymaking in this period is jumbled. The settlement of lend-lease debt, the ending of the Middle Eastern Supply Center, and the extension of American influence in specific countries contradict the attempt to cast it as a piece of the Cold War. This book really begins in 1949, and does not address the numerous issues before that time.

Can a monograph on US policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict be complete without some development of the Arab position? I am well aware that this may appear an unfair criticism given the massive volume of research and synthesis of this monograph, but it is Hahn's own valuable contribution that raises the question. He documents through his study of Israeli sources the active campaigning that occurred to influence and educate the American public. Where was the Arab voice? How did it play a role in the definition of the geopolitical strategy? Are there no documents that will speak to this lacuna?

If we, as diplomatic historians, are to narrate the events of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must we not search for the Arab story as well as the U.S., British, and Israeli tales? Perhaps Hahn will embark on that journey in his next book.

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Citation: Jacqueline Swansinger. Review of Hahn, Peter L., *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961.* H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. June, 2005.

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