

The “Middle East” as a Framework of Analysis: Re-mapping A Region in the Era of Globalization

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In recent years, there has been increasing dissatisfaction among many scholars with the term “Middle East” as a designation for the vast region lying between the Atlantic Ocean, Central Asia and India. This dissatisfaction results in part from the fact that the term is one of many relics of an earlier, Eurocentric era, when things were “near,” or “far,” or in the “middle,” in relation to the privileged vantage point of Europe.¹

While similar designations for other regions, such as “the Far East,” and “the Indian subcontinent,” are being discarded in academia in favor of more geographically neutral terms like East Asia and South Asia, this has not happened with regard to the “Middle East.” It would certainly be feasible to describe this region strictly in terms of its geography (as west Asia and North Africa,² or as the land mass between the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Black Sea) or in terms of its culture (Islamic, or Mediterranean, for example) or in other terms. But with few exceptions, this has not happened in most departments and centers devoted to the study of this region in the United States. The older language-based units generally still tend to describe it as the Near East, and the newer area studies centers as the “Middle East.”³

The old Eurocentric appellation has not only remained in both academia and the public domain, but has continued to shape the way in which the region is regarded in the English-speaking world (and through its French and German analogues, “*moyen Orient*” and “*naher osten*,” even farther afield). Thus, a description of this region as a function of its position vis-à-vis Europe, rather than for something inherently intrinsic, is not only archaic and misleading but continues to shape a perception of the region as being defined in terms of the perspectives and concerns of others.

Even within the “Middle East” itself, this term has great currency, with the standard designation in Arabic, “*al-sharq al-awsat*,” being no more than a translation of the

English term. The Turkish and Persian terms for the region are also translations of the term “Middle East.” Sadly, *al-sharq al-awsat* in Arabic, and analogous terms in other regional languages, indicate that an external perception of the region is prevalent in countries of the “Middle East” itself. In Western countries, this reaches the point of a perverse sense that in this region — perhaps even more than in others in the non-Western world — the West has a peculiar proprietary interest. This was clearly indicated during the second Gulf War (the Iran-Iraq war being the first) when politicians and commentators in the United States frequently referred to “our oil,” speaking not of the oil-fields of Texas and Oklahoma but of those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

It goes without saying that within this region there exist other ways of describing it, representing quite distinct alternative world views. Thus the Arabic terms for “Arab world” and “Islamic world:” “*al-alam al-Arabi*,” and “*al-alam al-Islami*,” the even more highly charged terms for the Arab nation and the Islamic community, “*al-umma al-Arabiyya*,” and “*al-umma al-Islamiyya*,” represent powerful competing frameworks for describing and understanding this region. One finds these terms in the political writings of Arab nationalists and Islamists respectively, and in much of the public discourse which they have influenced over the past few decades (as well as in earlier writings). But in spite of the impact of these powerful trends of thought, it is the imported term “Middle East” in translation which seems to enjoy the greatest currency in the Arab and other countries in the region.

There are other problems with the term “Middle East.” One is the lack of a precise definition of the areas, countries, cultures, religions, and language groups which are encompassed by this designation. In spite of the widespread use of the term, there is no consensus as to precisely where the “Middle East” is, what its limits are, and

what it includes. While some definitions include North Africa, others do not — the United States State Department, for example, for many years considered the “Middle East” to include the countries of West Asia and Egypt, but not the rest of North Africa. By some definitions, the region includes Turkey, while by others it does not; by some it includes Afghanistan, by others it does not, and so forth, stretching across a very broad range of countries on the “periphery” of the “central” countries of the region. Practically the only areas included in virtually every definition of the “Middle East” are the “Fertile Crescent” — another old term to signify geographical Syria and Mesopotamia — and the Arabian Peninsula. Iran and Egypt are almost always included, but are left out by a few definitions, and so it goes.

Beyond this, even if there is a general sense of which broad areas are included, there is no clear idea of where the precise limits of the region are. This is true wherever no clear boundary is provided by a large body of water like the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, or the Indian Ocean. Thus the question arises in Western Africa over whether the “Middle East” ends in the Sahara or south of it, and in Eastern Africa whether it includes the Horn of Africa or not; or at the region’s eastern limits, in West Asia, where by some definitions Pakistan and Afghanistan are part of the “Middle East” and by others they are not; or to the north-east, where the question arises of how much, if any, of Central Asia is part of the region. The latter question has been reopened by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and by the resultant closer involvement of the countries and peoples of Central Asia with Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other states to their south, which has renewed historic connections between them.

Leaving aside these seemingly trivial definitional problems, there are others relating to the confusion — in the West at least — about the identity of the people who live in this region: are they all Muslims, or all Arabs, and if so does this mean that other peoples living in the “Middle East,” such as the Turks and Iranians, are Arabs? Such questions, which we might expect to come only from those with a high degree of ignorance and a faulty education, are in fact commonly asked by many Americans and Europeans who are neither ignorant nor poorly educated. At least in part, their confusion is rather a function of the fact that the term used to describe this region confounds many non-experts, or at least fails to enlighten them sufficiently.

In fact, for many people the world over, the “Middle East” is synonymous with Islam. This is a misconception in terms of the many millions of non-Muslims who live there, whether Copts in Egypt, Israeli Jews, or Christians of various Eastern and Western denominations in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, as well as adherents of other faiths, like Bahais and Yezidis. The notion that the “Middle East” is synonymous with Islam is further belied by the fact that the great majority of the world’s Muslims now live outside this region. Today most Muslims world-wide reside in the countries of South and Central Asia and in Indonesia, Malaysia

and China, rather than in the “Middle Eastern” historical core of the Islamic world, however defined.

If the “Middle East” is not synonymous with the Islamic world, whose center of gravity is today far to the east, what is its central focus? It is perhaps most easily defined in terms of the peoples who speak Arabic, Persian and Turkish, the three main historic languages of Islam. Even that definition causes problems, however, since there are many who speak other languages in the region (Berbers, Israelis, and Kurds, to name but three) and many living well outside it who speak related languages, notably Tajik and a number of Turkic languages.

Other problems with this term are broader ones, which relate to this and other regions, and to the institutional processes whereby they are defined, studied and processed into knowledge in universities and elsewhere. Thus the enterprise of area studies as it has developed in the American academic community since World War II has left us in the late 1990s with a Balkanized set of fields, each one in large measure isolated from the others, and all of them suffering from a greater or lesser degree of isolation from much of what is going on in the broader realms of the social sciences and the humanities.

In the study of the “Middle East,”⁴ for example, complex processes which transcend regions, such as the trade, capital and labor flows between countries all around the rim of the Indian Ocean, which in differing forms appear to have been quite significant for a very long time, have been given far less attention than they deserve (and less attention than a newly discovered “region,” the Pacific rim). This has occurred partly because these processes transcend several fields which have been reified through the fields known as “Middle East studies,” “African studies,” and “South Asian studies.” Beyond this, little attention has been paid in the “Middle East” field to what was happening in other branches of area studies. This was true whether it was the study of South Asia, where the Subaltern School has had a profound influence which has now gone well beyond the history of that region alone, or Latin American Studies, where *dependencia* theory for many years was highly influential in analyses not only of Latin America but of development and under-development generally.

The situation today may indeed be worse than it was before the modern area studies approach was devised.⁵ To explain why this is the case, it is necessary to discuss briefly the genesis of “area studies.” This new approach emerged first in the United States in the wake of World War II. It emanated in a situation where, with the exception of a few isolated specialists, including missionaries, businessmen, and diplomats, there did not exist a body of American expertise on the history, politics, culture and economies of most regions of the world.

In this, the United States was unlike the European countries, especially the colonial powers, which had spent decades and sometimes centuries developing a considerable range of academic, scientific and scholarly expertise and

resources on many areas of the world. Although some had a greater concentration on, and more resources pertaining to, those areas where they had colonial ambitions or financial or other interests, in the European academy generally there was a cadre of specialists dedicated to the attempt to apprehend, understand and master the languages, cultures and history of the rest of the world. This attempt mirrored, was often the precondition for, and was generally the result of Europe's mastery over the world.⁶

To understand how limited were the resources, whether governmental or non-governmental, devoted to an examination of the rest of the world in the United States, it suffices to note that no American intelligence service with international scope existed before the establishment of the CIA in 1947 as a successor to the Office of Strategic Services – which itself was a World War II creation. Nor, with very few exceptions, did there exist programs for the study of the languages, history, society or culture of most other parts of the world (besides Europe) in American universities or any other American institutions before World War II.

The development of the area studies approach was thus in large measure an attempt to produce a body of knowledge on an inter-disciplinary basis which would make up for the almost total absence of information available to American policy-makers. This information was suddenly crucial to the management of the world system which the United States found itself dominating at the end of the war.⁷ There grew up thereafter an entirely new set of institutions, such as Foreign Language and Area Centers, new fields, such as Middle East Studies, and new professional associations, such as the Middle East Studies Association of North America, none of which had existed a few decades before.⁸

The situation today is worse in some ways than it was before the area studies approach developed; before then what organized knowledge existed about many of these regions — in particular the “Middle East,” South Asia and East Asia — was subsumed under the general rubric of “Oriental Studies.” As such, it was organized on the basis of approaches to philology, religion, culture and history which were generally quite similar. While often antiquarian in their interests, and resolutely focused on the pre-modern, these American branches of the European Orientalist disciplines shared their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Among the strengths was an understanding that there were some things that these ancient civilizations had in common, and that they were thus best studied in conjunction with one another, and in terms of the paradigm of the “civilization.”

Thus, at the University of Chicago, to take one example among the very small number of American universities with a strong tradition of Oriental Studies during the first half of this century, study of the Islamic world and the ancient Near East, South Asia and East Asia took place within the walls of one institution, the Oriental Institute, founded by James Breasted. Similar situations existed in the few other American academic institutions, such as Princeton, Har-

vard, Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania, which supported what was then called Oriental Studies. For all the failures of classical Orientalism, as they are well described by Edward Said in his influential book *Orientalism*, it at least managed to avoid the kind of compartmentalization between different areas, in some cases amounting almost to a ghetto mentality, which has afflicted modern area studies.

It may be argued in response that the focus of the Near Eastern, South Asian and East Asian branches of Oriental Studies on philology and linguistics, archeology, ancient history and the history of religion may have tended to foster certain kinds of comparative work, but that while closely linked to one another and to some areas of the humanities as broadly defined, this entire enterprise was cut off from what was going on in the social sciences. The rejoinder to this is, of course, that as the paradigm for the organization of knowledge developed in Europe and the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was the discipline of Oriental Studies rather than the social sciences which was considered to be appropriate for the study of these ancient civilizations.

As Immanuel Wallerstein has brilliantly shown in an analysis of the genesis of the structure of modern Western forms of knowledge, during this formative period for the core disciplines of the social sciences, only the “advanced” countries of the West were seen as having politics, societies and economies which were worthy of study. The non-Western world was perceived as devoid of such things, since it was “timeless,” “stagnant,” “backward,” or some combination of these things.⁹ Thus the social sciences established to study these realms of human endeavor, notably economics, political science, and sociology, hardly extended their scope beyond Europe and the United States. As for the rest, they had either anthropology, if they were “primitive” societies, or Oriental Studies, if they were “ancient” societies.

The new enterprise of area studies did not suffer from these old prejudices about the non-Western world (although it may have been affected by new prejudices), or from a lack of attention to the social sciences, at least at the outset. Indeed, among the pioneers and most important propagators of the new area studies approach were a number of prominent social scientists, among them the anthropologists Milton Singer and Jamie Redfield at the University of Chicago. Many years later, however, after the glory days of area studies from the 1950s to the 1980s had passed, several of the American social science disciplines increasingly rejected involvement with any form of area knowledge.¹⁰ At one major American university, for example, graduate students in a social science department stated that they had been told unequivocally by faculty that there was no point in learning foreign languages!¹¹

With the important exceptions of anthropology and history, both of which coexist uneasily with the “harder,” more quantitative fields within the rubric of the social sciences, most of these disciplines have become increasingly resis-

tant to connections to area studies, and increasingly reluctant to make appointments of area specialists in their disciplines. The situation at the University of Chicago, where area studies can be said to have begun, and where social scientists were instrumental in the elaboration of the area studies paradigm, can serve to illustrate this point. With two new junior appointments in early 1997, this University has just ended a period of five years when there was not one regularly-appointed "Middle East" specialist in the departments of Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology or Sociology. For over a dozen years there has not been a single tenured faculty member specializing in the "Middle East" in any of these departments. The situation concerning many other regions, such as Africa, East Asia and Eastern Europe, was only slightly better at the same university.

Elsewhere in American universities, although the situation was occasionally better than this in certain departments or with regard to some regions, it was generally quite similar, and for similar reasons. As several of the social sciences became more self-consciously theoretical, as well as more quantitative, the linguistic, cultural and historic concerns of many area specialists have come to seem quaint and retrograde. Thus the President of the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, in a Presidential letter, argued that many in political science viewed area studies as opposed to the newest trends in political science, as a drag on the profession, and as defectors from the so-called "quantitative" side of the division in the academy to the so-called "qualitative" side.¹²

Thus area studies are in profound trouble in the United States in a situation where they no longer have prestige in some of the most important disciplines of the social sciences, and where Oriental studies (already historically isolated from the social sciences) suffers both from the disdain of scholars influenced by Said's critique of it, and from budget cuts because it is believed that its arcane and difficult practice draws few students (and especially few of those all-important undergraduates whose tuition is increasingly vital to the financial well-being of American universities today).

These difficulties are compounded by the end of the Cold War, which has jeopardized funding for area studies. Government support of the intensive study of the languages, cultures, societies, politics and history of distant parts of the world was once defended on the grounds that it was necessary for waging the struggle against the Soviet Union and its proxies in these regions. Now that the USSR has disappeared and the US is triumphant throughout the world, such study is seen as an unnecessary luxury by some members of Congress, who are parsimonious about certain aspects of international education. For some on Capitol Hill, if this expertise cannot be shown to be essential for explicit foreign policy purposes (or as an adjunct to the expansion of US business interests throughout the world), it is not necessary, and certainly does not merit being supported by tax dollars.

In the wake of the US victory in the Cold War, the resurgence of the idea that "the business of America is business," and that capitalism is the measure of all things, has reinforced the tendency to see international studies as having utility primarily insofar as they serve to expand the international reach of US business. This recently led Congress to authorize the establishment of Centers for International Business Education and Research at a number of American universities.

To these problems can be added the sense in public policy circles and some other forums of public discourse in the United States that there is less need for local knowledge of other parts of the world, since globalization basically means that the world is becoming more like America. Thus, a crude form of the argument goes, there is no need to read their exotic languages or learn their strange customs in order to deal with them, since they will all be speaking English and eating Big Macs soon, if they are not doing so already. This crass triumphalism finds another, ostensibly more sophisticated, expression in the view that the end of the Cold War means the final validation of the capitalist system and of Western liberal democracy as the height of historical development of the human race — the "end of history" in the memorably imbecilic phrase of Francis Fukuyama.¹³

Regardless of how it is expressed, this potent disdain for the rest of the world translates into a belief that there is little sense in studying it. Such ideas have increasing power in some sectors of American society, and could be heard in recent Congressional discussions about cutting funding for federally-supported foreign language training (which ultimately did not take place). Such ideas are nevertheless being powerfully contested in the academy and elsewhere. They are certainly not accepted by the growing number of American students, graduates and undergraduates, who seem to understand instinctively that if globalization means anything to them, it means they will have to learn more rather than less about the cultures of other parts of the world, and that these cultures are nearer rather than farther away, whether because of the increasingly multi-cultural nature of American society or because of the greater accessibility of other parts of the world in this era.¹⁴

A final example of disdain for the rest of the world, and for the "Middle East" in particular, can be found in the profoundly obtuse, but nevertheless remarkably powerful argument put forward by Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in his influential 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs*, "The Clash of Civilizations?" which was followed by a recent book of the same name. Under the veneer of the ostensibly equal treatment accorded to each of the seven or eight civilizations described by Huntington (he is not sure whether there is such an entity as "African civilization"), his argument boils down to "the West against the rest" in the broadest terms, and most immediately the West (and others of the civilizations he lists) against Islam.¹⁵

This clash between civilizations which Huntington sees as the most likely, and the conflict which he sees as most

intractable, is that which he predicts will take place with Islam. Not surprisingly, the authority on whom Huntington relies for his portrayal of Islam is none other than Bernard Lewis, whose 1992 article "The Roots of Muslim Rage," in *The Atlantic Monthly*, was highly influential in setting the parameters for discussion of Islam in terms of social pathology.¹⁶ This attitude is adopted by Huntington, who spends the better part of four pages of his essay on the subject, concluding with the words, "Islam has bloody borders."¹⁷

Huntington's denigration of Islam is embodied in a depiction of both its religion and culture as profoundly alien, and as monolithic and unchanging, and of an uninterrupted history of conflict between the Islamic world and all its neighbors. As is obvious to anyone with the slightest knowledge of the relevant history, this is an ahistorical and reductionist portrayal, which nevertheless finds a wide resonance in American culture. It would appear that such a representation also finds resonance in societies other than the United States. According to a report in *The New York Times*, the 1997 rejection by European Christian Democratic parties meeting in Brussels of Turkish membership in the EU was based in part (it can be suspected in large part) on deep reservations about whether "a Muslim country should be included" in the European Union, in the words of one unnamed source.¹⁸

Huntington is in fact just the latest in a series of writers with wide audiences within and without the American academy to demonstrate a particular animus towards Islam, the Arab world and the "Middle East" generally. Among the most important of them have been two experts in the field, Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes.¹⁹ The existence of such a trend has been best analyzed by Edward Said in his works *Orientalism* and *Observing Islam*, and is in fact an enduring feature of modern American political culture.

As evidence of the pervasiveness of this trend, we can point to a recent study by John Woods of the blatant stereotyping of Muslims, Arabs and "Middle Easterners" in the American mass media, and in particular in political cartoons in the daily press.²⁰ Employing dozens of images, mainly cartoons, Woods shows clearly that it is possible to use crude racist images about these groups in these media almost with impunity. This is in clear distinction to treatment of almost every other major national, ethnic or religious group in the United States, even those who in the past have been the objects of fierce racial or religious prejudice in America or elsewhere, such as African-Americans and Jews.

To sum up, we have seen that there are serious problems with the definition of the "Middle East" as a region and as a field of inquiry; there are problems with Middle East Studies in particular, and with area studies in general; there is a growing distancing from important segments of the world seen as threatening by influential elements of the American elite (but not all of American culture) and by some European elite; and there is a particular hostility towards Islam, Arabs and the "Middle East" among many of these

same elite. In view of all these disturbing trends, what is to be done?

In suggesting what is to be done, it is probably preferable to focus on the first three sets of problems rather than the fourth: for the hostility in the United States and the West generally towards Islam has deep and quite specific roots, a serious discussion of which will take us far from our subject. It is worth noting simply, however, that this hostility is not only bound up with the broader problems affecting area studies. Indeed, it can probably be addressed effectively only as part of the resolution of other issues — notably the Arab-Israeli conflict — for it is grounded in great measure in carefully cultivated ignorance and fear of the "Middle East," Islam and the Arabs, which are exceedingly useful in mobilizing support for Israel among important segments of the American public. It is likely that the only thing that will measurably diminish that ignorance and fear is a resolution of this conflict.

As far as regional definitions are concerned, it is time to recognize that there are processes which transcend regions, and which must be addressed on an extra-regional basis. Whether this is a disciplinary basis, within sociology or anthropology or history, or involves bringing together more than one region in an ad hoc fashion, or even the redefinition of regions, or involves the study of new phenomena on an entirely new basis, as for example on the basis of the new paradigm of globalization, it is clear at least that we must expect solutions from directions other than the "traditional" areas into which area studies are divided.

Moreover, for all their value in other respects, most of the existing fields grounded in Orientalism are singularly ill-adapted to deal with these processes. Departments of Near East, or South Asian, or East Asian languages and literature, or languages and civilizations, are resolutely backward looking, and with their heavy emphasis on philology, archaeology and ancient history, they are simply not appropriate venues for the study of subjects such as globalization, urbanization, the environment.

Similarly, area studies generally, in their current configuration dominated by National Resource Centers and other centers for the study of specific regions, while generally somewhat more forward-looking, are by their mandate confined to the study of a single region, rather than transcending regions. It remains to be seen how much of traditional Oriental and area studies can be recuperated and recycled — particularly the essential language and literature training which they successfully fostered in Europe and North America — and how much is irremediably mired in the historical and institutional contexts out of which they emerged.

And outside the American and European contexts, there is an understandable obsession with each country's, and each region's, history and development, an obsession that tends to preclude research that cuts across regions. But perhaps it is here, outside America and Europe, with their heavy institutional investments in both conservative Oriental studies and region-bound area studies, that an open-

mindful attitude to these processes that transcend specific areas of the world might be most easily found. Perhaps the right environment for work going beyond traditional disciplinary and regional boundaries can be found in areas such as the "Middle East," where there is an acute consciousness of countries' and peoples' ties to adjacent parts of the Eurasian-African land-mass and of integration in numerous global processes.

There is every reason to encourage such a development, if this is the case, for it will make it possible for scholars and intellectuals in such countries to begin work in fields where the developed countries not only do not have the advantage of a head start, but where institutional inertia and natural conservatism will hinder many of their scholars from moving in new directions. At the very least, scholars from the non-Western world have certain advantages with these new approaches and new fields which Western scholars do not have, although the latter of course retain their comparatively lavish funding and relative stability of working conditions by comparison with colleagues elsewhere.

Whether scholars in developing countries will take the lead or not, it is necessary to devise new paradigms which can help us to see new connections and new combinations. These include the long-standing linkages between the countries of the Indian Ocean rim, which has not yet received the attention devoted to the Pacific rim as a unit for certain purposes of description and analysis. Another is the integral relations in the present and the past between Central Asia, the Caucasus and Black Sea regions and the "Middle East," relations which were temporarily obscured by Russian colonialism and during the Soviet period. There are many more such sets of linkages, some regional like the two just mentioned, and some truly global in nature: Islamic banking for example; or the use of websites by radical political movements; or the extraordinary capital, labor and population flows within, through and out of South Asia and the "Middle East."

And in the "Middle East" in particular, there are many specific incentives to think about these issues, for they are central both to many of the region's internal problems, and perhaps to some of the solutions to them, as well as to many of the region's problems with the developed world. It would help if some of these problems could be seen as shared, across the region and across regions, and if solutions which transcend the region could thus be devised. This may sound almost trite, but it is one of the key realizations that taking a global perspective makes possible: while "Middle Easterners" and others may see the problems of their societies as unique and specific, many of them are far from unique, whether the problem is pollution, urban crowding, over-population, food dependency, corruption, or something else.

Of course, this region has a specific language and culture. The latter is shared in some measure with other regions but is different in some important respects, including

the impact of Islam which, in spite of its many universal aspects, is practiced differently in different regions, and often produces different social and political results in each case. We must study and understand both what is shared and what is unique, if we are to understand why some global phenomena appear in quite a similar fashion all over the world, and have completely disparate effects in others. If anything justifies the Oriental studies and area studies paradigms, it is these specificities of language and culture, which we must understand and respect, but must also transcend on occasion.

These observations on the "Middle East" in an era of globalization have hopefully contributed to the rethinking which will be necessary if we are to remap not only the "Middle East" but other regions, and if we are to understand how to preserve a comprehension of their specificities, while being open to the broader trends which are becoming increasingly important in the modern – or post-modern — world in which we live. This process will benefit greatly from the increased input of those who, coming from regions outside Europe and North America, are free of some of the heavy intellectual and institutional baggage of rigid disciplines, inflexibly defined areas, and conservative departments. While they generally do not enjoy the support of well-funded institutions which many of us benefit from, and may operate in circumstances which are less than ideal for scholarly endeavor, they are often in immediate touch with many of the phenomena which we study from afar, and benefit from involvement in the debates within their societies. For all these reasons, in order for the process of re-mapping regions to be successful, it must be a collaborative project of those within and without the regions being re-mapped.

Notes

¹ The term was in fact invented by an American, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, in his seminal 1892 work of geopolitics, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. It was later taken up and propagated by the British Liberal Imperialist journalist and writer, Halford MacKinder. See Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

² We often forget that the continents themselves are constructs. As Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen point out in *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Europe, Asia and Africa are actually part of one landmass.

³ At the State University of New York at Binghamton, the relevant area center is called the South West Asia and North Africa Center. The letterhead of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Chicago describes it as "A Center for the Study of North Africa, Western Asia, Central Asia and the Islamic World."

⁴ For details, see R. Khalidi, "Presidential Address: Is there a Future for Middle East Studies?" *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 29, 1 (July 1995): 1-6.

⁵ There is an ongoing discussion of the area studies paradigm in the academic disciplines, the foundations, and the area studies groups themselves. Some contributions to it are in *Items*, Bulletin of the Social Science Research Council, notably Stanley J. Heginbotham,

"Rethinking International Scholarship: The Challenge of the Transition from the Cold War Era," 48, 2-3 (June-Sept. 1994): 33-40; and Kenneth Prewitt, "Presidential Items," 50, 1 (March 1996): 15-18, and "Presidential Items," 50, 2-3 (June-Sept. 1996): 31-40. See also Robert H. Bates, "Letter from the President: Area Studies and the Discipline," *APSA-CP, Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section in Comparative Politics*, 7,1 (Winter 1966): 1-2; Peter A. Hall and Sidney Tarrow, "Globalization and Area Studies: When is Too Broad Too Narrow?," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 23, 1998): B4-5; *Area Studies, Regional Worlds: A White Paper for the Ford Foundation* (The Globalization Project, The University of Chicago, June 1997). Philip S. Khoury, "Letter from the President: Global and Local Perspectives," *MESA Newsletter*, 20, 2, (May 1998), pp. 1,3.

⁶ A seminal work on this subject is Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). See also V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), J.M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford, 1993), Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷ The fact that this effort was profoundly rooted in the needs of the new post-World War II American world hegemony, and the related needs of the Cold War, can be shown by the name of one of the first Congressional measures to provide funding for foreign language instruction, the National Defense Education Act of 1957. Much has changed since the early Cold War years, with academics, universities, foundations and professional associations in many fields asserting their own agendas, which were often counter to those of the government. This could be seen during both the Vietnam and Gulf wars, when many, and ultimately perhaps most, American experts on these two regions were opposed to the government's policies.

⁸ This organization, founded in 1966, in 1996 had a Roster of Members which ran to over 160 pages, and holds annual conferences which draw over a thousand people.

⁹ See I. Wallerstein, "Open the Social Sciences," *Items*, 50, 1, (March 1996): 1-7. This was part of Wallerstein's summary of a recent survey of the social sciences by a panel of eminent academics sponsored by the Mellon Foundation.

¹⁰ *Items*, The Bulletin of the SSRC, is full of analyses of why and how this trend has developed. See the articles cited in footnote #4 above. The Vice President of the Mellon Foundation, in a letter cited in Khalidi, "Presidential Address," p. 2, noted that foundations are moving away from support from "area studies, as they are traditionally defined."

¹¹ These were Political Science students at Indiana University.

¹² Robert H. Bates, "Letter from the President."

¹³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹⁴ These students may search for knowledge about the world in the departments that are the heirs to Orientalism – the language and culture and language and civilizations departments – or in other parts of area studies, or elsewhere, whether within the social science disciplines, in business or law, or in the growing field of globalization studies. The point is that their numbers are clearly growing.

¹⁵ Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

¹⁶ Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic*

Monthly, 26, (September 1992): 57-69. For a harshly critical perspective on Lewis' anti-Islamic prejudices, see Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1997), pp. xxix-xxxiii.

¹⁷ Huntington, "The Clash," p. 35.

¹⁸ Stephen Kinzer, "Brussels Meeting Dims Turks' Hopes," *New York Times*, March 11, 1997, p. A7.

¹⁹ Lewis' work is justly well known in this regard: see the critique of it cited in note 17, above, and in Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 314-321. Pipes has published a number of works which display such an animus, occasionally thinly veiled, notably *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), and *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). More important in this respect has been his work as Director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, a think tank whose primary task appears to be to denigrate opponents of Israel, perceived and real, whether in the United States or the Middle East.

²⁰ John Woods, "Imagining and Stereotyping Islam," in A. Husain, J. Woods and J. Akhtar, *Muslims in America: Opportunities and Challenges*, Position Paper 2, pp. 45-77, (Chicago: International Strategy and Policy Institute, 1996).