American Orientalism

The United States and the Middle East since 1945

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a very great degree the United States succumbed to that temptation after 1945, unleashing a dynamic whose most significant unintended consequence was Osama bin Laden's monstrous bid to crush the United States on 11 September 2001. This book explores the impact of that dynamic on five decades of U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

To see a camel train laden with the spices of Arabia and the rare fabrics of Persia come marching through the narrow alleys of the bazaar . . . is a genuine revelation of the Orient. The picture lacks nothing. It casts you back at once into your forgotten boyhood, and again you dream over the wonders of the Arabian Nights; again your companions are princes, your lord is the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid, and your servants are terrific giants and genii that come with smoke and lightning and thunder, and go as a storm goes when they depart!
—Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869)

Most Americans now know better than to use nasty generalizations about ethnic or religious groups. Disparaging stereotypes—the avaricious Jew, the sneaky Chinese, the dumb Irishman, the lazy black person—are now so unacceptable that it's a shock to hear them mentioned.

Thanks to current international politics, however, one form of ethnic bigotry retains an aura of respectability in the United States: prejudice against Arabs. Anyone who doubts this has only to listen to the lyrics in a song [titled "Arabian Nights"] from the animated Disney extravaganza "Aladdin."—*New York Times* editorial, 14 July 1993

1

Orientalism, American Style

The Middle East in the Mind of America

Few parts of the world have become as deeply embedded in the U.S. popular imagination as the Middle East. The Puritans who founded "God's American Israel" on Massachusetts Bay nearly four centuries ago brought with them a passionate fascination with the Holy Land and a profound ambivalence about the "infidels"—mostly Muslims but some Jews—who lived there. Raised on Bible stories and religious parables laced liberally with a fervently Christian sense of mission and a fiercely American Spirit of '76, the citizens of one of the New World's newest nations have long embraced a romanticized and stereotypic vision of some of the Old World's oldest civilizations. The missionaries, tourists, and merchants who sailed from America into the Eastern Mediterranean during the nineteenth century were amazed by the Christian relics and biblical landscapes but appalled by the despotic governments and decadent societies that they encountered from Constantinople to Cairo. The diplomats, oil

men, and soldiers who promoted and protected U.S. interests in the Middle East during the twentieth century converted these earlier cultural assumptions and racial stereotypes into an irresistible intellectual shorthand for handling the "backward" Muslims and the "headstrong" Jews whose objectives frequently clashed with America's.

That intellectual shorthand, reflected in everything from feature films and best-selling novels to political cartoons and popular magazines, has had a profound impact on Main Street and in the nation's capital. Over the years the public and policymakers in the United States have frequently employed what historian Michael Hunt has termed a "hierarchy of race" in dealing with what used to be called the Third World. As early as 1900, Hunt argues, Anglo-Saxon racism and Social Darwinism had fused in the collective mind of America to generate a powerful mental map in which, predictably, the "civilized" powers—the United States and Western Europe—controlled a descending array of underdeveloped, even "primitive" Asians, Latinos, American Indians, and Africans. Although Hunt discusses the Middle East only in passing, his brief references suggest that U.S. policymakers tended to place Arabs and Jews nearer the bottom than the top of the hierarchy of race.[1]

More than a decade ago Columbia University's Edward Said suggested *why* this should have been so. Borrowing from intellectual history, literary criticism, and classical philology, Said showed how eighteenth-century British officials embraced "orientalism," a self-serving view of Asians, Africans, and Arabs as decadent, alien, and inferior, a view that Whitehall later used to rationalize its own imperial ambitions from the Indian subcontinent to the banks of the Nile. For British orientalists, Ottoman despotism, Islamic obscurantism, and Arab racial inferiority had combined to produce a backward culture that was badly in need of Anglo-Saxon tutelage. With the waning of Britain's power and the waxing of America's after 1945, something very like Said's orientalism seems subconsciously to have shaped U.S. popular attitudes and foreign policies toward the Middle East.[2]

More recently anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins have suggested *how* orientalism made its way into U.S. popular culture. Utilizing insights from postmodern social theory, photojournalism, and cultural anthropology, Lutz and Collins trace the process through which orientalist images of the Middle East and other parts of the Third World were generated and disseminated by one of the most widely circulated magazines in the United States, *National Geographic*. The subliminal messages encoded in the magazine's eye-catching photos and intriguing human interest stories seem clear. The Arabs, Africans, and Asians who grace the pages of *National Geographic* are backward, exotic, and occasionally dangerous folk who have needed and will continue to need U.S. help and guidance if they are successfully to undergo political and cultural modernization.[3]

Once the orientalist mindset of imperial Britain insinuated its way into the White House, the Pentagon, and Foggy Bottom during the late 1940s, and once the orientalist worldview epitomized by *National Geographic* found its way onto America's coffee tables and movie screens during the early 1950s, U.S. policies and attitudes toward the Middle East were shaped in predictable ways. Influenced by potent racial and cultural stereotypes, some imported and some homegrown, that depicted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior, U.S. policymakers from Harry Truman through George Bush tended to dismiss Arab aspirations for self-determination as politically primitive, economically suspect, and ideologically absurd. Meanwhile, Zionist pioneers were ineluctably transforming the dream of a Jewish state into Middle Eastern reality through blood, sweat, and tears. Both the dream and the reality soon prompted most Americans to shed their residual anti-Semitism and to regard the children of Isaac, now safely more Western than oriental, as a strategic asset in America's increasingly nasty confrontation with the children of Ishmael.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, Hollywood confirmed that orientalism American style had sunk deep roots into U.S. popular culture. In 1992 Disney Studios released *Aladdin*, the latest in a long line of animated classics, which opens with a Saddam Hussein look-alike crooning "Arabian Nights." The lyrics evoke long-standing sinister images of the Muslim world punctuated by an orientalist punch line: "It's barbaric, but hey it's home." Two hundred years earlier, Americans familiar with the Middle East would not have disagreed.

Of Pirates, Prophets, and Innocents Abroad

In 1776 what little the average American knew about the Middle East and its peoples likely came from two sources: the King James Bible and Scheherazade's *Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. Few Americans could have found Baghdad or Beirut on a map, and fewer still had climbed the great stone pyramids at Giza or waded the holy waters of the River Jordan. But most Americans remembered the Gospel according to St. Matthew and the tale of Ali Baba and his forty thieves, most recalled the crucifixion and the crusades, and most regretted that the Holy Land was peopled by infidels and unbelievers, Muslims and Jews beyond the pale of Christendom.[4]

Because it wedded the religious teachings of the Koran with the secular power of sultans and sheiks from Turkey to Morocco, the specter of Islam loomed larger in late-eighteenth-century U.S. popular culture than did Ju-

daism. Alongside *Arabian Nights* on library shelves from Boston to Charleston were biographies of the Prophet Mohammed depicting the Islamic messenger of God as the founder of a wicked and barbarous creed that had spread from Arabia to North Africa by offering conquered peoples a choice between conversion and death. The revolutionary statesmen who invented America in the quarter-century after 1776 regarded the Muslim world, beset by oriental despotism, economic squalor, and intellectual stultification, as the antithesis of the republicanism to which they had pledged their sacred honor.[5] Three decades of sporadic maritime warfare with the Barbary pirates helped spread these orientalist images to the public at large through captivity narratives such as Caleb Bingham's *Slaves in Barbary* and plays like Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*.[6]

Greater American familiarity with the Muslim world during the nineteenth century seems merely to have bred greater contempt. When Greek patriots rebelled against Turkish domination of their homeland in 1821, the widely read *North American Review* labeled the ensuing struggle "a war of the crescent against the cross" and claimed that "wherever the arms of the Sultan prevail, the village churches are levelled with the dust or polluted with the abominations of mahometanism."[7] American missionaries such as Harrison Gray Otis Dwight, who hoped to spread the gospel throughout the Ottoman Empire during the late 1820s, certainly shared these sentiments.[8] Indeed, when Dwight visited Washington and called on John Quincy Adams in early 1839, he painted "a melancholy picture" of the peoples of the Middle East for the aging statesman. "They consist of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews," Adams confided in his diary, of whom "the Jews [were] the worst" because, according to Dwight, "their hatred of all Christians is rancorous beyond conception."[9]

Dwight's anti-Semitism was not unusual among America's nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon elite, most of whom regarded Jews as one part Judas and one part Shylock, a suspect people wedded to a set of cultural and economic values that seemed vaguely un-American. Although most of the 150,000 Jews who arrived in the United States before the Civil War had fled persecution in Germany and were eager to Americanize themselves by shedding many of their Old World customs, Jewish Americans were nevertheless the targets of ugly racial stereotypes depicting them as greedy, greasy, and grasping.[10]

Yet despite such anti-Semitic caricatures, many Christian citizens of God's American Israel felt a peculiar sense of kinship with Jews. Evangelical Protestant revivalists interpreted the Book of Revelation to mean that the millennium would arrive once the Jews returned to the Holy Land, and hundreds of American pilgrims trekked east to worship at sacred sites in Jerusalem and

Nazareth.[11] "We know far more about the land of the Jews," *Harper's Magazine* announced smugly in January 1855, "than the degraded Arabs who hold it."[12]

The orientalist assumptions explicit in *Harper's Magazine* were implicit in much of nineteenth-century U.S. popular culture. Illustrated editions of *The Arabian Nights* and trusty McGuffey readers brought a frequently exotic and often evil Middle East to life for a new generation of schoolchildren. Popular authors like Washington Irving published books such as *Mahomet and His Successors* that presented stereotypic portraits of a Muslim world whose benighted inhabitants were far better suited for theocratic or autocratic rule than for American-style democracy.[13] Landscape artists such as Minor Kellogg and Edward Troye painted Middle Eastern vistas littered with biblical ruins and peopled with Bedouins and other orientals who had clearly fallen from grace.[14] Portrait painter Frederick Arthur Bridgman produced dozens of sexually charged canvases modeled on those of his mentor Jean-Léon Gérôme, a leading French orientalist famous for works like *The Snake Charmer* and *The Slave*. It is not surprising that one of the most popular attractions at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition in Chicago was the Ottoman Pavilion, complete with mosque, bazaar, harem, and belly dancers to titillate Victorian Americans.[15]

No one probably did more to shape nineteenth-century U.S. views of the Middle East, however, than Mark Twain, whose darkly humorous account of his calamitous tour of the Holy Land sold nearly 100,000 copies in the two years after it was published in 1869. A master of irony, Twain titled his saga of this eastward odyssey *The Innocents Abroad* and provided scathing sketches of his fellow travelers, most of whom he found guilty of tactlessness, excessive pride, and what twentieth-century critics would call cultural imperialism.[16]

What may well have stood out in the minds of Twain's readers, however, were the venomous vignettes he offered of the local population. Terming Muslims "a people by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, [and] superstitious" and calling the Ottoman Empire "a government whose Three Graces are Tyranny, Rapacity, [and] Blood," Twain found little correlation between the "grand oriental picture which I had worshipped a thousand times" in *Arabian Nights* and the gritty reality he encountered during his Arabian days. The Arabs of Palestine were mired in dirt, rags, and vermin, he observed, and "do not mind barbarous ignorance and savagery." Nor was Twain fond of Egyptians, whose constant cries of "bucksheesh" echoed down Cairo's back alleys. "The Arabs are too high-priced in Egypt," he remarked acidly at the end of his voyage. "They put on airs unbecoming to such savages."[17] To be sure, some readers of Twain's account must have marveled at the author's sarcastic wit, but many more probably put down *Innocents Abroad*

with their orientalist images of a Middle East peopled by pirates, prophets, and paupers more sharply focused than ever.[18]

Americanizing the Middle East

The Middle East began to loom larger on America's diplomatic and cultural horizon during what Mark Twain called "the Gilded Age," not only because U.S. missionaries sought to save more souls but also because U.S. merchants sought to expand trade. By the 1870s American entrepreneurs were buying nearly one-half of Turkey's opium crop for resale in China while providing the Ottoman Empire with everything from warships to kerosene. "Even the sacred lamps over the Prophet's tomb at Mecca," one U.S. diplomat gloated in 1879, "are fed with oil from Pennsylvania."[19]

Meanwhile a new generation of American missionaries made their way to Armenia, Syria, and other corners of the Ottoman realm, spreading not only the gospel but also subversive New World ideas. Indeed, by the 1890s two institutions of higher learning established by U.S. missionaries three decades earlier—Robert College just outside Constantinople and the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut—had become notorious anti-Turkish hotbeds, where Arabs, Kurds, and Armenians began to dream of and scheme for national independence.[20] "Quite without intention," British orientalist and adventurer T. E. Lawrence observed a generation later, these two colleges had actually "taught revolution" to subject peoples throughout the Turkish empire.[21]

While most U.S. observers seem to have agreed that the Christians of Armenia and Syria might profit enormously from these lessons, few churchmen or diplomats expected such revolutionary teachings to spell anything but disaster in the Muslim world. When angry mobs of Iranian students and peasants toppled the royal government and forced the shah to proclaim a constitutional monarchy in August 1906, for example, Ambassador Richmond Pearson offered a bleak forecast laced with orientalism: "History does not record a single instance of successful constitutional government in a country where the Mussulman religion is the state religion."[22] Ambassador John Leishman, Pearson's counterpart in Constantinople, was no more sanguine about the prospects for constitutional rule in Turkey, where reformist military officers—"the Young Turks"—staged a coup and curbed the sultan's powers in July 1908. "The fanatical element" among Muslim students, soldiers, and mullahs, Leishman reported nine months later, had triggered antigovernment riots, an army mutiny, and "a reign of terror and a succession of murders."[23]

President Theodore Roosevelt, who had appointed both Pearson and Leishman, was even more skeptical about the possibility of reform and progress in the Middle East. A firm believer in a hierarchy of race in which "civilized nations" like the United States must shoulder "the White Man's Burden" and attempt to westernize the "benighted" peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, Roosevelt confessed privately in 1907 that "it is impossible to expect moral, intellectual and material well-being where Mohammedanism is supreme." The Egyptians, for example, were "a people of Moslem fellahin who have never in all time exercised any self-government whatever." Britain's Lord Cromer, Roosevelt added, "is one of the greatest modern colonial administrators, and he has handled Egypt just according to Egypt's needs"—military occupation, foreign tutelage, and Christian patience.[24]

If Roosevelt ranked Muslims near the bottom of his hierarchy of race, he placed Jews closer to the top. To be sure, like many other members of the patrician elite that still ruled America at the turn of the century, Roosevelt harbored some patronizingly offensive stereotypes of Jewish Americans.[25] But he was also highly critical of the wave of anti-Semitism that swept Turkey and Russia during the First World War, and he was an early supporter of the idea of establishing a Jewish state in the Holy Land. The United States and its allies, Roosevelt observed in July 1918, should "pledge themselves never to make peace until the Turk is driven from Europe, and . . . the Jews [are] given control of Palestine." It seemed, he added two months later, "entirely proper to start a Zionist State around Jerusalem."[26]

As the war to end all wars drew to a close, the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine had become a goal widely shared on both sides of the Atlantic. Famous mainly for its biblical ruins and its fruit exports, Palestine had until very recently remained little more than a sleepy backwater controlled by the dying Ottoman Empire. Overwhelmingly Muslim, Palestine had counted just 25,000 Jews among a total population of 300,000 as late as 1880.[27] Fifteen years later, however, Theodore Herzl, a thirty-five-year-old Jewish lawyer-turned-journalist born in Budapest, published what might be called the first Zionist manifesto. Outraged by the pogroms in Russia and Poland and appalled by the resurgence of anti-Semitism farther west in France, Herzl warned his brethren in the pages of *The Jewish State* that only by establishing a national home in Palestine could they be safe from persecution. Working tirelessly, Herzl brought together Jews from seventeen countries, including the United States, in Basel, Switzerland, where in August 1897 they founded the World Zionist Organization committed to accelerating Jewish immigration to Palestine by purchasing land from the Arabs. Zionist efforts bore fruit in short order and helped swell the Jewish community in Palestine to 85,000, 12 percent of the total population, on the eve of the First World War.[28]

Although very few of these immigrants had come from the United States, American Zionists hoped that President Woodrow Wilson's wartime pledge to make the world safe for democracy would apply to Jewish aspirations in the

Holy Land. Well before the United States entered the war in April 1917, Louis Brandeis, a Harvard-educated reformer whom Wilson had named America's first Jewish Supreme Court justice, apprised the White House of Zionist objectives in Palestine. Across the Atlantic in London Chaim Weizmann, a brilliant chemist and Britain's leading Zionist, was likewise pressing Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to endorse the idea of a Jewish state as U.K. forces prepared during the autumn of 1917 to wrest control of Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. Fearful that the German government might soon embrace Zionism in a cynical bid to undermine support for the Allied war effort among British, Russian, and American Jews, Whitehall drafted what came to be known as the Balfour Declaration, one of the most controversial, compound-complex sentences ever written: "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."[29]

Before releasing the Balfour Declaration, however, the British government sought the blessing of the Americans. The United States was not formally at war with the Ottoman Empire, and Wilson was not willing to see U.S. troops become embroiled in what seemed certain to be a nasty, three-cornered quarrel among Turks, Arabs, and Jews. But once he realized that the British intended the Balfour Declaration to be merely a statement of principles rather than a prescription for specific policies, Wilson quietly sent word across the Atlantic that he "concurred in the formula suggested from the other side."[30] Relieved to have U.S. approval, Foreign Secretary Balfour unveiled Britain's new approach toward Palestine on 2 November 1917 in a letter to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, a recent convert to Zionism who was working closely with Weizmann and Brandeis.[31]

When Woodrow Wilson and British prime minister David Lloyd George journeyed to Versailles fourteen months later to negotiate what one historian has called "a peace to end all peace," they found it extremely difficult to translate the Balfour Declaration from diplomatic principle into political practice. To be sure, Wilson publicly reaffirmed his commitment to a Jewish homeland in an August 1918 open letter to Rabbi Stephen Wise, a Hungarian-born Zionist with close ties to Brandeis and other White House insiders, and Lloyd George briefly lent a sympathetic ear to Chaim Weizmann during the spring of 1919. But conflicting Jewish and Arab claims to Palestine and mounting pressure from Armenians, Kurds, and other peoples formerly subject to Turkish rule for full and complete independence led the peacemakers to proceed with extreme caution.[32]

Before the summer was over, Wilson would send a fact-finding mission to the Middle East headed by General James Harbord, who uncovered both good and bad news among the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. "Without visiting the Near East," he reported in October 1919, "it is not possible for an American to realize even faintly the respect, faith and affection with which our country is regarded throughout that region." Thanks to "the world-wide reputation which we enjoy for fair dealing" and to "unselfish and impartial missionary and educational influence exerted for a century," he added, "it is the one faith which is held alike by Christian and Moslem, by Jew and Gentile, by prince and peasant in the Near East." Unfortunately, Harbord warned Washington, the peoples of the Middle East exhibited much less faith in each other. In short, should America decide to become more involved in the Middle East, U.S. policymakers would face not only familiar quarrels among peoples who shared their own Judeo-Christian heritage but also the "bloodthirsty, unregenerate and revengeful" attitude of "the indolent and pleasure-loving Turk" and the "traditional lawlessness of migrating Kurds and Arabs," among whom "the temptation to reprisals for past wrongs will be strong for at least a generation."[33]

Of Sheiks, Sphinxes, and Final Solutions

Grounded in a Social Darwinistic belief in the racial inferiority of Arabs, Kurds, and Turks and sustained by an abiding faith in the superiority of the United States, orientalism American style became a staple of popular culture during the 1920s through such media as B movies, best-selling books, and mass circulation magazines. Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Sheik* (1921), *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924), and *Beau Geste* (1926) propelled Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks, and Ronald Colman to stardom while reinforcing popular stereotypes of the Arabs as a culturally backward, sexually depraved, and congenitally violent people.[34] In 1927 T. E. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert*, an abridged version of his massive *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, became an overnight best-seller in U.S. bookstores, providing American readers with a predictable portrait of the Arabs as brave and brutal primitives, noble savages badly in need of Western guidance and tutelage.[35]

Many of the orientalist stereotypes of the Arabs evoked by films and books were reinforced by popular magazines such as *National Geographic*, which by the late 1920s had become a window on the world for millions of middle-class Americans. *National Geographic*'s entire May 1923 issue, for example, was devoted to the recently discovered tomb of King Tutankhamen and other wonders of the Muslim world. Articles like "Egypt, Past and Present" and "East of Constantinople" contrasted the imperial grandeur of ancient Egyptian and medieval Islamic civilizations with the hardscrabble realities of the twentieth

century. In "A Visit to Three Arab Kingdoms" *National Geographic* took its subscribers on a tour of three newly independent states—Transjordan, Iraq, and the Hejaz (later incorporated by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud into modern-day Saudi Arabia)—ruled by the Hashemite clan, who had spearheaded the revolt in the desert chronicled by T. E. Lawrence. Despite the political fragmentation of the region, the article emphasized that the Arabs had long been united by race, language, and religion. "To all this has been added, largely since the war, a new and broader bond, a sympathy between the Orient and Mid-East, a resentment of world domination by the white races of the Occident." In short, the magazine warned its readers, "the tinder is ready whenever the spark may strike."[36]

Over the next decade *National Geographic* published nearly a dozen articles highlighting the widening political and cultural gap between Occident and Orient in the Middle East. A December 1927 article titled "East of Suez to the Mount of the Decalogue," for example, focused on "the fatalistic and irresponsible Arabs" who wandered the Sinai Desert as childlike camel jockeys, shunning Western technology and embracing Mohammedan superstition.[37] Three years later a photoessay on Libya, where Benito Mussolini was waging one of the most brutal colonial wars of the twentieth century, downplayed the imperial carnage and emphasized instead westernization and modernization. "To-day the will of New Italy dominates this long derelict land and Italian agriculturalists are teaching new ways to Berber, Arab, and black Sudanese."[38] An October 1932 piece called "Into Burning Hadhramaut" detailed a trek into the interior of Southwest Arabia straight out of the tales of Scheherazade. "That Arabia has been able to guard its mysteries so long against the inquisitive Westerner," the author informed his readers, "is due partly to the physical features of the country and partly to the religious fanaticism of its sparse population."[39]

Nowhere did Muslim religious fanaticism and anti-Western radicalism come through more clearly, however, than in Palestine, where in a series of five articles published between 1926 and 1938 *National Geographic* tracked the descent of the Holy Land into sectarian strife between Arab and Jew. Three early pieces focusing on Bethlehem and Jerusalem presented a portrait as familiar to most Americans as the nearest Bible of a land where "three great faiths" managed to live in relative harmony.[40] But by the mid-1930s the magazine's readers learned that the rapid modernization of the Holy Land was generating considerable religious and cultural tension. "Changing Palestine," a photoessay that appeared in April 1934, described how hundreds of British bureaucrats and thousands of Jewish settlers were transforming "the land of milk and honey" into a Western outpost in the Eastern Mediterranean. "In Palestine, possibly more dramatically than anywhere else in the world, mod-

ern inventions [and] modern methods" disseminated among the Arabs were "developing pastoral people to a higher plane of life."[41]

Not until *National Geographic* published "Change Comes to Bible Lands" in December 1938, however, did middle America gain a full appreciation for the Old Testament ferocity fueling the clash between Arab and Jew. "The Balfour Declaration and Europe's anti-Semitic waves brought thousands of new settlers, especially from Germany," the magazine noted, and these Zionist pilgrims had converted a vast expanse of scrub brush and sand dunes into "the world's first new-made, 100-per-cent-Jewish city," Tel Aviv. "The influx of Jews from all over the world aroused the hostility of the Arabs," whom *National Geographic* depicted as colorful primitives capable of extraordinary acts of violence. Yet although "Arab terrorism paralyzed all Palestine in the summer of 1938," many readers doubtless put down the magazine confident that the swelling tide of Jewish immigration was likely to sustain a wave of economic growth and social progress that would soon give the Holy Land "the look of Southern California."[42]

Before 1938 was over, however, developments 1,700 miles to the northwest in Berlin would unleash a vicious outburst of anti-Semitism whose genocidal outcome would dramatize for Zionists on both sides of the Atlantic that establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine had truly become a matter of life or death. During the preceding two decades fewer and fewer Americans remembered Woodrow Wilson's wartime promises to Louis Brandeis and Stephen Wise. Instead, more and more isolationists from coast to coast applauded Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover for minimizing U.S. political entanglements abroad, whether in Western Europe or the Middle East. Meanwhile U.K. officials, such as Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, who were responsible for administering the Palestine mandate Britain had received from the newly created League of Nations, edged away from the Balfour Declaration in the face of violent resistance from Arabs opposed to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in their midst.[43]

As enthusiasm for a Jewish state in Palestine faded at the White House and at Whitehall during the 1920s, an upsurge of nativism eroded support on Main Street for the Zionist dream. From Atlanta to Anaheim the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses and staged rallies to intimidate African Americans, Catholics, and Jews, while on the banks of the Potomac Congress was erecting restrictive quotas to stem the flow of Jews and other "undesirable" groups from Eastern Europe. Fearful that a Zionist success in Palestine might inadvertently call into question the loyalty of the entire Jewish community in the United States, influential American Jews such as *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger distanced themselves from lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill. By the early 1930s membership in the Zionist Organization of America, an

umbrella agency founded by Brandeis and Wise a generation earlier, had plummeted from a postwar high of 175,000 to just 25,000, convincing the State Department's elitist and sometimes anti-Semitic Middle Eastern experts that they could safely ignore this first Jewish foray into interest group politics.[44] By late 1936 the State Department's Wallace Murray had convinced his superiors to do nothing that might "entangle us in any other way in the most delicate problem of Palestine."[45]

Murray's brief for U.S. noninvolvement could not have come at a worse time for American Zionists or their comrades in Europe. Claiming that the influx of 250,000 European Jews during the decade and a half since the First World War was more than the overloaded Palestinian economic and political system could bear, in 1936 the Arabs launched a violent revolt to resist Zionism. While Palestinian militias battled the Haganah, the Jewish underground army, in the streets of Jerusalem and the foothills of Nablus, even more ominous events were unfolding in Germany, where Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic policies were growing ever more blatant. Since coming to power in early 1933 the Nazi dictator had tarred German Jews with the brush of communism, stripped them of their civil rights, and branded them scapegoats for the Third Reich's economic woes. After Nazi tanks rolled into Vienna in March 1938 and after Hitler's storm troopers went on an anti-Semitic rampage in Berlin eight months later, thousands of German and Austrian Jews sought refuge abroad, some in Britain and America, but most in Palestine.[46]

At the time when European Jewry was most desperate for a safe haven in a national homeland, however, the British government moved to reduce Jewish immigration to Palestine sharply. Having just completed a costly two-year campaign to suppress the Arab revolt, Whitehall issued a White Paper on 17 May 1939 limiting the total number of Jewish refugees permitted to enter the Holy Land to just 75,000 during the next five years; after that, all further immigration would be subject to Palestinian approval. Among the most outspoken critics of the 1939 White Paper was fifty-three-year-old David Ben Gurion, the charismatic unofficial leader of the Yishuv, as the 350,000-member Jewish community in Palestine was now known. Convinced that persuading Whitehall to rescind the White Paper would prove an exercise in futility, Ben Gurion and his comrades hoped American Zionists might be more successful at the White House, where Franklin D. Roosevelt was preparing to seek an unprecedented third term with support from Jewish liberals.[47]

Long sympathetic to the aims of the Balfour Declaration, FDR was clearly troubled during the late 1930s by signs that Britain intended to repudiate its commitment to a Jewish homeland. "I was at Versailles," he recalled in 1938, "and I know that the British made no secret of the fact that they promised Palestine to the Jews. Why are they now reneging on their promise?"[48] Britain's actions during the spring of 1939 only raised more questions. "I have read with interest and a good deal of dismay the decisions of the British Government regarding its Palestine policy," he told Secretary of State Cordell Hull in mid-May. "This White Paper," Roosevelt hastened to add, "is something that we cannot give approval to."[49] During the following eighteen months well-connected Zionists such as Stephen Wise and Felix Frankfurter, whom FDR had recently tapped to fill Brandeis's seat on the Supreme Court, quietly encouraged the president to press Whitehall to honor its commitments regarding Palestine. At the State Department, however, Hull and his advisers insisted that U.S. meddling would only serve to undermine the U.K. position in the Middle East at a time when Britain, in the wake of the fall of France in June 1940, was the sole remaining barrier to complete Nazi domination of Europe. Judging geopolitical considerations to be more important than domestic politics, Roosevelt kept his doubts about the White Paper to himself and still managed to win a third term by a healthy margin.[50]

Thousands of European Jews unable to find refuge abroad would soon be among the earliest victims of the Holocaust. During 1939 and 1940 the Nazis had targeted the Jewish population of occupied Europe for relocation to concentration camps in Poland. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, agents of the Gestapo, Hitler's secret police, began systematically to murder all Russian Jews who fell into their hands. By the time that Germany's Japanese allies attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, rumors of the Gestapo's anti-Semitic butchery were already filtering into the United States. In January 1942 Hitler formally approved a "final solution for the Jewish problem" and authorized the Schutzstaffel, or SS, an elite corps of the German army whose commanders spoke with the voice of Cain, to begin the wholesale extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews then imprisoned at Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and other concentration camps. During the next three years nearly 6 million Jewish men, women, and children would die.[51]

The unspeakable slaughter unfolding in Nazi-occupied Europe removed any remaining doubts among most American Jews about the importance of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In May 1942, 600 American Zionists gathered at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City and passed a unanimous resolution demanding "that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world." While insiders such as Stephen Wise sought to win White House support for the Biltmore declaration, outsiders like Abba Hillel Silver, a fiery Cleveland rabbi born in Lithuania and educated at Hebrew Union College, founded the American Zionist Emergency Council, whose 200 local chapters funneled a half-million dollars into national headquarters to finance a lobbying effort in Washington.[52]

Nineteen forty-four was an election year, and U.S. advocates of a Jewish

homeland in Palestine worked tirelessly to gain bipartisan endorsements for their plans. Relying on his close ties with Senator Robert Taft, an Ohio Republican with a perennial case of Potomac fever, Abba Hillel Silver managed to persuade the Grand Old Party to insert a plank in its platform calling for the immediate implementation of the Balfour Declaration. Not to be outdone, Zionist Democrats saw to it that when their party gathered in Chicago for its national convention, it endorsed the creation of "a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth" in Palestine.[53] As his campaign for a fourth term drew to a close, Franklin Roosevelt publicly reiterated his support for the Balfour Declaration and vowed that "if re-elected, I shall help to bring about its realization."[54]

A few days after the voters had handed Roosevelt yet another triumph at the polls on 7 November, however, American Zionists began to detect signs that, like the exhausted chief executive's health, his commitment to their objectives was quite fragile. Just one week after election day the Roosevelt administration cautioned Rabbi Stephen Wise "that it would be a mistake to stir things up at this time" by seeking a congressional resolution calling for a Jewish state in Palestine. When Senator Robert Wagner, an Empire State Democrat, pressed the White House to honor its campaign promises to the Zionists in late November, FDR replied that it would be most unwise to "add fuel to the flames" in Palestine. "There are about half a million Jews there. Perhaps another million want to go," Roosevelt informed Wagner on 3 December. "On the other side of the picture there are approximately seventy million Mohammedans who want to cut their throats the day they land."[55]

Roosevelt learned just how ferocious Arab opposition to Zionism had become when, on the return leg of his trip to the great power summit at Yalta in early 1945, he sat down with Saudi Arabia's King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. During a three-hour Valentine's Day meeting with FDR the Saudi ruler demanded that the United States and Britain halt Jewish immigration and vowed that "the Arabs would choose to die rather than yield their lands to the Jews." Somewhat taken aback, Roosevelt assured Ibn Saud that the United States "would do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs and would make no move hostile to the Arab people."[56] After his return to Washington, the aging and ailing president could not shake the image of the hawklike Saudi monarch, ensconced in a gold chair and surrounded by six slaves, thundering against Zionist plans to carve out an enclave in Palestine. "Ibn Saud made the point that he had no trouble with native Palestine Jews," Roosevelt told an aide on 14 March 1945, "but the immigration from Europe was more than he could cope with and if things went wrong the millions of surrounding Arabs might easily proclaim a Holy War and then there would be no end of trouble."[57]

When Rabbi Stephen Wise called at the White House the next day, however, FDR was far more sanguine. Despite "a momentary sense of failure" after his encounter with Ibn Saud, the president remained committed to "the establishment of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth."[58] After Wise relayed this news to the Jewish community at Roosevelt's request, State Department officials forecast stormy weather for U.S. interests in the Middle East. "The statement which [the White House] authorized Rabbi Wise to make is certain to cause consternation and dismay in the Arab world . . . and damage to our position," Wallace Murray warned his superiors on 20 March. "The President's continued support of Zionism may thus lead to actual bloodshed in the Near East and even endanger the security of our immensely valuable oil concession in Saudi Arabia."[59] Seeking to limit the damage, Roosevelt reminded Ibn Saud several weeks later that the United States still intended to consult the Arabs before acting on Palestine. But FDR's cardiovascular system gave out before he could see whether his soothing message would prevent the Saudi monarch from launching his jihad.

During the first weeks of his administration, Harry Truman was more concerned with ending the hot war in Europe than with avoiding a holy war in the Middle East. The day before Truman had taken the oath of office, tanks and half-tracks from General George Patton's U.S. Third Army had rolled into Buchenwald, a Nazi death camp just outside Weimar in central Germany, where American GIs discovered gruesome proof of Hitler's unspeakable brutality. Photographs from Buchenwald, Auschwitz, and other concentration camps imprinted indelibly in the world's collective memory ghastly images of corpses stacked like cordwood and emaciated bands of "displaced persons," as the survivors of the Holocaust were known, too weak to walk or talk. In the weeks and months after the guns fell silent on 9 May 1945, the number of displaced persons in the custody of U.S. and U.K. forces would swell to nearly 1 million, 250,000 of whom were stateless Jews who desperately sought to immigrate to Palestine.[60]

As they frequently had done when confronted with the horrors of war and revolution, the editors of *National Geographic* downplayed the carnage of Hitler's final solution, choosing instead to publish upbeat stories hinting that the best solution for those who had survived the Nazi death camps was the creation of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. Readers thumbing through a June 1945 pictorial titled "Americans Help Liberated Europe Live Again," for example, found not the grisly photos of the victims of Buchenwald taken six weeks earlier but, rather, inspirational portraits of clean-cut GIs helping the people of France, Belgium, and Germany begin to put their shattered societies back together. The article mentioned neither Hitler's anti-Semitism nor his concentration camps, nor did it include Jews on its list of nationalities victim-

ized by the Nazis. Indeed, few *National Geographic* subscribers would have realized that at least one-quarter of the "refugees and displaced persons" targeted by Allied relief and relocation efforts were Jewish.[61]

When *National Geographic* finally got around to acknowledging the Holocaust sixteen months later, it did so in "Palestine Today," a matter-of-fact account of relatively westernized Jews reclaiming their rightful place in the Holy Land from orientalized Arabs. One photo, for example, showed "Singing, Shouting Fugitives from Concentration Camps" marching beneath the Star of David into a promised land that, according to the magazine, "is, in a broad sense, the United States of the middle 1800s at the same time that it is, paradoxically enough, California of today." Another photo captured "Westernized Haifa's Streamlined Balconies Stretch[ing] for Oriental Breezes" along the Mediterranean, where "the Jews have lived since Biblical times." The photos of Arabs, on the other hand, showed smiling but simple people dressed in native garb carrying fruit, picking vegetables, and performing other menial tasks.[62]

Most Americans reading this article must surely have come away with the impression that the Zionist dream was not very different from their own. After all, the Jewish refugees arriving in Palestine, like the Puritans who had settled New England three centuries earlier, were victims of religious persecution determined to make new lives for themselves in an unforgiving landscape. "On a miniature—almost a laboratory scale," the magazine assured its subscribers, "a visit to Palestine today is much like a visit to America of yesterday." A pair of snapshots juxtaposed near the end of the article left little doubt regarding who was cast as Prospero and who as Caliban. The first photo shows a pretty teenager, whose "parents may have been among the six million Jews massacred in Europe," planting tomato seedlings in Palestine. "Buchenwald and Belsen behind her," the caption reads, "a survivor of Horror Camps tills the land of her dreams." The second photo shows a grungy Arab farmer clad in a kaffiyeh and armed with an ornamental sword overseeing three Palestinians doing stoop labor. "A semifeudal economy," *National Geographic* explained, "prevails in isolated Arab farm communities."[63] Projected into America's living rooms by mass circulation magazines, these powerful images of brave Jews who had survived Hitler's final solution in order to make new lives on an old frontier, and of exotic Arabs, one part sheik and one part sharecropper, would do much to shape the U.S. approach to the Middle East after 1945.

David, Goliath, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1967

During the nineteen years between the founding of Israel in May 1948 and the stunning Israeli victory in the June 1967 Six Day War, the U.S. public and policymakers gradually came to see the tiny Jewish state's confrontation with its much larger Arab rivals as a reenactment of the biblical story of David and Goliath. Cast by much of the American media as a geopolitical underdog whose occidental values were anathema to its oriental neighbors, Israel relied on courage, ingenuity, and increasingly, Western weapons to defeat people whose Muslim faith and tribal culture seemed to magazines such as *National Geographic* more and more out of step with twentieth-century realities. The November 1948 issue of *National Geographic*, for example, included "Sailing with Sindbad's Sons," an account of the voyage of the *Bayan*, a square-rigged "Winged Galleon of Araby" that retraced the route of the old slave and spice trade from Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea to Zanzibar off the East African coast. The description of the *Bayan*'s crew reaffirmed the classic orientalist myth of the primitive but happy native. "Like Monkeys in Treetops, Arabs Climb a 130-Foot Yard," reads one caption. "Their pay is a pittance and their food poor, yet they are cheerful."[64]

The sharp contrast that *National Geographic* drew for its readers between westernized Israelis and backward Arabs came through most clearly, however, in a pair of articles that appeared in the autumn of 1947. In "An Archaeologist Looks at Palestine," photographs of Bronze Age skeletons and biblical ruins alternate with snapshots of Zionist irrigation projects that "Make the Desert Bloom" and sun-drenched Tel Aviv beachgoers clad in Bermuda shorts.[65] The color photos at the end of the article, on the other hand, highlight the exotic and dangerous Arab lands to the east. "Sheiks of the Wealthy Majali Bedouins Relax on Rugs and Soft Cushions before Their Tent," reads one caption. A few pages later a Jordanian desert warrior, sporting a rifle, a pistol, two bandoliers, and a silver dagger, stares menacingly at the camera from beneath his red-checkered kaffiyeh.[66]

National Geographic's subscribers got their longest look at the primitivism of the Arab world in October 1947 with the publication of "Yemen: Southern Arabia's Mountain Wonderland," a forty-one-page photoessay written by Harlan B. Clark, a U.S. Foreign Service officer based next door in Britain's Aden protectorate. One aerial shot showed Imam Yahya watching his "Parading Troops Perform the Dagger Dance" amidst racing camels and black stallions, a moment Clark likened to "a scene out of *Arabian Nights*." The article closed with a photo of Harry Truman, clad in a double-breasted suit, chatting in the

Oval Office with Yahya's youngest son, Prince Saif, who had arrived at the White House carrying worry beads and wearing a fez and a prayer shawl.[67]

Saif's July 1947 visit doubtless helped persuade Truman that Arabs were exotic figures straight out of *Innocents Abroad*. After meeting with Abdullah Suleiman, King Ibn Saud's minister of finance, in August 1946, Truman had likened the second most powerful man in Saudi Arabia to "a real old Biblical Arab with chin whiskers, a white gown, gold braid, and everything." When Suleiman asked for U.S. help on a Saudi irrigation project, Truman replied that "he should send for a Moses to strike rocks in various places with his staff and he'd have plenty of water."[68]

Other top U.S. officials held the Arabs in even lower esteem. When Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies nearly sidetracked U.S. plans for the early recognition of Israel in the spring of 1948, for example, White House counsel Clark Clifford urged decisive action. "The United States appears in the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes," he wrote Truman in early March. "Why should Russia or Yugoslavia, or any other nation treat us with anything but contempt in light of our shilly-shallying appeasement of the Arabs."[69] Even across town at Foggy Bottom, where State Department Middle East experts had a reputation for being much more sympathetic to Arabs than to Jews, key officials regarded Israel's neighbors as irrational and unrealistic. "As for the emotion of the Arabs, I do not care a dried camel's hump," acid-tongued Palestine desk officer Robert McClintock growled on 1 July. "It is, however, important to the interests of this country that these fanatical and overwrought people do not injure our strategic interests through reprisals against our oil investments."[70] Like McClintock, George Kennan, the State Department's reigning Soviet specialist and newly appointed chief of its Policy Planning Staff, questioned the wisdom of U.S. support for Israel. But he was no friend of the Arabs, who had left a lasting impression on him during a wartime visit to Iraq as a people prone to "selfishness and stupidity" and "inclined to all manner of religious bigotry and fanaticism."[71]

Few U.S. policymakers saw any reason to challenge Clifford's or Kennan's orientalist interpretation of Muslim behavior during Truman's second term. After all, according to a 1949 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) psychological profile of the Middle East, the Arabs were not only "non-inventive and slow to put theories into practice" and "skillful mainly at avoiding hard work" but also capable of "astonishing acts of treachery and dishonesty."[72] Carleton Coon, a State Department whiz kid whose first assignment abroad had come in Damascus during the early 1950s, recalled long afterward that "the Syrians had a well deserved inferiority complex" that predated the creation of Israel.[73] Adolf Berle, a Democratic Party insider who served in Truman's kitchen cabinet, remarked privately during the summer of 1952 that this well-documented psychological profile of instability extended to non-Arab Muslims such as the Iranians as well. "Fanatic Mohammedan nationalism" seemed about to sweep away the shah of Iran, opening the door to a "Communist takeover" in Tehran, Berle confided in his diary on 13 August. There was a very real danger, he concluded gloomily, "that the Russians would be on the Persian Gulf by Christmas."[74]

In short, as the Truman administration drew to a close, officials from the bottom to the top of the policymaking pyramid were convinced that the peoples of the Muslim world were an unpredictable lot whose penchant for political and religious extremism constituted a grave threat to U.S. interests in the region. Indeed, most U.S. policymakers would likely have seconded the orientalist assessment that Britain's ambassador to Iraq forwarded to London in late 1952. The Iraqi, like most Arabs, "is embittered, frustrated and fanatical," Sir John Troutbeck cabled Whitehall on 31 October. "Seeing little but squalor and stagnation around him, he will not admit even to himself the obvious answer, that he belongs to a peculiarly irresponsible and feckless race."[75]

The man who replaced Harry Truman in the Oval Office in January 1953 was equally comfortable with such orientalist stereotypes of the Middle East. Dwight Eisenhower's view of the Muslim world was colored by his wartime experiences in North Africa, where a decade earlier he had tried unsuccessfully to bridge the gap between French colonialists and Algerian nationalists. "Arabs are a very uncertain quantity, explosive and full of prejudices," he remarked privately in November 1942. "Many things done here that look queer are just to keep the Arabs from blazing up into revolt."[76] Eisenhower's close encounter with the Arabs during the 1950s did nothing to soften his earlier assessment. Despite Britain's "modern program of independence for countries once part of the Empire," Ike complained in his memoirs, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser had unleashed a crusade of "virulent nationalism and unreasoning prejudice" in which there was "evidence of Communist meddling."[77]

Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal during the summer of 1956 reinforced Eisenhower's belief that the Arabs were irrational, resentful, and dangerous to Western interests. "Nasser," Ike observed on 31 July, "embodies the emotional demands of the people of the area for independence and for 'slapping the White Man down.'"[78] When Eisenhower sent U.S. marines to Lebanon two years later to shore up a pro-American regime besieged by pro-Nasser dissidents, he reminded the National Security Council (NSC) that "the underlying Arab thinking" remained deeply rooted in "violence, emotion and ignorance."[79] As his term drew to a close, Ike complained that Nasser and like-minded nationalists were little more than oriental despots. "If you go and live with these Arabs, you will find that they simply cannot understand our ideas of freedom or human dignity," he told the NSC in June 1959. "They have lived so long

under dictatorships of one form or another, how can we expect them to run successfully a free government?"[80]

Eisenhower's top advisers echoed the president's growing frustration with the Arabs. Shortly after taking over at Foggy Bottom, for example, John Foster Dulles took a two-week fact-finding trip to the Middle East that confirmed all of his Presbyterian fears of the Muslim infidel. Following visits to Cairo and other Arab capitals in May 1953, Eisenhower's secretary of state pronounced Nasser and like-minded Arab nationalists "pathological" in their suspicion of the Western powers and "naive" in their trust of the Kremlin.[81] It is no surprise that in private conversations with U.K. officials in early July, Dulles described Iran's anti-Western prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, as "a wily oriental."[82] When anti-Western violence rocked Baghdad, Beirut, and Amman five summers later, White House troubleshooter Robert Murphy undertook a "twenty-nine-day Magic Carpet tour of the fabled East" at the behest of Eisenhower, with whom he had worked to curb "the restiveness of the indigenes" in Muslim North Africa during the Second World War. After visiting "Godforsaken stretches of Iraq," where "mobs whose violence surpassed all expectations" held sway, he informed his boss in August 1958 that little had changed since the early 1940s.[83]

U.S. diplomats stationed in the Middle East helped reinforce the orientalist views of Eisenhower, Dulles, and Murphy. When Ambassador Henry Villard found himself mired down in endless negotiations over a U.S. air base in June 1954, he cabled Washington that the tactics of Libyan officials were "tantamount to blackmail and show[ed] little change from [the] barbary pirate tradition."[84] Two years later Henry Byroade, the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, confirmed that Nasser and his followers were volatile, unpredictable, and quixotic. "Arabs are quite capable of getting completely beside themselves" on matters related to Israel, Byroade warned Dulles on 14 March 1956, "because by nature they [are] inclined to fight windmills."[85] A White House study completed four years later reiterated the importance of "psychological" factors in U.S. relations with the Middle East. American officials, the drafters of NSC-6011 pointed out in July 1960, must understand that "the Arabs' experience with and fear of Western domination" had generated hostility and suspicion that were in turn exacerbated by "their belief that the United States is the special friend and protector of Israel."[86]

Indeed, by the time that Eisenhower retired to his farm just outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in January 1961, the Arabs could see that Israel had won not only a special spot in the hearts of everyday Americans, who identified with the underdog status of the new nation, but also the grudging respect of U.S. policymakers, who were impressed by its military prowess.[87] As they had during the mid-1940s, so too during the Eisenhower era many Amer-

icans seemed to regard sympathy for a Jewish homeland in the Middle East as a form of symbolic atonement for having done too little too late to prevent the Holocaust in Europe. For the United States during the 1950s perhaps the most powerful reminder of Hitler's genocide was a grainy, black-and-white snapshot of a teenage Jewish schoolgirl that graced the cover of her heartbreaking, posthumous account of life and death in Nazi-occupied Holland. When first published in 1952, *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* became an instant bestseller. By the end of the decade the haunting visage of Anne Frank had been imprinted even more deeply onto U.S. popular culture, first by a Pulitzer Prize–winning play that drew standing-room-only crowds on Broadway in 1956 and then by a Hollywood box-office smash that received two Academy Awards three years later.[88]

The literary and cinematic connections between the nightmare of the Holocaust and the dream of Israel were drawn most clearly for readers and moviegoers in Eisenhower's America, however, in the work of novelist and screenwriter Leon Uris. Few novels have sold 4 million copies faster while winning wide critical acclaim than *Exodus*, a thinly fictionalized account of the tireless Zionist crusade to run food, guns, and Jewish refugees into Palestine after the Second World War. Published in 1958, the book contained a plot that pitted survivors of the Nazi death camps against callous British colonial bureaucrats and ruthless Arab demagogues as well as a message that trumpeted the eventual triumph of good over evil. Hollywood wasted little time producing its version of the heroic founding of Israel. In December 1960 United Artists released *Exodus*, a four-hour epic starring rising young screen idol Paul Newman as an indomitable Jewish freedom fighter and featuring a stirring soundtrack that would win an Oscar for best musical score. Appearing seven months after a well-publicized, stranger-than-fiction operation whereby Israeli intelligence had snatched Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief architects of the final solution, off the streets of Buenos Aires and spirited him to Jerusalem to stand trial as a Nazi war criminal, *Exodus* reminded American audiences that with the creation of a Jewish state in the Holy Land, Anne Frank had not died in vain.[89]

Eighteen months after Paul Newman enthralled friends of Israel with his gallantry and good looks in *Exodus*, a white-robed Peter O'Toole stormed out of the heart of Arabia and into movie theaters from coast to coast as the reincarnation of T. E. Lawrence. Directed by British filmmaker David Lean and shot on location in the desert just outside Seville, where the Spaniards had finally driven the Muslims out of Europe in 1492, *Lawrence of Arabia* recaptured the romance, the adventure, and the orientalism of Britain's errand among the Arabs during the First World War. Despite the bravery and skill of the Bedouin warriors, millions of filmgoers went home convinced that with-

out Lawrence's help, the Arabs could never have thrown off the Ottoman yoke. Unlike the Zionists in *Exodus*, whose singleness of purpose ensured the establishment of a strong and independent Jewish state, the Arabs in *Lawrence of Arabia* saw their dreams of self-determination dashed by their self-destructive penchant for tribal infighting and political scheming. *Lawrence of Arabia*'s orientalist message, its breathtaking camera work, and its talented cast combined to win six Oscars, including those for best actor, best director, and best picture.

The images of noble Israelis surrounded by unruly Arabs projected by Hollywood were reinforced by mass market monthlies such as *National Geographic*, whose circulation soared during the early 1960s. The magazine's December 1963 issue, for example, included "Holy Land Today," a brief photoessay that described Israeli pioneers, "a trowel in one hand and a Bible in the other," methodically "reversing the ordinary course of history" through "the transformation of ancient ruins into living communities."[90] By way of contrast, a March 1964 *National Geographic* piece on Yemen began with this lead-in: "Wracked by civil war, an ancient Arabian land struggles to find its place in the world of the twentieth century." Even a brief look at the wild-eyed mountain tribesmen brandishing daggers and submachine guns or the bearded worshipers "pour[ing] out of Yemen's Arabian Nights capital" must have persuaded many American readers that the Yemenis were unlikely to win that struggle without the second coming of T. E. Lawrence.[91] Subscribers thumbing through a March 1965 pictorial on Israel, on the other hand, discovered a "Land of Promise" where "smooth new highways hum with traffic" and where "fields of soft green gleam amid the old desert wastes."[92]

Like the editors of *National Geographic*, the insiders who advised John F Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson on the Middle East seem subconsciously to have embraced a hierarchy of race and culture in which the Arabs ranked far below the Israelis. A June 1961 CIA national intelligence estimate on U.S. relations with Nasser, for example, predicted that his brand of nationalism was likely to grow stronger "because it provides an excuse—the wickedness of the great powers—for a host of deficiencies and inadequacies in Arab society."[93] Nasser was not above employing "an oriental bargaining tactic," White House Middle East expert Robert Komer complained to Kennedy in November 1962, whenever he needed to extract himself from a military or diplomatic tight spot.[94] It was always important, Komer mused a year later, to "tak[e] adequate account of the inferiority of the Arab soldier as compared to the Israeli."[95] Perhaps the most pronounced orientalist views, however, were expressed by U.S. diplomats serving overseas, like Harold Glidden, who was stationed in Iraq. "If Arabs ever took over [the] world, they would start instantly to tear it down," Glidden told a reporter shortly after a bloody military coup rocked Baghdad in

early 1963. "Arab values of vengeance, prestige and obsession with feuding are not acclimated to urban society."[96]

The hulking Texan who succeeded Kennedy in the Oval Office later that year did not disagree with this harsh assessment. An ardent friend of the Jewish state and an outspoken foe of radical Arab nationalism since his days as Senate majority leader during the late 1950s, President Lyndon Johnson regarded the Middle East as a backward and exotic corner of the world straight out of *Arabian Nights* and badly in need of westernization. At a White House dinner in April 1964, for example, Johnson toasted King Hussein of Jordan for having "brought that ancient land of the camel, the date, and the palm to the threshold of a bright and a hopeful future."[97] On the other hand, LBJ neither liked nor trusted militant Arab leaders such as Nasser, who seemed to be a cross between Ho Chi Minh and Geronimo. Johnson's sentiments became very clear after Egyptian students staged violent anti-American demonstrations and burned down the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) library in Cairo in December 1964. "One way to react," LBJ told a group of congressmen shortly afterward, was to tell Nasser "to go to hell."[98]

According to Mohamed Heikal, a leading Egyptian journalist and one of Nasser's closest advisers, the feeling was mutual. After Johnson threatened to suspend U.S. economic aid to Egypt in retaliation for the destruction of the USIA facility, Nasser delivered a blistering reply. "Those who do not accept our behavior can go and drink from the sea," he thundered on 23 December. "We will cut the tongues of anybody who talks badly about us." Lest LBJ miss the point, Nasser added, "We are not going to accept gangsterism by cowboys."[99] This outburst helped place America's confrontation with the Arabs into a context any self-respecting Texan could appreciate: cowboys and Indians. While neither Johnson's memoirs nor his private papers make it clear whether he ever cast the problem explicitly in terms of Western civilization versus oriental barbarism, the newly created Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) did remind him of the Viet Cong.[100] When PLO raids against Israeli villages along the Syrian frontier lit the fuse for the Six Day War during the spring of 1967, the Johnson administration knew who wore white hats and who wore black. White House aide John Roche probably put it best in late May when he told LBJ in the vernacular of the Lone Star State, "I confess that I look on the Israelis as Texans and Nasser as Santa Ana."[101]

Israel's stunning victory over the combined forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in June 1967 seemed to confirm a verdict British orientalists had handed down about the Arab East a century earlier. Nasser might invoke the memory of Saladin and appeal to "the 'Holy War' psychology of the Arab world," Secretary of State Dean Rusk prophesied as the clock ticked down toward H-hour in early June, but in the face of superior Western firepower, the Egyptians

would cut and run.[102] Israel's swift seizure of the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights with the blessing of Lyndon Johnson touched off "a riotous wave of anti-Americanism" from Cairo to Kuwait City that John Badeau, Kennedy's ambassador to Egypt, likened to "the Boxer Rebellion in China" seven decades earlier.[103] The implications of the Six Day War for U.S. policymakers were spelled out several years later in a CIA study of the Arab-Israeli conflict. "The June [1967] war was frequently invoked by analysts as proof," the agency's experts concluded in late 1973, that "many Arabs, as Arabs, simply weren't up to the demands of modern warfare and that they lacked understanding, motivation, and probably in some cases courage as well."[104]

For the U.S. public, however, the lessons of the Six Day War grew out of popular culture rather than foreign policy and probably ran more in the direction of David and Goliath tempered by knowledge of the Holocaust. Opinion polls taken shortly after the shooting stopped showed that Americans sympathizing with Israel outnumbered those sympathizing with the Arabs by a whopping 19-to-1 ratio.[105] Predisposed to siding with the underdog, most Americans seemed to regard Israel's smashing victory as the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy. Indeed, one of the hottest-selling paperbacks in June 1967 was James Michener's *The Source*, a 1,000-page epic recounting 2,000 years of Jewish exile, torment, and eventual redemption symbolized by the creation of Israel. Dismissing the notion that his country should remain "a little enclave that thrills the world because its fighters defend themselves against the Arab circle," Michener's Israeli protagonist insisted that the Jewish state could "become a beacon of pure, burning light, illuminating this entire area, forming an alliance with a prospering Arab world."[106] Readers thumbing through the *National Geographic*'s fifteen-page photoessay on the Six Day War six months later were reminded of just how close that light had come to burning out. "I am the only member of my family who survived Buchenwald," reads the caption alongside a snapshot of an Israeli commando who had helped defeat three Arab armies. "This time I have a gun to fight with, a country and a cause to serve."[107]

In short, for Americans Israel's military triumph in June 1967 completed the transformation of Jews from victims to victors while branding the Arabs as feckless, reckless, and weak. For a generation that remembered appeasement as a dirty word and regarded Nasser as a Hitler on the Nile, the Six Day War closed the book on Anne Frank and fulfilled the dream of *Exodus*. The burned-out tanks that littered Egypt's Sinai Desert and Syria's Golan Heights and the angry mobs who burned Uncle Sam in effigy from the Gulf of Sidra to the banks of the Euphrates confirmed for many Americans that the Arabs did not have an inferiority complex; they were simply inferior. As Lyndon Johnson settled into a Vietnam-induced early retirement at the LBJ Ranch in January

1969, his disappointment that the Indians held the upper hand in Southeast Asia was tempered by his realization that, in the Middle East, the cowboys were winning.

True Lies?: From Black September to Desert Storm

For many Americans the darkest and most chilling image to emerge from the Middle East before 11 September 2001 may well date from September 1972. As Richard Nixon moved inexorably toward a landslide victory in his bid for a second term inside the Beltway, a small band of Palestinian commandos shot their way into the Israeli compound at the Olympic Village just outside Munich, the city that thirty-four years earlier had become synonymous with totalitarianism and appeasement. While the whole world watched in horror, seven Black September terrorists mowed down eleven defenseless Israeli athletes during an airport shootout with German police. For the next twenty years both U.S. popular attitudes and foreign policy toward the Middle East would be preoccupied with combating Palestinian terrorists and their patrons such as Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Like most Americans, Richard Nixon was appalled by the awful news from Munich. After watching the Olympic tragedy unfold live via satellite, he denounced Black September as "international outlaws of the worst sort who will stoop to anything in order to accomplish their goals" and pledged to help the Israelis rid themselves of the Palestinian terrorists whose cruelty knew no bounds.[108] Indeed, although he occasionally lambasted Jews critical of his administration in language that shocked insiders like national security adviser Henry Kissinger, Nixon was a staunch friend of the Jewish state. "In every crisis Nixon stood by Israel more firmly than almost any other President save Harry Truman," Kissinger recalled in his memoirs. "He admired Israeli guts. He respected Israeli leaders' tenacious defense of their national interest. [And] he considered their military prowess an asset for the democracies." Speaking for himself, Kissinger confessed that Israel was also an intensely personal issue. "I could never forget that thirteen members of my family had died in Nazi concentration camps," he noted grimly. "I had no stomach for encouraging another holocaust by well-intentioned policies that might get out of control."[109]

For both Kissinger and Nixon this meant working quietly behind the scenes to broker an Arab-Israeli truce with moderates such as Egypt's Anwar Sadat while isolating extremists like the Black September guerrillas. Despite his role in masterminding the Syro-Egyptian attack on Israel in October 1973, by the end of the decade Sadat was regarded by most Americans and by many Israelis

as the quintessential "good Arab." In Egyptian-Israeli disengagement parleys extending through three U.S. administrations, Sadat struck American policymakers as shrewd, pragmatic, and willing to take enormous risks for peace. Nixon praised Sadat's "great subtlety and sophistication" and called him "a constructive and essential influence for any future Middle East negotiations."[110] Gerald Ford, who had once inadvertently toasted Sadat as the leader of "the great people of the Government of Israel," appreciated the Egyptian president's sense of humor, his straightforward manner, and his diplomatic flexibility.[111] Jimmy Carter, who without Sadat's help could never have launched the Camp David peace process in September 1978, came to admire his Egyptian friend "more than any other leader" and called him "a man who would change history."[112]

Carter, Ford, Nixon, and most other Americans were shocked and saddened on 6 October 1981 when Anwar Sadat was gunned down in Cairo by "bad Arabs," Muslim militants linked to the shadowy Islamic Group. The funeral three days later produced a media frenzy reminiscent of Valentino's death fifty-four years earlier, with a sad-eyed Barbara Walters beaming an informal eulogy of her friend Anwar into millions of American living rooms. The *National Geographic* crew that witnessed Sadat's assassination never forgot the "exceptional beauty about his dark, complex face, noble as a pharaoh's," as he rose to confront his killers, and they never forgave the Bedouin tribesmen who shortly thereafter celebrated the Islamic Group's awful deed.[113] "Sadat was a great and good man," Jimmy Carter remarked upon hearing the sad news, a victim of "his most bitter and dangerous enemies," anti-Western extremists "obsessed with hatred for his peaceful goals."[114] A latter-day pharaoh, Carter added four years later, Anwar Sadat had died "at the hands of misguided religious fanatics."[115]

Although few Americans realized that "assassin" was an Arabic word, many probably believed that the brutal act of terrorism in the streets of Cairo, like Black September's bloody raid outside Munich nine years earlier, was very much in keeping with the Arab character. Seven months before the Olympic massacre, a retired State Department Middle East expert had published a psychological profile warning that the repeated humiliations inflicted by Israel would unleash a "collective need for vengeance" deeply rooted in Arab culture. "It is difficult to describe the depth of the Arabs' emotional need for revenge, but suffice it to say that Islam itself found it necessary to sanction revenge," Harold Glidden observed in February 1972. "The felt need for revenge is as strong today as it was in pre-Islamic times."[116]

Other orientalist broadsides followed in quick succession. Raphael Patai, an Israeli-educated anthropologist who had taught Middle Eastern studies at Princeton, Columbia, and other American universities, offered his readers a

bleak view of the "backwardness, cultural decline, indeed, fossilization" of the Arab world in 1973. The troubled relationship with the West, Patai explained, was the result of everything from prolonged breast-feeding to faulty toilet training, all of which "produced a disturbing inferiority complex in the Arab mind which in itself made it more difficult to shake off the shackles of stagnation."[117] Two years later British orientalist John Laffin informed the American public that "violence exists at every level of Arab life," thanks mainly to "poverty and frustration—sexual, economic, [and] political." Long ago, Laffin added, "history 'turned wrong' for the Arabs," leaving them subordinate to the Western powers. The "consequent trauma," he concluded, was "a principal reason for the great psychological sickness which fell like a plague upon the Arab race."[118] William Brown, a U.S. diplomat posted to Cairo and Beirut during the 1960s, confirmed Patai's and Laffin's orientalist diagnoses in a 1980 retrospective aptly titled *The Last Crusade*. Arab nationalism was "beyond the control apparatus of any state" and had "a reactive quality arising from the Arabs' experience with the West," Brown observed. "A relative and tolerant perspective is not possible within the Arabs' world of absolute and God-given truth."[119]

Critics such as Edward Said were quick to challenge these orientalist assumptions. As early as 1978 Said insisted that such pathological stereotypes of the Arabs constituted little more than self-serving rationalizations for Western cultural and economic imperialism. "Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of *jihad*," he observed bluntly. "Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world." The net effect of this fear was ignorance, Said concluded in the final chapter of *Orientalism*, ignorance that seemed destined "to keep the region and its people conceptually emasculated, reduced to 'attitudes,' 'trends,' statistics: in short, dehumanized."[120] Throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s Said broadened his critique, stressing that America's habit of viewing "Arabs as basically, irrecusably, and congenitally 'Other'" clearly reflected "racist overtones in its elaboration of an 'Arab' anti-democratic, violent, and regressive attitude to the world." This, Said pointed out in *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993, "contributed to the polarity that was set up between democratic Israel and a homogeneously non-democratic Arab world, in which the Palestinians, dispossessed and exiled by Israel, came to represent 'terrorism' and little beyond it."[121]

Said's trenchant criticism notwithstanding, the reading public was treated to a steady diet of orientalism American style during the Reagan and George Bush years. In a revised edition of *The Arab Mind* that appeared in 1983, Raphael Patai saw little hope for peace or progress in the Middle East unless the children of Ishmael could "devote their best talents not to fighting windmills, but to constructing the new Arab man."[122] Six years later David Pryce-

Jones, a crusty veteran of Britain's Suez War and a self-styled orientalist, published *The Closed Circle*, a scathing anti-Arab diatribe that recycled many of the stereotypes popularized by Glidden, Patai, and Laffin. Because the Arabs remained trapped in a brutal, patriarchal, and tribal society whose members "really believe in their inalienable right to be exploited by people of their own nationality," Pryce-Jones concluded that autocracy, not democracy, would always carry the day: "Instead of construction, destruction; instead of creativity, wastefulness; instead of body politic, atrocities."[123]

The most widely disseminated orientalist screed of the decade, however, was probably Bernard Lewis's "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly*'s cover story for September 1990. A British-born, Princeton-based founding father of the modern academic discipline of Middle Eastern studies, Lewis attributed the wave of anti-Americanism sweeping the Muslim world to an irrational hatred of Judeo-Christian civilization exacerbated by "the revival of ancient prejudices" among Islamic extremists. Reminding the *Atlantic*'s readers that "America had become the archenemy, the incarnation of evil," for theocratic zealots from Lebanon to Iran, Lewis prophesied that Islam's "war against modernity" would eventually escalate into "a clash of civilizations."[124]

Anyone studying the magazine's cover, which showed a bearded and turbaned Muslim whose scowling eyes were riveted on the stars and stripes, might reasonably have concluded that the clash was already under way. Anyone reading the blurb in the *Atlantic*'s table of contents, which insisted that the "intense—and violent—resentment of the West" was merely the latest in "a long series of attacks and counterattacks, jihads and crusades, conquests and reconquests," might well have wondered whether Lewis had uttered a self-fulfilling prophecy. Indeed, critics such as Georgetown University's John Esposito have suggested that academic orientalists, U.S. policymakers, and the American media had, like twentieth-century Scheherazades, conjured up the genie of rampaging "Islamic fundamentalism" to fill a "threat vacuum" created by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.[125]

A quick look at how Arabs have been depicted in everything from pulp fiction to television during the past twenty years confirms that orientalism American style remained alive and well in both popular culture and the mass media. A "Saturday Night Live" spoof during the 1979 oil shortage, for example, featured "The Bel Airabs," poor Bedouins transplanted to California like latter-day Beverly Hillbillies thanks to the dumb luck of Abdul, the leader of the clan: "And then one day he was shootin' at some Jews, and up through the sand came a bubblin' crude."[126] Nor was such imagery uncommon in prime time, where during the late 1970s Arabs were the frequent butt of jokes delivered by everyone from Sonny and Cher to Archie Bunker on "All in the Family." Angered by the shoddy treatment he received from an Arab dry

cleaner, Archie orders Edith, "Don't go near that Ay-rab again unless you got a dirty camel to wash." When son-in-law Michael objects to the nasty stereotype, Archie retorts, "They're born pirates, all of 'em."[127]

Arabs have fared little better in American cartoons. When Tarzan inadvertently insulted a thin-skinned sheik during the 1980s, a sword-wielding comic-book Arab shrieked, "Only this blade will satisfy me . . . letting flow your coward's blood!" Later that decade *Marvel Comics*' GI Joe and a band of U.S. commandos rescued two Americans held hostage by a stereotypical Arab potentate who "has been known to behead jaywalkers." In 1985 one political cartoonist provided a nasty portrait of "the Arab mind" that included "vengeance," "fanaticism," and "blackmail" among its many lobes. "What is the difference between a rat and [Yasser] Arafat?" another asked after sketching two vermin, only one of whom was a rodent, crawling out of the garbage. "Answer: The rat has more friends." Still another humorist drew a captionless panel showing a white-robed Arab executioner holding a bleeding globe in one hand and a bloody scimitar in the other.[128]

This orientalist imagery was no less pronounced among newspaper reporters and television journalists. "It became very clear to me," Jim Hoaglund of the *Washington Post* recalled in early 1982, "that in Western writing in general—not just newspapers but in books and certainly in cartoons—there was quite a distorted image" of a Middle East peopled by "Arabs sneaking about with knives in their teeth."[129] A year later John Cooley of the *Christian Science Monitor* agreed that "certainly Arabs have been unfairly portrayed" in both print and electronic media. Indeed, Cooley added, "Arabs are probably still the only group in the U.S. that anyone dares to portray in pejorative terms."[130] As early as 1975 ABC television anchorman Peter Jennings acknowledged that "there is definitely an anti-Arab bias in America," a bias that had led "unfortunately, [to] stereotyping in the media."[131] In the early 1980s Jim Lehrer, cohost of the PBS evening news hour, agreed that network television's fascination with terrorism and sectarian strife in the Middle East "feeds the stereotype that many Americans have of Arabs as bloody people who just go out killing each other all the time."[132]

When pressed by an interviewer to suggest what Arabs and, more generally, Muslims might do to counteract this stereotype, Lehrer did not mince words. "This is not a public relations image problem," he observed archly, his mind's eye doubtless riveted on the fifty-two Americans recently released from 444 days of captivity in Iran and on the never-ending civil war in Lebanon; "it's a reality problem."[133] Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* agreed. "When Mr. Arafat goes on an American television program," Lewis told Arab American media consultant Edmund Ghareeb, "he comes through as a mixture of that romantic desert Arab you spoke of, but without the romance."

When Ghareeb retorted that many Americans mistakenly seemed to regard Arafat as "a bloodthirsty terrorist," Lewis shot back, "But you know, he does look a bit bloodthirsty."[134]

What Lehrer termed "a reality problem" was clearly exacerbated, however, by how Arabs were portrayed in pulp fiction. Beginning in 1975 with the publication of Thomas Harris's *Black Sunday*, which revolved around a Palestinian plot to commandeer the Goodyear blimp and terrorize the Super Bowl, a slew of paperback potboilers with titles such as *Jihad, Phoenix*, and *On the Brink* routinely depicted Arabs as either ruthless and brutal thugs or greedy sheiks eager to bankroll their bloodthirsty brethren. But the most widely read mass market novel extolling orientalist stereotypes of the Arabs was probably *The Haj*, a prequel written by Leon Uris in 1984, a quarter-century after the publication of *Exodus*. Set in the Holy Land during the 1930s, *The Haj* describes Palestinians in language that would have made even right-wing Israeli leaders like Menachem Begin blush. "Every last Arab is a total prisoner of his society," a British officer tells Uris's proto-Israeli protagonist. "The Arabs will never love you for what good you've brought them. They don't know how to really love. But hate! Oh God, can they hate!"

Lest readers miss the point, Uris hammered home this orientalist verdict in terms that prefigured those employed by Bernard Lewis six years later. The Arabs "have a deep, deep, deep resentment because you have jolted them from their delusions of grandeur and shown them for what they are—a decadent, savage people controlled by a religion that has stripped them of all human ambition . . . except for the few cruel enough and arrogant enough to command them as one commands a mob of sheep." This anti-Arab soliloquy ends with a message intended not only for Zionists during the 1930s but also for Americans during the 1980s: "You are dealing with a mad society and you'd better learn how to control it." With nearly 2 million copies of *The Haj* in print by 1985, that message seems to have been well received by the reading public.[135]

As it had for more than a generation, the film industry projected orientalist images from the printed page onto the silver screen throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. As early as 1977, when the big-budget *Black Sunday* became the summer's hottest hit, Hollywood's Arabs were consistently depicted as homicidal fanatics who were, more often than not, too clever by half. Occasionally Arabs came across as comical, as in *Back to the Future*, a 1985 blockbuster in which bungling Libyan hitmen out to steal enough plutonium to build an atomic bomb shoot Christopher Lloyd and inadvertently send Michael J. Fox and his nuclear-powered DeLorean back to 1955.

U.S. audiences, however, were more likely to cringe than chuckle when an Arab appeared on the screen. In *Delta Force*, a 1986 action film loosely based on the brutal murder of a U.S. sailor aboard a hijacked TWA jetliner a year

earlier in Beirut, Chuck Norris and a team of commandos rescued a planeload of Americans held hostage by psychopathic Palestinian terrorists. Eight summers later in *True Lies*, a CIA superman played by Arnold Schwartzenegger single-handedly thwarted "Crimson Jihad," a gun-toting band of Arab wildmen planning to launch a nuclear attack on Miami from their base in the Florida Keys.[136] Despite protests from Arab Americans, at the end of the twentieth century the film industry continued to offer orientalist fare like *Executive Decision* (1996) or *The Mummy* (1999), with Arabs depicted as airborne fanatics or feckless and foul-smelling opportunists. "To Hollywood, the Arab is the wife-abuser who wants to buy Steve Martin's house in *Father of the Bride II*," Ray Hanania complained in *Newsweek* in late 1998. "We Arabs murder innocent airline passengers in *Executive Decision* simply because it makes us feel good."[137]

The Israelis, by contrast, tended to fare somewhat better than the Arabs at the hands of Hollywood and the mass media. To be sure, the *New York Times* and the major television networks were highly critical of both Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and its repression of the Palestinian "Intifada" uprising that erupted on the West Bank in December 1987. Ze'ev Chafets and Stephen Karetzky responded by publishing stinging exposés in which they charged that the media were employing a double standard. Why was there so much coverage of the massacre of nearly 1,000 Palestinian refugees just outside Beirut in September 1982 by Lebanese Christians allied with Israel, Chafets and Karetzky wondered, and so little outcry over the far greater slaughter seven months earlier at Hama, a city 100 miles north of Damascus, where Syria's president Hafez al-Assad ordered his troops to kill more than 10,000 Syrians whose only crime was to oppose his dictatorship?[138] Israeli foreign minister Moshe Arens reacted in a similar fashion to U.S. criticism of Israel's crackdown on the West Bank. "The media coverage of the Intifada," Arens told U.S. Jewish leaders in early 1989, "had successfully switched the focus from the Arab-Israeli conflict—in which Israel appeared as little David—to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which Israel was being made to appear as Goliath."[139]

Yet despite a tendency among militantly pro-Israeli pundits such as *Commentary*'s Norman Podhoretz to imply that media figures critical of the Jewish state were closet anti-Semites, journalists at NBC, *Newsweek*, and the *Los Angeles Times* found fault with Israel because of what its government was doing in Lebanon and on the West Bank, not because most of its citizens were Jews. In any case, Moshe Arens's complaint notwithstanding, most Americans still seemed to identify Israel as more like David than Goliath. Much of the reason probably lies in Hollywood. The 1981 made-for-television movie *Masada*, for example, retold the legendary story of a besieged Jewish fortress on

the shores of the Dead Sea whose heroic defenders, like Davy Crockett at the Alamo, had chosen death rather than submission to Roman imperialism almost 2,000 years earlier.

It was the Holocaust, however, painfully and painstakingly relived with the help of Hollywood, that probably did the most to reaffirm subconsciously Israel's status as an underdog in the hearts and minds of most Americans. The eight-hour miniseries *The Holocaust*, which starred Meryl Streep as a beautiful but doomed twenty-something version of Anne Frank, won the network ratings war during sweeps week in 1978 and later captured eight Emmys. Four years later Streep won an Oscar for her moving performance in *Sophie's Choice*, where she played a concentration camp survivor haunted by having had to choose which of her two children would die at Auschwitz. Once television and film viewers turned their attention from these emotionally charged histories of the Holocaust to the here and now of the modern Middle East, more than a few must have taken comfort from the knowledge that, whatever Israel's faults, it remained the best insurance available against a replay of Hitler's final solution.

An even more riveting cinematic treatment of the Holocaust appeared a decade later with the premiere of *Schindler's List* in December 1993. Shot on location just outside Auschwitz in grainy black and white and directed by Hollywood wunderkind Steven Spielberg, the film told the story of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman whose growing doubts about Nazism and whose simple humanity led him to risk everything to save several hundred Jewish slave-laborers imprisoned at the death camp. Although *Schindler's List* won seven Oscars, including those for best director and best picture, the film was banned in April 1994 by many Islamic countries, less because its brief nude scenes and graphic violence offended Muslim sensibilities than because its subliminal message ran counter to the abiding anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiments of some Arab audiences.[140]

A year earlier a very different movie, Disney's *Aladdin*, had won two Oscars while offending the sensibilities of many Arab Americans. Ostensibly an animated love story about two rather westernized Arabs, Aladdin and Princess Jasmine, whose English was flawless, Disney's animators and lyricists depicted most of the other inhabitants of their imaginary oriental sheikdom as frightful thugs sporting turbans, daggers, and thick accents. The Academy Award–winning soundtrack written by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman summed up *Aladdin*'s subconscious orientalism most succinctly. The first song, "Arabian Nights," contains an opening lyric straight out of *Innocents Abroad*. "Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place, where the caravan camels roam," a swarthy merchant croons, "where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face, it's barbaric, but hey, it's home." The second tune, "A Whole New World," won a Grammy in March 1993 as "song of the year." Evoking images of a patriarchal oriental past and an egalitarian Western future, Aladdin serenades Jasmine with the promise of "a new fantastic point of view," if only she will let her heart decide. Although repeated protests from the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee persuaded Disney Studios to remove the most offensive lyrics from the home video distributed later that year, *Aladdin* revised still reflected the orientalism deeply embedded in U.S. popular culture during the preceding two centuries.[141]

As it did for many people living next door to hostile neighbors, xenophobia came naturally to most citizens of the fledgling United States, surrounded as they were by Spanish imperialists, British provocateurs, and Indian infidels who seemed determined to destroy God's American Israel. Because Jews and Muslims were neither Christian nor Anglo-Saxon, both groups were suspect in the eyes of most Americans, who throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth relied on a well-defined hierarchy of race and culture in dealing with foreigners who looked and prayed differently. The missionaries, merchants, and archaeologists who shaped America's understanding of the Middle East from the Barbary Wars through the discovery of King Tut's tomb reaffirmed orientalist stereotypes as old as the Crusades depicting Arabs as exotic, fanatical, and congenitally predisposed toward autocracy. Likewise, America's blue-blooded elite and its blue-collar workforce usually greeted the millions of Jewish immigrants who arrived in the United States between the Civil War and the Balfour Declaration with anti-Semitic epithets and ethnic slurs.

Beginning in the 1920s, however, the images of Muslims and Jews as represented in U.S. popular culture began to diverge sharply. Well into the last quarter of the twentieth century, films, books, and magazines continued to depict Arabs as primitive, untrustworthy, and malevolent figures who bore close watching. By contrast, the eagerness of Jewish newcomers to assimilate themselves into Main Street's mainstream and the awfulness of the Holocaust combined to reduce American anti-Semitism and to stimulate U.S. support for the creation and preservation of Israel, despite Arab objections.

Down through the 1990s, media giants as diverse as *National Geographic* and Disney Studios presented a Middle East in which Israel was cast as an occidental David while Arabs, and Muslims in general, were depicted as oriental Goliaths. Predictably, the Oscar for best documentary in March 2000 went to *One Day in September*, the heartbreaking story of the Israeli Olympians massacred at Munich twenty-eight years earlier. Meanwhile the season's first box-office smash, *Rules of Engagement*, saw Samuel L. Jackson mow down a wild-eyed mob of Islamic zealots in Yemen, and Nelson DeMille's *The Lion's*

Game, a potboiler recounting the fictional exploits of a ruthless Libyan terrorist, topped the *New York Times* best-seller list.

Nevertheless, in the wake of the airborne terrorist attacks on Washington and New York City on 11 September 2001 there were some reassuring signs that life need not always imitate art. Three summers earlier Twentieth Century Fox had released *The Siege*, an eerily prescient film about an ever escalating Muslim reign of terror in the streets of Manhattan that culminates with a group resembling al-Qaeda attacking a skyscraper with a truck bomb and killing 600 New Yorkers. "You have to learn the consequences of telling the world how to live," the terrorist ringleader informs the FBI's Denzel Washington in words that must have made Osama bin Laden smile. Shortly thereafter the Pentagon's Bruce Willis rounds up Arab Americans and briefly places them in detention centers.

Despite causing many more deaths, however, bin Laden's real-life assault on the World Trade Center generated a relatively mild orientalist backlash against America's Muslims. Sadly, there was some racial profiling at airports, a few hate crimes, and even one or two murders. But there was no wholesale violation of the civil liberties of Arab Americans. Indeed, during a visit to Washington's Islamic Center on 17 September, George W. Bush took pains to emphasize that "Islam is peace" and reminded all Americans that they "must treat each other with respect," regardless of race or religion. "The terrorists are traitors to their own faith," Bush told a joint session of Congress three days later, "trying to hijack Islam itself."[142]

Yet lurking just beneath Bush's rhetoric of toleration was a subliminal impulse to demonize Islamic terrorists that echoed earlier orientalist diatribes. "By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions—by abandoning every value except the will to power—they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism," America's forty-third president concluded. "And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."[143] As the grim task of recovering the remains of thousands of Americans entombed beneath the ruins of the World Trade Center entered its sixth month, a truck bomb here or an oil embargo there seemed very likely to resurrect ugly anti-Arab prejudices from the not so distant past. With popular culture saturated by an American-style orientalism dating from the nineteenth century, it should come as no surprise that since 1945 the U.S. public and policymakers have ostracized Arab radicals who threaten Israeli security or challenge Western control over Middle East oil.

The fact cannot be ignored that the reported resources of Mesopotamia have interested public opinion of the United States, Great Britain, and other countries as a potential subject of economic strife. . . . The Government of the United States assumes that there is a general recognition of the fact that the requirements for petroleum are in excess of production and it believes that opportunity to explore and develop the petroleum resources of the world wherever found should without discrimination be freely extended, as only by the unhampered development of such resources can the needs of the world be met.
—Bainbridge Colby, 20 November 1920

Vital issues of principle are at stake. Saddam Hussein is trying to wipe a country off the face of the Earth. . . . Vital economic interests are at stake as well. Iraq itself controls some 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves. Iraq plus Kuwait controls twice that. An Iraq permitted to swallow Kuwait would have the economic and military power, as well as the arrogance, to intimidate and coerce its neighbors—neighbors who control the lion's share of the world's remaining oil reserves. We cannot permit a resource so vital to be dominated by one so ruthless. And we won't.
—George Bush, 11 September 1990

2

Opening the Door

Business, Diplomacy, and America's Stake in Middle East Oil

While the earliest images of the Middle East in the mind of America were products of traditional Bible stories refracted through nineteenth-century orientalist literature and twentieth-century popular culture, the region's most recognizable symbol has probably been the oil well. By 1900 some business leaders and government officials were predicting that the black gold oozing to the surface from western Pennsylvania to east Texas would eventually propel the United States to industrial and military supremacy. The discovery of huge pools of crude oil in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia during the first half of the twentieth century prompted America's largest petroleum firms to obtain concessions in the Middle East and, in the process, to transform themselves into giant multinational corporations.

Founded and managed by entrepreneurs who favored maximizing profits by

POF	President's Office Files
PPP	*Public Papers of the President* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946–2000)
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew, Surrey, England
tel.	telegram
telcon	telephone conversation

Introduction

1. To avoid confusion, the current occupant of the Oval Office will be referred to as George W. Bush. His father, who was president from 1989 to 1993, will be referred to as George Bush.

2. "Text of President Bush's Address," *New York Times*, 21 Sept. 2001.

3. Painter, *Oil and the American Century*; David Schoenbaum, *United States and Israel*; Bill, *Eagle and the Lion*.

4. Hahn, *United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*; Kunz, *Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*; Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*; Freedman and Karsh, *Gulf Conflict*.

5. Fraser, *USA and the Middle East since World War 2*; Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East*; Brands, *Into the Labyrinth*. An exception to this rule is Tillman, *United States in the Middle East*, whose topical approach combines the depth of a monograph with the breadth of a survey.

Chapter One

1. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 79, 163, 177.

2. Said, *Orientalism*, 31–49, 284–328. For an interesting discussion of Said's analytical approach, see Rotter, "Saidism without Said."

3. Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 11–14, 119–53.

4. On the earliest English translations, see the introductory essay in Haddawy, *Arabian Nights*, xv–xvii.

5. Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, xiv–xviii, 190–92.

6. Ibid., 204–6.

7. "Affairs of Greece," *North American Review*, 41 (Oct. 1823): 420.

8. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World*, 154–65.

9. Diary entry, 6 Jan. 1839, in Charles Francis Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 10:90–91.

10. Sachar, *History of the Jews in America*, 48–51, 72–75.

11. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World*, 274–85.

12. "The Dead Sea, Sodom, and Gomorrah," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Jan. 1855, quoted in Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 5.

13. Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought*, xiii–xxi.

14. Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 101–48.

15. Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*, 12–18, 31–34, 77–82.

16. Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 516.

17. Ibid., 101, 431, 433, 499.

18. For the impact of Twain's *Innocents Abroad* and other nineteenth-century tr literature on U.S. popular culture, see Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 16–25.

19. Quoted in Field, *America and the Mediterranean World*, 311.

20. Ibid., 345–59.

21. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 45.

22. Pearson to DOS, 12 Aug. 1906, *FRUS 1906*, 2:1216–17.

23. Leishman to DOS, 8 Aug. 1908, *FRUS 1908*, 747–48, and 15 Apr. 1909, *FRUS 1909*, 563–65.

24. Roosevelt to Spring Rice, 1 July 1907, and to Silas McBee, 27 Aug. 1907, in Morison, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 5:698–99, 774–75. On Roosevelt's orientalized views of Egypt and the Arabs, see Brands, *Last Romantic*, 33–36, 660–61.

25. Roosevelt to Lyman Abbott, 29 May 1908, in Morison, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 6:1042–43. For more on Roosevelt and Jews, see Blum, *Republican Roosevelt*, 37–38.

26. Roosevelt to Lioubomir Michailovitch, 11 July 1918, and to Julian H. Miller, 16 Sept. 1918, in Morison, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8:1350, 1372.

27. Sanders, *Shores of Refuge*, 116–17.

28. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 20–26, 56–59. For the 85,000 figure, see Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, 288–89, and Tessler, *History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 145.

29. Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 46–71.

30. Balfour to William Wiseman, 6 Oct. 1917, and Wilson to Edward House, 13 Oct. 1917, in Link, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:324–25, 371; Lebow, "Wilson and the Balfour Declaration," 507–13.

31. Sanders, *High Walls of Jerusalem*, 594–613.

32. Fromkin, *Peace to End All Peace*, 396–98; Howard, *King-Crane Commission*, 36–51, 270–75.

33. James Harbord, "Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia," 16 Oct. 1919, *FRUS 1919*, 2:849–50, 859–60, 865, 874.

34. Michalek, "Arab in American Cinema"; Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*, 99–117.

35. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*. On the reaction to Lawrence's two books, see Liddell Hart, *T. E. Lawrence*, 403, and Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 782–90.

36. *National Geographic Magazine*, May 1923, 568. For an account of the discovery of King Tut's tomb and its impact on the popular imagination, see John A. Wilson, *Signs and Wonders upon Pharaoh*, 159–66.

37. Williams, "East of Suez," 737.

38. Harnet Chalmers Adams, "Cirenaica," 692, 714–15.

39. Van Der Meulen, "Into Burning Hadhramaut," 387.

40. Whiting, "Among the Bethlehem Shepherds" and "Bethlehem and the Christmas Story"; Keith-Roche, "Pageant of Jerusalem."

41. Keith-Roche, "Changing Palestine," 521, 527.

42. Simpich, "Change Comes to Bible Lands," 708, 710, 730, 748.

43. Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 93–104.

44. Zionist Organization of America membership figures are from David Schoen-

baum, *United States and Israel*, 19. See also Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 225–31.

45. Murray to Acting Secretary of State R. Walton Moore, and Moore memcon, 18 Nov. 1936, *FRUS 1936*, 3:455–59.

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