

TAH Annotated Bibliography on US in the Middle East
Melani McAlister

US Foreign Policy overall

Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line : American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Harvard, 2003)

Connects the Cold War and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, highlighting the extent to which "domestic and foreign policies regarding people of color developed as two sides of the same coin" and "how those racial lenses helped shape U.S. relations with the outside world in the era of American dominance in the international sphere." A very good introduction to the ways in which race figured in expected ways in US foreign policy, so that policymakers pushed for civil rights as a way of enhancing the US image abroad.

Michael Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (Yale, 1988)

This is an older book, but one that does a very nice job introducing the ways in which certain ideological perspectives, including racism, have framed US policymakers' views of the world. Includes a great collection of cartoons.

US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Beacon, 2004).

Written by one of the country's most distinguished historians of the Middle East, this short and accessible book traces the history of European and US involvement in the region, and so gives an excellent sense of the impact of that history. Looks at the history of Iraq, the Palestinian issue, and the importance of oil, as well as the specific worldviews and decision-making of the Bush administration.

Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: US Foreign Policy in the Middle East since 1945* (Univ. of California, 2004).

Details the complex and sometimes inconsistent attitudes and interests that determined U.S. policy in the region, contending that American political activity has been hampered by profound cultural misunderstanding, resulting in unforeseen and unintended negative consequences. Addresses the implications of oil, the persistence of racial and cultural stereotypes (whether anti-Semitic or anti-Islamic) and the importance of Israel in American foreign policy.

Phyllis Bennis and Noam Chomsky, *Before and After: US Foreign Policy and the September 11th Crisis* (Olive Grove, 2002)

Examines the role of US foreign policy in the terrorism/anti-terrorism crisis that began-publicly-with the attack on the World Trade Center, but which in fact has roots in specific Middle East policies long identified with public opposition in the region (for example: support for Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, economic sanctions

responsible for widespread deaths of Iraqi civilians, and support for repressive monarchies and dictatorships throughout the Arab world). Critique of US unilateralism.

Historical Background to September 11th:

History and September 11th, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Temple Univ. Press, 2003).

Probably the best book for brief background materials on 9/11 is the collection It includes some very useful essays on US-Middle East relations and the ideologies that fed the attacks, including an excellent study of “Anti-Americanism” in the Arab world by Ussama Makdisi, which points out that Arabs have in fact had very mixed feelings about Americans, including a good bit of admiration and warm feeling. Michael Hunt’s essay about the “clash of civilizations” is quite useful. And there are a couple of essays on the ideologies that underpin the US response to 9/11, including Emily Rosenberg’s on “Rescuing Women and Children,” and McAlister’s on “A Cultural History of the War without End.”

One particularly valuable component of the book is its inclusions of key Primary Source documents, which could be used in high school or college classes: Samuel Huntingtons’ famous “Clash of Civilizations” essay, a selection from the writings of Islamist thinker Sayd Qutb, and speeches by George Bush, Laura Bush, and Osama bin Laden.

Mary Dudziak, ed. *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment?*

Legal scholar Dudziak’s collection pays close attention to legal and policy responses to the attacks. Collectively the contributors address the question of whether September 11 was a “watershed moment” in history. Most argue that it was not; the claim for an historical rupture belies the realities of multiple historical continuities in US foreign policy and cultural history. The ten articles fall into three categories: first, cultural and historical analyses of the terms of the debates about terrorism and US foreign policy; second, consideration of Islamic responses to the attacks; and third, analyses of the legal and juridical problems that have emerged in the “war on terrorism.”

Leti Volpp’s analysis of the “citizen and the terrorist” is useful and potentially teachable; it uses an array of well chosen vignettes to unpack the construction of “Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim” as a new kind of racialized identity category. There are also two excellent discussions of Islamic theology, by Kahled Abou el Fadl and Sherman Jackson, which offer different and sometimes conflicting visions. Both agree that “Islam” has no single character: “it” is not inevitably tolerant and peaceful, as apologists would have it, any more than it is the jihadist or puritanical, as anti-Muslim experts insist. Together the essays make clear, far more than liberal pieties ever could, the ways in which “clash of civilization” arguments distort the richness and complexity of Islamic thought.

Terrorism and Osama Bin Laden:

Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (Yale Nota Bene, 2001).

Rashid's is the best single book on this history that created bin Laden—it looks at the history of Afghanistan, the ideologies of the Taliban, and the impact of US involvement in the anti-Soviet resistance of the 1980s. The book gives a chilling picture of the thinking of these Islamic militants, but by placing their rise in the context of political developments and state politics, he also makes clear that their views were not those of “Islam” but of a particular group, whose ideologies were formed in a specific historical context.

The role of the media:

Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson, eds. *Embedded: The Media At War in Iraq* (Lyons Press, 2003).

Collection of interviews with 60 leading journalists who were embedded with U.S. troops invading Iraq. The editors begin with a brief history of the relationship between the military and the media and a discussion of the practice of embedding reporters, detailing the pros (greater access and immediacy of reporting) and cons (the greater risks to reporters' lives and their ability to be objective).

Douglas Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

Kellner's analysis focuses on the role of the media in representing 9/11 and the Afghan war immediately after it. Kellner's political agenda is clearly anti-Bush and his arguments are sometimes tendentious, but his insights into the “dominant media frames” that structured news coverage of 9/11 and the war on terror is useful, with many interesting examples.

Iraq war:

Jon Anderson, *Fall of Baghdad*

A very detailed but quite readable account of a journalist for *The New Yorker* covering the beginning of the Iraq war. Details the Iraqis he meets and their reactions of the US invasion.

Christopher Cerf and Micah Sifry, *The Iraq War Reader : History, Documents, Opinions*. (Touchstone, May 2003).

Collection of speeches, documents, articles, and commentary, from a broad range of perspectives --from Ann Coulter to Barbara Ehrenreich and from William Safire to Jonathan Schell. Contributions are organized chronologically, beginning with a section on "roots of the conflict, 1915-1989," and followed by others on the first Gulf War, the impact of September 11, the debates leading to the invasion, and final sections on Iraq's future and that of "pax Americana."

Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (Simon & Schuster, 2004).

This is an insider's account of the decision-making in the Bush administration leading to the Iraq war. Since we broke the Watergate story in the 1970s, Woodward has become one of the country's most influential journalists, and for this book, he had access to every senior White House official, though the official he seems to draw on most heavily is Secretary of State Powell. A highly detailed account that is nonetheless riveting.

James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (Viking, 2004).

Mann's book is accessible and anecdotal, sometimes to the point of being gossipy, but it does a very good job of laying out the ideas and values of leading members of the Bush administration, especially those most invested in the push into Iraq. His portraits of Wolfowitz, Powell, Rice, and Pearle are revealing, and give real insight into the ideas of those "neoconservatives" who drove the Bush administration's post-9/11 foreign policies.

Salam Pax, *Salam Pax: The Clandestine Diary of an Ordinary Iraqi* (Grove Press, 2003).

Salam Pax became a famous web blogger whose description of life under Saddam Hussein and then during the invasion of Iraq gripped thousands of people on the internet. This twenty-nine-year-old gay Iraqi architect writes sharp, candid, and often dryly funny posts that record of the anticipation, anger, humor, and sheer terror felt by an ordinary man under dictatorship and war. The web blog continues, intermittently, at http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/.

US Images of the Middle East

Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge UP, 2004).

Offers a broad survey of the development of Western knowledge about Islam and the Middle East. Beginning with ancient Greek and Roman conceptions of the world, Lockman goes on to discuss European ideas about Islam from its emergence in the seventh century, with particular attention to the age of European imperialism, the era of deepening American involvement in this region, and the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East* (Univ. California, 2nd ed., June 2005)

Examines how popular culture has shaped the ways Americans define their "interests" in the Middle East, arguing that U.S. foreign policy, while grounded in material and military realities, is also developed in a cultural context. American understandings of the region are framed by narratives that draw on religious belief, news media accounts, and popular culture. Weaves analyses of film, media, and music with analysis of U.S. foreign policy, race politics, and religious history.

The Stories from 9/11:

CBS News, *What We Saw : The Events of September 11, 2001, in Words, Pictures, and Video*

A book and CD collection that includes arresting photographs from the day and a narrative of events (in the book), and television news clips and interviews with journalists (on the CD).

September 11th Digital Archive

<http://www.911digitalarchive.org/>

Unrivaled. An extraordinary collection of ordinary people's memories of the days: retrospective accounts, emails written on 9/11 and immediately after, photographs, and more. The collection can be sprawling, and is barely categorized, so it can take some creative searching, but the searching is well worth the effort to get personal, individual stories – not only from NYC and DC, but from people of all ages and races, from all over the world.

Annie Thomas, ed. *With Their Eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero* (Harpertempest, 2002).

Students from a high school near the World Trade Center turn a series of interviews (with classmates, faculty and staff members) about 9/11 into monologue-poems that capture the complex emotions surrounding the event. The texts were originally presented as a performance, and can be uneven. Still, as Thomas explains, the goal was "to capture the ways individual people express themselves in speech," and, indeed, the collective impression is one of a group therapy session that may speak well to high school readers.

Tamara Roleff, *America Under Attack: Primary Sources* (Greenhaven, 2002).

Roleff's useful compendium offers thematically arranged perspectives from witnesses in New York and Washington, DC, U.S. and world leaders, the blamed and the accusers, and war proponents and opponents. Includes journal excerpt from an army chaplain visiting the Pentagon, a transcript of an Osama bin Laden videotape, and personal accounts. The tone is fairly grim, with graphic descriptions at times.

Islam

Basic tenets of Islam:

PBS Islam: Empire of Faith

<http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>

Very simple but informative page: you can find the outlines of belief (and can click for more details), a timeline, and some clips from PBS specials. An excellent resource.

About.com

<http://islam.about.com/blintroa.htm>

Survey of Islam, including numbers of adherents, differences between “Muslim” and “Arab,” and overview of the basic beliefs. Probably the best single site for mid-level detail on Islam.

Islam Online

<http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/index.shtml>

Clear, readable, and yet nicely detailed survey from the perspective of believers. Useful detail and anecdotes.

Sunni-Shia Difference: Islam.about.com

http://islam.about.com/cs/divisions/f/shia_sunni.htm

Straightforward examination of the differences between the two major sects of Islam, Sunni and Shia. Links to other, related articles.

Lived Islam

Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage*.

Ahmed teaches about women’s studies and Islam at Harvard Divinity School. Her autobiography tells of her growing up in Egypt, her education in England, and her move to the United States. It is very much a personal story, but it also aims to show how Islam has different manifestations for men and women – she has a fascinating analysis of the lived Islam of women’s lives versus the textual/Scriptural Islam taught at the mosques.