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The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace

John R. Schindler

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the book about this epic struggle for the future of the Army doctrine is still yet to be written.

LT. COL. JON SCOTT LOGEL, U.S. ARMY
Naval War College



Miller, Aaron David. *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*. New York: Bantam, 2008. 407pp. \$26

This interesting book aims at unraveling a significant mystery that has lain at the heart of international diplomacy for more than a generation: Why and how has America failed to bring lasting peace to the Middle East? Specifically, why, despite so much expended American money and political effort, does peace between the Jordan River valley and the Mediterranean look as far off today as in the last forty years? Answers to this question have never been lacking, yet few authors have tried to tackle it comprehensively and fairly.

There are few individuals better placed to answer this question than Aaron David Miller, a scholar-diplomat who was an eyewitness to much of the drama he recounts, having served as an adviser on the Middle East to six U.S. secretaries of state. Miller's prose is accessible and more, as he draws the reader into behind-the-scenes vignettes that make the most of a topic that is potentially mind-numbing, given its complexities and nuances. The author is refreshingly open about his biases as an American Jew whose emotions about the plight of the Palestinians are sincere, as are his not-infrequent frustrations with the Israelis. His notion that both Israelis and Palestinians are caught in a macabre

diplomatic dance that occasionally delves into comedies of the absurd would merit a smile, were it not for the countless lives—and, as Miller demonstrates, diplomatic careers—that have been wrecked while the band plays on.

Miller's vivid, usually empathetic descriptions of the cast of characters alone are worth the price of admission. This is diplomatic history at its most accessible and enjoyable. Miller's lively work is thoroughly researched, including interviews with almost all the dramatis personae, so this is much more than a you-are-there account. The author's analysis of the problems that he, like so many others, failed to unravel fully is candid and detailed, and it will be a reference source for future generations of scholars.

Moreover, *The Much Too Promised Land* deserves high praise for finding paths through all the major minefields, not least the vexing issue of the Israeli lobby, the alleged den of limitless Jewish money and aggressively neocon influence on U.S. foreign and defense policy. While not all readers will accept Miller's answers, the fair-minded will appreciate the care and tact with which he addresses them. In this sense, this work is a polite refutation of such recent academic writings as those of Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who have perhaps indulged in an overdrawn analysis of Israeli influence in Washington, D.C.

In his conclusion, Miller offers some thoughtful guideposts to thinking about this never-ending problem and what it means for regional and international security. Considering that the Arab-Israeli dispute looks as intractable as ever (and that the Jewish state is facing

demographic crises that threaten to overwhelm it by the end of this century, if not before) the author's counsel, including a plea for humility, is refreshing and much needed. His concluding thought about America's role in the peace process, that "although we remain vital to peacemaking, we can't drive the train as much as I once believed," is a fitting one and captures the essence of the author—a thoughtful observer, seasoned analyst, veteran diplomatist, readable scholar, and all-around mensch.

JOHN R. SCHINDLER
Naval War College



Law, Randall D. *Terrorism: A History*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2009. 342pp. \$24.95

Rarely is a book written to fulfill the author's own need for a scholarly work on a topic that he teaches at university. So when Associate Professor Randall Law determined that he must write a book on the history of terrorism, he sought to satisfy a need not only for himself but for other professors and researchers who deal with the subject. According to Law, "When I started teaching a course on the subject shortly after September 11, 2001, I could not find a book for my students that told this story in a clear chronological fashion, that provided sufficient analytical framework, that made use of the most recent scholarly work, and that was comprehensive but succinct." Law's book does exactly what he intended.

Dr. Law, a historian, immediately wrestles with his own working definition of terrorism with two core assertions. The first is that individuals or groups act through rational and conscious

decision making within political and cultural contexts. Therefore, according to Law, terrorism is not "a kind of madness." His second states that terrorism is a communicative act intended to influence the behavior of the audience. Consequently, the author emphasizes a correlation between terrorism and the media throughout the book.

An astute reader might ask on what basis the author chose certain groups and historical events. Actually, Law selected three viewpoints that would give the reader a broad understanding of the complexity of the subject. The first is what he calls the "terrorist toolbox," a set of tactics, behaviors, and methods normally associated with terrorism. The second is that terrorism is "violent theater" that leverages symbols and provocatively violent acts. The third viewpoint is that terrorism has become a cultural construct, while the word itself connotes illegitimacy or is used as a label to vilify enemies.

Although concise and of a nice, workable size for classroom use, the volume treats terrorism with a stunningly all-encompassing approach. Its sixteen chapters truly span the historical, cultural, and political underpinnings of terrorism.

As one who teaches graduate courses on terrorism to federal, state, local, and tribal law-enforcement professionals, as well as military leaders, I found this book to be a welcome addition to the multitude of scholarly materials on terrorism. Randall Law has written the quintessential work on the subject, one that is provocative and educational, and will stimulate a necessary dialogue for future decision makers.

JEFFREY H. NORWITZ
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, Georgia