

## The Risk of Knowing

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The deceptive claims offered by the Bush administration to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq are on record. They implicated Congress and the mainstream media that supported them in violation of international law and the Constitution. Deception was designed to blunt the impact of public opposition to the war, thus confirming the fear of an informed and aroused public opinion among those whose overt contempt appears to belie any such position.

In the summer of 2008, the media was reported to have demoted the war in Iraq to “the back burner,” allegedly due to lack of public interest, the expense of wartime coverage, and the competition of the presidential campaign (Stelter C4). Iraq had become “like a conversation killer,” according to an American correspondent in Baghdad, which was meant to explain why its coverage was “scaled back.”

But was the scaling back a response to lack of public interest or loss of public confidence in media coverage of the war or something more? There was a photograph that accompanied the story; it was of a weeping Iraqi woman. Underneath the photo, the caption read: “For the people in Iraq, the war is fulltime. A woman wept as the body of a relative was borne to burial in Najaf” (Stelter C4). The juxtaposition of the image and the story underlined the contrast between those for whom the war was “fulltime” and those who had no time for it. What explained the apparent failure to connect, the inability to see and understand and empathize with human loss, and to feel some sense of responsibility? Was it indifference or a reflexive numbing that had become a long-term habit?

There were other crises in the Middle East that also appeared to have been scaled back in the media or else were offered with inadequate or absent historical explanation. Washington’s backing of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon in the summer of 2006 fits this category. The coverage, or lack thereof, of the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the West Bank and Gaza does not differ. It is viewed largely through the eyes of Israeli officials, excluding left-leaning Israeli critics. As to accounts of the region that would allow Americans to hear the “Voices of a People’s History,” they are rare insofar as the mainstream media is concerned.<sup>1</sup> To include them could open a Pandora’s box of awkward questions about who determines what we know and why, and worse, who makes policy and in whose interests. Transposing such questions to the analysis of Middle Eastern elites and regimes

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with a “special relationship” to Washington would be no less important and taboo.

In practice, the Middle East is and has been a taboo subject, which does not contradict the fact that it has become an increasingly popular subject of discussion. The taboo refers to the habit of political cover-up and the absence of straight talk, the caricatured images that pass for analysis. Those images offer a largely undifferentiated monolith of the Arab world defined by its predilection for violence, ethnic hatreds, and tradition-bound behavior. In this allegedly wretched context, the recurring theme is of the nasty oil-producing monarchs, the forever-warring and quarreling Arabs, the permanently intransigent Palestinians, and in contrast, the image of Israel whose peacemaking efforts are unappreciated. For the rest, state and nonstate actors are arrayed on a continuum that tilts heavily in the direction of the robed “extremists,” without explanation as to why opposition has assumed such a form save as proof of the pervasive and fearsome “clash of civilizations.”<sup>2</sup>

After the 1979 Iranian revolution, and even more after the events of September 11, the tendency to reduce all politics and conflict to religious differences, notably the Sunni-Shi'i divide, became commonplace. In practice, religious designations often served as the exclusive identifiers of Arab and Iranian politics and society, producing a hardened pattern of reductive simplicity that was seldom challenged in the absence of a different understanding of the “troubled” region. The approach remains in place.

Saddam Hussein was not a case apart in this context save that what attracted Washington to Iraq was routinely excluded from official accounts of policy, namely, its oil wealth. It was Iraqi oil and the geopolitics of the region that shaped U.S. policy, which explains U.S. support for the Iraqi dictator after the Iranian revolution of 1979 that ended the Shah's reign. In the 1980-88 war between Iraq and Iran, Washington provided support that included the sale of weapons of mass destruction, as the U.S. Congressional hearings disclosed (Gendzier, “Democracy” 202-12). With Saddam Hussein's wrong turn in Kuwait, however, the former recipient of U.S. favors became anathema. Gulf War I followed and then the sanctions and the build up to Gulf War II and now.

For those committed to knowing what had happened and why, information existed though it was not always readily available. Internet access to national and international news sources, the formidable efforts of independent organizations in making past and present U.S. policies known to the public, and the availability of the National Security Archive combined to make a difference in the struggle to know. But for many, competing obligations defeated the time and effort involved in retrieving such information. And for others, the absence of prior knowledge and the reliance on media distortions combined to promote a confident indifference, if not arrogance, about unconventional sources challenging official news and views of the Middle East.

The effort in maintaining such a state of ignorance is difficult to exaggerate. In the case of Iraq, as the discussion that follows indicates, it was the fear of a negative public opinion that led to the collaboration of military analysts with major mainstream media to assure the proper media message. That message was designed to block the risks of

independent critical judgment of a war whose unfolding evoked criticism from the outset. But other cases involving U.S. support for declared and undeclared wars in the Middle East generated similar concern lest public opinion demand to know and challenge government policies. The risk was particularly acute in democracies, as the work of Alex Carey, Noam Chomsky, as well as Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, has pointed out,<sup>3</sup> where the manufacture of consent is designed to secure the legitimation of policies and accompanying interests without resort to overt coercion. It was to avoid the risk of knowing the human, social, and political costs of war and conflict in the Middle East, along with who supported them and why, that efforts to influence media, shape government legislation, and monitor academia assumed importance.

Consider first the information wars on U.S. policy in Iraq. On April 20, 2008, *The New York Times* ran a front-page story by David Barstow that exposed the "Pentagon's Hidden Hand" in TV and radio news of Iraq, Guantánamo Bay, and "terrorism coverage." In its opening remarks, the story revealed that the Pentagon men, former officers assigned to shape the news,

represent more than 150 military contractors either as lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants. The companies include defense heavy weights, but also scores of smaller companies, all part of a vast assemblage of contractors scrambling for hundreds of billions in military business generated by the administration's war on terror [ . . . ]. (A1)

Some of those who accepted such assignments later conceded that their function was to tell their audiences what to think. As one of the former analysts admitted, "night and day, I felt we'd been hosed" (Barstow A1). The hosing began at the same time as the planning for the war. Planning for the organization of media coverage began in 2002. At the time, according to *The New York Times*, polls showed many Americans to be "uneasy about invading a country with no clear connection to the 9/11 attacks. Pentagon and White House officials believed the military analysts could play a crucial role in helping overcome this resistance" (Barstow A1). The connection between public "unease" and possible opposition and the decision to contain it by the mobilization of propaganda emerged in the decision to inject military analysts into the mainstream media. As *The New York Times* reported, "a strategic decision was made in 2002 to make the analysts the main focus of the public relations push to construct a case for war. Journalists were secondary. 'We didn't want to rely on them to be our primary vehicle to get information out'" (Don Meyer qtd. in Barstow A1).

In the prewar period, military analysts were given Pentagon

talking points portraying Iraq as an urgent threat. The basic case became a familiar mantra: Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, was developing nuclear weapons, and might one day slip some to Al Qaeda; an invasion would be a relatively quick and inexpensive "war of liberation." (Barstow A1)

When, at one of the prepared briefings, the select analysts asked for evidence of “illicit weapons,” they were told that “we don’t have any hard evidence,” a point that was neither relayed to the public nor considered damaging enough to lead to resignation (Barstow A1). The reason: the feared loss of “access” to connections and contracts.

In short, the military analysts who participated followed the script. So did the embedded media, and so did many—though by no means all—among the public. As to military analysts who showed signs of independence, they understood that “there is a price for sustained criticism” (Barstow A1), which was an indirect reference to the risks of losing access to lucrative military contracts.

Of public consumers who became skeptical, some may have had prior knowledge of U.S. policy and/or access to alternative sources of information on Iraq. Moreover, some may have been aware that *The New York Times*, the “paper of record,” had been obliged to publish a mea culpa for the paper’s one-sided reporting on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (qtd. in Schell; Massing n. pag.). *Times* coverage was severely criticized additionally by legal scholars for its indifference to the Bush administration’s violation of international law in its justification of the invasion of Iraq. Such indifference reinforced

an increasingly passive U.S. Congress that has been derelict in upholding its constitutional role in the area of war and peace, mainly, its responsibility to ensure that all wars fought under an American flag have been authorized by a proper congressional declaration of war in accordance with Article 1, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. (Friel and Falk, *The Record* 2)

*The Times* was singled out in such accounts because of its preeminence in American media, but the scope of the media crisis extended far beyond it (Massing n. pag.).

Official deception was highly organized and, to judge by the delayed response to it, effective. “Information Warfare,” “PSYOPS,” and other terms that referred to the organization of deceit leveled at foreign and domestic audiences was no longer news in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Its effects, however, remained toxic even as public opposition to the continued war in Iraq and the threat of further wars were ignored by an administration claiming immunity from public opinion. In 2004, the Defense Department’s Office of Strategic Influence led by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith had as its purpose to “oversee, coordinate, and augment standing DOD [Department of Defense] efforts to influence foreign public opinion” (Conetta 4). When that Department was closed in response to adverse publicity, another was created: the Science Applications International Corporation (Conetta 4). Among its major concerns were Afghanistan, Iraq, and the war on terror, with “Information Warfare” among its weapons.

The strategic value of ignorance was affirmed, albeit in different terms, by the U.S. military in the essay on “The Media as an Instrument of War,” published in *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly* (Payne), whose principal argument was that modern wars rely on domestic and foreign public opinion as much as on military defeat of

the enemy. Hence the importance of using “deception, distortion, omission or obfuscation” in the media.<sup>5</sup> Examples of the approach abound (Miller).

But the Iraqi case was not isolated, although war served to frame and constrain some in the media from an aggressive questioning of policy. In the political climate that resulted, not only was the taboo on the Middle East reinforced, so were the caricatured images of the region and its policies. Mainstream coverage of Israel’s bombing of Lebanon echoed U.S. support, while beyond its perimeters a campaign to undermine the credibility of accounts by the U.N. and other international organizations sought to delegitimize the evidence of the extent of devastation rained on Lebanon in the thirty-three days of Israel’s carpet bombing and relentless use of cluster bombs.<sup>6</sup> U.N. accounts of the Mine Action Coordination Center in South Lebanon, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports of casualties, and international press coverage of Israeli destruction of southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut proper were among the targets of denial. Yet confirmation of these reports and more was available in the Lebanese press, where journalists and writers documented the effects of the bombings and the havoc of their impact.<sup>7</sup> Why were they not heard in the U.S.? What was the risk? Why were Israeli journalists and writers critical of Israel’s bombings similarly muted in the mainstream U.S. media? (Laor; Piterberg).

The managing editor of one of Lebanon’s newspapers, *As-Safir*, may have provided the answer in her parting letter on the war written August 15, 2006, in her blog. Thanking her readers, she wrote: “Every day, you gave more meaning to all this. People’s stories were heard, people’s suffering was shared. This was what I could do for my people: tell some of their stories. Knowing that you would listen, knowing that you cared, made the whole difference” (Salman, “Beirut” 126). And therein lies the risk.

If confronting the Israeli bombing of Lebanon in 2006 without blinders constituted a risk as interpreted in the present context, far more hazardous was the risk of confronting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to judge by media coverage as well as the campaign that has targeted academia in the wake of September 11. Avoiding such risks or, more to the point, voiding them by delegitimizing those who addressed such issues, required undermining the sources that contradicted prevailing views, an increasingly difficult task given the wide access to alternative news sources that include critical Israeli press coverage.

The emphasis in the discussion that follows is largely on developments in academia affecting Middle East studies with the understanding that such developments reflect a more pervasive attack on academic freedom and civil liberties in the period since September 11. As Laurie A. Brand, chair of the Middle East Studies Committee on Academic Freedom, has observed, such attacks are symptomatic of “the desire to silence critical voices from universities, which, given the ongoing emasculation of the fourth estate, remain one of the few sites of wide-ranging public exchange” (189). And it remains the site of ongoing research and exchange, albeit regularly and rudely interrupted through harassment and intimidation. Yet the university

is also the site of institutions, such as libraries and research centers, that provide access to national and international sources, from media to scholarly works and government archives, that are the bedrock of knowledge: both mainstream as well as subjects currently deemed out of bounds. Short of barring doors and burning books, such access remains.

The campaign to “reform the campus” and undo what is claimed by right-wing critics to be unconscionable bias in the academy took off after September 11. It found a receptive climate in an administration staffed by influential neoconservatives who shared a common view of U.S. relations with Israel and Israel’s role in the Middle East that precluded criticism. But the organization of efforts targeting criticism of U.S. policy in the Middle East began years earlier. It coincided with the period following the 1967 war in the Middle East and continued to grow in direct proportion to the increased public criticism of Israeli policies and U.S. support for them. In 1967, and again after 1982, such opposition intensified among a minority of academics and intellectuals who often joined with Israelis, Palestinians, and others from the Middle East on and off university campuses where increased interest was apparent. It continued to grow within modest circles until the first Gulf War, which inspired a broader constituency to begin to question U.S. policy. In the interim, the growth of the field of Middle East studies manifested in the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), an organization with an international membership that provided a regular forum for diverse explorations of past and present developments in the region.

The above period corresponded to the mobilization of various organizations that focused their efforts increasingly, though hardly exclusively, on exposing and curbing the emergence of critics of U.S. and Israeli policies, including those within or beyond academe. The American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Jewish Institute for National Security affairs (JINSA), and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), some of whose members joined the ranks of the administrations of Presidents Clinton and then George H.W. Bush, were among the most active and influential (Beinin 242). Efforts at surveillance and monitoring of Middle East studies met with formal opposition from MESA. But intimidation continued and assumed considerable proportions as it enveloped more diverse constituencies, as in April 1993, when “the San Francisco police seized over ten thousand files from the ADL’s local office” (Beinin 251). As Joel Beinin reports in his comprehensive review of “The New McCarthyism: Policing Thought About the Middle East,” those files included information that came from “the San Francisco Labor Council, International Longshore Workers Union Local 10, the Oakland Educational Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Irish Northern Aid, the International Treaty Council, the faculty of Mills College, and the Asian Law Caucus” (251). What was the ADL looking for? Beinin goes on to say that the above campaign ended with the ADL making an “out-of-court cash settlement with the city of San Francisco, the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, and three individuals” (251).

September 11 marked a further turn in this dismal history. Within a month after the attacks, WINEP published Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle East Studies in America* and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), whose organizers included Lynne Cheney and Senator Joseph Lieberman, published the report *Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can be Done About It* in November 2001 (Martin and Neal). In addition, Daniel Pipes's Middle East Forum issued the *Middle East Quarterly*, of which Kramer was editor, as well as Campus Watch, whose function it was to monitor academia as well as the media, publicizing its findings the better to intimidate individuals, institutions, and publications of which it disapproved.<sup>8</sup> Its objective was to uncover what it considered to be anti-Israel as well as anti-American bias. But, as Sara Roy has remarked,

not only does Campus Watch monitor universities for signs of "sedition,"—i.e., views on U.S. foreign policy, Islam, Israeli policy, Palestinian rights, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that Dr. Pipes considers unacceptable—it encourages students to inform on professors whose views they find offensive. (149)

President George W. Bush's nomination of Daniel Pipes to the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) inspired opposition from Senators Kennedy (D-MA), Dodd (D-CT), and Harkin (D-IA), who described him "as a 'provocative' and 'highly controversial' candidate whose 'decidedly one-sided' views would be in 'direct contradiction' to USIP goals" (qtd. in Action Alert n. pag.). As the Action Alert of the Middle East Anthropology Task Force added, referring to the backers of HR 3077 as well as Daniel Pipes and Martin Kramer, "these conservative radicals are not supporters of ideological, ethnic, and political diversity; instead they promote (especially anti-Muslim, anti-Arab) prejudice, which should raise questions about the legislation they are pushing" (n. pag.). The reference was to HR 3077, to which we will return shortly.

There were other groups and associations similarly inspired, such as the David Project, Students for Academic Freedom, and *FrontPage Magazine* among them. They viewed the university as having failed in its calling, having failed to predict the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and having failed to promote allegiance to U.S. policies instead of its criticism. In addition, they denounced the reception given high-risk luminaries, such as Edward Said, whose 1978 publication *Orientalism* they denounced as a literary and historical fraud produced by a figure whose eminence, to judge by the preoccupation with Said and the rage against *Orientalism*, was close to intolerable (Berkowitz n. pag.). The galaxy of Said's other works, including his calls for a universalism of standards in matters of social justice, were ignored.

The effort to influence public opinion was but part of a broader strategy, as Jason Vest's 2002 account of the operations of JINSA and the Center for Security Policy (CSP) reveals. Describing the activities of JINSA, Vest explained that,

JINSA facilitates meetings between Israeli officials and the still-influential U.S. flag officers, who, upon their return to the States, happily write op-eds and sign letters and advertisements championing the Likudnik line. (Sowing seeds for the future, JINSA also takes U.S. service academy cadets to Israel each summer and sponsors a lecture series at the Army, Navy and Air Force academies.) In one such statement, issued soon after the outbreak of the latest intifada, twenty-six JINSAns of retired flag rank, including many from the advisory board, struck a moralizing tone, characterizing Palestinian violence as a “perversion of military ethics” and holding that “America’s role as facilitator in this process should never yield to America’s responsibility as friend to Israel” [ . . . ]. (n. pag.)

In 2003, attention focused on legislative reform. As Stanley Kurtz, fellow of the Hoover Institution and contributing editor of the *National Review*, explained, he

testified before a House subcommittee investigating charges of bias in academic programs of area studies (including Middle East studies) funded under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. Subsequently, late last month, a House Committee approved legislation (H.R. 3077) that would finally bring reform to academic areas studies. (“Studying” n. pag.)<sup>9</sup>

Quickly recognized as a fraudulent claim of malpractice that was a thinly veiled attempt to destroy academic freedom with Middle East studies as its prime target, it elicited sharp resistance and rebuttals from professional associations as well as research institutions and individual faculty.<sup>10</sup>

HR 3077 was designed to amend Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965. It was formally dedicated to promoting international education, including language study, with a number of critical provisions (Section 2), such as the aim of “helping the national effort to educate and train citizens to participate in homeland security efforts [ . . . ]” (HR 3077 n. pag.).<sup>11</sup> Section 6 of the same Act “establishes an independent international Education Advisory Board to advise Congress and the Secretary on Title VI programs in relation to national needs with respect to homeland security, international education, international affairs, and foreign language training.” Section 7 identifies “Federal Government agency recruiter access to students and student recruiting information [ . . . ].” Section 8 “directs the Secretary to study and report to Congress on foreign language heritage communities of U.S. residents or citizens, particularly those that include speakers of languages critical to U.S. national security.” The lists of compiled names of those so identified has led to the joining of minority groups with civil liberties organizations to oppose a practice that is reminiscent of World War II internment of Japanese Americans (Newhall 235).

HR 3077 passed in the House of Representatives in October 2003, but did not become law as it failed to pass the Senate. It was revived in the 109th Congress (January 2005-January 2007) as HR 509 without becoming law.

Critics of such proposed legislation have rejected its premises and implications for control of scholarship through government intervention and funding. As Amy Newhall, executive director of Middle East Studies Association of North America, notes, the proposal to establish an "Advisory Board" has drawn criticism from those who have pointed out that it "has extraordinary investigative authority, its own staff, and no requirement that it report to the Secretary of Education" (220). Further, the same board is enabled to "make recommendations for improving programs and ensuring that they meet the title's purposes. This authorization would enable the board to investigate the activities of grant recipients, including those of individual faculty members" (220). In the same passage, Newhall cites the board's right to conduct probes and engage any number of agencies, whether at the state or federal levels for assistance, was reminiscent of "the activities of the FBI during the Cold War" (220).

Given that Middle East studies centers form a small part of the far larger circuit of centers devoted to regional area studies that receive federal funding, some 16 out of 118, the practical implications are severe. "Middle East and other area centers would either be forced to adopt government dictates, which would seriously erode the quality of instruction or, by refusing funds, would have to reduce and possibly end their programs altogether" (Roy 152).

HR 3077 was not the only legislation proposed. In the case of the Solomon Amendment, for example, the biblical-sounding legislation was designed to deny federal funding to campuses prohibiting military recruitment, which "could jeopardize \$35 billion in funding to academic institutions" (Canavan n. pag.). In considering the Solomon Amendment, Roger W. Bowen, former president of the American Association University Professors (AAUP), pointed to the dangers facing academic freedom. His warning applied to HR 3077 as well. As Bowen indicated, the danger to academic freedom stemmed from

federal oversight over accreditation; resolutions centering on ideological balance on campuses; corporate sponsorship of research; government oversight of academic departments, including Middle Eastern studies; lack of protection for university employees in the health care system; the percentage of campus budgets spent on athletics; and the view of college campuses as another part of the economy. (Canavan n. pag.)

Among the arguments in favor of HR 3077 and other legislation designed to exercise control over area studies and make them compatible with policy was the claim that U.S.-funded area studies programs were biased against proposals supporting U.S. policy. But in using Iraq as an example, some former supporters of U.S. policy familiar with the world in which such critics operated had a rather different assessment of what such supporters of U.S. policy had achieved.

Consider the words of Ali A. Allawi, former finance minister of the Iraqi Transitional Government:

In official Washington, the ignorance of what was going on inside Iraq before the war was monumental. None of the proponents of the war, including the neo-conservatives, and also no one in the institutes and think tanks that provided the intellectual fodder for the war's justification, had the faintest idea of the country that they were to occupy. The academics and researchers who congregated around the Washington think tanks and the vice president's office, who had made Iraq their pet project, were blinkered by their dogmatic certainties or their bigotries. There was a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of Iraqi society and the effects on it of decades of dictatorship. Each strand of American thinking that combined to provide the basis for the invasion was isolated from any direct, even incidental, engagement with Iraq. The State Department, supposedly a citadel of realist thinking, had little firsthand experience of the country, instead relying on inference and analogous reasoning when trying to unravel the possible outcomes in the post-war period. The only certainty was provided by the American military who knew that the Iraqis were no match for their kind of warfare, and who also knew that they were facing a dispirited and ineffectual army.

It was not only the absence of any systematic analysis, based on a wealth of information and experience about the country that was the cause of this woeful condition. It was more a deliberate reveling in the debunking of whatever knowledge on Iraq existed. (7)

Allawi's exposé applies to the combined arrogance and ignorance afflicting the official discourse on other areas, including Israel and Palestine.

Considered in this dismal context one can ask, "What did the efforts to undermine Middle East studies achieve?" One can argue that they succeeded in heightening awareness of the forces bent on crushing the open discussion of U.S. policy in the Middle East and more particularly, discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that risked undermining conventional accounts. Such efforts succeeded in intimidating vulnerable faculty, in threatening university administrations with dire financial and other crises, in having conferences and meetings banned from campuses, and, in notorious instances, of blocking appearances and appointments by some of the preeminent scholars on Israel and Palestine who have international recognition and are the subject of violations of academic freedom in the United States, as in the case of Professor Norman Finkelstein (Menetrez; Pappé).

Such efforts reflect more on the poverty of the intellectual and political environment that tolerates them than on those abused. As Columbia University Professor Joseph Massad, who has been a consistent target of right-wing attacks, points out, part of the difficulty facing those who speak out on the Israeli-Palestinian question is that they often address audiences who are poorly informed. As Massad explains, referring to the attacks against the university and Middle East studies, what makes such attacks possible "is the existence of a major discrepancy, even a radical disconnect, between popular knowledge and media coverage about the Palestine/Israel conundrum and established scholarly knowledge about the topic" (n. pag.).

Among the examples of discrepancy is the conventional vs. the scholarly reading of the origin of the Palestinian refugee problem. Israeli research on the subject, including the works of historians such as Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev, Avi Shlaim, and earlier the Mapam activist Simha Flapan, has radically altered the scholarly and political landscape. It is at the very root of the contrast between *Image and Reality of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, about which Norman Finkelstein has written. Thus far, the exposé of major myths surrounding Israel's formation and policies has remained a subject of analysis within the intellectual community of Middle East scholars. Largely unknown or unacknowledged by scholars of U.S. foreign policy, it is a subject seldom broached in media coverage.

The exception is to be found in the attacks published by the Middle East Forum (*MEForum.org*), Campus Watch (*Campus-Watch.org*), and *FrontPage Magazine* (*FrontPageMag.com*), where an article under the title "Israel's Howard Zinn," for example, sought to demolish one of the major new historians of Israel, Ilan Pappé, author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.<sup>12</sup>

The same treatment has not been meted out to Benny Morris since the publication of his latest work on the subject entitled *1948*. As a January 26, 2004, *Los Angeles Times* op-ed revealed, Morris did not disclaim his original research in which he had confirmed the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948, describing it as "an element of the partial ethnic cleansing that rid Israel of the majority of its Arab inhabitants at the very moment of its birth" (n. pag.). But, as he bluntly stated,

"[. . .] today—after looking afresh at the events of 1948 and at the context of the whole Arab-Zionist conflict from its inception in 1881 until the present day—I find myself as convinced as ever that the Israelis played a major role in ridding the country of tens of thousands of Arabs during the 1948 war, but I also believe their actions were inevitable and made sense." (n. pag.)

Writing in *The Jerusalem Post* on April 10, 2008, David Horowitz, of *FrontPage Magazine*, found Morris's evolution to be praiseworthy.

The response to Ilan Pappé's work and to that of other revisionist historians is reminiscent of an exchange that occurred in Israel in the summer of 2007 in which the Education Ministry's attempt to alter Arab textbooks raised the hackles of Avigdor Lieberman, the nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu Party "strategic affairs minister." The Ministry had issued a statement indicating its approval of "a textbook for use in the state's Arab schools that for the first time described Israel's 1948 war of independence as a 'catastrophe' for the Arab population" (Kershner n. pag.). Lieberman described such action as a sign of "the masochism and defeatism of the Israeli left." As the Kershner article makes clear, such changes were reserved for Arab students only, even as some Hebrew texts "have over the years come to broach once-taboo subjects surrounding the establishment of the state, and the curriculum for Arab schools has also been slowly changing to take Arabic culture more into account" (n. pag.). But in this instance, "the Hebrew version of the third-grade book does not include the Palestinian version of the events of 1948" (n. pag.). According to the "national supervisor

of homeland, society and citizenship studies," Dalia Fenig, "while the Arabic translation was adjusted to address Arab sensitivities and culture, Jewish third-graders were considered too young to cope with the conflicting narratives" (n. pag.).

The same applies to those committed to making certain that no such conflicting narratives disrupt the academic and political environment in the United States.

In retrospect, the attack on Israeli historians and on those in American universities who dare to further historical knowledge that has altered the fate of generations in the Middle East is part of a larger struggle in which U.S.-Israel alignment is viewed as of paramount importance. To the extent that the media and academia can influence or endanger the public perception of such a connection, they remain primary targets of concern. In such an environment, the risks of knowing have to be avoided, whatever the cost.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The title is taken from Zinn and Arnove. See also Lewis in a letter to *The New York Times Book Review* ("Making History"), responding to a review of Zinn's *Young People's History*. Writing about his experience in Amman, where Zinn's book was enthusiastically adopted, Lewis wondered whether it represented "[r]etaliation for our superficial caricaturing of Middle Eastern social, cultural and political histories?" (5).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Huntington's article "Clash of Civilizations?" originally appeared in *Foreign Affairs* summer 1993 and was later expanded into the book *The Clash of Civilizations*.

<sup>3</sup> See Carey; Chomsky; and Herman and Chomsky.

<sup>4</sup> See Secretary of the Air Force Widnall and USAF General/Chief of Staff Fogleman. See also Lt. Colonel Collins and discussion in Gendzier, "Consensual Deception" 452.

<sup>5</sup> See Payne.

<sup>6</sup> See Friel and Falk, *Israel-Palestine*, ch. 7 "Lebanon, 2006" for the attack on Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International by the head of the Anti-Defamation League Abraham Foxman, and Professor Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School.

<sup>7</sup> See the following articles by Elias and Rami Khoury; Salman; Salt; and Scheid; see also Traboulsi.

<sup>8</sup> See *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for more information on Campus Watch documents available online at <http://www.campus-watch.org/docs/publication/The+CHronicle+of+Higher+Education>. See also Beinín for more information on Campus Watch in the media and its coverage of "The New McCarthyism [refs. Nadia Abu El-Haj, Norman Finkelstein, Beshara Doumani, Khalil Gibran International Academy, MESA]." See also Cohler-Esses, and Kramer, "Middle East Studies."

<sup>9</sup> See also Kurtz, "Reforming the Campus."

<sup>10</sup> See Doumani; Lockman, "Did the Events"; Shami and Godoy-Anatívia 343-49. See also Lockman, "Behind the Battles"; "Action Alert, HR 3077"; Makdisi; Finkin, et al.; Roy; Schrecker; and "Academic Freedom."

<sup>11</sup> The HR 3077 bill is also reproduced in Doumani, Appendix 283-97.

<sup>12</sup> See Levy and Seid n. pag. See also Joffe and Romirowsky n. pag.

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