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Introduction by Douglas Little

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## Introduction by Douglas Little, Clark University

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I spent the past ten days grading bluebooks, watching the Trump administration implode, and battling writer's block as I prepared to draft the introduction for this H-Diplo Roundtable on *Imperfect Strangers*, Salim Yaqub's splendid account of America and the Arabs in the age of Presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter.<sup>1</sup> Then, without warning, ninety-three-year-old Secretary of State Henry Kissinger waddled into the Oval Office late last week for a cameo appearance alongside the forty-fifth President and I experienced a flashback to the 1970s, when chaos on the Potomac and crisis in the Middle East went hand in hand. The take-away message from Yaqub's latest book echoes one of Yogi Berra's most memorable aphorisms: 'It's déjà vu all over again.'

*Imperfect Strangers* is really three books in one. First, Yaqub has written an extremely readable revisionist history of U.S. diplomatic efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict from the Six Day War down through the aftermath of the Camp David summit. He argues that the step-by-step approach to achieving Middle East peace pursued by the Nixon and Ford administrations at the behest of Kissinger was deliberately designed to prolong Israeli control of Arab territories occupied in June 1967, something that effectively doomed President Jimmy Carter's quest for a comprehensive settlement during the late 1970s. Second, Yaqub has provided a path-breaking account of the emergence of Arab Americans as a self-conscious and increasingly cohesive ethnic group which began to play an important role in the debate over U.S. foreign policy in the wake of the October 1973 War. With increasing vigor, Arab American students, lawyers, and politicians pursued a three-pronged campaign—protecting civil liberties in the courts, promoting positive images in the media, and pressing for a more balanced approach to the Middle East inside the beltway—that prefigured the efforts of organizations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to combat Islamophobia forty years later. And third, Yaqub has utilized material drawn from cartoons, feature films, and pulp fiction to highlight the traditional 'Orientalist' stereotypes embedded in American popular culture while simultaneously developing a counter-narrative depicting Arabs as something other than bloodthirsty terrorists or lecherous oil sheiks. The story that emerges here is much more nuanced than the one I myself have told in *American Orientalism*,<sup>2</sup> with Yaqub juxtaposing the quintessential 'Bad Arab' (e.g., a Black September terrorist) alongside the quintessential 'Good Arab' (e.g. Barbara Walters's 'best friend for forever,' Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat).

Nathan Citino, whose new book *Envisioning the Arab Future: Modernization in U.S. Arab Relations 1945-1967*<sup>3</sup> might serve as a prequel to *Imperfect Strangers*, gives Salim Yaqub high marks for weaving diplomatic, social, and cultural history together into a compelling narrative. Citino is particularly impressed not only with the masterful reconstruction of the brutal bureaucratic infighting inside the Nixon administration that enabled the victorious Kissinger to pursue 'scuttle diplomacy' as he shuttled between Middle East capitals from 1973 to 1975 but also with the detailed description of the political rivalries that pitted the

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction was submitted on 19 May 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 25-42.

<sup>3</sup> Nathan Citino, *Envisioning the Arab Future: Modernization in U.S. Arab Relations 1945-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

‘accommodationist’ National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) against the far more radical Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG). Citino agrees with Yaqub that the inchoate ‘Arab lobby’ was no match for pro-Israel organizations like AIPAC the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, which limited Carter’s options at Camp David, and that anti-Arab stereotypes distorted American understanding of the increasingly important Palestinian question. That said, Citino believes that *Imperfect Strangers* would have come closer to perfection had Yaqub been able to “incorporate more non-U.S. perspectives, including those in Arabic.” Overcoming “the world according to Washington syndrome” in order to view things from the other end of the telescope remains a perennial challenge for all of us exploring U.S. relations with the Middle East, whether or not we can read Arabic.

Craig Daigle likewise finds Yaqub’s blend of social and diplomatic history a perfect recipe for unpacking the paradoxical aspects of this story. The liberalization of the U.S. immigration laws after 1965 convinced many Arab Americans that traditional interest-group politics might yield a more even-handed approach to the Middle East at precisely the moment that Black September and OPEC the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries were making Arabs *personas non grata* in Nixon’s Washington. The rise of Middle Eastern Studies programs at elite American universities during the 1960s and 1970s produced greater understanding of the Arab world on campus but had little effect on U.S. foreign policy, which remained under the control of Cold War national security managers who employed a global lens, not a regional one. Indeed, reprising an argument central to his own book, *Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1969-73*,<sup>4</sup> Daigle wishes that Yaqub had explored more fully how the cold-war paradigm constrained Nixon’s and Kissinger’s policies. And like Citino, Daigle wants to hear more from Arab leaders and insists that Anwar Sadat should receive top billing over Jimmy Carter at Camp David.

Pamela Pennock, whose new book *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism 1960s-1980s*<sup>5</sup> covers interest-group politics in much greater detail than Yaqub, echoes Citino’s and Daigle’s praise for *Imperfect Strangers*. She agrees that Washington did tilt toward Tel Aviv during the early 1970s, that Henry Kissinger was never an honest broker, and that Arab Americans did fight a losing battle against Orientalist stereotypes during the Carter years. Given her own familiarity with the fierce rivalries between groups like the NAAA and the AAUG, Pennock is especially impressed by Yaqub’s “careful acceptance of ambiguities, nuances, and paradoxes” central to the Arab American narrative and by his emphasis on “moderate, pragmatic political lobbying” during the late 1970s that was frequently overshadowed by the radical rhetoric of extremist groups.

James Stocker makes it unanimous, calling *Imperfect Strangers* “a deftly written, entertaining book demonstrating a mastery of subject matter and source material.” Yaqub’s archival research on the 1970s is remarkably thorough. Beyond the predictable collections at the National Archives and various presidential libraries, he has examined the private records of key political figures like Spiro Agnew, George Ball, and South Dakota senator James Abourezk, interest groups like the AAUG and the NAAA, and the private papers of Arab diplomats like Charles Malik. These materials confirm that the influence of Arab Americans was limited

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<sup>4</sup> Craig Daigle, *Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1969-73* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Pamela Pennock, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

during the 1970s not only by the actions of better organized pro-Israel interest groups but also by internecine political and religious rivalries, which sparked disagreements over the best approach to hot-button issues like the Lebanese Civil War, the subject of Stocker's own monograph *Spheres of Intervention: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon 1967-1976*<sup>6</sup>. Stocker wonders whether Yaqub's critique of Kissinger is too harsh, and he wishes that Yaqub's epilogue had explored the implications of his findings for Arab Americans in the age of Donald Trump, but these quibbles do not diminish the significance of what Yaqub has accomplished.

In short, *Imperfect Strangers* is a remarkable book that bears all the trademarks of Salim Yaqub's scholarship—comprehensive, multi-archival research that seeks to tell an extremely complex story from multiple perspectives; familiarity with the burgeoning historical literature on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East; and a provocative interpretation of politically charged events that is less concerned with identifying heroes and villains than with highlighting how interest group politics influenced decision-making during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. Where else could one find a compassionate portrait of Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's assassin, a quick summary of Vice President Spiro Agnew's dreadful novel, *The Canfield Decision*, and a grim account of Billy Carter's wheeling and dealing with Muammar Qaddafi?

Like many of the best new books on U.S. foreign policy, *Imperfect Strangers* transcends the traditional boundaries between diplomatic, social, and cultural history and is likely to appeal to a broader audience more interested in potboilers like Thomas Harris's *Black Sunday*<sup>7</sup> than in the details of Henry Kissinger's Sinai II Agreement. This book is such a good read that, in my weak moments, I am tempted to tweet Kissinger and suggest that he advise Donald Trump to pack a copy in his golf bag for summer reading the next time he visits Mar-a-Lago.

### **Participants:**

**Salim Yaqub** is Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Director of UCSB's Center for Cold War Studies and International History. He is the author of *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (University of North Carolina, 2004) and of several articles and book chapters on the history of U.S. foreign relations, the international politics of the Middle East, and Arab American political activism. His second book, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s*, was published by Cornell University Press in September 2016.

**Douglas Little** is the Robert and Virginia Scotland Professor of History and International Relations at Clark University. He received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1978. Little's latest book, *Us versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (University of North Carolina Press), appeared in 2016. He is currently completing research for a book on Ronald Reagan and the Third World, with special emphasis on the Middle East.

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<sup>6</sup> James Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon 1967-1976* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Harris, *Black Sunday* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975).

**Nathan Citino** is associate professor of history at Rice University. His new book is *Envisioning the Arab Future: Modernization in U.S.-Arab Relations, 1945-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

**Craig Daigle** is Associate Professor of history at the City College of New York. His first book, *The Limits of Detente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* appeared from Yale University Press in 2012. He is currently completing a manuscript entitled *Camp David and the Remaking of the Middle East* and researching a biography of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir.

**Pamela E. Pennock** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. She specializes in 20th century U.S. social and political history. Author of *Advertising Sin and Sickness: The Politics of Alcohol and Tobacco Marketing, 1950-1990*, her previous research concentrated on the politics of consumer safety and health. More recently, she has published "Third World Alliances: Arab-American Activists in American Universities, 1967-1973," in the journal *Mashriq & Mahjar* in 2014, and her book *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

**James Stocker** is Assistant Professor of International Affairs at Trinity Washington University. He received his Ph.D. from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. He is the author of *Spheres of Intervention: US Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cornell University Press, 2016), as well as articles in the *International History Review*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, the *Middle East Journal*, *Cold War History*, and other publications. His research interests are in the history of U.S. foreign relations, the contemporary Middle East, and the politics of energy.

Review by Nathan Citino, Rice University

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More than one colleague has remarked on the ‘look’ of Salim Yaqub’s landmark new study of Arab-American relations. For one who grew up in middle America during the 1970s, the cover’s muted neutrals and stylized, Crayola lettering evoke the decade’s childhood sensory experiences: the feel of velour, the smells of elementary school, the opening chords of *Star Wars*. In terms of the book’s wide-ranging contents, however, which encompass the origins of the Arab-Israeli ‘peace process,’ representations of Arabs in American culture, and the emergence of Arab Americans in public life, Yaqub modestly denies that his study is representative of any larger historiographical trend. Drawing on disparate literatures examining the 1970s as a decade of transition, culture in U.S. foreign relations, and American policy toward the Middle East, the author insists that the parts of his study do not necessarily amount to a greater whole. He writes: “because its focus, scope, and arguments are so particular—idiosyncratic, some may say—it is difficult to relate them, as a whole, to any single historiographical position or theme in the literature” (12). On this larger point, and in contrast with most of Yaqub’s other claims, I disagree. Just as the book’s appearance calls to life the decade it examines, this study employs the range of approaches that comprise what has become known as ‘the U.S. in the World’ (the name of the successful Cornell University Press series in which it appears). By combining diplomatic with cultural history and grappling with the implications of an increasingly diverse society and its transnational connections, *Imperfect Strangers* embodies the field as it evolved in response to late twentieth-century criticisms and the challenges posed by social history. Scholars have turned their attention to racialized cultural representations and pluralism at home as a way of offsetting a focus on political elites in the study of state diplomacy.

In his account of 1970s diplomacy, Yaqub renders his greatest service with a withering historical criticism of Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State to Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. If Kissinger’s detractors tend to focus on his policies toward Latin America and South and Southeast Asia, then Yaqub’s well-documented contribution to the Kissinger wars makes it clear that the Middle East ‘peace process’ cannot be counted in Kissinger’s favor.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Kissinger left an “enduring diplomatic legacy” in the region but one that has been highly negative. Yaqub writes of the so-called “peace process” that “Kissinger *deliberately* designed that process to enable Israel’s indefinite occupation of Arab land” seized in 1967 (13). Kissinger’s ‘peace process’ was therefore a formula that succeeded in perpetuating conflict. Building on previous work, the author demonstrates how Kissinger cynically undermined efforts by Nixon’s first Secretary of State William Rogers to pursue a land-for-peace deal based on United Nations Resolution 242.<sup>2</sup> Kissinger dispatched Wall Street lawyer and jazz musician Len Garment, Nixon’s advisor for Jewish affairs, to intercept Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir upon her arrival in the U.S. for a 1970 speaking tour. Garment describes the mission undertaken at Kissinger’s behest as instructing Meir to “slam the hell out of Rogers and his plan” (31). Although Kissinger blamed Rogers for failing to secure Egypt’s diplomatic recognition of Israel and an end to the Soviet military presence in Egypt, the National Security Advisor

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Greg Grandin, *Kissinger’s Shadow: The Long Reach of America’s Most Controversial Statesman* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015); and Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See Salim Yaqub, “The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” in *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*, ed. Fred Logevall and Andrew Preston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 227-248.

tellingly remained opposed to Rogers' principles even after President Anwar Sadat and the Soviets agreed to those very concessions in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Yaqub also shows how differently the 'peace process' might have unfolded had Nixon not been distracted and then sidelined by the Watergate scandal. In February 1973, in response to another of Kissinger's arguments in favor of postponing any attempt at a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, Nixon wrote: "I totally disagree" and "The time has come to quit pandering to Israel's intransigent position" (113). But by summer, when Watergate had erupted into a full-fledged political scandal, Yaqub observes that "it was hard to see how the president could demand greater flexibility from Israel and win the bruising domestic battle that would surely ensue" (125). As Yaqub notes, the fact that the Egyptian-Syrian military offensive against Israel in October immediately preceded the 'Saturday Night Massacre' and the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew enabled Kissinger to take control of the administration's response. Although back-footed by the initial Arab successes and oil embargo, Kissinger designed the 'peace process' on a bilateral basis to reduce pressure on Israel to withdraw from the territories it had occupied in 1967 and to avoid any direct consideration of the Palestinian question. The Soviets were contained within a token peace conference that convened briefly in Geneva, but Kissinger kept control over the substantive diplomacy through a frenetic series of face-to-face bilateral meetings held in the Middle East that Yaqub terms "Scuttle Diplomacy" (Chapter 5). Yaqub uses the documentary record to impeach Kissinger's own account of his policies and to expose his double-dealing. For instance, he contrasts Kissinger's assurances to Israel that only a symbolic withdrawal from the Golan village of Quneitra would be required to reach a ceasefire on the Syrian front with his declarations to Syrian and Saudi officials that the U.S. did not support Israel's claim to the Golan. Kissinger strung Syrian President Hafez al-Assad along with expectations of a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and bluntly told Saudi Arabia's King Faysal: "The United States supports no claim by Israel to the Golan Heights" (161).

The most enduring elements of Kissinger's legacy were removing Egypt as a Soviet military client and committing it to a bilateral 'peace process' that would retire the most powerful Arab country from the struggle against Israel. Even after Kissinger left office, Sadat sidestepped the Geneva conference and opted instead for bilateral diplomacy to regain sovereign control over the Sinai. In what might be described as the continuation of Kissinger by other means, Sadat first sent his deputy to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan in Morocco and then traveled to Jerusalem himself. Equally significant was Kissinger's 1975 Memorandum of Agreement with Israel that accompanied Sinai II and prohibited the U.S. from negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) until the group acceded to the principles of Resolution 242. This was a step that Kissinger knew Fatah leader Yasir 'Arafat could not afford to take, despite Fatah's earlier concessions opening the door to co-existence. The agreement tied the hands of Kissinger's successors for more than a decade and prevented serious discussion of Palestinian rights, not only in terms of the territories Israel had occupied in 1967 but also with respect to the refugees who were driven from or fled their homes in 1948. Kissinger's 'peace process' therefore precluded addressing the issue that remains at the heart of the conflict. Yaqub criticizes Kissinger's legacy without portraying him as omnipotent. For instance, Yaqub agrees with a recent *Diplomatic History* article in which David M. Wight argues that rather than scheming to bring about Assad's intervention in the Lebanese civil war, Kissinger failed to prevent it.<sup>3</sup> Yaqub gives Kissinger his due: he

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Wight, "Kissinger's Levantine Dilemma: The Ford Administration and the Syrian Occupation of Lebanon," *Diplomatic History* 37 (January 2013): 144-77.

“labored tirelessly and often brilliantly to construct a diplomatic framework that fortified Israel’s occupation of Arab land” (181). All of us—but Palestinians especially—have reaped the whirlwind.

Yaqub’s most original contribution comes from combining the history of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East with the political mobilization of Arab-American communities. This synthesis corresponds to the transnational “immigrant foreign relations” described by Donna Gabaccia and illustrates Mae M. Ngai’s observation that immigration politics have historically served to define an idealized conception of the nation.<sup>4</sup> Yaqub dates Arab-American political mobilization to the Hart-Cellar Act (1965), which mostly eliminated race-based immigration quotas, and, more importantly, to the Arab states’ crushing 1967 defeat. “To possess, in the United States, any conscious ties of kinship to the Arab world at that moment,” he writes, “was to court an overpowering sense of alienation and public shame” (57). Organizing to challenge America’s pro-Israel policies and the well-established Israel lobby, however, exposed ideological and other fault lines within the Arab-American community. Yaqub distinguishes political trends among Arab-Americans with respect to their ‘accommodationist’ or ‘defiant’ attitudes toward U.S. power in the Middle East. This distinction also separated those who desired an ‘even-handed’ policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from those who supported revolutionary resistance against Zionism, Arab leaders, and U.S. imperialism. While the National Association of Arab Americans practiced accommodationist civic activism, the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) reflected the revolutionary ethos of the Palestinian *fida’iyin* organizations. Michigan-born Abdeen Jabara, who participated in anti-Vietnam war and Third World activism, represented the latter group’s orientation. Yaqub uses Jabara’s participation in pro-Palestinian organizing in the U.S., Jordan, and Kuwait to exemplify Arab-American transnational activism. Jabara also effectively illustrates the dilemmas that Arab Americans faced between activism and assimilation. Jabara, along with Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said and Egyptian-American lawyer M. Cherif Bassiouni, became targets of FBI surveillance. Challenges to government spying on Jabara eventually contributed to passage of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and its requirement that the government seek warrants to monitor electronic communications. But Operation Boulder, the program initiated by the Nixon administration to screen Arabs entering the U.S. after Palestinian militants killed Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, signaled the ongoing danger of ‘de-assimilation’ for Arab Americans. In the “collective memory of Arab Americans,” Yaqub writes, Operation Boulder is regarded as a “‘dry run’ for the draconian measures” implemented after 9/11 to monitor Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. (89).

Yaqub’s engaging account of Arab-American activism complements his sharp critique of Kissinger’s diplomacy. His anecdote about Bassiouni interposing himself between rival groups led respectively by Said and former Israeli intelligence officer Yehoshafat Harkabi at an Evanston, Illinois hotel vividly evokes the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict during the post-1967, Vietnam era (68). Yaqub sympathetically describes the career of Lebanese-American James Abourezk, the George McGovern protégé from South Dakota who became a pro-Arab, accommodationist voice in and outside of the Senate. Nevertheless, Arab-Americans’ increasing visibility did not translate into greater influence over U.S. foreign policy, even with the help of non-Arab allies such as oil-industry figures, peace activists, and African Americans. After Munich, terrorism became the “primary frame of reference” in which most Americans understood the Palestinian issue (95). Yaqub criticizes the “almost mystical faith” among accommodationist groups “in oil companies’ ability to

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<sup>4</sup> See Donna Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, rev. ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).



transform U.S. policy,” while the AAUG dismissed the effectiveness of the “oil weapon” in the absence of a regional revolution (128). The 1975 affair in which the United Nations General Assembly voted to designate Zionism as racism is a prime example of the pro-Israel force field in U.S. public opinion. What began as a campaign to expel Israel from the UN for failing to carry out commitments made decades earlier to respect Palestinian Arab rights as a condition of Israel’s UN membership became diluted, following debates within the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement, into the anti-racism resolution passed by the General Assembly.<sup>5</sup> In the U.S., responses were “overwhelmingly negative,” interpreting the measure as an anti-Semitic attack (178). It served to strengthen support for Israel and consolidate the neoconservative movement behind U.S. ambassador to the UN Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson. As Gabaccia notes, the relative influence of American immigrant and ethnic communities tends to be a “consequence of American geopolitics.”<sup>6</sup> This principle proved true with respect to the groups that contended to influence U.S. Middle East policy during the tumultuous 1970s.

In another original contribution, Yaqub examines the “Speculative Mode in American Discourse on the Arab World.” He analyzes the ways that Americans turned to their popular culture to process Arabs’ increasing visibility following the oil embargo, Arab-Israeli clashes, and highly-publicized terrorist attacks. His account of the Abscam scandal, which prompted Abourezk, Jabara, and James Zogby to organize the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, captures how the deployment of anti-Arab stereotypes catalyzed further mobilization. Yaqub’s sources include episodes from popular TV series such as *CHiPs* and *Charlie’s Angels* (a few of which I seem to recall watching) featuring stereotypically rich Arab oil sheikhs. His account of the “Speculative Mode” focuses on apocalyptic novels with titles such as *On the Brink*, *The Masada Plan*, *The Petrodollar Takeover*, and *The Canfield Decision*.<sup>7</sup> The latter potboiler was written by ex-vice president Spiro Agnew, who also served as a fixer for U.S. corporations seeking contracts in Saudi Arabia. While some of these portrayals presented Arab political views sympathetically, most depicted Arabs as sinister and anti-American, with Arab oil producers’ embargo undermining the American way of life and their petrodollar investments threatening U.S. sovereignty. Such portrayals drew on perennial anti-Arab and anti-Muslim themes that would return with a vengeance following 9/11.<sup>8</sup> Like Melani McAlister, Yaqub recognizes the significance of popular culture as a medium through which diverse groups wage political and social conflict.<sup>9</sup> But Yaqub’s aim is narrower than McAlister’s. He documents how U.S. popular culture took notice of Arabs in the immediate post-embargo years by projecting “current trends into dark future scenarios” that assumed Arabs to be powerful and united (204). By the end of the decade, however, the Lebanese civil war and the

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<sup>5</sup> On the politics surrounding Israel’s UN membership, see Shira Robinson’s similarly-titled book *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel’s Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 36-38.

<sup>6</sup> Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations*, 223.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Stein and Benjamin Stein, *On the Brink* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977); Leonard Harris, *The Masada Plan* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1976); Peter Tanous and Paul Rubinstein, *The Petrodollar Takeover* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975); and Spiro Agnew, *The Canfield Decision* (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> See Douglas Little, *Us versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 211-245.

<sup>9</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interest in the Middle East after 1945*, rev. ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

Camp David Accords deepened conflicts within the Arab world. Arabs came to appear less threatening to many Americans, who consequently downgraded the estimated costs of pursuing pro-Israel policies.

Yaqub portrays peace negotiations during President Jimmy Carter's administration as unmistakably confirming the power of the Israel lobby and the "dearth of political clout" wielded by Arab Americans (257). Having backpedaled from his proposal to reconvene the Geneva conference and pursue a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, Carter "modified his initiative to suit Israeli preferences" by promoting a bilateral treaty with Egypt instead (240). Carter met with Arab-American leaders following Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, but Carter's forsaking of Geneva and the rights of Palestinians revealed such meetings to be mere "rituals of inclusion" (344). This verdict highlights the asymmetry of Yaqub's claims about the significance of the 1970s in Arab-American relations. Kissinger's "friendly manhandling" of Arab leaders (156), the visibility of figures such as Abourezk, and the "Sadat effect" (273) may have helped to carve out some "Arab-friendly space at home" (344). But 'de-assimilation' remained a constant threat and public opinion favoring Arabs in the conflict with Israel barely registered double-digit percentages by 1977 (272). The U.S.-Israel alliance, forged during the 1970s on the basis of the 'peace process' and high levels of military assistance, faced ineffective opposition from Arab governments and Arab Americans. By the time Ronald Reagan became president, events outside of the Arab world, such as the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, had set the course for a more interventionist U.S. foreign policy across the greater Middle East, where America's 'unipolar moment' preceded the actual collapse of the Soviet Union by a decade.

It might seem gratuitous to criticize a rich and important study, especially one as well-written as *Imperfect Strangers*, for what it excludes. But such criticisms of omission apply in a larger sense to literature on the U.S. in the World. They raise perennial questions about the centrality of the American state, the meaning of transnationalism, and redefinitions of the field beyond 'diplomatic history.' Yaqub has chosen to emphasize the multiplicity of voices within the U.S. rather than to incorporate more non-U.S. perspectives, including those in Arabic. He does cite some Arabic press accounts, as well as memoirs by Egyptian intellectual Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, Syrian official Ahmad 'Abd al-Karim, and Ashraf Ghorbal, the Harvard-educated diplomat whose uncle was one of Egypt's leading historians. Yaqub's emphasis nevertheless distinguishes *Imperfect Strangers* from his previous book *Containing Arab Nationalism*, which remains almost in a class by itself a dozen years after publication for its use of Egyptian archives and other Arabic sources to study U.S. foreign policy.<sup>10</sup> Accessing archives in Arab states has become ever more difficult since 2011, a problem that some Middle East historians have sought to address.<sup>11</sup> Greater attention to published writings by the Palestinian revolutionary Left, however, might have strengthened our understanding of Jabara's activism and placed the AAUG in a more fully-drawn transnational context, while at the same time explained the political pressures acting on 'Arafat and revealed the limitations of interstate diplomacy. *Fida'iyyin* and other revolutionary voices could provide an alternative axis by which to measure what it meant to be 'accommodationist' or 'defiant' after 1967 and make visible the Third Worldist networks that facilitated the anti-Zionist vote at the UN. Yaqub also acknowledges the rise of Islamist movements and their opposition to U.S. power (325-326), but accounting for their successful challenge to secular ideologies during the 1970s

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<sup>10</sup> Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> See Omnia El Shakry, "'History without Documents': The Vexed Archives of Decolonization in the Middle East," *American Historical Review* 120 (June 2015): 920-934.

and incorporating them into the international history of the decade awaits further research. In analyzing the implications of domestic pluralism for foreign policy, the emphasis necessarily falls on the first part of the 'U.S. in the World' formula. It is the United States that contains multitudes.

Review by Craig Daigle, City College of New York

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On 7 December 2015, Republican Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” Citing a Pew Research study, Trump argued that there is “great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population” and argued strongly for the necessity of a Muslim ban until U.S. officials could understand the roots of their discontent. “Without looking at the various polling data,” Trump stated, “it is obvious to anybody that the hatred is beyond comprehension.”<sup>1</sup> How such a ban would be enforced was not clear then (nor is it clear now), but suffice it to say that Trump’s calls for a Muslim ban were an attempt to tap into long-standing nativist, and particularly anti-Muslim and anti-Arab, sentiment in the United States. A March 1993 Gallup poll, for example, showed that just 39% of Americans had a favorable opinion of Arabs, while an ABC News poll, conducted during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, found that the majority of Americans said the following terms applied to Arabs: “religious” (81%), “terrorists” (59%), “violent” (58%) and “religious fanatics” (56%).<sup>2</sup>

How and why these views developed is in many ways the subject of Salim Yaqub’s impressively researched new book, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s*. Yaqub draws on a wealth of recently declassified documents from U.S. archives to argue that the 1970s were the ‘pivotal decade’ in the evolution of U.S.-Arab relations and transformed the way Arabs and Americans understand each other. During the decade, the United States increased economic and military support to Middle Eastern countries; became deeply entrenched in the Arab-Israeli conflict; extended trade to states in the greater Middle East; and replaced the European powers as the dominant foreign presence in the region. Meanwhile, the rise of international terrorism, the Arab oil embargo of 1973-1974, the related increase in the price of oil, the visibility of petrodollars in American life, and rising levels of immigration from the Middle East all “forced ordinary Americans to pay closer attention to the Arab world” (7).

It was also during the 1970s, Yaqub argues, when “fundamental patterns” were established “setting out much of the tone and substance of U.S.-Arab relations as they have unfolded in subsequent decades” (7). Changes in U.S. immigration laws that opened the doors to Arabs, Arab investment in the U.S. economy, a growing Arab dependence on U.S. weapons and military support to Gulf states to defend against the spread of Islamic militants, and a willingness of Arab actors to parlay their new influence into an accommodation with the U.S., created a “mutual dependence” in national security and economic policies between the U.S. and the Arab world. Indeed, for Yaqub “Americans and Arabs became an inescapable presence in each other’s lives and perceptions, and members of each society came to feel profoundly vulnerable to the political, economic, cultural, and even psychological encroachments of the other” (7).

In viewing the 1970s as central to our understanding of America’s growing involvement in the Middle East and Muslim world, Yaqub joins a chorus of recent scholars who see the decade as a ‘transformative’ or

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<sup>1</sup> “Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration,” 7 December 2015, [Donaldjtrump.com/press-releases](http://Donaldjtrump.com/press-releases).

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, “Americans Felt Uneasy About Arabs Before September 11,” Gallup News Services, 28 September 2001.

‘pivotal’ period in U.S. diplomatic, military, and economic relations, and who believe that policies adopted during the decade were imperative to shaping the post-Cold War era.<sup>3</sup> But what makes Yaqub’s book unique is his use of cultural and psychological history, as well as new demographic studies, to show the paradoxical relationship that developed in Arab American relations at home and abroad. In foreign affairs, according to Yaqub, the U.S.-Arab relationship became increasingly antagonistic as the U.S. became Israel’s principal financial and military patron and, through its diplomacy, enabled Israel to maintain control of the Arab territories occupied during the June 1967 war. Domestically, however, Arab Americans and Muslims Americans found “a greater sense of participation and belonging in the nation’s civic life,” (13) and “enhanced the Arab image within the United States, an outcome of some benefit to Arab American political activism” (14).

Yaqub is certainly to be congratulated for highlighting how the reform of immigration laws during the 1960s, which permitted a marked increase in immigration from Third World countries, led to growth of Arab-American communities in the 1970s. The emergence of Arab-American political activism following the 1967 Six-Day War, spurred many leading Arab-American academics to become activists and encouraged the growth of Middle East studies programs at leading U.S. universities. Along with new studies from Zachary Lockman and Osamah F. Khalil, which offer fresh perspectives on how the American national security state during the Cold War gave rise to post-World War II Middle East studies programs, Yaqub’s chapters on the Association of Arab American University Graduates and the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA), among other groups, are highly instructive to our broader understanding of U.S. relations with the Arab world, the development of postwar area studies in the U.S., and the roots of anti-Israeli attitudes present at college campuses today.<sup>4</sup> Many scholars may disagree with his challenge to the ‘de-assimilation’ thesis, which holds that Arab Americans lost status in the 1970s due to geopolitical trends in the Middle East, but he makes a convincing case that during the decade Arab Americans revolted against the “deplorable status quo” and thereby “gained strength, cohesion, experience, and visibility.” (344)

Yet as much as *Imperfect Strangers* offers a fresh perspective on Arab Americans in the United States, the book is still largely focused on U.S. diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This emphasis was deliberate, according to Yaqub, for it not only reflected the fact that policymakers in Washington treated the Arab-Israeli dispute as the most important policy challenge they faced in the Middle East, but also because the struggle against Israel “was the consuming issue for politically aware Arabs, whether they were government officials, opinion leaders or ordinary people” (14). For most Arab American activists, U.S.-Middle East policy during the decade had

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<sup>3</sup> See Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the U.S. Traded Factories for Finance in the 1970s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Movement: US Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), especially Chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Osamah F. Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace: The Rise of the U.S. National Security State and Middle East Expertise, 1902-2012* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016). For anti-Israel sentiment on U.S. college campuses, see Eric Alterman, “The B.D.S Movement and Anti-Semitism on Campus,” *New York Times*, 29 March 2016.

become “scandously one-sided” (14), and they used their new acceptance in the intelligentsia— as academics, journalists, writers, teachers—to voice their opposition against U.S. support for Israel.

Arab Americans, particularly intellectuals at leading American universities, became critical of U.S. policy, says Yaqub, largely as a result of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s efforts to “scuttle” (145) any chance for peace settlement that would have put an end to Israel’s control of the occupied territories. Instead of working for a comprehensive agreement that compelled Israel to withdraw from all Arab-occupied territories, and offered the Palestinians an opportunity for self-determination in the West Bank and Gaza, Yaqub contends that Kissinger “*deliberately*” (his emphasis) focused on limited bilateral agreements in a Machiavellian scheme to ensure “Israel’s indefinite occupation of Arab land” (13). The shuttle diplomacy negotiations that consumed the bulk of Kissinger’s diplomatic efforts in the Middle East from 1973-1975 and turned Kissinger into a media star, Yaqub argues, were merely a ruse to ensure Kissinger’s “central objective” (13) of neutralizing Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict and established a pattern for future administrations to follow. “The spectacle of simultaneous, or nearly simultaneous negotiations on several fronts would appear to heed the worldwide cry for progress toward a comprehensive settlement,” he suggests, but in the end merely “created the illusion of progress toward the 1967 borders while ensuring that those borders were never actually restored” (149).

Kissinger’s diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict is certainly open to criticism. There is no question that his pursuit of détente with the Soviet Union and unwillingness to take Egypt seriously before October 1973 directly contributed to the outbreak of the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War. Yaqub, moreover, is also correct that Kissinger wanted to remove, or neutralize, Egypt from the Arab-Israeli dispute, as this would not only strengthen Israel’s hand vis-à-vis Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians, but it would essentially quash the chances of another Middle East war and the potential for U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the region. As Kissinger told Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in February 1974: “Once you have taken Egypt out of the confrontation with you altogether, the capability of Syria without Egypt to cause trouble is reduced” (150).

Yet, I would argue that the driving force behind U.S.-led efforts at bilateral Egyptian-Israeli agreements during the decade was not Henry Kissinger (and later President Jimmy Carter), but Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Indeed, from the moment he ascended to the Egyptian presidency following the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in September 1970, Sadat not only indicated his willingness to sign a separate peace agreement with Israel but he made it clear to U.S. officials that he wanted to distance Egypt from the grips of Soviet control and move much closer to the West. Growing Soviet influence in Libya, on Egypt’s western border, as well as in the Horn of Africa in the mid-1970s only accelerated Sadat’s desire to reach accommodation with Israel. Fearing that the Ethiopian Revolution, which brought to power a repressive communist regime in Addis Abba, would spill over into neighboring Sudan and threaten control of the Nile River, the lifeblood of the Egyptian economy, Sadat had every incentive to push for a separate peace agreement with Israel so he could focus on new regional problems in Africa.

That Kissinger latched on to Sadat’s offer to sign a separate peace agreement with Israel after the 1973 war should not be seen as a nefarious scheme, as Yaqub contends, but as practical diplomacy. The opportunity to broker a peace accord between Israel and the largest Arab nation alone would have made it worth pursuing. But that it also offered the United States the opportunity to draw Egypt further out of the Soviet camp was not only a significant strategic victory for Washington but would be seen by American allies and adversaries as a major triumph in the U.S. contest with the Soviet Union in the Third World.

True, the 1975 Sinai II agreement, Kissinger's signature achievement of his shuttle diplomacy negotiations, was far from perfect. It fell considerably short of a full treaty and left Israel holding the bulk of the Sinai Peninsula, including Egypt's valuable Alma oil fields. The agreement also provided the Israelis with a new arsenal of U.S. weapons. Furthermore, it ensured that the United States would not recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) so long as it did not recognize Israel's right to exist and it failed to accept UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. These decisions clearly hamstrung President Jimmy Carter's efforts to negotiate with Palestinians during his administration. But the Sinai II agreement committed Egypt and Israel to resolve the conflict between them "not by military force but by peaceful means."<sup>5</sup> That Egypt and Israel continued to pursue peaceful negotiations in the midst of continuing Arab-Israeli hostilities during the late 1970s, including Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon in the spring of 1978, was in no small part a result of commitments Egyptian and Israeli leaders made as part of the Sinai II agreements. This was a significant accomplishment at the time.

Moreover, to criticize both the Ford and Carter administrations for pursuing bilateral accords with Egypt assumes that a comprehensive settlement was attainable. The more likely scenario, however, was that a comprehensive peace was simply never in the cards. Former Undersecretary of States George W. Ball and Eugene V. Rostow, and Columbia University Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who would later be named as Carter's National Security Adviser, all advocated for this approach in the mid-1970s, believing that Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy had run its course and a lasting peace would come to the Middle East only by addressing all aspects of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> In 1975, a team of leading scholars and current and former policymakers, known as the Middle East Study Group, working under the aegis of the Brookings Institution, largely concurred with this view. According to the report the group released in December 1975, peace would only be achieved through a "comprehensive settlement" in the Middle East that provided a path to "Palestinian self-determination subject to Palestinian acceptance of the sovereignty and integrity of Israel within agreed boundaries."<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive peace is a noble goal, but unfortunately it was not tied to the reality on the ground. The Israelis firmly objected to a comprehensive settlement that would involve the PLO, while Arab states had widely divergent views about the independence and composition of a future Palestinian state and the extent of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Carter gradually learned that a comprehensive peace was not attainable after a year of negotiations with Arab and Israeli leaders. As Yaqub makes clear, the new President initially accepted many of the recommendations from the Brookings Institution report when he entered office and launched "the most ambitious Middle East peace initiative ever attempted by a U.S. president" (239). Between February and October 1977, Carter and his advisors labored aggressively to convene an international conference at which the main parties to the dispute, including the Palestinians, could reach a comprehensive settlement entailing "the fullest possible

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<sup>5</sup> For the full text of the Egyptian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement, see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 226.*

<sup>6</sup> Eugene V. Rostow, "Where Kissinger Went Wrong: A Basis for Peace," *The New Republic*, 5 April 1975; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Francois Duchene and Kiichi Saeki, "Peace in an International Framework," *Foreign Policy*, No. 19 (Summer 1975), 3-17; Memorandum from George W. Ball, "The Coming Middle Eastern War and How to Stop It," Library of Congress, Sol M. Linowitz Papers, Box 123, Background Material.

<sup>7</sup> The full text of the 1975 Brookings Institution report is printed in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6:2 (Winter 1977): 195-205.

exchange of land for peace” (239). During that same time, Carter went further than any previous U.S. president in calling for the establishment of a Palestinian “homeland” in the West Bank and Gaza, and challenging Israeli leaders on the legality of settlements in the West Bank (242). But Carter abandoned his efforts at a comprehensive peace in favor of a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement at Camp David.

Yaqub blames this “retreat” (239) from the pursuit of comprehensive settlement on the fact that Carter, by the summer of 1978, “had lost his stomach for confronting Israel” (240). There is certainly a strong degree of truth to this. The transcripts of conversations between U.S. and Israeli officials during the Carter administration clearly show that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin had a knack for getting under Carter’s skin through his rigid intransigence and willingness to spend countless hours quibbling over the most minute details of any future settlement. Carter told Israeli officials on more than one occasion that he believed Begin remained the single “obstacle” to peace and was convinced that the prime minister would refuse to “face the problem of the full autonomy he had promised to the Palestinians on the West Bank. He was obsessed with keeping all the territory except Sinai, and seemed to care little for the plight of the Arabs who were having to live without basic rights under Israeli rule.”<sup>8</sup> But Carter did not give up on a comprehensive settlement simply because of Israel, nor because of any “diplomatic legacy” that Kissinger bequeathed (339). Rather the President, like Kissinger, chose to pursue a bilateral agreement with Egypt because Sadat presented him with an opening that he simply could not ignore.

Indeed, it was Sadat, not Carter (nor Kissinger), who scuttled any chance of a comprehensive agreement by launching his own initiative, in November 1977, and becoming the first Arab leader to officially visit the Jewish state. Sadat’s historic trip to Jerusalem, just weeks after Soviet and American leaders called for the resumption of an international peace conference at Geneva,<sup>9</sup> was the most overt signal he could send to Washington that while he was committed to resolving his dispute with Israel he had no intention of getting entangled in a comprehensive process that was bound to take years and would most likely fail due to longstanding disagreements among Arab states. As historian Nancy Mitchell recently argued, Sadat made it clear to Carter administration officials in early 1977 that he had grown far more concerned with events in Africa than his conflict with Israel.<sup>10</sup> He wanted a quick settlement with Israel so he could focus on problems in the Horn, Zaire, and in Libya.

Given that both Kissinger and Carter pursued bilateral agreements with Egypt and left the Palestinian problem unresolved, a practice that was largely followed until the Clinton administration (and remains unresolved to this day), one also has to question whether the Arab-American political activism that emerged in the 1970s made any difference at the national level. Yaqub may certainly be correct that greater acceptance of Arab Americans during the 1970s provided activists new outlets to voice their opposition to U.S. policies. President Gerald R. Ford’s meeting with a delegation of the NAAA in June 1975 was a testament to the

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<sup>8</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 421.

<sup>9</sup> Telegram 10023 from Secretary of State Vance to Multiple Destinations, 1 October 1977, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D770358-0288.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), Kindle Edition, Location 4381.



growing influence of Arab Americans. But the NAAA's calls for the U.S. to recognize the PLO quickly fell on deaf ears (10, 172). This was a pattern that repeated itself during the remainder of the decade. Arab-American political activists called on the U.S. to get tough with Israel but largely failed to sway U.S. policymakers to adopt this approach.

Outside of these differences, *Imperfect Strangers* is an impressive work of diplomatic, cultural, and social history and should be considered required reading for anyone who is interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict, U.S. relations with the Arab world, U.S. immigration history, and Middle East area studies. Alongside Melani McAlister's seminal study on U.S.-Middle East cultural encounters,<sup>11</sup> *Imperfect Strangers* has deeply added to our understanding of how a combination of U.S. policy and popular culture has shaped the ways Americans understand the Arab world and how Americans and Arabs have come to know each other.

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<sup>11</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

**Review by Pamela E. Pennock, University of Michigan, Dearborn**

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With his extensive research in United States (U.S.) diplomatic sources and Arab-American manuscript collections, Salim Yaqub has made a major contribution to the study of U.S.-Middle East relations by positioning Arab Americans and their organizations as important actors in U.S. diplomatic history. No other study of U.S.-Middle East relations in the post-1967 period has devoted as much attention to Arab Americans. Although many studies of, for example, twentieth-century U.S.-African relations consider the role of African Americans in that exchange,<sup>1</sup> Arab Americans have been so invisible in historical research that the scholarship on U.S.-Middle East relations has been written as though there were only two parties: U.S. non-Arab policymakers, and Arabs in the Arab world. Yaqub draws our attention to a third party (and variations within that third party) by uncovering the political organizing of Arab Americans and their responses to Arab world developments and U.S. policymaking. His book blends the methodologies of diplomatic history with social history, and his incorporation of cultural analysis further enriches the study.

*Imperfect Strangers* makes a convincing case that the 1970s constituted a crucial period in U.S.-Middle East relations. Considering all of the events that occurred in the decade after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, including the oil embargo, terrorist attacks, the October War of 1973, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, and the Camp David Accords, his identification of the 1970s as pivotal is undeniable.

Even more intriguing is Yaqub's intricate argument that the era produced "double movements"—trends that simultaneously constricted and affirmed the status of Arabs in the United States (344). He contends that although U.S. diplomacy, as guided by Kissinger, was stacked in Israel's favor, the period saw an opening for more Arab perspectives in America. Yaqub skillfully demonstrates the "peculiar irony" that while in some areas of U.S. society anti-Arab prejudice grew, in other aspects the reputation of Arabs and Arab Americans was enhanced (7). But he recognizes that the dual trajectories were not merely ironic; the relationship was causal as well. "The diplomatic maneuverings that widened the political rift between the United States and the Arab world also had the effect of humanizing Arabs to American audiences," he argues (11). Furthermore, precisely because U.S. policymaking negatively affected Arabs abroad and residing in the United States, many Arab Americans mobilized politically to protest and influence U.S. policies, making them more visible and also more connected to American political arenas. This mobilization in turn helped to legitimize Arab Americans as a minority group in the United States.

This episode of history was set off by the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, and Yaqub argues that the Arab-Israeli conflict was paramount to U.S.-Middle East relations through the 1970s. Over the next few years the rest of the world came to advocate a resolution in which Israel would give up the land it occupied after the war and an independent Palestinian state would be established. Although various U.S. policymakers showed sympathy with this stance in the 1970s, Kissinger's diplomacy—sometimes subtly and sometimes openly, but always intentionally—had the effect of securing Israel's ongoing occupation of these lands. According to Yaqub,

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*, Revised Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land?: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

America's policy of upholding Israel's right to these lands had an adverse impact on relations with the Middle East. While showing that Arab actors were not blameless in perpetuating the conflict, Yaqub does not place the onus on them. His account persuasively demonstrates that Arab leaders, particularly Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt, and Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), were consistently more open to compromise than were their Israeli and American counterparts.

The 1967 war also energized Arab Americans' activism, particularly their intensified effort to make their voices heard in the American public arena on Middle East questions. In a contribution to Arab-American historiography, Yaqub comments on what he identifies as the "de-assimilation" thesis, which holds that Americans of Arab heritage increasingly emphasized their identification as Arabs in the post-1967 period. (13) Accepting this thesis as partly true, he also challenges it by pointing out that in their endeavor to influence American policymaking and assert their place in the American social fabric, Arab Americans actually became more integrated in the American public arena. He thus depicts Arab Americans' organizing in the 1970s as "redoubled assimilation," which he views as a positive development that in part offset the anti-Arab tilt of American diplomacy. (13) This argument follows a propensity in Yaqub's earlier work, such as *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (2004), in which he was reluctant to bestow much explanatory power to the Orientalism thesis and the 'othering' of Arab Americans.<sup>2</sup> Although Yaqub wisely does not give too much weight to the separatist inclinations of some Arab Americans nor to the marginalization of Arabs by the American society at large, in my opinion his "redoubled assimilation" characterization goes too far in that it invokes the Arab-American (especially Syrian-American) assimilation tendencies of the early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The kind of absorption into mainstream white American culture that the term "redoubled assimilation" signifies (to me at least) was not what most Arab Americans, let alone avowedly Arab-American organizations, were interested in recapturing by the 1970s. Instead, a new kind of integration, grounded in affirmation of their particular ethnic identity and political perspectives, was what many of them pursued.<sup>4</sup>

Right from the start readers understand this book will be a different kind of study of U.S.-Middle East relations. *Imperfect Strangers* opens with an account of Sirhan Sirhan's assassination of U.S. Senator and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy in June 1968. By connecting the Palestinian immigrant Sirhan's act to U.S. policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict and examining the reactions of Arabs and Arab Americans to the assassination, Yaqub uses the incident to demonstrate Arabs acting "less shy about letting Americans know how they felt about" the United States "playing an increasingly decisive role in the geopolitics of the Middle

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<sup>2</sup> Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 141; Michael W. Suleiman, "Arab-Americans and the Political Process," in *The Development of Arab-American Identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 42-45.

<sup>4</sup> Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight Against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock, ed., *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000); Sarah Gualtieri, Epilogue to *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 165-190.

East.”(6) Yaqub proceeds to introduce us to the main actors and organizations in the emerging Arab American political scene: the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA), attorney and activist Abdeen Jabara, activist Mohamed T. Mehdi, and Senator James Abourezk, among many others. Yaqub also explores the stances and efforts of a host of ‘Arab friendly’ organizations founded by non-Arabs, including Americans for Middle East Understanding and the American Committee for Justice in the Middle East. Judiciously, he pays careful attention to both the radical and moderate branches of the burgeoning pro-Arab organizations that endeavored to influence U.S. policy. The AAUG, which he calls a “cross between a political advocacy group and an academic society,” (69) was the most important of the organizations taking a radical perspective on Palestine and the Arab world, while the NAAA operated as a more moderate, pragmatic political lobbying group, which Yaqub argues better represented the growing pragmatism of most Arab states surrounding Israel in the 1970s.

Hence, Yaqub weaves the history of Arab American activism into U.S. diplomatic history to provide a story of U.S. relations with the Middle East that showcases different perspectives and angles than we have seen before. He devotes a chapter to the Nixon administration’s reaction to the Palestinian terrorist organization Black September’s murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games in 1972, which entailed a visa screening program on Arabs called Operation Boulder as well as surveillance and investigations of Arab Americans who were active in pro-Palestinian organizations. When discussing the October War of 1973, Yaqub not only explains the failed diplomacy that led to the war, lucidly detailing the back-and-forth exchanges of U.S., Soviet, Israeli, Egyptian, and other Arab leaders, but he also incorporates Arab Americans’ responses to the war in his narrative. He thus attends not only to the war’s impact on international relations but also to its impact on Arab Americans who, he argues, “now could reasonably aspire to shape public attitudes in the U.S.” because “the war and oil embargo had aroused considerable curiosity about the Middle East among” Americans (144). Similarly, when examining major developments such as the Camp David Accords, Yaqub covers both the customary diplomatic history, by using sources from presidential libraries, the National Archives, and the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, and the involvement and responses of Arab-American organizations by utilizing their publications and archival collections. He discusses the ABSCAM debacle, in which FBI agents impersonated Arab ‘sheiks’ to entrap U.S. politicians, which is also important to Arab-American history and its intersection with the U.S. government and foreign affairs. Yaqub then provides an interesting account of the controversy surrounding the meeting between Andrew Young, the first African-American Ambassador to the United Nations, and Zehdi Terzi, a representative of the PLO, which caused President Carter to fire Young. Young’s dismissal in turn instigated an outpouring of protest from African-American leaders and fueled their increased support for the Palestinian cause and a growing alliance with Arab Americans. One of the book’s most stimulating chapters, written in the vein of Melani McAlister’s excellent *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (2001), is a cultural analysis of 1970s apocalyptic and thriller fiction that showcased pro- and anti-Arab views, including a novel by Spiro Agnew titled *The Canfield Decision*.<sup>5</sup>

This book makes a major contribution to both U.S. diplomatic and social history by incorporating Arab Americans. What I most appreciate about Yaqub’s scholarship, also displayed in his earlier work, is his careful acceptance of ambiguities, nuances, and paradoxes. This does not mean that he shies away from judgments

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<sup>5</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*, updated edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Spiro Agnew, *The Canfield Decision* (New York: Playboy Press, 1976).

and conclusions; his book is not 'balanced,' if balanced means neutral. But he appreciates that conflicting trends can occur at the same time, and that one development can have multiple and contradictory determinants and consequences. In *Imperfect Strangers* he shows that U.S. policymaking in the 1970s had an overall pro-Israeli tilt, and that this tilt impaired relations with most of the Arab world and instigated harmful treatment of Arab Americans at the same time as it allowed avenues for increased Arab and Arab American perspectives and legitimacy in American society.

**Review by James Stocker, Trinity Washington University**

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During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the press struggled to understand the evolving nature of American society and its impact on representative government. In August, *Politico* highlighted a change in the political attitudes of Arab Americans in Michigan, who were polling as overwhelmingly in support of Democrats. This had not always been the case. George W. Bush had won the majority of the Arab American vote there in 2000 with a conservative but egalitarian message, though Republicans had lost much of their support following 9/11. This change, according to *Politico*, represented a lost opportunity to make Michigan, a long-time blue state, competitive.<sup>1</sup> As it turned out, the author was wrong: Donald Trump either did not need, or actually got enough of, those Arab American votes to win the state, in spite of his anti-Muslim rhetoric and strong support for Israeli settlement activity. One is left to wonder what the impact of the Arab American vote truly was. Is the Arab-American community gaining or losing power? How does the influence of this community compare to other domestic constituencies interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict, notably Jewish Americans and lobby groups for Israel?

There is no better starting place for exploring these difficult and deeply contentious questions than by taking a look at the period in which the Arab American community became a political force: the 1970s. In *Imperfect Strangers*, Salim Yaqub argues that this decade was pivotal for U.S.-Arab relations, as Americans and Arabs became an “inescapable presence in each other’s lives and perceptions, and members of each society came to feel profoundly vulnerable to the political, economic, cultural, and even physical encroachments of the other” (6-7). Covering a wide range of topics during a transformational era, this is a deftly written, entertaining book demonstrating a mastery of subject matter and source material.

*Imperfect Strangers* tells two major, inter-related stories: first, that of U.S. government involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1970s, and second, that of the rise of Arab Americans as a political, social, and cultural force in the national life of the United States. Each of these could easily have been the subject of a separate book, and as discussed below, there may have been some advantages to this. The two stories are not equally interdependent: U.S. political involvement in the Middle East arguably had much more impact on the political lives and identities of Arab Americans than Arab-American activism—whose successes were “rare and modest” (13)—had on U.S. Middle East policy. But the connections are undeniable and significant, and resonate with the current political situation regarding Arab and Muslim Americans.

The book’s narrative of U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is solid and well-written. Still, much of this story, particularly regarding the Nixon and Ford administrations, has been told elsewhere, from the battles between Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (Chapter 1) to the failure of U.S. officials to foresee the 1973 war (Chapter 4). The sections on the second half of the 1970s are the most insightful, drawing on recently released archival evidence that shapes our understanding of this period. Yaqub’s skillful and accurate account of U.S. involvement in the early stages of the Lebanese Civil war in 1975-1976 integrates this often-neglected conflict into the narrative of U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict (Chapter 7). The Carter administration, Yaqub reminds us, initially inspired great hope in the Arab world and amongst the Arab American population (Chapter 8). *Imperfect Strangers* reveals new

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Kaffer, “How the GOP Lost Arab-American Voters”, *Politico*, 3 August 2016, available at <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/08/arab-american-muslim-vote-2016-trump-bush-dearborn-detroit-michigan-214134>.

information about contacts with the PLO via Palestinian professor and Arafat confidant Walid Khalidi (246-247), as well as insights into the reaction of the Carter administration to the election of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (244).

The author's approach to U.S. involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict is based on his view that National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger "*deliberately* designed [the Arab-Israeli peace] process to enable Israel's indefinite occupation of Arab land" (13).<sup>2</sup> Whether or not Kissinger really intended to do so remains, in the mind of this reviewer, an open question, dependent upon one's understanding of the term "indefinite." This word could be understood to mean simply of uncertain length, or to mean extending on and on towards eternity. In the book's telling, it seems to be the latter: Kissinger was fundamentally opposed to a return to the borders that existed prior to 1967 Arab-Israeli War, believing them to be indefensible for Israel (149). But since Kissinger has never articulated his own vision of the final borders between the Arab states and Israel, it is impossible to know what kind of revisions he would have endorsed. The U.S. had been open to at least some minor alterations to Israel's borders since the 1967 war, so it matters whether or not Kissinger wanted Israel to keep most of the land it captured, or just add a few additional meters or miles along its pre-1967 borders. If it is the latter, this undermines the force of Yaqub's argument that he deliberately did so. In any case, there is no doubt that the interim agreements Kissinger brokered had the effect of taking military pressure off Israel, and therefore made it easier to sit tight indefinitely in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights, whether or not it was "deliberately designed" to do so.

The story of the rise of the Arab American community as a political force will be less familiar to most readers, but it is arguably an even greater contribution. In the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, incredulity and outrage over Israel's massive defeat of Arab armies and occupation of Arab land politicized many Arab Americans. At the same time, as Palestinian and other actors employed terrorist tactics in an attempt to advance their cause, Arab Americans became stigmatized by association. By 1975, scholars had put forward the so-called "de-assimilation thesis": although Arab Americans integrated well into broader American society for the first part of the twentieth century, they later ceased to do so. Yaqub sees this argument as only half right, since many—in fact—embraced assimilation in a "redoubled" fashion, as they were "goaded...to engage with the dominant society to seek a redress of grievances, or at least some better public understanding of their concern" (13). The combination of foreign and domestic trends, in his view, "produced a sort of double movement: contentious international events that alienated Arab Americans and made their position in American society more precarious were often accompanied by, and sometimes inseparable from, developments that mitigated those processes." (344)

This position is well supported by the analysis in the book. In his reconstruction of the rise of Arab American activism (Chapter 2), Yaqub resurrects little known and forgotten figures such as Rashid Bashshur and Abdeen Jabara, representing the moderate and the radical wings of the Arab American movement (64). We get a sense of how a new Arab political identity emerged out of older Syrian American clubs, which had advocated what Yaqub calls a "soft Arabism" (70). Non-Arab groups, too, mobilized on behalf of Arab causes (70-74), providing a connection to other, mostly left-leaning, organizations. The double movement was reinforced by the Nixon administration's campaign of domestic surveillance and repression, dubbed

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<sup>2</sup> This argument was previously put forward in Salim Yaqub, "The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

“Operation Boulder”, against potential domestic terror threats in the aftermath of the 1972 kidnapping and killing of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics by Black September. This story resonates strongly today in light of clear parallels with the post-9/11 surveillance of Muslim Americans. The book justifiably pushes back against claims from that period and later that these actions were the result of Zionist lobbying, arguing that “genuine security concerns” (89) were primarily what prompted their introduction. Arab Americans, then as now, were anything but passive victims. Arab American groups used the example of the Watergate scandal and other governmental abuses of power to suggest that Arab minorities were being unjustly repressed (106-110), thereby demonstrating how they could play within the system to promote and defend their own interests.

Arab Americans became the subject of broader American anxieties due to their depiction in the popular media and an influx of funds from the Arab world amidst rising oil prices. In Chapter 6 and parts of Chapter 9, reminiscent of Melani McAlister’s *Epic Encounters*, Yaqub explores popular depictions of Arabs in Hollywood films, television, and novels.<sup>3</sup> Most of these predictably characterized Arabs as lascivious, avaricious, cruel, and cowardly, while Israelis were principled, courageous, and willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. There were some prominent exceptions, such as former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew’s book *The Canfield Decision*, which portrayed American politics as trapped in the clutches of a pro-Israel lobby (196-203).<sup>4</sup> But the strong backlash against Agnew as a result of his book, which Yaqub sees as “crude and tendentious but not inherently anti-Semitic”, reflects the fact that it was more acceptable to stereotype Arabs than other groups. Agnew’s book was thus the exception that proved the rule. Arab American organizations and scholars such as Jack Shaheen (author of *Reel Bad Arabs*) pushed back against these negative tropes, winning only small concessions at first from the studios, but slowly making their case known in broader society (283-285).<sup>5</sup> An infusion of Arab oil money into academia both helped with the creation of knowledge and led to charges of bias from critics of Arab causes (285-289).

However, while we catch a glimpse of the future of the Arab American community in the book’s epilogue (344-348), the latter is not quite enough for the reader to fully understand the significance of this era. It is well-known that the American-led peace process in the Middle East has resulted in stalemate, but the contemporary influence of the Arab American community is less evident and requires situating. Did the 1970s mark a peak in the power of the Arab American community, or was it merely a prelude to more effective lobbying later? By the 1990s, Muslim American groups had risen to prominence in American politics. Yet not all Arab Americans were Muslims: many were Christians, Jews, or secular-minded, or simply may have preferred to emphasize their ethnic rather than religious background. How did these groups interact with one another? Did they cooperate or compete? Here, the author’s commitment to tell multiple stories seems to result in one being stretched thin.

On the other hand, the juxtaposition of these stories will work well for many readers. The book provides a wonderful overview of U.S. diplomacy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1970s. As such, it would

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<sup>3</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Spiro T. Agnew, *The Canfield Decision* (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).



be ideal as a text in a course on the history of the Modern Middle East, or as a supplementary text in a Cold War or international history course, precisely because it combines these themes so well. Undergraduate students, for instance, will be challenged to think about the connections between high and low politics.

All of this is to say that Yaqub has turned over fertile soil. In addition to its own rich contributions as a model of international history, *Imperfect Strangers* is likely to herald other works that follow in the same vein of drawing connections between political, social, and cultural developments in regards to U.S. Middle East policy and Arab Americans.

**Author's Response by Salim Yaqub, University of California Santa Barbara**

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I would like to thank Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse for all they have done to put this roundtable together. It is thrilling to see *Imperfect Strangers* receive the focused attention of such a distinguished and methodologically diverse group of scholars. While I of course appreciate the many kind things the contributors say about my book, I'm even more grateful for the vivid and insightful ways in which they recreate its themes and arguments. The reviews remind me of why I got excited about this subject in the first place. The contributors also make a number of thoughtful criticisms, some of them touching on the book's core arguments, all of them meriting careful and reflective responses.

To a couple of those critiques I can only answer, 'guilty as charged!' In the course of writing the book, and with varying degrees of deliberateness, I made decisions that favored certain objectives over others; in each case, something valuable was sacrificed. Nathan Citino observes that my use of Arabic-language sources is far more modest in this book than it was in my first. He is absolutely right to suggest that "[g]reater attention to published writings by the Palestinian revolutionary Left" or to sources documenting "the rise of Islamist movements and their opposition to U.S. power" would have made for a richer monograph. The truth of the matter is simple and, perhaps, a little damning. I embarked on the project determined to consult a wide array of Arabic-language materials. But this was a daunting task, and I kept putting it off. Meanwhile, I found I had a vast and intricate American story on my hands. It eventually became clear that the only way to supply a comparable Arab dimension would be to devote several more years to a project that had occupied me for over a decade, and to add many more pages to a manuscript already bursting at the seams. So I went with my more limited set of Arabic sources. A colleague of mine likes to say that book projects are not completed; they're abandoned. The observation is especially apt in this case—which is to say that *Imperfect Strangers* is true to the adjective in its name. (I should note here that Citino's own new monograph, an outstanding study of modernization in U.S.-Arab relations, makes extensive use of Arabic sources and is thus unassailable on this score.<sup>1</sup>)

James Stocker, too, hits the mark when he writes that my discussion of Arab American political activism in the 1970s leaves many questions unanswered and that the subject merits much fuller treatment than I provide. I completely agree. But my purpose was not to produce an exhaustive study of this topic. Rather, it was to conduct a briefer foray into an area that, at the time I began the project, had received virtually no attention from professional historians. (Happily, this is no longer the case: Pamela Pennock, one of the contributors to this round table, has just published a splendid study of left-leaning Arab American activism from the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>) Indeed, the Arab American story was only one of many narrative strands I sought to weave into a comprehensive account of the overall relationship between the United States and the Arab world. The idea was to make provocative and, hopefully, fruitful interventions in several specialist literatures: on official U.S. policies toward the Middle East, on domestic American discourses regarding conflicts in that region, on the evolution of Arab American political activism, and on American popular

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan J. Citino, *Envisioning the Arab Future: Modernization in U.S.-Arab Relations, 1945-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight Against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

culture and the Arab world. I launched this multipronged effort because I was interested in all of the above topics and their literatures, because I wanted my interpretation to be as robust and as persuasive as possible, and because I was intrigued by the conceptual and technical challenges of bringing so many disparate subfields into conversation with one another. Inevitably, my treatment in a number of these areas has been loose and suggestive rather than airtight and definitive.

Against other criticisms, I need to push back a bit. I am gratified that Stocker, a rising authority on U.S. interactions with the Lebanese civil war,<sup>3</sup> blesses my handling of that subject, but I regret that he doesn't see much originality in my discussion of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's approach to Arab Israeli peacemaking. My argument that Kissinger *deliberately* set out to fortify Israel's occupation of Arab land does, I think, break new ground, at least insofar as it draws on recently declassified government documents and appears in a work of academic history. Decades ago, the journalists Alan Hart and Patrick Seale made versions of this claim.<sup>4</sup> But they did so by relying on open-source material and by channeling the views of Palestinian and Syrian leaders, whose jaundiced assessments of U.S. motives were occasionally warranted. Few if any of my fellow diplomatic historians have connected the dots in this way.

Indeed, Stocker himself goes on to question whether the dots *should* be so connected. Did Kissinger intentionally and significantly abet Israeli annexationism? “[S]ince Kissinger has never articulated his own vision of the final borders between the Arab states and Israel,” Stocker writes, “it is impossible to know what kind of revisions he would have endorsed. The U.S. had been open to at least some minor alterations to Israel's borders since the 1967 war, so it matters whether or not Kissinger wanted Israel to keep most of the land it captured, or just add a few additional meters or miles along its pre-1967 borders. If it is the latter, this undermines the force of Yaqub's argument that he deliberately did so.”

Actually, the record isn't as opaque as Stocker suggests. Whether or not Kissinger wanted Israel to retain “most” of the land it had occupied in 1967, he certainly advocated that it keep more than “a few additional meters or miles” along its borders. In February 1974, in a conversation quoted in my book, Kissinger privately recommended to Israeli leaders that, in the upcoming Israeli-Syrian disengagement talks, they insist on retaining almost all of the Golan Heights. “I must also say,” Kissinger added, “that whether you can hold that position in the face of certain diplomatic pressures that will arise depends on the degrees to which you can keep Syria isolated, other problems solved, and the energy problem taken out of the way. If you can achieve all these things, I can't believe that the world is going to die on the issue of the Golan Heights” (158–159). My book documents other instances in which Kissinger colluded with Israeli leaders over strategies for maximizing Israel's retention of Arab land (149, 161).

Pamela Pennock is exceedingly generous, but she takes issue with my use of the term “redoubled assimilation” to describe the process by which some Arab Americans engaged with mainstream U.S. institutions—the news media, electoral politics, the entertainment industry, etc.—to air their grievances and concerns. The ‘A-word,’ I suppose, can be a bit of a red flag to scholars of the Arab American experience. I used it for a number of

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<sup>3</sup> James R. Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Alan Hart, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 366, 378; Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 246, 252, 256.

reasons: because it is intelligible to non-specialists, because it presents the most elegant counterpoint to ‘de-assimilation,’ and because I wanted to offer a friendly challenge to the tendency within Arab American studies to privilege the experiences and outlooks of radical Arab American activists over those of their moderate counterparts. The moderate Arab American groups, whose rhetoric and iconography were often patriotic, accommodating, and, yes, assimilationist, played a key role in articulating Arab-friendly views in this period. As long as their story remains untold (and my book barely begins to tell it), our understanding of this history will be incomplete. And anyway, as Pennock acknowledges, I do not deny the force of the de-assimilation thesis; I merely posit a countervailing trend. (Nor, I should stress, do I question Pennock’s own decision to focus on the Arab American left. The historical study of Arab American activism is in its infancy, and we have to begin somewhere. Both logically and chronologically, the left is an excellent starting point).

Craig Daigle offers the most extensive critique of *Imperfect Strangers*. In view of his considerable expertise in the subjects he addresses, his words carry great weight.<sup>5</sup> He argues that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, not Henry Kissinger or any other American leader, was “the driving force behind U.S.-led efforts at bilateral Egyptian-Israeli agreements during the decade.” Daigle has a point: no bilateral deal would have been possible had Sadat not stepped forward when he did. While my paragraph-by-paragraph treatment of Arab-Israeli diplomacy can leave no doubt about Sadat’s centrality to the peace process, on reflection I agree that I could have featured his role more prominently in the overall framing of those sections. But Kissinger, too, was indispensable; he devised the sophisticated diplomatic strategy that allowed Sadat to separate himself from the Arab coalition and move down the bilateral path. The Egyptian President merits more conspicuous billing, but not to the point of upstaging the U.S. Secretary of State.

Daigle further argues that I am unduly critical of the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace process that Kissinger (and Sadat) set in motion and that culminated in the Camp David agreement of 1978. After all, here was an “opportunity to broker a peace accord between Israel and the largest Arab nation” and thus “essentially quash the chances of another Middle East war.” Even though a broader peace would continue to elude the parties, some of them, at least, were taking a long step in the right direction—and, better still, were saving future generations from untold carnage. These propositions have intuitive appeal, but I believe that Daigle’s view of the matter is excessively linear and binary. In the dynamic interplay of Arab-Israeli diplomacy, some steps had the effect of precluding others, and thus of placing certain destinations further and further out of reach. Moreover, U.S. diplomats did not face a stark choice between, on the one hand, defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict via a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement and, on the other, resigning themselves to the inevitability of another full-scale war. There were options for sharply reducing this likelihood that involved addressing, not sidelining, the issues related to Israel’s disputes with other Arab actors.

It would have been one thing, for example, if the various Egyptian-Israeli agreements (such as the Sinai II Agreement of 1975, the Camp David Accords of 1978, and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979) had been linked to firm Israeli commitments to withdraw, at some later date, from the remaining occupied territories and to grapple seriously with the Palestinian issue (in exchange, of course, for Arab recognition of

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<sup>5</sup> Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

Israel). But none of these agreements contained such linkage.<sup>6</sup> Their main consequence, therefore, was to relieve Israel of military pressure from the southwest and allow it to consolidate its occupation elsewhere. Former President Jimmy Carter himself eventually grasped this bleak reality. The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, he wrote in 1985, “removed Egypt’s considerable strength from the military equation of the Middle East and thus gave the Israelis renewed freedom to pursue their goals of fortifying and settling the occupied territories” (271). Carter belatedly came to recognize what Kissinger had long understood.

Daigle actually reinforces this last point when he quotes Kissinger’s February 1974 assurance to Israeli leaders: “Once you have taken Egypt out of the confrontation with you altogether, the capability of Syria without Egypt to cause trouble is reduced” (150). The “trouble” Kissinger was referring to was a renewed military campaign by Syria to win back its own territory. The point bears repeating: from the start of his shuttle diplomacy, Kissinger was a knowing and systematic enabler of Israeli annexationism.

But was the main alternative scenario, a comprehensive settlement between Israel and all of its direct Arab adversaries, including the Palestinians, ever a realistic prospect in the 1970s? Daigle doubts that it was. He believes that the Israelis were too determined to exclude the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Arab states too divided among themselves, for such a settlement to succeed. He may be right. Still, at various moments in the middle years of the decade (for reasons I spell out in Chapters 5 and 8), the prospects for a comprehensive settlement, while never sunny outright, were considerably brighter than they had been previously or would be again. It’s also worth noting that both of the obstacles Daigle cites—Israel’s rejection of the PLO and inter-Arab division—were significantly exacerbated by the actions of Kissinger and Sadat, respectively. On the one hand, this observation validates Daigle’s point about Sadat’s importance. On the other, it highlights the necessity of viewing the Arab-Israeli peace process as a dynamic system. The unpromising diplomatic situation wasn’t simply a ‘given’ that Kissinger and Sadat inherited and reacted to; it was an environment they actively shaped and, from the standpoint of those favoring a comprehensive peace, made even less promising.

Daigle also notes, in seeming criticism of my treatment, that Arab American activism had little influence on U.S. policy. In fact, this is a point I make repeatedly in the book. I argue that the activism’s principal impact was on Arab Americans’ self-conception and, more diffusely, on the substance and tenor of American public discourse on the Middle East (10–11, 13, 66, 69–70, 90, 102–103, 135, 172, 257, 327, 344–348).

I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the time and care the contributors have devoted to reviewing my monograph. Responding to their interventions has prodded me to think more systematically about a number of key issues, and the experience has been invigorating. There is so much more to say about all of these subjects, and the prospects for bringing traditionally disparate genres into closer interaction with one another are exciting. I look forward to continuing and broadening the conversation.

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<sup>6</sup> In 1977–1978, both Sadat and President Jimmy Carter tried to insert this sort of linkage into the emerging Egyptian-Israeli bilateral peace process, but they ultimately relented in the face of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin’s adamant opposition to meaningful linkage.