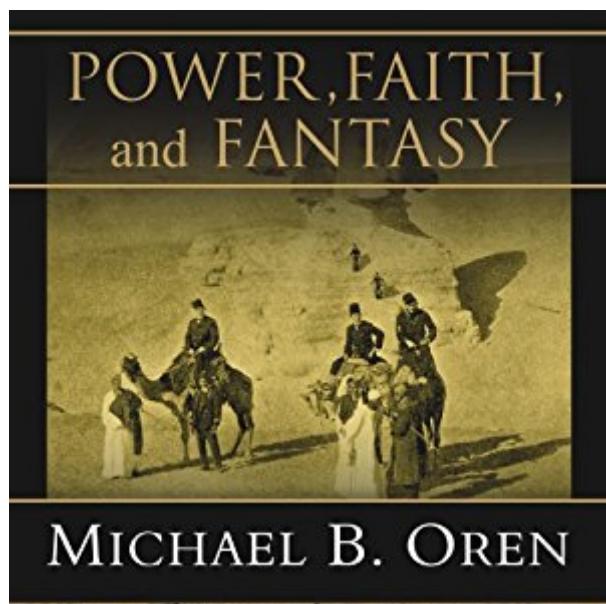


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Power, Faith, And Fantasy: America In The Middle East, 1776 To The Present



Synopsis

This is the first comprehensive history of America's involvement in the Middle East from George Washington to George W. Bush. From the first cannonballs fired by American warships at North African pirates to the conquest of Falluja by the Marines, and from the early American explorers who probed the sources of the Nile to the diplomats who strove for Arab-Israeli peace, the United States has been dramatically involved in the Middle East. For well over two centuries, American statesmen, merchants, and missionaries, both men and women, have had a profound impact on the shaping of this crucial region. Yet their story has never been told-until now. Drawing on thousands of government documents and personal letters, this book reconstructs the diverse and remarkable ways in which Americans have interacted with this alluring yet often hostile land stretching from Morocco to Iran and from the Persian Gulf to the Bosphorus. Covering over 230 years of history, Power, Faith, and Fantasy is an indispensable work for anyone interested in understanding the roots of America's Middle East involvement today. "This is a wonderfully rich and thought-provoking history." -Library Journal Starred Review --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I like Michael Oren's book about the 1967 war, and like him in general. Nevertheless, I found this book somewhat contrived. Among other things, Oren claims that the need for the fledgling United States to build a navy to defend against the Barbary Pirates was the impetus for the Constitution,

and there is a lengthy section on Lawrence Arabia, even though the only connection to America is that Lowell Thomas wrote a book about it. After his detailed review of the war against the pirates, little happens other than an endless litany of Christian missionaries starting in the early 1800's, until British and Americans discovered oil in Arabia in the 20th century.

A full comprehensive, and very interesting account that truly brings the current IS involvement in the Middle East in perspective. Long, sometimes too long in certain discussions, not necessarily always an easy read. But definitely recommended for anyone who wants a good understanding of this often convoluted history and fractured relationship between the US and Middle Eastern societies.

Power, Faith, and Fantasy is a strong 4, weak 5 star book. Oren does an excellent job going over the history and bringing events together in a natural way, but Oren really centers his efforts on the founding of Israel and the frustrations of American presidents after that founding in balancing the, often contradictory, interests of oil, fighting the Commies, defense of Israel, and still promoting democracy and human rights in the region (usually in that order). What I found most interesting was the extent of American travels in the region and our general prestige in the area to a certain extent. The history of educational institutions founded by Americans and the relatively good natured religious missionary presence goes much longer back, essentially to the late 1700s, than I would have thought. The frequency of minor military excursions into the region I also found fascinating, and was a different aspect of seeing them all compiled in the same book as opposed to reading about them separately. Also interestingly, it is astonishing how quickly the animosity is shifted from the British/French/Imperialists is turned toward the US following the end of WWII and founding of Israel. This is common knowledge almost now, but actually remarkable given our 'footprint' in the region compared to hundred years ago (imagine, a US army occupying Egypt now). While US has certainly had its adventures in the region, they are nothing compared to the European incursions as late as 50 years ago (except Iraq, as it turns out). I did find the book to be frustrating on some topics though. For example, following the Holocaust there were floods of refugees trying to leave Germany. Oren discusses the challenges in finding homes for them all, but doesn't discuss why the US, considered a favored spot for many Jewish refugees (second only to Palestine), was still under immigration quotas and only allowed in a trickle of all displaced persons needing a new home. This is a big point, and one must wonder what would become of the Zionist movement, and the founding of Israel in particular, if the US were more willing to welcome Jewish displaced persons. Maps were oddly lacking for a book on the Middle East. There were only 2-3 in the first few pages as reference, and

were quickly forgotten. For a region that sees considerable changes in territory and control, sometimes differing from year to year, it was frustrating to not be able to follow changes as closely as I would have liked. The book largely focuses around Israel, and the founding of it is really seen as a changing point and climax for the book, or at least the event where everything pivots. While not necessarily a bad thing, to title the book "America in the Middle East," and then focus so much on the Zionist movement and Israel, I had to change my expectations for the book. On buying the book, I was hoping to learn more about American involvement in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc. There was some of this in there, but it seemed to be of secondary importance to Israel. In the end, it really is a fantastic book, but left some minor questions that should have been explored by the author but for some reason weren't. But to say it covers all the Middle East is not entirely accurate. There is some discussion, and the last chapters go president by president in interactions with the Mid East, but not in depth (which, come to think of it, even the author admits in the opening chapter).

Finishing this superb treatise has left me nearly mute. How can one man know his subject so well and share the information so readily? After seizing upon original insights does one not keep them to one's self and savor, at least awhile, their enlightening truths? Not so, apparently, with this brilliant researcher, historian and storyteller. He shares his conclusions on every page, studded with the vocabulary of a Mensa fanatic. I learned more U. S. History than expected. Not just facts, but subtle nuances and striking interactions which leap out at the intent reader. For no other author have I so lamented nearing the final pages of the book. Michael B. Oren is a joy to read in every work he has written. Having now read them all, I think I shall reread his latest, ALLY. It endears one to Oren and makes one hope that he has another book ready for the publisher.

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