



MEI Bulletin

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MEI Focuses on Culture

The focus of this edition of the *Bulletin* is the culture of the Middle East. It was inspired by the success of MEI's 2008 Summer Garden Series, "Deconstructing Myths: The New Sounds of the Middle East." First launched in the summer of 2007, the summer series highlights the music, art and cuisine of the region, and this year covered the full geographic and cultural range of the Middle East. The launch event for the series highlighted Morocco and while a heavy downpour kept the band from playing, guests were still treated to fantastic

unorthodox networking event. More than 150 non-profit professionals, entrepreneurs and government staffers converged on the Garden to network over a sampling of hookah, Moroccan music and authentic cuisine prepared for us on site.

We are particularly pleased to have highlighted the true diversity of the Middle East over the course of the series and to have brought new audiences to the Institute.



Performers at MEI's Cultural Series: the Kardelen Turkish Dance Ensemble and pianist Omer Klein and his jazz trio. (Photos: S. Richardson)

food and a display of Moroccan graffiti art. The next event brought clearer skies and a crowd of more than 200 to the garden for a celebration of Turkish culture. Guests were treated to a wonderful performance by traditional dancers plus Turkish coffee and fortune telling. Summer rains again threatened the final event on August 14, but the weather held and MEI's guests enjoyed the beautiful music of Israeli pianist Omer Klein and his jazz trio.

As an extension of the Garden Series, MEI invited DC-area young professionals to "Talk Souq," an

MEI also continued to host guest lecturers and VIPs from the region, including Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani of Pakistan in an event co-hosted with the Council on Foreign Relations. This timely event took place just weeks ahead of Pervez Musharraf's resignation as President of Pakistan. Similar to MEI's timely sponsorship of Benazir Bhutto's appearance in Washington just before her return to Pakistan in 2007, we are once again on the cutting edge of the news, helping to shape the dialogue of important policy issues.

A second special edition of the MEI web publication

[continued on page 2]

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Viewpoints was released at the end of July that focuses on the issue of Iraqi Refugees. Entitled “Iraq’s Refugee and IDP Crisis: Human Toll and Implications,” it features 15 essays from leading experts on topics ranging from the flight of the Christian minority through Turkey, the status of Palestinian refugees living within Iraq, and the problem of “brain drain” among the remaining Iraqi population. It contains more than 60 pages of maps and statistics, a bibliography and testimonies from the refugees themselves. *MEJ* Book Review Editor John Calabrese — who continues to direct the project — has several more special editions in the works, with the next set for release in November 2008.

The special edition of *Viewpoints* attracted media attention and a marked jump in the number of visits to our website. C-Span covered MEI’s event in the Boardman Room to celebrate the launch of the publication. Two contributors to the piece joined me in a panel discussion: Elizabeth Ferris of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement and Iraq expert and *MEJ* Board of Advisory Editors member Phebe Marr. We engaged in a discussion of the many perils facing Iraq’s refugees and internally displaced populations. Phebe Marr also appeared that same morning on C-Span’s Washington Journal to answer questions from viewers about the current crisis. Both events are viewable on C-SPAN and from our website.

In July, we had great news for the George Camp Keiser Library: a generous donation of books from the personal library of Dr. Fahim Qubain, a long-time supporter and one-time employee of the Middle East Institute. The collection of more than 1,000 books is almost entirely in Arabic and will provide exceptional source materials for the library’s patrons. Some of the noteworthy subjects include ethnographic material from Iraq, key PLO documents, historical and religious works about Arab Christians, and Egyptian political publications on Pan-Arabism.



Guests at MEI’s “Talk Souq” event show off their henna.

MEI hosted Dr. Qubain and his wife for a private reception in the Garden and honored him with a special plaque as a gesture of our sincere appreciation.

There is also wonderful news from *The Middle East Journal* this month, with the addition of *MEJ* to JSTOR, the leading online source for academic articles. Now, *MEJ* articles from the first edition in 1947 all the way through 2004 are available as downloadable pdfs to academics, students and others at participating institutions.

As you can see from our activities, increased access to *MEJ*, donations and expanded online publications, MEI continues to actively pursue its mission to educate Americans about the Middle East and its rich heritage.

— Wendy Chamberlin

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As you start to think about year-end giving, please consider making a gift to the Middle East Institute. Your valuable contributions enable the Middle East Institute to continue to be your reliable source for information about a dynamic region in transition. Your gift to MEI is tax-deductible.

On behalf of Middle East Institute, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to you for your belief in our mission and your ongoing support in making the widespread understanding of the region a reality.

The Middle East Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Meet the Scholars: George Harris

MEI Adjunct Scholar George Harris served as the State Department's Director of the Office of Analysis for Near East and South Asia from 1979 to 1995. His more than 20-year career in the US Foreign Service includes many years of service in Washington and multiple postings in Turkey. Dr. Harris joined MEI as an Adjunct Scholar in 2007.

What first stimulated your interest in the Middle East?

I had thought when I went to college that I would be a scientist and major in chemistry. But I had been overseas in the summers before college and in college, and that changed my mind, so I decided that I would like to do something with an international flavor. I looked around to see what area would be the most fruitful to study, and it seemed to me that Western Europe was picked pretty clean. The Soviets, although I was very interested in them, was where lots of people were gravitating. The Far East had some very fine minds, better than mine, and so I thought that the Middle East in the 1940s was not well studied and that I could make a contribution there earlier than elsewhere. It was a rational decision.

Why did you focus on Turkey in particular?

I wasn't influenced by people I knew or events, so much as I thought there was a void there. When I began studying the Middle East, although I studied the whole of it, Turkish literature, or literature on Turkey, was more accessible than the Arab world at that time. And so I gravitated toward Turkey and went there to do my Ph.D. studies. But I followed the events of the whole Middle East and so when I went to work with the government I had a broader mandate.

You were the Director of the Office of Analysis for Near East and South Asia for more than 15 years. Why did you initially decide to work for the Department of State? How would you compare your work in Washington to your experiences overseas?

Initially, I went to Turkey as a graduate student. I knew the country and loved it, and so it was a chance to go back to a place where I could solidify my language skills. I met all the politicians in Turkey. It was a very heady experience in those days because the movers and shakers in Turkey were few and you could get to know the people who were making the decisions. That wasn't true in many other countries. When I served in the embassy, I was the conduit for information passing back and forth with the opposition in the 1950s. I met ex-President Ismet İnönü on several occasions and I knew his top advisors well, so it was an opportunity to know what was going on.

There was a military coup in 1960 when I was in Turkey.

That was a most exciting time. I really enjoyed the possibility of watching something dramatic like that unfold. It was a different era and you didn't feel that there were any security threats to you under any circumstances. In fact, at one point, I drove between tanks that had their guns pointed at each other and I knew that they wouldn't fire while I was there. It was just a very different place. If you went to a demonstration people would say, "why don't you stand here so you can see better." While Americans have had a harder time in the world since, it was a glorious time to be abroad, as people seemed to like you, respect you, and try to go out of their way to help you.

My work overseas was personally rewarding and I learned a great deal, which I used later on, but I couldn't say that it was particularly significant because the Ambassador and I were on different wavelengths. He wouldn't accept anything that I was finding out, and so I can't say that I had a great deal of an impact on anything. But later on, in Washington, we did have something of an impact. I eventually got a signed picture from George H.W. Bush when he was Vice President, thanking us for following the Iranian situation for him.



MEI Adjunct Scholar George Harris addresses a group of students in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Looking towards the future, how do you see Turkey as a player in regional and international politics?

If you had asked me about six months ago, I would have said that they'll be on the sidelines. Certainly in the Arab-Israeli question. They would be cooperative, but I expected that they wouldn't have much of a role. Now I can see that they are questing for a role in the Middle East, particularly in bringing the Israelis and Syrians together. They think they have a place to play since they have implicit leverage over Syria because they control their water supply. Even though Turkey can't do very much about it, it's a lever in the background that people are conscious of so it gives them more of an influence in the situation. And so, they have relations with both countries and they have had some success in brokering these talks.

I think that they're going to try to become a more active player in the general Middle East. They have to be careful in Iraq not to step on our toes, and they have real problems of their own. The Kurds have a quasi-independent state on Turkey's border, which they don't particularly like but they've lived with for almost the last 20 years. They can tolerate that, but it complicates their relations with Iraq and with the United States.

Membership in the European Union has been a topic of discussion for Turkey in recent years. How is the process going? Would you venture a prediction?

It's going extremely slowly. The Europeans don't want to say no but they don't want to say yes. The Turks have made considerable changes in their legal system. The Europeans think that this is more show than real and therefore they have been reluctant to credit Turkey with the goodwill that they ought to have. This is a process that is dragging on and the end is not in sight. Nobody wants to break it off, but events conspire to cause delay and give an excuse for delay, such as the current unsettled condition of the Turkish political scene. The Turks are likely to continue to press for admission to the EU though it's an ignominious process: the Balkan countries, which were under dictators a short time ago, were considered for membership while Turkey is not. They can't understand how that can be since they've been struggling for democracy for over 75 years. I would say that around 2020 things will probably come to a head and we will see whether they will give in. They may and they may not; I don't think you can really predict.

— Ari Gore

The Middle East Journal

The Fall 2008 issue of *The Middle East Journal* covers a broad range of themes by a global mix of scholars. The articles are:

Peter Sluglett, "Imperial Myopia: Some Lessons from the Invasions of Iraq." One of the better known historians of modern Iraq, Peter Sluglett of the University of Utah compares the British and American experiences in the post-World War I era and today.

Amelie Le Renard, "Only for Women: Women, the State, and Modernization in Saudi Arabia." Based on some rare fieldwork in Saudi Arabia, Le Renard, a Ph.D. candidate at Sciences-Po in Paris, discusses how the creation of parallel, women-only institutions in Saudi Arabia have developed and examines their implications.

Philip Robins, "Back from the Brink: Turkey's Ambivalent Approach to the Hard Drugs Issue." Robins, of the Middle East Centre at St. Antony's College Oxford, is a recognized authority on Middle Eastern drug issues. Here he traces the evolution of Turkish policy towards the hard drugs trade over a 30-year period, from an era of government involvement with criminal elements to the present, when Turkey has effectively brought the situation under control.

Andrew Cooper, "Showdown at Doha: The Secret Oil Deal that Helped Sink the Shah of Iran." Based on recently declassified papers at the Gerald Ford library, a New Zealand scholar argues that in 1976 the US and Saudi Arabia colluded to bring down world oil prices, inadvertently destabilizing the Iranian economy and thus indirectly leading to the Iranian Revolution. This article includes previously unpublished material.

Rafi Nets-Zehngut, "State Activity Regarding Collective Memory of the Arab-Israeli Conflict." A look at how Israeli government publications approached two subjects — the 1948 refugee issue and Palestinian infiltrations from 1948-56 — and helped shape Israeli collective memory on the issues.

For the Book Review Article, William Quandt reviews several recent books on United States policy in the Middle East.

— Michael Collins Dunn

“Deconstructing Myths: The New Sound of the Middle East” From Morocco to Israel: Bringing the Best Sounds of the Middle East to Washington

This summer the Middle East Institute enlivened its Islamic Garden with a series of cultural celebrations highlighting Middle Eastern food, wine, art and music. “Deconstructing Myths: The New Sounds of the Middle East,” was a four-part series dedicated to introducing both traditional and modern Middle Eastern themes to an American audience.

On June 27 MEI hosted the first event, “Sounds of Morocco,” co-sponsored by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Moroccan American Cultural Center. Despite being rained out, guests were treated to a mixture of *Gnawa* music — drum-based music with its roots in the slave trade — and *Rai* music, a modern North African funk and hip-hop fusion. There was also an assortment of Moroccan appetizers, wine and desserts as well as a mint tea ceremony. Expert henna artists applied designs to interested guests.



On July 11, MEI hosted a tribute to all things Turkish with “Turkish Groove,” in cooperation with the Turkish Cultural Foundation and ATA-DC. After a lively violin performance by Ilhan Ozulu, accompanied by a Turkish guitarist, the Kardelen Turkish Dance Ensemble wowed the audience with a dynamic performance. When guests were not dancing, eating sweets or sipping strong Turkish coffee, a fortune teller read their futures. This event brought together people from the local Turkish community with a diverse crowd of Washingtonians, and, in the spirit of MEI’s mission, fostered a strong sense of appreciation for the Middle East’s cultural diversity.

“Talk Souq: Not Business as Usual” was held on August 1. Talk Souq was an unorthodox networking event for young professionals in the Washington area. The band “Sounds of Morocco” played a unique blend of sounds from the Maghreb and the Levant as young people danced and relaxed in the *shisha* tent. Refreshments were donated by Steuart Martens of Express Cuisine Solutions. Khan el Khalili Middle Eastern warehouse helped to transform MEI’s garden into a Middle Eastern souq, complete with a café and shisha tent. It was a great success, with guests staying well into the evening.



The last event in the summer series was held on August 14. In “Contemporary Israeli Music,” MEI hosted Omer Klein, an up-and-coming Israeli jazz pianist who traveled from New York for the event. Combining modern jazz with North African musical traditions, Omer Klein and his band delighted the audience with their musical selections. The Embassy of Israel cosponsored the event and graciously provided delicious kosher refreshments and an Israeli wine tasting.

— Kelly Davies and Alex Marquese

Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center Interviews Alicia Adams, Organizer of the Kennedy Center's Arab Cultural Festival

The Kennedy Center, America's national center for the performing arts, is hosting an Arab cultural festival from February 25-March 15, 2009 entitled "Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World." Arab countries from all over the world will be participating. The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center and the Kennedy Center are collaborating on the only curated work for the Festival celebrating Omani culture, "OMAN ... O Man!," created and choreographed by Emmy and Tony Award winner Debbie Allen. Alicia Adams, the Kennedy Center's Vice President for International Programming and Dance, is the key figure organizing the Festival. Ambassador Elizabeth McKune, Executive Director of SQCC, recently interviewed Ms. Adams.

Why did the Kennedy Center decide to focus on the arts of the Arab world at this time?

The Kennedy Center had been considering a festival of the Arab world for some time but the political climate always worked against moving forward. When Michael Kaiser came to the Kennedy Center as President, he decided to move forward, regardless of any events in the region. There are so many wonderful artists that have not been seen in the United States, and we felt that it was our responsibility to present the festival, especially since the Kennedy Center is the national center of the performing arts.

Did you have any previous experience with Arab culture?

Ten years ago, I curated a festival, *African Odyssey*. It was at that time that I became familiar with artists from North Africa — we presented artists from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. It was that experience of working with those artists that made me interested in doing a festival that would involve the entire Arab world. We have continued to present artists from those countries in programs on the Millennium Stage and as part of the Center's Etcetera series, which I also curate.



Alicia Adams of the Kennedy Center

How much lead time do you need to plan such an event, and what is involved in the planning?

I would like as much lead time as possible, but it does not always happen that way. When we did the *Festival of China* in 2005, I began planning and working on it five years in advance; with the Japan Festival in 2008, about two years and with the Arab Festival, again, about two years. Planning these events takes a lot of work, including exploring the culture and visiting the various countries to see the artists and to understand the context in which the work is created. Planning means assessing the work that is available and making choices to determine the right artists to create the right mix of offerings for our audiences at the Kennedy Center. It is always our goal to engage our existing audiences and, at the same time, to reach new ones.

Planning involves budgeting to determine what will be affordable given the resources that we have, while taking into consideration all the costs for the artists including visas, cargo and taxes. Each country is different, so there are different considerations for each. Understanding the applicable laws for each country is essential in creating a program that will be an exciting and dynamic festival.

Was there anything that surprised you about Arab culture?

I don't know that I was surprised, but certainly I have learned a great deal about the complexity and diversity of the societies of the 22 countries with which we engaged. As I began to research the culture, religions and people, I was reminded of the huge contribution that was made by the Arabs to world culture and civilization. Whether it was astronomy, math or medicine, the Arabs made extraordinary contributions to the world's knowledge.

What do you hope your audiences will get from this festival?

I hope that our audiences will experience the beauty and humanity of the cultures of the Arab world. We will

present the best in terms of the performing arts as well as the visual arts, film, literature and food. The Kennedy Center will be transformed by many installations that will be created throughout the spaces of the facility. I hope that it will show a different face of the people of the Arab region — one that is not about politics.

How many people do you expect to be exposed to some aspect of the festival?

Through all of the windows that we will have on this festival, we expect more than 300,000 people to participate or view the festival.

Can you describe how the Kennedy Center is working with the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center?

I was interested in commissioning a new work for young people with Debbie Allen serving as the creator and director. I had a concept in mind, but when I traveled to Oman and saw the country, met the people, and began to understand its history and place in the world, I decided that I would like to do a work that told some of this country's stories. This is a great opportunity to involve young Americans with Omanis for a piece that would allow for the maximum in cultural exchange. The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center expressed interest in the idea, and we moved forward with it. In August, we were all in Oman beginning the process by casting the Omani performers in the work. So, we have begun, and I think that this will be an extraordinary collaboration.

What other artists and artistic groups will be featured?

A few of the companies in the festival are: Simon Shaheen's Aswat, Marcel Khalife, Caracalla Dance Theatre, Kuwait's Al-Bassam Theatre and their production of *Richard III: An Arab Tragedy*, Al Kasaba Theatre, Fathy Salama, Ensemble Al-Kindi with Sheikh Habboush and the Whirling Dervishes of Aleppo and many more. We also will do an exhibit on the traditional wedding dresses from each of the countries in the Arab world and create a souq.

When will tickets be on sale for this event and others?

People can start to purchase tickets in November on the Kennedy Center's website, www.kennedy-center.org.

— Elizabeth McKune

MEI September Book Series

MEI is honored to host a diverse range of speakers to discuss their recently published books on the Middle East during late August and September in order to examine the subjects of reform in the Arab world, the changing situation in Iraq, literature in Libya, the economic boom in the Gulf, rethinking US grand strategy in the Middle East, the US-Saudi strategic relationship, the crisis of US superpower status, the role of Pakistan's military, and a cutting-edge study on understanding how terrorist groups end.

August 28: Marwan Muasher, *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation*

September 3: Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq*

September 5: Ethan Chorin, *Translating Libya: The Modern Libyan Short Story*

September 9: Aamir A. Rehman, *Dubai & Co.: Global Strategies for Doing Business in the Gulf States*

September 11: Kenneth Pollack, *A Path Out of the Desert: A Grand Strategy for America in the Middle East*

September 15: Thomas W. Lippman, *Arabian Knight: Colonel Bill Eddy USMC and the Rise of American Power in the Middle East*

September 18: Gary R. Weaver and Adam Mendelson, *America's Midlife Crisis: The Future of a Troubled Superpower*

September 19: Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the War Within*

September 23: Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qaeda*

All events will be held from 12-1pm in MEI's Boardman Room.
For more information and to RSVP, please visit www.mideasti.org.

The George Camp Keiser Library

In August, the George Camp Keiser Library received a generous donation by Dr. Fahim Qubain from his personal library. The collection, almost completely in Arabic, numbers well over 1,000 volumes. It boasts hard-to-find items from the Arab world collected by Dr. Qubain during his many travels to the region. Subjects of note include important ethnographic material from Iraq, key PLO documents, historical and religious works about Arab Christians and critical Egyptian political publications on Pan-Arabism.

Dr. Qubain was born in Transjordan and immigrated to the United States in 1946. He received a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Wisconsin. A prolific scholar, Dr. Qubain worked for Yale University, the Department of Defense and the Middle East Institute.

The Library is also pleased to announce the publication of its latest online bibliography, *A Research Guide on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Non-proliferation Efforts in the Middle East*. The 52-page guide was authored by spring intern Marice Fernando and is available at the following url: <http://www.mideasti.org/library/research-guide-series>

The following is a sample of recent library acquisitions:

Books marked by an asterisk (*) have been reviewed in the Summer 2008 edition of *The Middle East Journal*.

Arab-Jewish Relations: From Conflict to Resolution? Essays in Honor of Professor Moshe Mao'z / Elieh Po-deh and Asher Kaufman, eds.(2006)*

The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation / Marwan Muasher (2008)

A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East / Lawrence Freedman (2008)

Coming to Terms with the Qur'an: a volume in honor of professor Issa Boullata, McGill University / Khaleel Mohammed and Andrew Rippin, eds. (2007)*

Crossing Boundaries: Gender, the Public, and the Private in Contemporary Muslim Societies / Dale Eickelman, ed. (2008)

Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents / Robert Irwin (2006)

The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq / Peter G.

Stone and Joanne Farchakh, eds. (2008)*

The Friends of God — Sufi Saints in Islam: Popular Poster Art from Pakistan / Jurgin Wasem Fremberg (2006)

Egypt: Through Writers' Eyes / Sahar Abdel Karim, ed. (2007)

Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence / Je-roen Gunning (2008)

Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East / Quil Lawrence (2008)*

The Iconography of Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand / Bernard O'Kane, ed. (2005).

Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a / Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im (2008)

Islamic Literature in Contemporary Turkey: From Epic to Novel / Kenan Cayir (2007)

Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-first Century Pakistan / Robert Thomas Rozenhal (2007)

The Persian Gulf: The Rise of the Gulf Arabs: The Politics of Trade on the Persian Littoral, 1747-1792 / Willem Floor (2007)

Polygamy and Law in Contemporary Saudi Arabia / Maha A.Z. Yamani (2008)*

Popular Islamic Literature in Kazakhstan / Allen J. Frank (2007)

Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean / Kai Kresse (2008)

Uzbek Islamic Debates: Texts, Translations, and Commentary / Allen J. Frank and Jahangir Mamatov (2006)

Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters / Richard A. Clarke (2008)

Latest DVDS

Umm al-Urusa (Mother of the Bride) / Atef Salem [Arabic] (1963)

Yawm Jadid fi San'a al-Qadima (A New Day in Old San'a) / Bader Ben Hirsi [Arabic] (2005)

— Simon Braune

Selected items on Middle Eastern Culture

Bidoun: Arts and Culture from the Middle East

This magazine covers topics on contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa, focusing particularly on plastic arts, such as sculpture and painting. Interviews with artists and reviews of exhibitions, movies and books allow readers to learn more about current regional trends in popular arts and culture from the region.

The Cinema of North Africa and the Middle East / Gonul Donmez-Colin, ed. (2007)

This work provides in-depth analysis of film and cinema in the region. It explores 24 individual films from different countries, among them Morocco, Israel, Turkey and Iran. Many of the essays are written by prominent scholars and writers from the film's country of origin.

Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen / Yosefa Loshitzky (2001)

In *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, Yosefa Loshitzky explores the formation of a national identity in Israel, a country composed of people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and religions. She emphasizes three points in her study of Israeli identity: the Holocaust, the Palestinian population and the paradigm of Western versus Eastern ideas present in the region. Loshitzky attempts to answer these questions through analyzing a select number of films, focusing on the relationships and overlap among the various groups rather than on building clear divides among them.

Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning / Robert Hillenbrand (1994)

This comprehensive study of the history, structure and form of various architectural works across North Africa and the Middle East from the early Middle Ages until the 18th century is rich in terms of the quality of material presented and the depth of the author's analysis. Hillenbrand also tackles the influence of Orientalism on Western scholars' interpretations of Islamic architecture.

The Music of the Arabs / Habib Hassan Touma (2003)

The Music of the Arabs provides readers with a comprehensive background on the history and theory of Arabic music. A disc with seven traditional songs performed by contemporary artists accompanies this study.

Paradise Now / Hany Abu-Assad (2005)

This film, which won the 2005 Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film, follows the story of two young Palestinian men who have agreed to serve as suicide bombers for a local resistance group. Trouble arises, however, when the two men become separated at the Israeli border while on the way to carrying out the attack and one of them starts to get second thoughts. The movie presents the issue of suicide bombing in a way that permits viewers to peer into the minds of its perpetrators.

Revising Culture, Reinventing Peace: The Influence of Edward W. Said / Naseer Hasan Aruri and Muhammad A. Shurayri, eds. (2001)

In this volume, scholars analyze Edward Said's studies of culture — from Orientalism, to the Jewish people and Palestine, to the disability rights movement in the United States. The essays both support and challenge Said's influential works.

With Downcast Eyes / Tahar Ben Jelloun (1991)

In *With Downcast Eyes*, Tahar Ben Jelloun, considered one of Morocco's most famous and accomplished writers, tells the story of a young Berber woman who flees her impoverished home in Morocco to settle in Paris. Although enchanted by the city, she feels bound by a sense of duty to preserve her native culture. The themes of immigration, alienation, and being torn between cultures feature prominently in the novel.

— Jennie Cottle and Elizabeth Perego

Books in Brief: *Palestine, Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg (2005)

In *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg bring the issue of popular culture in Palestine and Israel to the forefront of the discussion on the region, asserting

that it warrants as much attention as the more well-known topics of national security and regional conflict. In their study, they attempt to break away from the traditional views of Zionist discourse and Israeli history, presenting a new dialogue founded on cultural and social history. To this end, Stein and Swedenburg have compiled essays by experts from a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from anthropology, to ethnomusicology, to literary analysis, to political science, producing a truly interdisciplinary, thorough and unique perspective of Israeli and Palestinian society.

Stein and Swedenburg point out the need for greater analysis of political culture in this region, arguing that “politics and power” are inevitably intertwined. They state that to neglect popular culture is to ignore an “expanded conception of the possible avenues and modalities of resistance.”

The essays included represent a myriad of subjects and fields, including music, cinema, literature and mixed media. For example, in her article, “Virtual Nation: Palestinian Cyberculture in Lebanese Camps,” Laleh Khalil looks at the role of the internet in Palestinian refugee camps, analyzing the cultural community of cyberspace and how it enables younger generations to express their own ideas, wishes and worries about their “nonvirtual” lives.

In the realm of film, Carol Bardenstein’s article, “Cross/Cast: Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema,” analyzes the cross-casting of Israelis and Palestinians in each other’s films during the 1980s and 1990s in order to present the overlapping identities of the two groups. This cross-casting challenges the idea of identities as permanent and unchanging. These are just two windows into this dynamic collection. Ultimately, *Palestine, Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture* provides a startling new outlook on the capacity of culture to reveal the complexities of a particular time and place.

— Jennie Cottle

Books in Brief: *Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2*, by Marjane Satrapi (2003 and 2004)

Before the film of the same name, illustrator and author Marjane Satrapi guided readers of her autobiography *Persepolis* through a childhood spent in revolutionary Iran. As a member of a Westernized, upper-class family from Tehran, Satrapi experienced the 1979 Revolution firsthand. The graphic novel allows readers to witness the shifts in Iranian society and culture from the perspective of a child. *Persepolis* additionally chronicles such emotionally charged events in the life of the author as the execution of her beloved Uncle Anoosh at the hands of the Revolutionary Guards. All of these circumstances greatly impacted the author’s life prior to her 1983 departure from Iran for Austria, prompted by her parents’ fear that the brazen teenager would soon run afoul of the same organization that murdered her uncle for supposedly violating the principles of the revolution.

Satrapi’s undertakings and mishaps as a young Iranian teenager in Austria and then upon her return to Iran make up *Persepolis 2*. Much like the first installment, this portion of her autobiography deals with dark issues such as death and loss. It also delves more into Satrapi’s personal struggles, first as an Iranian immigrant grappling with social alienation and racism, but also as a normal teenage girl seeking to make sense of herself and the world around her. Following a bout of depression, Satrapi returns to Iran in 1987, only to find that the Iran-Iraq War has rendered the situation there even more dire than before. After a botched suicide attempt, Satrapi pulls herself out of depression to become a fitness instructor and then an art student at Tehran University. She later marries a fellow student and subsequently divorces him. After a few years of life back in the Islamic Republic, Satrapi tearfully leaves her home and family behind to build a new life in France.

The suffering of an entire nation in the wake of the Islamic Revolution comes to life for readers of *Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2*. Ultimately, Satrapi intricately weaves the political with the personal, simultaneously portraying devastating events like the Iraqi army’s bombing of Tehran while depicting the typical growing pains of a child and adolescent. Characters such as her wise and outspoken grandmother, her evil Austrian landlady Frau Doctor Heller and her loving parents are scattered throughout the novel, and their anecdotes and phrases provide Satrapi with some much-needed humor, comfort and perspective. In both graphic novels, breathtaking illustrations accompany a story that is as poignant as it is heartfelt.

— Elizabeth Perego

MEJ Author Peter Sluglett on the British and American Interventions in Iraq

Your article draws several cogent parallels between the British experience in Iraq — both the World War I Mesopotamian campaign and the subsequent occupation — and the US experience, noting such parallels as inadequate initial intelligence, failure to accurately estimate troop requirements, the role of oil and so on. Without going into the detail that the article does, could you summarize some of the similarities and differences?

There are several parallels, but there are also several major points of difference. In the first place, both the British and the Americans made lofty claims about “rescuing” Iraq from the excesses of a) Ottoman rule and b) the rule of Saddam Husayn. While Iraq was in many ways “neglected” in the late Ottoman period, there is absolutely no comparison between its situation on the eve of the First World War and the fearful dictatorship it endured under Saddam. Much was made at the time of “Ottoman tyranny,” but that was greatly exaggerated, as was the notion that the population of Iraq (or indeed the other Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire) were straining to get rid of the Ottomans. On the other hand, there was no doubt whatsoever of the vicious nature of the Ba‘thist regime and also, most unfortunately, that it was virtually immune to pressure/overthrow from within.

Military unpreparedness is another commonality. The British Indian military administration sent out a small expeditionary force whose remit was gradually expanded far beyond its capacity; it is quite clear that the numbers of US forces in 2003 were utterly inadequate for the task of policing Iraq (although they were sufficient to defeat regular Iraqi forces). Again, both in 1914 and in 2003 the “threat” which the invaders were facing was highly exaggerated: in 1914, there were no large Ottoman troop concentrations in southern Iraq, although British intelligence claimed there were, while in 2003 it seems that both the British and US administrations were at least “economical with the truth” about Iraq’s stocks of weapons of mass destruction. This was suspected in 2003 in some quarters and is becoming increasingly clear from recent accounts such as Ron Suskind’s *The Way of the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).



British troops enter Baghdad in March 1917.

Lack of planning and the failure to grasp the extreme thinness of the line between liberation and occupation can be discerned in both operations. However, the British learned quickly from the “Revolution of 1920,” and introduced a less oppressive and less demeaning political system soon afterwards. The doggedness of the American unwillingness to think about the “day after” is something at which one can only continue to marvel as time passes. For their part, the British had many years of colonial experience and immediately began to set up a British-Indian style administration of the territories they occupied, so that, for instance, public services and utilities were soon functioning in a more or less normal manner. Certainly, the sanctions regime of the 1990s and 2000s had starved Iraq of many items essential to the proper maintenance of its water and electrical infrastructure, but Iraqis generally found it hard to believe that US engineers could not have done a better, faster job, or that the restoration of public services seemed to have been so far down on the list of US priorities. Also, for all of their paternalism, several military and civilian members of the British-Indian expedition had a fair understanding of the Middle East, Arabic, Islam, tribal society and so on; this sort of expertise was almost completely absent among those taking part in the US invasion of 2003. Paul Bremer, who was in charge of the Coalition Provisional Authority, had no previous experience in either Iraq or the Middle East, and only two of his senior colleagues (one, Ryan Crocker, is currently US Ambassador to Iraq) either knew Arabic or had any significant previous Middle Eastern experience. Apparently a grand total of just 63 Arabic speakers came to Iraq with US forces in 2003.

Do you think a better understanding of Iraqi history, particularly of the role that the memory of the British occupation plays in Iraqi nationalist thought, might have helped the US avoid some of the mistakes

made, or perhaps avoid the occupation altogether? Most of the debate about Iraq prior to the war made no reference to any events before 1968 or so.

I would have thought so; certainly the British occupation and mandate used to loom large in Iraqis' understandings of their own past. Given the paralysis of institutions which followed the invasion, an American occupation was inevitable, but serious mistakes were made very early on (most notably the failure to stop looting after the US occupation of Baghdad). This and the lack of US sensitivity to local feelings (and here the small number of Arabic speakers was a crucial deficiency) all combined to cause immense anti-US hostility — which was already at an all-time high in the region for other reasons.



Saddam's Statue is toppled in 2003. (Photo: Department of Defense)

In your estimation, do you think that greater attention was paid to the Soviet experience in Afghanistan prior to the American invasion of that country in 2001 than to the British experience in Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion?

Probably, but the two situations are very different. The nature of US support for the resistance to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was crucial in enabling the Taliban to take over (see *Charlie Wilson's War*¹; and, much more poignantly, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*²). Interestingly, the most commonly mentioned parallel to the situation in Iraq currently discussed by strategists in Iraq is that of the insurgency in Malaya (1948-1960), where the insurgents were not linked to a government, unlike, say, the situation in Vietnam. A recent paper by Milton Osborne questions (quite effectively) the utility of the comparison.³ I very much doubt whether anyone in the US had considered the British experience in Iraq between 1914 and 1932 in the run-up to the invasion of 2003.

What similarities and differences do you see in the political role of the Shi'i clerics in both the British and American occupations?

The British tended to dismiss the Shi'i clergy as backward and obscurantist, ignoring or forgetting the generally positive role many of them had played in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution only a few years earlier (1906-11). Also, most of the Shi'i clergy urged their followers to reject British (foreign) rule, and in that sense they were more "advanced" than the Sunni political classes, who had little difficulty in carrying out an almost seamless transfer of their loyalty from the Ottomans to the British. This was aided by the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a Sunni institution, which employed Sunnis, Jews and Christians in its administration, but very few Shi'is (who themselves often disdained state employment). Faysal and the British expelled their leading Shi'i critics to Iran in June 1923, which effectively ended Shi'i clerical protest. With the onward march of secularism, the clerics lost much of their political clout until the rise of the events which ultimately led to the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It's important to understand that in the current situation in Iraq (and in Iran) "the Shi'i clergy" are not a monolithic entity; some are completely independent politically, some support the Iranian notion of *vilayet-i faqih* ("rule of the jurist") and some reject it completely. Also, as Patrick Cockburn's recent book⁴ emphasizes, Muqtada al-Sadr's role as the standard bearer of the dispossessed Shi'i masses relates to an



Sadr City, Baghdad. (Photo: Department of Defense)

1. George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2003).
2. Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (London: Penguin, 2007).
3. Milton Osborne, "Getting the Job Done: Iraq and the Malayan Emergency," The Lowy Institute for International Policy, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=215>.
4. Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq* (New York: Scribner, 2008).

important trope in recent Iraq history, the gap between the higher clergy and the Shi'i poor. The latter seek political rather than religious solutions.

The British ultimately installed a monarch, King Faysal, to rule Iraq. Beginning with the Bakr Sidqi coup of 1936, the first Arab military coup in modern times, Iraq began a long series of military coups. With the possibility that American troops may be drawn down in the coming years, how strong of a threat do you believe there is that an autocrat may step into any resultant power vacuum and supplant Iraq's democratic institutions?

The coup of 1936 took place largely because the British either could not install or could not be bothered to install a stable system of government, which led to the "relative autonomy of the state." The military was the strongest power bloc in the state and was thus able to capture it. Apart from the period between 1945 and 1958 (and even this is arguable) Iraq has had military rule or dictatorship since 1936. Unfortunately, the United States' understandable preoccupation with "order" and "stability" is likely to enhance the role of the army and the security services, making the scenario of a military takeover well within the realm of possibility.

— Michael Collins Dunn



An Iraqi soldier in 2008. (Photo: Department of Defense).

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Beyond the Beltway

New developments in the region provoked a substantial amount of interaction between our scholars and the media. From potential peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors to the continuing US-led military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, our scholars analyzed a wide array of events in the Middle East. They were cited more than 300 times in newspapers, magazines and online articles. They also were featured regularly on a number of television networks including Al Jazeera, the BBC, Bridges TV and C-SPAN. The global reach of MEI Scholars extended to more than 30 specific countries and in several languages, including Chinese, Arabic, German and French. The following is a brief selection of their contributions.

MEI in the News

On July 17, the *International Herald Tribune* published an article co-authored by Karl F. Inderfurth and MEI President **Wendy Chamberlin**. Addressing the trilateral relationship between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, their article advised, “All three countries need to engage in active, high-level diplomacy aimed at stemming the spread of extremism in their common neighborhood ... [India, Pakistan and Afghanistan’s] security fates are intertwined.”

MEI Scholar-in-Residence **Marvin Weinbaum’s** analysis of the meeting between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi appeared in *USA Today* and more than a dozen other papers across the US. Weinbaum also published a commentary on a recent bombing in Afghanistan, which appeared in more than 30 newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* and the *International Herald Tribune*. His comments also were widely published in Pakistan-based blogs. Adjunct Scholar **Alex Vatanka** was cited in the *Christian Science Monitor* and *Yahoo News* in an article that suggested that Iran might be more vulnerable than it appears. Adjunct Scholar **Greg Myre** reviewed a new book by Middle East expert Kenneth M. Pollack in the *Washington Post*. MEI Vice President **Michael Ryan** wrote the cover story on American soft power in the Maghreb for the August 2008 issue of *Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst*. MEI Book Review Editor **John Calabrese** wrote an article for the same issue on “Militants and the Kurdish Question in Iran.”

In an op-ed in the *Baltimore Sun*, Adjunct Scholar **David Mack** argued that military escalation alone in Iraq is doomed to fail. Mack also appeared in a *Newsweek* article spotlighting Ryan Crocker, the US Ambassador to Iraq. In the article, Mack recalled Ambassador Crocker as “a no-frills diplomat, very different from the stereotypical ambassador who goes to fancy champagne cocktails.” Also providing commentary on the situation in Iraq were Adjunct Scholar **Louay Bahry**, who was interviewed by the *Dallas Morning News*, and Adjunct Scholar **Mishkat Al Moumin**, who appeared on NPR’s Diane Rehm Show and C-SPAN’s Washington Journal. John Calabrese also appeared on Washington Journal to discuss Iran and the US-Iran relationship.

Around Town

MEI President Wendy Chamberlin appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 25, 2008 to testify on US aid to Pakistan. In praising the new aid bill by Senators Joe Biden and Richard Lugar, Ambassador Chamberlin warned of the danger of focusing solely on the money allocated to projects, rather than concentrating on the impact made by specific financial investments, advising, “it becomes an accounting issue. It ought to be an accountability issue ... with this legislation, we must build in efforts to measure the programs and our assistance by the impact it has on the lives of Pakistanis.”

Adjunct Scholar **David Newton** spoke in early June at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill, discussing the need for a diplomatic surge as part of US foreign policy. Also in early June, MEI Adjunct Scholar **Peter Bechtold** appeared as guest lecturer for The George Washington University Elliott



MEI President Wendy Chamberlin Speaks at the University Club in Washington, DC.

School's Summer Intern Seminar.

Greg Myre addressed an audience at the Palestine Center in early July, speaking on the possibilities and challenges of Palestinian reconciliation. MEI President Wendy Chamberlin spoke at the University Club in early August, focusing on internal Pakistani politics and providing insight on the government's stability.

Beyond the Beltway

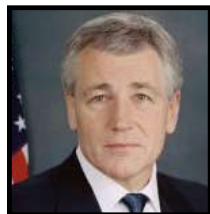
MEI Adjunct Scholar **Roby Barrett** briefed 300 senior NCOs and officers on Gulf security and US foreign policy in the Middle East at the Air Force Special Operations School in Florida. Adjunct Scholar **Wayne White** also presented to the United States Air Force in late June in upstate New York.

In July, Marvin Weinbaum helped organize a three-day conference in Istanbul titled "Afghanistan's Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia and China." Dr. Weinbaum moderated each panel session and provided an overall summary of the issues. He later attended a conference in London where he presented a paper on Afghanistan-Pakistan relations.

— Ari Gore

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