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Introduction by Salim Yaqub

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Introduction by Salim Yaqub, University of California, Santa Barbara

It is not hard to understand why the Suez Crisis of 1956 is such an irresistible topic of historical inquiry. It features an ensemble cast of outsized personalities (Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion), presents the climactic eruption of several basic and long-running international disputes and tensions (Arab-Israeli, U.S.-Soviet, imperialist-nationalist, North-South, European-U.S.), and encompasses the full range of dramatic genres (heroism, tragedy, intrigue, mystery, farce). Added to this is a man-bites-dog plot (the United States and the Soviet Union join hands to defend Nasserist Egypt from an attack by Britain, France, and Israel—come again?) and the fact that, by general scholarly agreement, Suez marks a turning point along several historical trajectories, involving the Cold War, Western imperialism, decolonization, nonalignment, Arab nationalism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, European integration, and so on. The vividness, complexity, and importance of the event also set the stage for challenging and innovative historical reinterpretation. Enter Guy Laron.

In *Origins of the Suez Crisis*, Laron recasts the crisis as the culmination of a decade-long international struggle over the direction, pace, and scope of Third World industrialization. He argues that political and economic elites in Egypt, Britain, France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere harbored competing visions of how Egyptian industry should be enmeshed in the global economy. Those visions were so incompatible that they eventually sparked a brief but highly consequential war in the Middle East. In perhaps his most original and provocative claim, Laron divides historical actors into two main camps: internationalists, who favored a fuller integration of Egyptian industry into the world economy, and isolationists, who hoped to contain that industry within imperial protectionist bounds. Viewing world politics through the internationalist/isolationist prism, Laron detects surprising affinities between the United States and the Soviet Union that help us make sense of the Suez Crisis. In essence, he writes, “internationalists both in Moscow and Washington sought to undermine isolationist designs hatched in London and Paris” (12).

The participants in this round table have a good deal of praise for Laron’s monograph. All of them give the author high marks for offering such a bold, novel, and provocative argument, while three of the four commend his extensive multiarchival and multilingual research. As Craig Daigle sums up both achievements, “Laron offers as close to an international history as we may get on the Suez Crisis and his use of ‘industrialization’ as a model will challenge historians to use this lens to examine several other Cold War and Middle Eastern crises.” Mary Ann Heiss agrees that scholars “will find much food for thought here.”

On the substance of Laron’s contribution, however, there is less consensus. While Heiss appears generally persuaded by the author’s foregrounding of economic considerations, the other three reviewers subject it to varying degrees of criticism, with Jesse Ferris expressing the greatest skepticism. Daigle appreciates Laron’s “demonstration that we

need to better account for the economic factors that led to [the Suez] crisis” but remains unconvinced “that these were *the* overriding concerns that produced the conflict.” McFarland similarly writes that Laron’s treatment of internal Egyptian debates over foreign policy “raises larger questions about the relative weight that historians assign to material interests compared with more intangible factors like political ideologies,” with the implication that the author slights the latter. Moving beyond Egypt, McFarland finds that the internationalist/isolationist dichotomy, though elegant, “underplays much of the nuance and complexity revealed by Laron’s own research.” More forcefully, Ferris characterizes the whole monograph as an unsuccessful effort to “challenge . . . conventional understandings of what the Cold War was all about.” Laron’s treatment, Ferris writes, “ignores the existence of a rarified realm of strategy at the pinnacle of decision-making that is, to varying degrees and at different times, insulated from domestic pressures.” Still, Ferris allows, “it is useful to be reminded that even the most strategic minded of statesmen are not as immune to such forces as we might expect.”

Laron’s book and these reviews are especially instructive for the light they collectively shed on the process by which scholarly positions are challenged, defended, and revised. Any historian tackling a topic that has already received extensive scholarly treatment will likely ask the following questions: Is there a new way of interpreting the subject? If so, is that new interpretation an improvement on more standard accounts? Or are the standard accounts standard precisely because they make the most sense? The assumption that most of the actors in the Suez drama pursued policies that blended economic motives with notions of geopolitics and prestige has become, I think it is fair to say, part of the conventional scholarly view of Suez. While all of the reviewers see value in Laron’s challenge to that view, they differ over the extent to which the challenge succeeds, with Heiss finding the most success and Ferris the least.

Some readers will object, of course, that the preceding paragraph frames the discussion too restrictively—that it assumes we have room on our shelves for only one sort of Suez book. Surely we can appreciate challenging interpretations even if they don’t displace existing accounts, can’t we? This latter view affords scholarly challengers some defense against the charge that they are exaggerating their novel findings or making monocausal claims. If their works are to be read *alongside* the existing literature rather than *instead* of it, then it becomes harder to fault those works for eschewing the balance we expect from monographs that claim to be definitive; and what does it mean to be ‘definitive,’ anyway? Other readers, however, will insist that every history should at least aspire to be a stand-alone work that imparts, in its own pages, the author’s assessment of the weight his or her interpretation merits in the broad constellation of understandings of the subject. There is no final verdict on these questions, which helps to explain why they will always command our attention.

Participants:

Guy Laron is a visiting fellow at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford for the academic year 2014-2015. He is also a lecturer at the department of international relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Previously he was a visiting assistant professor in the

department of history at Northwestern University. He is the author of *Origins of the Suez Crisis* as well as several articles in scholarly journals.

Salim Yaqub is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he specializes in the history of U.S. foreign relations, with a particular focus on U.S. involvement in the Middle East. He is also director of UCSB's Center for Cold War Studies and International History. His first book, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, was published in 2004 by the University of North Carolina Press. Dr. Yaqub is now writing a book on U.S.-Arab relations in the 1970s.

Craig Daigle is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History at the City College of New York. He is the author of *The Limits of Detente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (Yale University Press, 2012), and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (Routledge, 2014).

Jesse Ferris is Vice President for Strategy at the Israel Democracy Institute. He holds a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University and a BA in History from Yale University. His first book, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power*, was published in 2013 by Princeton University Press and won the 2013 Reuven Chaikin prize. He is currently at work on a history of Israeli foreign policy.

Mary Ann Heiss, Associate Professor of History at Kent State University, holds a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Her publications include *Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil, 1950-1954* (Columbia University Press, 1997); co-edited volumes on the recent history/future of NATO, U.S. relations with the Third World, and intrabloc conflict within NATO and the Warsaw Pact; and numerous essays in edited collections and professional journals, including the *International History Review* and *Diplomatic History*. Her current research explores the issue of colonialism as a factor in Anglo-American relations, particularly against the backdrop of the United Nations, in the period 1945-1963.

Victor McFarland is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Missouri. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University, and has served as a Miller Center Fellow at the University of Virginia and a Dickey Center Fellow at Dartmouth College. He studies the history of the global energy market and U.S. relations with the Arab world; his research concentrates on the oil crisis of the 1970s.

Review by Craig Daigle, City College of New York

In a memo to his Secretary of State in May 1971, President Richard M. Nixon wrote that the only time the United States had not subordinated its national security interests to the interests of Israel was during the 1956 Suez Crisis. “Just before the election,” said Nixon, “we took a position against the British, Israelis, and the French which brought an end to that comic opera war. Clearly apart from what effect this action may have had on the nations in the Mideast it had a devastating effect on the British and French.” From that time on, Nixon argued, the British and French ceased to be major powers in the world and “simply lost their stomach for playing a major role in world affairs.” Addressing Washington’s complicity in instigating the affair, Nixon conceded that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’ decision to withdraw U.S. funding for the construction of the Aswan Dam was a glaring error. “Here again, in a moment of pique, [Dulles] infuriated Nasser and to a certain extent may have contributed to the tragic events of 1956.”¹

Nixon’s conclusions have aptly captured what many scholars have seen as the essence of the crisis. Focusing on an East-West narrative, rather than Third World agency, this view holds that the Suez Crisis erupted, in July 1956, as direct result of the U.S. decision to cancel funding for the dam, and British efforts to retake possession of the Suez Canal, one of their most important foreign investments. In this vein, Dulles and President Dwight D. Eisenhower became a central component of the story, and the Suez Crisis became submerged in the larger Cold War narrative, even though the U.S. role during the crisis was rather minimal.² Because of the wealth of British documentation on the crisis, moreover, and the fact that the crisis brought an end to the government of Prime Minister Anthony Eden, crippled the British economy, and dramatically reduced Britain’s involvement in world affairs, the British role in the events has deservedly received considerable scholarly attention.³

Guy Laron offers a refreshing interpretation of the dramatic events of 1956 in his highly revealing *Origins of the Suez Crisis: Postwar Development Diplomacy and the Struggle over Third World Industrialization, 1945-1956*. Drawing on a rich collection of documentation from Israeli, British, Russian, U.S., Czech, and Indian archives, as well as Arabic source material, Laron moves beyond the U.S. and British narratives and instead roots the Suez Crisis in post-war debates about Third World industrialization and globalization. In what could arguably have been entitled ‘The Long Road to the Suez Crisis,’ Laron offers a much

¹ Richard Nixon to William Rogers, May 26, 1971. National Archives, RG 59, Lot Files, Office Files of William P. Rogers, Box 25.

² See, for example, Hugh Thomas, *The Suez Affair*, Revised Edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970); William Roger Louis, “An American Volcano in the Middle East: John Foster Dulles and the Suez Crisis,” in Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 639-664; Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981);

³ See Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain’s End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003).

wider gaze of the events that led to Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the subsequent British, French, and Israeli attack on Egypt. By framing his argument in the months immediately after the conclusion of the Second World War, instead of in the summer and fall of 1956, and by focusing on the "economic Cold War", this study reshapes the way historians and political scientists will view the crisis, and it offers a useful corrective to the dominant East-West narrative of the conflict.

At the heart of Laron's argument is the global post-war debate between internationalists and isolationists about the ability to compete economically in the global arena. Internationalists, including capital goods producers, multinational corporations, international bankers, and lawyers advocated an open global market and encouraged Third World development to ensure greater demand for oil, capital goods, and investment opportunities. American corporations and government officials were at the heart of the internationalist crusade after World War II, Laron contends, but they certainly were not alone. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was "devoted" (114) to expanding trade ties with Third World countries, and many leaders in the Third World, including India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Egypt's Nasser, were receptive to foreign investment and increased trade opportunities for their developing economies. Yet these internationalists, as Laron demonstrates, faced continued resistance from domestic opponents.

The debate in London between internationalists and isolationists was particularly fierce. In what is arguably the strength of this book, Laron shows how British internationalists, who witnessed declining productivity in the colonies during World War II, believed the cost of maintaining the empire after the war meant a heavy defense burden, higher taxes, and rationing. They also viewed the 'sterling area,' countries of the British Empire united into a single exchange control area, as outdated, and wanted to see Great Britain enhance its trade with other parts of the world. Isolationists, led by Ernest Bevin, Anthony Eden, and Harold Macmillan, on the other hand, insisted that a withdrawal from any part of the empire would be "foolhardy and dangerous." (17) It was imperative, they claimed, to maintain control of their empire, the sterling area, and the 'captive markets' in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and to prevent free trade, which would flood the British market with cheaper manufactured goods from abroad. "Any government that tried to wean British industry off its dependence on captive markets would be quickly removed by the electorate," Laron maintains. "Viewed from this perspective, the British invasion of Egypt during the Suez Crisis was an attempt to have its cake and eat it, too: that is to keep the empire, on the one hand, but merge it with a European trading bloc on the other" (188).

The significance of Laron's argument is quite clear: the British and French were far more interested in maintaining their colonial empires and building a 'Third Bloc' of nations to compete with the United States and the Soviet Union than they were with larger security concerns in the Middle East or with seeing the crisis purely through a Cold War prism. What they hoped to achieve by retaking the Suez Canal and removing Nasser from power was a demonstration of the power of this Third Bloc. Such a bloc would "tie" (188) British and French raw-materials-producing colonies to Western European factories within the framework of a customs union. However fanciful this idea may seem in retrospect, both British and French leaders viewed their intervention in the Suez Crisis as a sign of their

strength, and as integral for maintaining their empires. French Prime Minister Guy Mollet was particularly enamored with this scheme, as he viewed the creation of a “procolonial European Union” (167) as the answer to American criticism of France’s Algeria policy.⁴ “The Anglo-French Operation in November 1956, therefore, was to send Nasser to the dustbin of history, show that Britain and France could operate independently of the United States, affirm their leadership in Europe, and prove that the European Third Bloc could work in practice,” Laron concludes. (188)

Throughout the book, Laron makes impressive use of multi-archival research to offer a study that challenges the traditional view of events leading to the Suez-Sinai War. His use of international history to tell the story from British, Soviet, American, and Eastern European perspectives is particularly useful given the far reaches of the origins of this conflict and the significant consequences that followed. His book is sure to be considered well among the many new studies that have examined the importance of modernization and development policies during the Cold War,⁵ and he is to be commended for adding significant historiographical contributions to the Suez Crisis, particularly on the economic side.

Yet, despite Laron’s convincing case that industrialization and globalization had far more to do with British and French motivations than previous historians have accounted for, and his demonstration that we need to better account for the economic factors that led to this crisis, I am still not convinced that these were *the* overriding concerns that produced the conflict. Indeed, Nasser’s decision to purchase weapons for the Soviet bloc and his efforts to undermine conservative, pro-Western regimes in the Arab world all posed serious strategic challenges to West and had the potential to bring the Soviets further into the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. The British made clear their concerns about Nasser’s struggles against Iraqi Premier Nuri al-Said and his efforts to undermine the Baghdad Pact. Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who had staunchly opposed the 1938 Munich agreement, believed that Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal was blatant aggression that needed to be confronted, much as Adolph Hitler’s aggression in the 1930s should have been confronted.

For the French government moreover, Nasser’s continued support for the Algeria’s National Liberation Front posed a major threat to their efforts to put down the resistance, and the French repeatedly made clear they wanted to strike “the nascent empire of Islam.”⁶

⁴ On further evidence of U.S. criticism of France’s Algerian policy, see Irwin M. Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁵ On modernization and development, see Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Postwar America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁶ Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 102-103.

They viewed Nasser's Egypt as the capital of Pan-Islam and feared its spread across North Africa and the Arab world. As French officials explained to U.S. officials after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal: "If Nasser succeeds [in North Africa] [it is] completely useless to fight there. This is one more reason why France is prepared to give its full support for whatever is decided upon to bring Nasser to order."⁷ Laron does not discount French and British strategic concerns, but in his view these issues were secondary to the economic factors.

It is also not clear how the Israelis fit into the story of 'industrialization.' Although Laron makes it clear that the Israelis were not considered a part of the "Bandung movement," a group of non-aligned countries largely from the Third World, (101) there is little new in this story about Israel's role in the Suez Crisis. Indeed, of the three participants in the attack on Egypt in October/November 1956, Israel receives the least attention in this study. This is curious given Laron's strong use of Israeli archives as a major source for the book. Although Israel was unlikely to be considered as part of a 'procolonial European Union', to what extent did British and French leaders see the Israelis as a partner in their Third Bloc? Did the Israelis want to be considered a part of this new Bloc? The Israelis relied heavily on French expertise for their nuclear weapons development during the late 1950s,⁸ but how far, if at all, were British and French leaders prepared to go in partnering with Israel as part of this Third Bloc, particularly when both had larger strategic and economic interests in Muslim world.

Finally, it would have been useful to have a more significant discussion in this book of how the British reacted to the crisis in Iran during the early 1950s, when Prime Minister Mohammed Mossedegh nationalized the Anglo-Iranian oil company. Did the Iranian case provide an example for the British in their response to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal? Were the debates between the internationalists and isolationist present during that crisis as well? If so, how did they shape the views of British officials in 1956? And why did the Third Bloc movement not present itself during the Iran crisis? Why did it take until 1956 to get to this bloc to emerge?

Answers to these questions would have certainly strengthened an already strong book. Still, Laron offers as close to an international history as we may get on the Suez Crisis and his use of 'industrialization' as a model will challenge historians to use this lens to examine several other Cold War and Middle Eastern crises.

⁷ Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State, 29 July 1956. *Foreign Relation of the United States, 1955-1957, Volume XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956, Document 24.*

⁸ See Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Review by Jesse Ferris, Israel Democracy Institute

Guy Laron's study of the origins of the Suez crisis is interesting, original, and based on an impressive variety of sources in multiple languages. Laron's most important contribution is to underscore the importance of economic factors in the global competition between the Soviet Union and the United States for power, legitimacy and resources. By emphasizing the centrality of hard economic interests over less tangible strategic and ideological concerns, his book challenges conventional understandings of what the Cold War was all about. Is the challenge successful? In my opinion, ultimately it is not.

Laron argues that the simple dichotomy of East vs. West belies a more complicated dynamic of conflict among interest groups *within* each of the competing powers, which produced shared interests and even occasional collaboration across Cold War lines. In the developed world, these interest groups invariably fell into one of two categories: so-called 'internationalists' who supported the development of third world economies so as to create markets for first-world products, and 'isolationists' who opposed investment in the third world for fear it would boost foreign competition to local production. Their third-world equivalents were groups in favor of liberalizing the economy or closing it to foreign investment.

At times, Laron imposes this interpretive framework somewhat heavy-handedly on a reality that necessarily is different from country to country. While one can see how industrialists and agriculturalists in America might face off over the prospect of an industrialized Egypt with an increased capacity for cotton production, it is less easy to accept Laron's portrayal of the intensely ideological face-off between proponents of Soviet autarky and supporters of international trade as being in any way analogous.

But the problems run deeper. Laron draws us into a somewhat conspiratorial world in which leaders say one thing but mean another; principled positions are unmasked as interest-group politics; and events seem to be driven solely by economics. The analysis of the "ferocious battle within the corridors of power" that took place between American "internationalists" and "isolationists" is a case in point (44-48, 101). On the one hand stood foreign policy activists who "belonged to three sectors of the American economy" that stood to benefit from a global liberal economic order: large export-oriented corporations, oil companies, and financial institutions. Against them ranged representatives of "a bloc of companies that were oriented toward the domestic market" and hence supported protectionist policies and the parsimonious application of American power. There is little doubt that an economic struggle of the sort Laron describes took place. But did it define American foreign policy?

Lost in Laron's dichotomy is any trace of the grand debate over America's global

orientation going back to Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson.¹ There were profound moral, strategic and, yes, economic dimensions to this debate, which had at least as much to do with differences over America's role in the world and the appropriate margins of American security as with competing economic interests. From the Spanish-American war to the Global War on Terror, it was, arguably, *liberalism*, not mercantilism that motivated American "internationalists." Was the Cold War struggle with Communism an exception to this trend? It seems implausible. To reduce foreign policy to a struggle among industries is to forge a quasi-Marxist interpretation of international relations infused with *primat der innenpolitik*. The result is fascinating. But how useful is it as an explanatory device?

One of Laron's recurring themes is that policymakers in Washington used Cold-War arguments to justify unpopular policies that were grounded in economic considerations (5-6, 114). To my mind, this turns reality on its head. Did Secretary of State John Foster Dulles really go to the trouble of erecting the Northern Tier in 1953 just in order to justify the massive foreign aid appropriations it would require (80-81)? When President Dwight Eisenhower warned in 1954 about the "loss of Asia" through a domino effect, and listed the natural resources that would be lost to the West as a result, was he not using economic arguments to buttress a *strategic* case for foreign aid, and not the other way around, as Laron contends (105)? Or when Eisenhower and Dulles got wind of the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal in 1955, were they really concerned that news of the deal "would be used by the anti-aid opposition in the Senate to block the funds for the Aswan Dam," or were they worried most about the troubling turn in Nasser's Soviet policy (139)?

Even when Laron acknowledges other factors, it is in a way that serves to reemphasize the importance of economics. Thus, for example, he concedes that NSC-68 was born of genuine concern over the expansion of communism in the wake of the Communist victory in China (55). But he omits the crucial strategic backdrop to the adoption of the containment doctrine—the successful detonation of an atomic bomb by the Soviet Union in August 1949, signaling the end of America's nuclear monopoly—and goes on to brand the hawkish architects of NSC-68 as an "internationalist" clique of investment bankers (Director of Policy Planning Paul Nitze, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett) and oil men (Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee and, by implication, Chester Bowles, president of the Rockefeller Foundation). One sympathizes with the effort to illuminate an understudied aspect of the Cold War. But the glare of economic determinism obscures crucial, arguably more important aspects of that conflict.

What, then, was at stake for the British, the Americans, and the Soviets in Egypt of the 1950s? For the British, certainly, the question of Egypt was bound up in the question of empire. Laron is at his most convincing when he illustrates the economic costs of losing the empire—even if he tends to underestimate the enormous significance of prestige for British policymakers. The notion that Churchill resisted presiding over the liquidation of

¹ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006); Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

the British Empire because of his ties to bankers in the City of London strains credulity (14, 33-35, 66).

For the Americans in the late 1940s and early 50s, on the other hand, strategic concerns were paramount. As Michael Cohen has shown, American defense planners deemed the Suez bases essential in the event of a third World War.² But with the advent of long-range ballistic missiles, the significance of these bases diminished. And monopolizing Egypt's foreign relations came to be seen as critical for maintaining Western influence over the Arab world—and keeping the Soviets out. Both John F. Kennedy and Eisenhower calculated that economic aid would preserve Washington's influence over Cairo. But in doing so, they were employing economic incentives in the service of grand strategy, not the other way around.

The Soviets, as Laron rightly points out, were mostly indifferent to Egypt as long as Joseph Stalin reigned. But the change of leadership in Moscow after his death in 1953 brought a greater willingness to compete with the West—and do business—far from the principle arena of conflict in Europe. The search for economic opportunities in Third World markets no doubt played a role in Nikita Khrushchev's 'pivot to Asia,' but—like the U.S. decision to prop up Europe with the Marshall Plan—the Soviet decision to support national liberation movements, mostly by means of economic and military aid, was motivated primarily by political, ideological, and strategic considerations in the struggle with the United States over the spoils of decolonization.³ And in many cases, as Oscar Sanchez reminds us, the Soviets were *responding* to initiatives from revolutionary leaders in the “global South,” not initiating some imagined “trade offensive.”⁴ Was Khrushchev, as Laron implies, really pushing aid on Egypt and other developing countries primarily as a way to improve the USSR's trade balance and curry favor with the Soviet steel industry (88-93, 189)? Or was he exploiting Nasser's entreaties in order to purchase political influence and gain strategic advantage over the West? Quite plausibly, both sets of factors were at play, but Khrushchev himself indicates the latter concerns were decisive: simply put, after 1952, capitalizing on Britain's troubles in the Near East by supporting Nasser seemed like a no-brainer.⁵ In any case, the magnanimous loans—and deferred repayment plans—that Khrushchev bestowed on countries like Egypt did little to improve Soviet balance sheets.

² Michael Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945-1954* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

³ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: Norton, 2006), 57, 80-82, 292-295; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67-70, 158-167; William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 348, 354, 487.

⁴ Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2014).

⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, *N. S. Khrushchev: Vospominania—vremia, liudi, vlast'* (Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999), Vol. 3, 390-391.

What of Egyptian policy? Laron convincingly portrays Nasser's early relations with the USSR as a sideshow to his primary concern with Washington. At least as long as the British evacuation of Suez was not assured, Nasser needed the Americans to keep up the pressure on their allies across the Atlantic. Laron's analysis of Nasser's eastward turn in 1955 is less convincing: he combines an original class analysis of Egyptian foreign policy with echoes of the official line to suggest that Nasser's radical turn reflected an appeal to his newfound political base among the *effendia* and a reaction to the threat from Israel (108-9, 118). This misses an important point: Nasser used the fabled Gaza raid of February 1955 to rationalize a controversial policy of rearmament directed primarily at Egypt's arch-rival in the Arab world, Iraq. Laron is right to locate the watershed of Egyptian foreign policy under Nasser in the last week of February 1955. But the event of consequence was not the Gaza Raid on 28 February; it was the conclusion of a military pact between Turkey and Iraq, under British auspices, four days earlier in Baghdad. When the British and the Americans backed Nasser's arch-rival in the struggle for regional hegemony, he sought a way out of his predicament by appealing to the Soviets.

Moreover, the relatively late emergence of Nasser's pro-Soviet streak should not be confused with the much earlier radical turn in his *Arab* policy. Although it was the 1955 formation of the Baghdad Pact that galvanized Nasser into action, his aspirations to regional leadership go further back than Laron allows (75-6). Indeed, as the founding Director of the Arab Affairs Department within Egyptian general intelligence has revealed, the Free Officers were bent on spreading their revolution to the Arab world, and to the Arab monarchies in particular, from as early as 1953.⁶

The notion of foreign policy as the expression of competing interest groups ignores the existence of a rarified realm of strategy at the pinnacle of decision-making that is, to varying degrees and at different times, insulated from domestic pressures. Nevertheless, it is useful to be reminded that even the most strategic minded of statesmen are not as immune to such forces as we might expect.

⁶ Fathī al-Dīb, *'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-tahrīr al-mashriq al-'arabī* (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Siyasiyyah wa-l-'istrātijyah, 2000), 27-32 and *passim*.

It's about Development, Stupid: The Non-Cold War Origins of the Suez Crisis

The received wisdom regarding the Suez Crisis generally tracks a straight-forward, Cold War-driven narrative: Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasser sought U.S. assistance in financing the Aswan Dam yet eschewed outright allegiance to Washington in the East-West Cold War. His pursuit of neutralism, in fact, went so far as to include refusal to join the Western-leaning Baghdad Pact, arms purchases from Soviet bloc member Czechoslovakia, and recognition of the People's Republic of China. When the United States registered its displeasure by withdrawing funding for the Aswan Dam, Nasser retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal; a joint Anglo-French-Israeli military operation to retake the canal (and possibly remove Nasser from power) followed, raising the prospect of Soviet intervention to restore peace. To prevent such an untoward eventuality, the United States pressured its allies to end the military operation lest Egypt become the first in a series of possible Middle Eastern dominoes. To ensure long-term Middle East stability and to keep the Soviets out of the region, President Dwight D. Eisenhower promulgated his 1957 doctrine justifying its intervention in the region. While not entirely dismissing that narrative, Guy Laron's *Origins of the Suez Crisis: Postwar Development Diplomacy and the Struggle over Third World Industrialization, 1945-1956* makes a compelling case for its inadequacies and reveals that in the end much more was involved in the Suez Crisis than the traditional narrative suggests.

Laron adopts a gaze both long and wide, expanding the story of Suez in time as well as space, in what are ultimately mutually reinforcing ways and making excellent use of political science's sectoral conflict theory that considers foreign policy decisions as products of competing domestic societal pressures. Chronologically, he rejects near-term analysis that emphasizes the immediate causes of the crisis and takes his story back to early postwar economic, ideological, and political trends and developments. Geographically, he moves beyond the standard accounts' emphasis on British and American policy by also considering the Soviet Union and Egypt itself. He accords Egypt far more agency than previous accounts, demonstrating clearly that, far from a pawn of superpower rivalry, it was an independent actor that at times was in the driver's seat. And in what is arguably the book's freshest historiographical contribution, he traces the role that differing internationalist and isolationist conceptions of development exerted on Egyptian, British, American, and Soviet policy in the years preceding the 1956 crisis. Although the Cold War conflict figures in Laron's account, it is by no means dominant or determinative. Instead, he paints a more complicated and decidedly more satisfying picture of the crisis than the well-worn narrative, one that roots it firmly within each major actor's larger postwar debate over Third World development.

Egyptian debates over development pitted internationalists who sought to secure outside contacts and assistance against isolationists who favored state-centered development à la the Soviet model. The latter view was especially popular among the Egyptian effendis, thousands of educated young men who blamed the British and the local elites who

collaborated with them for the dismal state of economic opportunity in postwar Egypt and who saw massive state-funded development initiatives as their route to social and economic betterment. After assuming power in the 1952 Free Officers coup, Nasser placed himself firmly in the internationalist camp, which explains his repeated requests for Western arms to help counter Israeli military power and economic assistance, including funds for the Aswan Dam. Because domestic pressures prevented him from coming out definitively on the Western side in the Cold War, however, U.S. assistance never amounted to much and arms were out of the question. By 1954, continuing economic problems made Nasser's political position precarious, and he was beginning to consider state-financed development and Soviet bloc assistance; withdrawal of Western funding for the Aswan Dam led him to cross the Rubicon. In Laron's formulation, nationalization of the Suez Canal stemmed from much more than simply the Western decision to withdraw funding for the Aswan Dam. It was also a bold attempt to shore up Nasser's sagging popularity at home, where his brand of internationally driven development had always been suspect among the effendis.

Concurrent postwar British debate over Third World development revolved around the efficacy of maintaining the nation's expensive imperial commitments in the face of shrinking revenues. Internationalists such as Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Dalton advocated liberalization of the imperial preference system, contraction of the nation's colonial presence, and a scaling back of British military commitments. Isolationists such as Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin could not have disagreed more and were determined to maintain the nation's grand global presence, including the Empire and its closed economic system, at nearly any cost. If Bevin's vision won out in the short term, resulting in refusal to retrench even as the cost of staying mounted, in the longer term it led to disaster, particularly when forced convertibility of sterling bled Britain's dollar holdings and U.S. financial assistance proved meager. With specific regard to Egypt, postwar British economic realities meant insufficient funds for much-needed development, at the very time that Egyptian demands for modernization were reaching a fever pitch. The return to Conservative rule in 1951 wrought no changes in Britain's imperial policies, which remained predicated on London's dominance even as the rise of nationalist ambitions in Egypt and throughout the formal and informal empires suggested the folly of such an approach. Leaders in both parties, in fact, woefully misread Egyptian domestic developments, underestimating the depth of anti-British sentiment and failing to appreciate that growing support for the state-centered economic modernization agenda of the effendis made London's position in the country untenable. By taking his analysis back to the immediate postwar period, Laron convincingly situates Suez within the larger story of British political developments and Britain's evolving postwar international position.

Laron similarly adds a welcome new layer to American policy regarding Suez by moving beyond the heretofore dominant East-West paradigm and highlighting the domestic U.S. internationalist-isolationist debate and its effects on foreign policy. The former brought export-oriented and capital-intensive companies, the petroleum majors, and financial interests together in support of economic interaction with the outside world, especially peripheral nations emerging from formal or informal colonialism, whether in the form of

sales contracts for heavy machinery, oil concessions, or investment opportunities. Labor-intensive enterprises, farmers, and companies that produced energy for domestic consumption (primarily coal and oil) joined together on the latter side, seeking to limit foreign contact and by all means to prevent the flood of cheap foreign goods into American markets. Although the northeast-based internationalists gained increasing strength and political influence during the postwar period, particularly when it came to control of the White House, the Midwestern/Southern-focused isolationists held a disproportionately strong position in Congress. It was the isolationists who insisted on making foreign aid contingent on Cold War allegiance, essentially forcing leaders like Nasser to make a Catch 22-style choice between accepting such aid or retaining their nationalist credentials at home; doing both was impossible. When Nasser therefore refused unreserved support for the West, isolationists in Congress forced the Eisenhower administration to withdraw funding for the Aswan Dam, with well-known results. Laron's analysis of the domestic U.S. debate over development complicates current understanding and reminds scholars of the important role that domestic politics play in shaping U.S. foreign policy decisions.

As Laron effectively demonstrates, a debate between isolationist and internationalist perspectives on development also raged among contenders for power in the Soviet Union after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. If all agreed on the need for more expansive economic contacts abroad, they differed greatly about where and in what areas to focus those efforts. Isolationists like Georgy Malenkov pushed for expanded trade with the developed Western world and a domestic emphasis on light industry for consumer production. Internationalists like Nikita Khrushchev dismissed such thinking as heresy and called instead for greater contacts with the developing world and continued emphasis on heavy industry, which could be used to fuel Third World development. The latter won out, and after Khrushchev consolidated control, the die was cast for a foreign policy approach that aimed to build Soviet ties to Third World nations through what amounted to developmental aid packages masquerading as extremely favorable equipment deals. Egypt, where the lack of both British and American assistance was whipping effendi-generated discontent at the lack of domestic development into a fever pitch, was just one of many areas for the new Soviet economic offensive. When the United States thus withdrew its offer of financial assistance for the Aswan Dam, the Soviet Union was more than ready to fill the void. In fact, doing so played right into the state's long-term economic plan.

To be sure, *Origins of the Suez Crisis* does not slight the regional Middle Eastern context—Nasser's rivalry with Western-leaning Iraqi leader Nuri al-Said for position in the region and his constant worries about the Israeli threat, for example, are well covered. But that context does not constitute Laron's primary focus, as he seeks to add to it a detailed exploration of the larger post-World War II debates over development that occurred in Egypt, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, how each nation's debates redounded in policy, and how those four national policies came together to produce the Suez Crisis. Laron's well-constructed and tightly woven account might therefore be seen as confirming the August 1954 words of President Eisenhower in the wake of isolationist congressional opposition to the sort of massive foreign aid bill he and other internationalists favored. "The difficulty," he ruefully lamented to C. D. Jackson, "is what is possible at home" (103). Scholars of political economy, U.S. foreign relations, Middle

East history, and international relations will find much food for thought here, as well as clear proof of the value of the new Cold War history's efforts to see the post-World War II period as more than merely the East-West struggle.

Guy Laron's new book *The Origins of the Suez Crisis* is remarkable both for its extraordinary array of archival sources and for its wide-ranging argument and analysis. As its title suggests, this book is not a narrowly-focused history of the Anglo-French-Israeli attack against Egypt in October 1956. Laron instead seeks to explain the deeper origins of the Suez Crisis in a multifaceted struggle over the future of the global economy during the 1940s and 1950s.

Laron's research includes work in the U.S., British, Russian, Czech, Indian, and Israeli archives. The Egyptian archives proved more difficult to access, but Laron consulted a large number of published Arabic-language materials, such as memoirs by former military officers and officials in Nasser's government. The multilingual scope of this research is, needless to say, extremely impressive.

Laron uses these sources to explore the interaction between the diplomatic and economic policies of a number of countries, focusing in particular on the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and Egypt. Laron notes that "the Soviet and American policies during the crisis seemed to dovetail" as both superpowers "prodded France, Britain, and Israel to desist and retreat." Why, he asks, "would sworn Cold War enemies cooperate to these ends?" (4). Laron argues that the Suez Crisis was shaped not only by the political struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, but also by what he calls the "economic cold war," the struggle by the great powers "for mastery over the so-called economic periphery (particularly Latin America, Asia, and Africa)" (9). This approach echoes both Matthew Connelly's call for historians to 'take off the Cold War lens' and Odd Arne Westad's argument for re-centering the study of the Cold War on the Third World instead of on the U.S.-Soviet confrontation in Europe.¹

Laron's narrative focuses not on the military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but on the contest between different visions of industrial development in the Third World. He argues that various interest groups in the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and Egypt were either "internationalists" who "stood to gain from a global market and pushed for greater economic openness," or "isolationists" who "wanted to close the national economy." Laron writes that although "Egyptian, British, American, and Soviet isolationists" came from different countries, "the foreign economic policies they supported were the same." On the other side, "the various internationalists" may have had "dissimilar provenances, but their politics were similar" (10). These distinctions cut across national borders, producing unexpected "transnational alliances that sometimes blurred traditional Cold War lines." During the Suez Crisis, for example, the United States and the USSR were led by internationalists who supported Third World industrialization, while Britain and

¹ Matthew Connelly, "Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 75, No. 3 (2000), 739-769; and Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

France were controlled by isolationists who opposed Nasser's plans for Egyptian economic development. As a result, "internationalists both in Moscow and Washington sought to undermine isolationist designs hatched in London and Paris" (11-12).

Laron's narrative employs a mix of chronological and geographical organization, generally focusing on one or two countries per chapter while also moving forward in time as the book progresses. He begins with Great Britain and Egypt. Laron argues that the British governments of the 1940s and 1950s were divided between internationalists and isolationists. The internationalists, who included the Labour politicians Clement Attlee (Prime Minister, 1945-1951) and Hugh Dalton (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1945-1947), along with the Conservative Richard Butler (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1951-1955), wanted to make sterling convertible and open the British economy to the outside world while withdrawing from many of Britain's remaining imperial possessions. They were allied with interest groups like the banks and insurance brokers of the City of London who would benefit from a convertible pound and a more open British economy. The isolationists, who included the Labour politician Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951) and the Conservative Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary, 1951-1955 and Prime Minister, 1955-1957), represented industries like steel and automobile manufacturing that feared foreign competition, benefited from the captive markets of the empire, and wanted the protection of tariff barriers and a non-convertible pound. Bevin, Eden, and other British isolationists hoped to preserve the remnants of the empire, including Britain's special position of influence in Egypt (14-18; 32-37). The isolationists generally prevailed during the run-up to the Suez Crisis, which, Laron argues, accounts for Britain's determination to maintain its control over the Suez Canal.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the educated, urban middle classes were growing in political influence. Laron calls this group the *effendia*.² They were populist, nationalist, and anti-imperialist, and wanted an Egyptian government that would remove foreign influence and pursue a state-led industrialization strategy. In Laron's taxonomy, this makes them classic isolationists (18-24). Although Nasser was of *effendi* origin, Laron argues that he initially disappointed the *effendia* by pursuing an internationalist agenda, welcoming foreign investment in Egypt and seeking a closer relationship with the United States (60-62). For their part, internationalists in the United States were delighted to work with Nasser. An internationalist coalition based in the Northeast and representing economic interests like Ford, GE, Coca-Cola, oil companies, and the financial sector, hoped to promote industrial development in the Third World, including Egypt. Nasser appeared to be an ideal partner for them. In fact, Laron argues that although the CIA had advance warning of the Free Officers' coup, the United States did nothing to stop it because American internationalists saw Nasser as a potential ally (44-59).

The potential of this nascent alliance was disrupted, however, by isolationist groups both in

² For a more detailed treatment of the *effendia*, one that focuses less on their socioeconomic interests than on their cultural identity as self-consciously modern individuals, see Lucie Ryzova's *The Age of the Effendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Egypt and in the United States. The Egyptian *effendia* opposed Nasser's dalliance with Washington and wanted a more neutralist foreign policy (67-73). Making matters worse, isolationists in the U.S. Congress, who were concentrated in the South and Midwest, and who represented labor-intensive industries like agriculture, steel, and textiles, were skeptical of foreign aid and other tools that could have helped the Eisenhower administration strengthen the U.S. relationship with Egypt (45). In order to placate these isolationist critics, Eisenhower and Dulles appealed to Cold War concerns, arguing that developing countries could be important allies against the USSR. They wanted Nasser to enter into a formal alliance with the United States to show that Egypt was a committed partner in the struggle against communism (77-84). Signing a treaty with Washington, though, was a bridge too far for Nasser, since it would have exposed him to intolerable pressures from his own domestic critics.

The Soviet Union was eager to take advantage of these difficulties between Washington and Cairo. The new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was an internationalist who "decided to boldly go where no Politburo had gone before" by deciding "to embrace the international economy and become an active player in it," expanding Soviet economic ties with newly-decolonized nations like Egypt, and launching an "aid offensive in the Third World" (85-93). Nasser still hoped for an alliance with the United States, though, until an Israeli military raid on the Gaza Strip in February 1955 embarrassed the Egyptian regime and threatened to undermine Nasser's popularity with the Egyptian army. Nasser decided to shore up his domestic support by taking several highly visible steps "to show he was no longer an American stooge" (107-111). He distanced himself rhetorically from the United States and signaled a neutralist shift in Egyptian foreign policy, attended the Bandung Conference, and most dramatically of all, signed a major arms deal to acquire Soviet weapons via Czechoslovakia. Laron argues that Nasser's "thirst for weapons was more the result of political logic than pure military rationale," since the Egyptian army's real deficiencies were in training and logistics rather than a lack of weaponry (116-117). The acquisition of Soviet arms did boost the prestige of the Egyptian regime, though, and helped Nasser to regain the army's support. The arms deal also had momentous international consequences, strengthening Cairo's ties with Moscow and opening a rift in U.S.-Egyptian relations that lasted for the next two decades.

Even in the face of Nasser's arms deal with the Eastern Bloc, Eisenhower and Dulles initially hoped that Egypt might return to the fold. They held out the possibility of U.S. assistance for the massive Aswan Dam project as an inducement for Nasser to work with the United States. This attempt, however, was scuttled when "isolationists of various stripes – Eden in Britain, the anti-aid coalition in the American Congress, and the Egyptian *effendia* – exerted their influence in ways that made a deal between Cairo and Washington impossible" (136). Eden was furious that Nasser seemed to be undermining Britain's influence in Jordan, and even wanted to have the Egyptian leader assassinated (138). Nasser was afraid to cooperate too closely with the United States, or to endorse American attempts to broker an Arab-Israeli peace, because he worried about hostile public opinion in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world; in other words, he feared losing the support of the isolationist *effendia* (140). Eisenhower, too, had to deal with domestic opposition to his request for funding to help build the Aswan Dam. "The isolationists in Congress were up in

arms,” Laron writes, particularly including Southern senators who were “wholly opposed to foreign aid” and were “also opposed to a development project that would help Egypt increase its cotton yield and lower the prices in world markets for Southern cotton” (196). As a result, the administration abruptly withdrew its offer to help fund the dam. Although foreign policy tensions between the United States and Nasser played a role in the aid cancellation, Laron argues that “in the end, it was domestic politics rather than Cold War strategy that set the pace of the game” (145).

This decision saved the rest of the foreign aid bill, but it humiliated and infuriated Nasser. In response, he nationalized the Suez Canal, which had previously been owned by an Anglo-French consortium. Nationalizing the canal won Nasser wide popularity in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, and came in the context of a broader shift to a state-led, isolationist strategy for economic development in line with what the *effendia* had been demanding for years (146-153). In Washington, London, and Paris, though, the reaction was very different. The United States was dismayed by Nasser’s move, but Eisenhower and Dulles opposed the idea of military action against the Egyptian leader for fear that it would set off an angry reaction in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Third World. Great Britain and France had no such reservations. Eden and French Prime Minister Guy Mollet were united in their opposition to the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and also hoped to form a larger, pro-imperial European alliance that could serve as a “Third Bloc” independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Mollet was motivated, as well, by anger over Nasser’s support for the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) rebels in Algeria (163-175). With Israeli cooperation, Britain and France launched a military operation against Egypt to retake the Suez Canal. The operation failed, however, in the face of U.S. and Soviet opposition. Britain and France drew different lessons from this defeat. France placed its hopes in European integration as a more modest version of the “Third Bloc,” while Britain chose to reemphasize its special relationship with the United States (183-184).

In the conclusion, Laron provides a useful summary of the book and underlines his main themes: the interplay between the U.S.-Soviet rivalry and the “economic cold war,” and the global rivalry between isolationists and internationalists as the driving force behind the origins of the Suez Crisis. Laron’s postscript makes a case for the present-day relevance of this story, revisiting a thesis first raised briefly in the introduction (3, 7-9). He writes that the Suez Crisis was a key turning point in the history of Third World industrialization, a phenomenon that has led to the rise of the “BRICs,” a term coined by Goldman Sachs analysts to describe the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Laron writes enthusiastically about the success of export-driven economic growth in East Asia, particularly in China, “the brightest student of them all” (199-200). By contrast, Laron condemns the isolationist economic strategy adopted by Nasser, arguing that it has badly damaged the nation’s potential for growth and, until it is abandoned once and for all, will “continue to wreak havoc on the Egyptian economy” (204). Egypt never learned, as China did, that “the rewards of globalization are undeniable” and that globalization has enriched “developed and developing countries alike” (209).

Readers may or may not agree with this pro-globalization sentiment. One might just as easily draw the opposite conclusion from Laron’s narrative. The determination with which

isolationists around the world resisted U.S. efforts to remake the global economy along internationalist lines during the run-up to the Suez Crisis indicates that the rewards of globalization are far from undeniable; they have been, and are, vehemently denied by a large and diverse array of critics. In this story, globalization comes across less like a win-win phenomenon for everyone than an unforgiving struggle in which there are both winners and losers. Laron's condemnation of Egypt's economic course since the 1950s does, however, lend a thought-provoking sense of complexity and ambiguity to this book. Even though the immediate result of the Suez Crisis was a spectacular political victory for Nasser, Laron sees that episode's implications for Egypt over the long term in a much more pessimistic light.

Even a scholar armed with an impressive list of languages, like Laron, will run into challenges in tackling a subject as wide-ranging as the global history of the origins of the Suez Crisis. Some of the relevant sources are simply not available. For example, the history of the CIA's activities in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world during the 1950s is still quite murky. Since the Eisenhower Administration was particularly fond of covert action, as in Iran and Guatemala, and since U.S. relations with many Arab regimes were managed by the CIA as well as by the State Department, the failure of the U.S. government to declassify many of the relevant documents is a real hindrance to historians of this period.

Laron deals with this challenge by referring frequently to *The Game of Nations*, the published recollections of Miles Copeland, a CIA operative who played a major role in U.S. policy toward Egypt during the 1950s.³ Copeland's memoirs are a unique and valuable source, but they are also rather problematic. They were published in 1969, years after the events in question, and even now, their testimony on many important questions cannot be confirmed or denied by the archival record. The historical value of *The Game of Nations* is also complicated by the fact that it is very much a work of political advocacy. Copeland argues in favor of coldblooded *realpolitik*, covert operations, and alliances with autocratic Third World leaders at a time when such methods were beginning to come under widespread criticism in the United States.⁴ This political slant strongly colors Copeland's account of U.S.-Egyptian relations during the 1950s. He takes great pains, for example, to depict Nasser as the prototype for the sort of undemocratic, but anticommunist, partner that the United States should learn to cultivate.⁵ Another factor to consider is Copeland's

³ For example, Laron cites *The Game of Nations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969) in endnotes 27, 28, 34, 52, 75, and 95 for Chapter Two alone. These citations provide some of the most important pieces of evidence for Laron's argument that the United States acquiesced in the Free Officers' coup in 1952 and supported Nasser's regime after it was established.

⁴ According to Copeland, despite the high-minded rhetoric of U.S. leaders, "most intelligent citizens would be relieved, not dismayed, to hear something nearer the truth [...] while our citizens may take pride in the solid front of high morality which our nation presents, they can also sleep more easily at night knowing that behind this front we are in fact capable of matching the Soviets perfidy for perfidy." Copeland, 12-13.

⁵ Copeland writes of Nasser: "I like him personally; I know of no one with whom I would rather spend a long evening of conversation and joking. He is one of the most courageous, most incorruptible, most

instinct for self-promotion. After leaving the CIA, he entered the private sector as a consultant and capitalized on his notoriety by publishing several books aimed at a popular audience. He even designed and marketed a board game, also entitled “The Game of Nations,” in which players take on the role of superpowers in the Middle East and manipulate local client-states in order to seize control of key petroleum fields and pipelines. It seems quite likely, then, that Copeland’s account was influenced by his desire to burnish his celebrity and his reputation as someone with privileged access to the deepest secrets of the world of espionage.⁶

Scholars who try to reconstruct internal Egyptian decision-making have encountered similar difficulties. The Egyptian government archives have never been easy to access, and the situation has become even more challenging since the fall of President Gamal Mubarak in 2011. Laron uses Arabic-language accounts by former Egyptian officials and military officers to help illuminate the inner workings of the Egyptian regime, but the extent to which Laron believes these memoirs can be trusted is unclear. At one point, Laron dismisses this literature as filled with “self-serving and retroactive claims [...] made by Egyptian officials” (109), but at other times relies on the same memoirs to provide some of the book’s more dramatic moments, like the scene where Nasser reportedly told his weeping subordinates that he might be assassinated by Western intelligence operatives while attending the Bandung Conference (110-111). There is, unfortunately, no easy alternative to the use of such imperfect sources when writing the recent political history of the Middle East, so readers will simply need to keep the limitations of the source base in mind.

Another way that Laron tries to overcome the inaccessibility of the Egyptian archives is by using sources from the United States and Israel that promise to provide some insight into domestic Egyptian politics. These materials, too, can be problematic. For example, as evidence that Nasser had become widely popular among Egyptian army officers by 1956, Laron uses pro-Nasser statements by Egyptian POWs when they were interrogated, or eavesdropped upon, by their captors in the Israeli Defense Forces (118-119, 180-181). There are, of course, ethical concerns associated with the use of such materials. Even setting those questions aside, however, it would not be surprising if these captured Egyptian officers proclaimed their support for the regime partly as a way of maintaining their own morale, demonstrating their patriotism to their fellow prisoners, and defying their Israeli guards. We cannot assume, then, that this sort of evidence obtained under conditions of imprisonment and duress is entirely reliable.

unprincipled [for Copeland, this is a compliment], and in his way, most humanitarian national leaders I have ever had the pleasure to meet.” Copeland, 239.

⁶ Hugh Wilford, in *America’s Great Game: The CIA’s Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2013) also employs Copeland’s testimony. Wilford is careful to point out Copeland’s questionable reliability, though, writing that “it is very difficult to know how far one can trust Copeland’s writings” (Wilford, 67). One review of *America’s Great Game* called Copeland “a man for whom the term ‘congenital liar’ might well have been coined.” Scott Anderson, “Playing Both Sides,” *The New York Times*, 13 December 2013.

Other concerns might be raised about some of the American sources that Laron uses to illuminate the internal Egyptian political situation. His characterization of the *effendia's* political views, for example, draws heavily on a 1951 survey conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University (20-21, 53-54, 146-147). H-Diplo readers familiar with the burgeoning literature on the politicization of American social science during the Cold War will doubt whether this study gives a truly impartial picture of Egyptian public opinion.⁷ Indeed, Laron notes that the Egyptian survey was commissioned by the U.S. government. That sort of contract was nothing new for the Bureau of Applied Social Research; some of its other commissions included the collection of data on the world's leading cities for the U.S. Air Force, in order to aid in the more efficient targeting of nuclear weapons, and a secret, and perhaps euphemistically-titled, project on "Interviewing Methodology" for the intelligence community.⁸ It should be no surprise, then, that the picture of the *effendia* that emerged from the Bureau's research – forward-thinking, nationalist, and committed to domestic modernization and industrial development – was almost indistinguishable from the sort of rising middle classes that U.S. government officials and American social scientists identified everywhere else in the developing world as potential allies of the United States in containing international communism. After all, any social group whose top priority was accelerating technological progress and economic growth would find the United States to be a useful partner. This depiction of the *effendia*, however, flattens the huge ideological diversity that existed among the Egyptian middle classes. Laron notes that they included members of parties spanning the entire Egyptian political spectrum, from the Muslim Brotherhood to the Communists (21), but otherwise tends to treat the *effendia* as a single group with a fairly unified set of political beliefs driven largely by their desire to accelerate Egypt's economic development and secure jobs for themselves.

Laron's treatment of the *effendia* (were they defined more by their similar economic interests or by their diverse ideological commitments?) raises larger questions about the relative weight that historians assign to material interests compared with more intangible factors like political ideologies. For example, Laron writes that the Bandung Conference was merely symbolic and lacked real substance; it "did not amount to more than a joyous gathering" (85) and was "essentially a stage upon which Third World leaders could

⁷ See, among other works, Joy Rohde, *Armed with Expertise: The Militarization of American Social Research during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); and Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); or, for more explicitly political critiques, Noam Chomsky et al., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: The New Press, 1997); and Christopher Simpson, *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

⁸ Allen Barton, "Paul Lazarsfeld and Applied Social Research: Invention of the University Applied Social Research Institute," *Social Science History* Vol. 3, No. 3/4 (1979), 14-15; and Raymond Bowers, "The Military Establishment," in Paul Lazarsfeld, William Sewell, and Harold Wilensky, eds., *The Uses of Sociology* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 241-242.

grandstand without committing themselves to anything in particular” (155). He argues that the conference had little meaning because the nations of the Third World did not have a shared set of economic interests. This skeptical treatment of Bandung stands in contrast to the work of other scholars who place more emphasis on transnational ideologies, beliefs, and discourses. They have argued that Bandung was one of the defining events of twentieth century international history, a moment when the ideal of Third World solidarity began to crystalize and came to represent the aspirations of millions of people around the developing world.⁹ Much of this work emphasizes not only the political but also the cultural impact of the Bandung Conference, including its role in forging connections between Third World intellectuals commemorated in books like Richard Wright’s *The Color Curtain*.¹⁰

Laron privileges material interests over ideology elsewhere in *The Origins of the Suez Crisis*, as well. For example, he highlights the opposition of isolationist southern senators, motivated by the desire to protect their states’ cotton industry, as a major roadblock in the path of Eisenhower’s foreign aid requests. Other scholars like Peter Hahn and Steven Spiegel agree that the cotton state senators played a role, but only as one part of a much broader coalition of aid opponents, including anticommunists angered by Nasser’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China, supporters of Israel who feared that U.S. aid might help Egypt to strengthen its armed forces, and conservatives who wanted to limit federal spending.¹¹

Laron’s classification of historical actors as either internationalists or isolationists is also open to debate. He identifies the “sectoral conflict” school of political science as his source for this taxonomy. Partly because he is drawing inspiration from another discipline, the specific way in which he uses these terms will be counterintuitive for many historians. In the context of American history, isolationism is usually used to mean a general opposition to ‘entangling alliances’ and involvement in foreign wars. Laron means something different; his isolationists are “interest groups that wanted to isolate their respective national economies,” while internationalists are “interest groups that supported increased international integration” (ix-x).

Any attempt to draw a clear line between these two groups during the 1950s, however,

⁹ Vijay Prashad, for example, argues that the Bandung Conference helped build a sense of shared identity and marked a key turning point in the political evolution of the developing world, a moment when “the representatives of the formerly colonized countries signaled their refusal to take orders from their former colonial masters; they demonstrated their ability to discuss international problems and offer combined notes on them.” *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2008), 41.

¹⁰ Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (New York: World Pub. Co., 1956).

¹¹ Peter Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 203; and Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 69.

begins to break down upon closer examination. Laron emphasizes the role of Southern senators as leaders of the isolationist coalition in the U.S. Congress, but also writes that those same senators were “free traders by nature” (127, 196). He describes the South and Midwest as “isolationist strongholds” (45) and explains that “none of the Southern Democrats was keen on Eisenhower’s emerging aid program” because they opposed the very idea of assisting Third World economic development (127). Later, though, Laron identifies the most enthusiastic congressional proponents of foreign aid as “Democratic senators like J. William Fulbright of Arkansas and Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota” who criticized Eisenhower’s request only because they “did not think the administration’s proposal went far enough” and, in Fulbright’s case, worried “that not enough money was given to development projects” (142). Even in the reputed heartlands of economic isolationism, there seems to have been little consensus in favor of protectionist measures and against foreign aid, and leading senators from those regions advanced positions that blended both “internationalist” and “isolationist” ideas.

Similarly, Laron writes that “the British financial sector, residing in the City of London” was the most important internationalist interest in the UK, and that “figures who were close to the financial sector – such as Attlee, Dalton, and Butler, who constituted an internationalist trio – were willing to relinquish parts of the empire (Attlee referred specifically to the Middle East)” in order to restore British economic stability (186-187). This is difficult to reconcile with other passages stating that Winston Churchill, who “was unwilling to countenance a retreat from any part of the empire,” represented a position that “closely overlapped that of leading City people” (33), and that the “Suez Group,” the members of Parliament most committed to the maintenance of the British imperial presence in the Middle East, were backed by “City interests” who “feared the loss of Middle Eastern oil [...] which the City considered vital for the strength of sterling” (66-67). As a result, readers may have a hard time keeping straight just who was an isolationist and who was an internationalist, and which policy prescriptions were associated with each side.

If the line between isolationists and internationalists is not always clear even within a single country, it is all the more difficult to draw on a global scale. Khrushchev, for example, is an internationalist in Laron’s framework. But while Khrushchev may have been “determined to embrace the international economy” (85) when compared with some of his diehard Stalinist rivals in Moscow, it is harder to argue that he was an economic internationalist when compared with the leaders of any of the major Western nations in the 1950s. Figures like Bevin, Eden, Macmillan, and Mollet, all of whom are described by Laron as isolationists, might have favored tariff barriers and other measures to protect certain industries in their home countries, but they were nevertheless willing to uphold the NATO alliance, the Bretton Woods system, and other pillars of the global capitalist order. When it came to their visions for the international political economy, did Eisenhower really have less in common with these European leaders than he did with Khrushchev?

Laron’s isolationist/internationalist dichotomy is an appealing way to impose some order on a large and multifaceted topic like the global history of the Suez Crisis. An overarching framework can help make sense of this history by pointing out connections between domestic political debates in the United States, Great Britain, Egypt, and the USSR, stories

that could otherwise appear unrelated to one another. It also helps to complicate assumptions that the divide between communists and capitalists was the only global conflict that mattered in the Cold War era. Just like the 'Cold War lens,' however, a rigid distinction between isolationists and internationalists can sometimes obscure more than it clarifies. This approach underplays much of the nuance and complexity revealed by Laron's own research, which suggests that isolationism and internationalism were not fixed identities; they meant different things in different places, and could overlap, blur together, and change over time.

At the same time, Laron makes a very convincing case for his larger argument that the "economic cold war" and the struggle to direct Third World industrialization were critical in shaping global politics during the 1950s. His narrative can be seen as supporting evidence for, and a particularly important case study of, Westad's treatment of the Cold War as a contest between two visions of global economic development and modernization that were radically opposed to one another but often operated in parallel.¹² Washington and Moscow had very different ideas about the future shape of the global economic order and the role of Egypt and other developing countries in that order. When they competed for Egypt's loyalty, though, they did so by offering to support exactly the same sort of high-modernist programs like the Aswan Dam. Both the United States and the Soviet Union also cast themselves as opponents of the traditional European colonialism practiced by Britain and France, but they could appear quite similar to the old imperial powers in their determination to control the destiny of the Third World, even when their attempts to do so came at great cost to the lives and welfare of millions of people in the newly-independent nations.

Laron also succeeds in his ambition "to contribute, first and foremost, to the field of the new Cold War history, which emphasizes the agency of smaller actors in the international arena, particularly Third World countries" (ix). Egypt emerges from Laron's narrative very much as a player in its own right, not merely the object of superpower policies. Nasser was buffeted by the pressures of the Cold War, but he still managed to chart his own course and establish Egypt as an influential participant in the affairs of the greater Middle East and the Third World.

Even more impressive is Laron's refusal to treat any country (or at least the four nations that serve as the focus of his research) as a monolithic actor. An inevitable temptation for any historian writing a sweeping international history is to restrict one's analysis to the foreign ministries and heads of state of the countries involved, sacrificing depth in order to achieve breadth. Laron, though, does not take the easy way out. Readers of this book will learn about internal political and economic debates in the United States, Britain, the USSR, and Egypt, as well as the foreign policies pursued by those nations. Laron's widening of his focus beyond Nasser to other Egyptian political actors is particularly rewarding. His characterization of Egyptian politics as a rather chaotic arena during the first years of the Free Officers' regime, a time when the character of the new government was not yet

¹² Westad, 4-5.

determined, echoes some of the best area studies work on this subject and provides a richer understanding of Egyptian politics than many non-specialists will have encountered before.¹³ And although other scholars may dispute his use of the isolationist/internationalist dichotomy, Laron clearly establishes that international economic policy was a deeply contested subject within, as well as between, Egypt and the great powers during the 1950s. *The Origins of the Suez Crisis*, then, helps illuminate the possibilities of joining national histories with international history, and joining the study of political economy with that of the Cold War.

Even a thoroughly-researched study like this one can still exclude some parts of the story. France, for example, receives considerably less attention than Britain, the United States, the USSR, and Egypt. Israel's role is hardly discussed at all, despite the fact that Tel Aviv was a key member of the coalition that attacked Egypt in 1956. Laron uses Israeli sources, but mostly to provide insight into events in Egypt rather than in Israel itself. We learn almost nothing about Israel's decision to join Britain and France in the invasion of Egypt, or about the internal politics of Israel during this period. How did Israeli domestic politics affect Ben-Gurion's foreign policy? Were Israelis divided between isolationists and internationalists just like the other members of the anti-Nasser alliance? At the end of this book, we still do not know.

This observation is not necessarily a criticism. There are limits, after all, to the number of countries and archives that can be added to a narrative before it becomes quite unmanageable. The history of Israeli foreign relations, however, is ready for more extensive study, particularly since Israeli declassification policies are rather strict and many government sources from the 1950s are only now becoming available. Laron has already published a superb article on Israeli intelligence and the 1955 Czech arms deal that uses newly-declassified Israeli sources to cut through some longstanding myths about Israeli policy toward Egypt during the mid-1950s.¹⁴ A portion of that research shows up in *The Origins of the Suez Crisis*, but I would have appreciated a chance to read more. We can hope that in the future, Laron will continue to explore the international history of the Middle East and will provide even more insights into the Israeli side of the story.

¹³ See, for example, Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ "Logic Dictates That They May Attack When They Feel They Can Win': The 1955 Czech-Egyptian Arms Deal, the Egyptian Army, and Israeli Intelligence," *The Middle East Journal*, Volume 63, Number 1 (Winter 2009), 69-84.

First, I would like to heartily thank Thomas Maddux for organizing this roundtable and the reviewers for devoting their time to reading and writing about my book – not a small thing in an increasingly demanding academic environment. It was a pleasure to read these reviews both for the praise and the spirited criticism.

With the notable exception of Mary Ann Heiss (I admire the cheeky title she gave her essay!), the reviewers, while appreciative of other aspects of my work, are not so sure about the lens I use to scrutinize the long run-up Suez Crisis. Daigle, whose review is a fine example of constructive criticism, politely suggests that he is “still not convinced that these [economic factors] were the overriding concerns that produced the conflict.” Ferris, trenchantly, avers that I am drawing readers “into a somewhat conspiratorial world.” According to Ferris, my book is also suffused with “economic determinism,” and “a quasi-Marxist interpretation.” Both Daigle and Ferris remain convinced that at the end of the day strategic considerations trump the economic factors around which my argument revolves.

So what do we talk about when we talk about “economic determinism”? And how come Daigle and Ferris are so certain that I err in giving so much weight to economics? What is at stake is a discussion about state theory. The great majority of diplomatic historians see the state as an independent, autonomic institution which is impervious to pressures arising from society. This is the reason that diplomatic historians, generally speaking, devote very little time to domestic politics. This is also the reason why the state becomes a breathing and living thing in the typical prose of diplomatic historians with sentences that start with “France refused...” or “Washington demurred...” As a result, many diplomatic historians believe as an article of faith that ‘politics stops at the water’s edge’ or as Ferris would have it: “The notion of foreign policy as the expression of competing interest groups ignores the existence of a rarefied realm of strategy at the pinnacle of decision-making that is, to varying degrees and at different times, insulated from domestic pressures.” This is also known as the ‘realist’ approach to international relations.¹

In contrast, both Max Weber and Karl Marx saw the state as fully permeated by society.² They were not alone in depicting the state in that manner. Both John Hobson, a fairly moderate British socialist and Vladimir Lenin, a diehard Russian Communist, assumed that the European governments which adopted imperialist foreign policies in the late nineteenth century were acting on behalf of major capitalists who were searching for new markets and investment opportunities. Even the late Robert Dahl, a political scientist based in Yale,

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Relations*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

² Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, (New York: Prometheus, 1998); Max Weber, *Economy and society*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1978), pp. 54, 901-925; idem, *From Max Weber*, (London: Routledge 2009), pp 77-128. See also: Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in Peter B. Evans, et al., eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 3-43.

argued in his *Who Governs?* that the government was but a playing field on which various classes and social groups vied for influence.³ In fact, many political scientists and historians such as Arno Mayer (Princeton University), Bruce Cummings (University of Chicago), and Jeffrey Frieden (Harvard University), to name a few, accept political economy as a valid research method.⁴ What I am trying to say in all of this is not that I know of quite a few prominent thinkers and senior academics who use the research method I adhere to. Rather, I am trying to show that political economy is indeed *a research method*. It is not a party. You can be a Marxist, a liberal, or an anarchist like Noam Chomsky and still believe that gauging the effect that economics have on politics is a very common-sense thing to do. I therefore fully agree with Oscar Sanchez-Sibony – whose great book is used by Ferris to criticize an argument I don't make⁵ – who observed that “International Political Economy (IPE), [is] a general approach to understanding power and international relations that is generally uncontroversial among political scientists but which the conservative field of Cold War history processed, impossibly, as Marxist ‘revisionism’ and ‘economic determinism’.”⁶

But wait! Why does Sanchez-Sibony refer to diplomatic historians who deny the legitimacy of IPE as a research method as “conservative”? Didn't I write earlier that political economy was not political *per se*? The use of the realist research method preserves the myth of the state as a benevolent organization working for the greater good of society.⁷ Translated into the field of international relations, this view would claim that decision-makers respond to external threats according to what the so-called national interest dictates. Classical-realists like Hans Morgenthau might admit that historical figures are fallible and might make bad decisions, but they would discount the influence of domestic politics. That in itself represents a gaping hole in the logic of realism. Realists will admit that states would behave according to their economic national interests by, for instance, fighting to have access to

³ Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁴ Arno Mayer, “Internal Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870-1956: A Research Assignment,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (Sep., 1969), pp. 291-303; Bruce Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981 & 1990), Vol. I & II; Jeffrey Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Rise and Fall in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Norton, 2007).

⁵ In his review Ferris attacks two straw men. He claims that I do not understand that the 1955 Gaza raid was the pretext Nasser used to justify his decision to conclude a large arms deal with the Soviet Union rather than the cause. Anyone who will visit the relevant section of my book would see that this is my conclusion as well. [See: Guy Laron, *Origins of the Suez Crisis*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 115-120] He also avers that “in many cases... the Soviets were responding to initiatives from revolutionary leaders in the “global South,” not initiating some imagined “trade offensive.” What I wrote was that there were both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors involved – i.e. both the Soviet Union and Third World countries had a mutual interest in strengthening their ties. Incidentally, and *contra* Ferris's claim, the term ‘Soviet trade offensive’ was coined by contemporary CIA analysts. [ibid, pp. 86-93]

⁶ Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. xii.

⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1961).

markets and raw materials. One would wonder, then, why these very realists would refuse to use the same logic to dissect the internal affairs of the realm? Why not assume that various economic sectors within society would fight to hijack the decision-making process to make sure that foreign policy would adhere to *their* material interests? An industrialist who produces world-class cars might, then, decide to fund the campaigns of politicians who strive to create a low-tariff (or no-tariff) trade system. A large land owner whose inefficient plantations produce cotton at twice the price and in half the quality of cotton available on the world market would decide to throw his support behind members of parliament who promise to close the domestic market by raising tariffs on foreign goods. Indeed, defensive realists such as Jack Snyder are willing to apply this logic to the domestic arena, producing as a result highly sophisticated and rewarding models.⁸

But once we adopt a defensive-realist (or materialist) research method to investigate foreign-policy making on the national level, *we, ipso facto*, undermine the myth of the benevolent state which works in the public's interest. It can no longer be described as an autonomous actor but as a multifaceted entity; a vehicle which varied classes, organizations, institutions and corporations fight to control in order to advance their preferred policy goals both on the national and international level. In theory, this perspective, when used responsibly, can help to develop a more informed and alert citizenry. Scholars who treat political economy with contempt are, in my opinion, conservative in the sense that they refuse to adopt this critical examination of state actions. I was not surprised, therefore, that Ferris referred to the works of two leading neo-con thinkers as Robert Kagan and Walter Russell Mead to bolster his case.⁹

Victor McFarland offers a sophisticated and interesting challenge to my analysis. Unlike Ferris, he does not reject my economics-centric model, but McFarland agrees with Ferris who wrote that I have imposed my "interpretive framework somewhat heavy-handedly on a reality that necessarily is different from country to country." McFarland further argues that my findings "suggests that isolationism and internationalism were not fixed identities; they meant different things in different places, and could overlap, blur together, and change over time." I overall agree with his statement although I would put it somewhat differently: isolationism and internationalism were on the two opposing ends of a continuum. Various historical figures were not isolationist or internationalist in the abstract. Rather they were isolationist or internationalists relative to each other. Soviet Communist Party Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, as McFarland rightly points out, was definitely more isolationist in his outlook than President Dwight Eisenhower, but was far more open to the idea of expanding the Soviet Union's trade with the world than any of his Politburo comrades, save Anastas Mikoyan. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the City people took indeed a contradictory position when they tried to make the sterling convertible while trying to

⁸ See in particular Snyder's *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁹ For a somewhat pedantic but nonetheless useful critic of both Kagan and Mead see Perry Anderson, "Consilium," *New Left Review*, 83, (Sep.-Oct. 2013).

maintain hold of 'dollar-earning' assets such as Persian Gulf oil and the Suez Canal. I never thought of my model as binary, but I nevertheless should have clarified that in my introduction and conclusion. In a self-serving manner, I will use McFarland's other queries for a plug: I hope to deal further with the 'spirit of Bandung' and Israeli foreign policy in the 1950s in two forthcoming articles which will be published in *Third World Quarterly* (December 2014) and *British Journal of Middle East Studies* (Spring 2015).

No book or article can by itself change the landscape of the field. Michael Hogan, Bruce Cummings, Robert Vitalis and many others wrote several books and articles that emphasized the utility of political economy as a research method for diplomatic historians.¹⁰ That has not brought it into the mainstream. As I wrote in my preface to *Origins of the Suez Crisis* (p. x), "starting a vibrant conversation over the question of whether such an economic angle is useful for the understanding of the Cold War is certainly something that I hope this book would do." Based on the fair-minded and incisive reviews which appear above, it seemed to me the book has done exactly this. Here's for hoping that we can keep this discussion going.

¹⁰ Michael J. Hogan, *Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bruce Cummings, "'Revising Postrevisionism,' or the Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 17, No. 4, (fall 1993); Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of the Empire in Egypt*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).