

3. See James G. Blight, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Re-examine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), pp. 291–305.
4. Brookings Middle East Study Group, *Toward Peace in the Middle East: Report of a Study Group* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1975).
5. Brookings Study Group on Arab-Israeli Peace, *Toward Arab-Israeli Peace: Report of a Study Group* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1988).
6. Michael Suleiman, *The Arabs in the Mind of America*, (Bratleboro, Vt.: Amana Books, 1988).
7. Shelly Slade, "The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 143–62.
8. Michael Bonine, "MESA and Middle East Studies: An International Perspective from North America," *MESA Bulletin* 20, no. 2 (December 1986): 155–70; and Bayly Winder, "Four Decades of Middle Eastern Studies," *Middle East Journal* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 40–63.
9. The Statistics for 1990 MESA membership was provided to the editor by the MESA headquarters in University of Arizona, Tucson.
10. This was written before the Gulf crisis of 1990, which is likely to change most of the givens in the Middle East equation before it is over.
11. As indicated earlier, this is not unique to the Middle East. See Blight, *On the Brink*.
12. For a good discussion of decision making in a crisis situation, see William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

CHAPTER 12

Middle East Studies and Education in the United States: Retrospect and Prospects

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During the last decades, the crises recurring in the Middle East have been a source of serious concern for all nations, for they represent a threat to the world peace and economy. The United States, in particular, perceives any disturbance in that geographical area as a danger signal which activates its responsibility, as a world power, to intervene in a potentially explosive situation. The United States—led war against Iraq in 1991 was the latest and most significant episode in modern Middle East history in which the Americans were directly involved.

Unfortunately, as Middle Eastern experts have noted repeatedly, American policies toward the region have not been always overly effective, nor have they been tailored to the cultural expectations, assumptions, prescriptions, and values of those diverse Arab, Iranian, and other nations that constitute the Middle East. Even the successful and destructive war against Iraq has not yet produced any tangible positive results beyond forcing Iraq out of Kuwait for the time being. Indeed, the war has created additional economic, environmental, and political problems on top of the problems that existed in the region. The inefficacy of U.S. Middle East policies may be attributed to two major causes, one of which

is the prevalence of an anglocentric orientation among those responsible for international relations in the United States, which leads them to disregard the existence of other world-views and function strictly in accordance with their own culture-bound standards in all international negotiations.¹ This unfortunate chauvinistic attitude, which is bitterly resented by overseas societies, and interpreted by them as a display of American arrogance, is further aggravated by another factor—the deplorable and widespread ignorance of the general public and many American government officials about the Middle East, its cultures, and its people. This lack of knowledge has resulted in a proliferation of stereotypes, misjudgments, and distorted expectations, aptly summarized in a 1978 study by Szalay *et al.*, who equated the American image of Arabs as “camel, desert, oil” and to which one must now add that of “terrorist.”²

The majority of the American people tends to be uninformed, as well as only marginally interested in international affairs. Furthermore, the information available to the public in this area is likely to be inaccurate, for it is derived primarily from tainted sources—the biased presentations of “facts” carefully edited by mass media specialists intent on achieving a maximum emotional impact on their viewers or readers.³ This distortion factor was specifically highlighted in the results of a 1977 study, conducted by Mir-Djalali, that compared American and Iranian cultures, and from which the researcher concluded that “the American image of Iran indicates little substantive knowledge of the country but appears to a large extent stereotypical.”⁴

It is worthy to note, at this point, that the sources of international information available to the mass media both here and in the Middle East are by their very nature biased in their approach to world affairs. Currently four major news agencies control overseas information: AP, UPI, AFP, and Reuters—all of which are based in Western countries; namely, Great Britain, France, and the United States. Their determination of what is newsworthy is culture bound and Eurocentric, both in terms of quantitative—a minimal amount of time and space devoted to non-Western news—and qualitative representations—stereotyped treatment of such countries.⁵ An excellent example of “filtered” news management, which results in a misrepresentation of a world event taking place

in the Middle East, was cited by a renown linguist, Noam Chomsky, in a recent article reviewing the concepts of terrorism and retaliation, as they are defined by key individuals and institutions in this country. Referring to the statements made in 1984 by Arafat, “calling for negotiations between Israel and the PLO, leading to mutual recognition,” this scholar pointed out that the *New York Times*, a newspaper commonly praised for its high professional standards, failed to include in its issues at that time even one mention of this occurrence while, at the same time, continuing to denounce Arafat’s alleged “unwillingness to pursue a diplomatic course.”⁶ What is interesting here is the fact that the *New York Times* chose not to report a statement that they saw as out of character for the PLO leader, rather than acknowledging it and simply discrediting it as pure rhetoric or even the “ravings of a madman.”

Quite clearly, any slanted news coverage (whether through omission or distortion) is obstructive to international understanding, for it not only generates misinformation about other parts of the world, but also reinforces the ethnocentrism of those exposed to it, a dangerous attitude to maintain at a time when the economic hegemony of the United States is on the wane and Third World countries are increasingly gaining access to full membership in the international community. For evidence on this changing balance of power, one need only look at the unassailably dominant position in world trade attained by Japan, an event predicted some twenty years ago by Kahn who anticipated that country’s emergence as a superstate that would some day surpass the United States.⁷ Typically, however, this meteoric rise is viewed by most Americans as the product of “unfair trading practices,” rather than the natural outcome of a specific cultural orientation. In this respect, the only valid interpretation of Japanese business practices must consider that society’s basic concern for harmony which, logically, results in the favoring of firms and individuals with a long-established track record of positive interactions. Both this *modus operandi* and the Japanese perception of trade competition as a form of war are inconsistent with American business ethics and expectations.⁸

In world affairs as well, the tenor of international relations is dictated to a large extent by the relative ratio of cultural commonalities and incongruence that may unite or separate different

nations. With respect to the Middle East, for instance, the balance between these positive and negative factors tends to weigh in favor of the latter, when one considers the far-reaching implications of crucial religious divergences: Islam, which has dominated the Arab world for centuries and prescribes every aspect of public and private life, on the one hand; and Western faiths, which abide by the separation of church and state, on the other.⁹ Such seemingly diametrically opposed outlooks are further complicated by other disparities in Middle Eastern and American world-views and accentuated by the U.S. media's biased presentation of Middle Eastern affairs. Indeed, the outcome of such ethnocentric clashes was amply illustrated during the Iran hostage crisis, when the United States chose to confront the issue publicly, in accordance with the tradition of "openness" established for such matters in the country. In doing so, government leaders and negotiators overlooked the crucial importance of *abrus* (literally translated as "the color of one's face", i.e., one's reputation) to Iranians, thereby triggering, on their part an immediate response of enraged shame.¹⁰ This reaction was further intensified by the latter's own misinterpretation of American democracy that, according to the unconfirmed reports of students who had visited the country recently, had led them to expect a mass uprising of U.S. citizens in protest against the antagonistic stance of their government against Iran.

The entire history of humankind is fraught with such examples of crises resulting from mutual misunderstandings between two or more nations but, today, world affairs have become infinitely more complex than they were fifty years ago. As noted in the introductory and concluding chapters by Amirahmadi, the distinctively bipolar orientation after World War II (based on the U.S.-USSR axis) has given way to a "multipolar system" in which all nations may be expected to interact on a relatively equal basis both politically and culturally. Given this egalitarian situation, any attempt on the part of any country to rule by fiat, through sheer economic or military pressure, no longer qualifies as an acceptable or even overly effective means of influencing the course of international events in favor of a particular nation and for any significant length of time. Instead, the expectations of contending governments are likely to be fulfilled only to the extent of their representatives' proficiency in what may come to be known as "the new di-

plomacy," a negotiation process mediated by multinational world organizations such as the United Nations and grounded in a solid combination of crosscultural communication skills, bilingual fluency, and a comprehensive knowledge of both societies and their cultures.

Although the innovations mandated by the "new diplomacy" may be challenging, they are by no means insurmountable in a country, such as the United States, which has been characterized as ethnically diverse, competitive, and change oriented. These pluralistic, ethnocratic conditions have created microcosms of cross-cultural encounters throughout the nation, in every area of human interactions that have, in turn, stimulated research on culturally induced factors causing interference in interpersonal and intergroup communication. These efforts have culminated in the creation of a new field of specialization, known as Intercultural-Cross-Cultural Communication, which gained momentum from the time of publication of Hall's seminal work on the human dimensions of time and space, *The Silent Language*, in 1959.¹¹ Since then, its development has been nothing short of phenomenal, and its impact, at first restricted to education, has gradually been extended to other areas, such as civil rights, law enforcement, medical care, social services, media advertisement, and multinational trade. Presumably, it is also an integral part of government training programs for all appointees and employees scheduled for overseas or overseas-related assignments.

With respect to the latter, however, the effectiveness of the provided cross-cultural instruction may be somewhat in doubt, when it is assessed in the light of implemented American foreign policies (imbued, at best, with limited vision and, at worst, with imperialistic overtones). Such a state of affairs immediately raises questions concerning the adequacy of professional preparation prior to entry into the civil service, particularly in the liberal arts or to entry into internationally oriented courses of study, intended to nurture a cadre of foreign relations experts with concentration on a specific world region, such as the Middle East.

From an educational standpoint, the concerns that have been raised in connection with the limited scope and accuracy of the international perspectives internalized by American officials, on the one hand, and the American public, on the other hand, are

particularly significant. They suggest the presence of a potential deficiency in the coverage of such subject matter at institutions of secondary and higher education. If American schools and universities are to continue to fulfill their mandated responsibility for intellectual development and leadership, now and in the future, in a country that has assumed the role of a major world power, this deficiency must be corrected and with some urgency.

THE STATE OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES

When members of a technologically advanced society exhibit a manifest ignorance in an area of knowledge that cannot be defined as esoteric or culturally taboo, the origin of the problem is usually traceable to a deficiency in the educational system. As noted earlier, such a state of affairs exists in this country with respect to the Middle East. To assess the extent to which university courses of study meet the needs of students and, by extension, those of the general public for accurate information on this particular region, the authors of this chapter initiated a project at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, in 1987 to survey existing programs and course offerings at accredited institutions of higher education throughout the nation. Its aims were, first, to determine the place and state of Middle East studies at undergraduate and graduate levels and, second, to utilize these findings as a basis for the restructuring, expansion, and improvement of the course of study in place in the university's Middle Eastern Studies.

To accomplish this objective, a comprehensive questionnaire consisting of thirty-nine items was constructed and disseminated, with a letter of explanation, to all universities listing this subject matter in their catalogues. Some of the queries contained therein were intended to collect basic information on course offerings, majors, and degree programs; on faculty size and composition; and on student recruitment and enrollment. Others sought to clarify the contents of instruction, its objectives, its underlying philosophy, and the pedagogical strategies and resources prevailing in this area. Finally a number of items attempted to identify those culture-based judgments, misconceptions, and stereotypes commonly manifested by American and Middle Eastern students to-

ward each other and their respective countries, as noted by their instructors. This information would be treated as strictly confidential.

A total of forty-one survey forms, duly filled out, were returned to the investigators out of the ninety-eight that had been initially disseminated; these responses included all contacted major universities, as well as a representational sample of smaller institutions. The corpus was analyzed and the results recorded; wherever deemed appropriate, an item analysis was performed that yielded frequency distributions. The data were subsequently organized into six categories: program information, faculty, students, course contents, course methods, and cultural interference in instruction. The outcome of this classification was then examined in each group to detect potentially prevailing trends within specific areas, and the findings derived from this analysis were described in a report; they are summarized in the next section.

THE NATURE OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES

If any general conclusion may be drawn from the survey conducted at Rutgers, it is that Middle East studies have not proliferated in the United States and that significant variations do exist among programs now in existence throughout the nation.

Most of the programs appeared to have been established in the 1970s, with one notable exception, a course of study initiated in 1788, and reorganized in 1978. Very few of these offerings had been revised since their inception, and none appeared to have been subjected to periodic review. Although there were some indications of planned expansion at selected universities, a majority of the contacted institutions stated that, at the present time, they intended to maintain a status quo in program size and curriculum content (a ratio of 2.25 to 1).

When these results were examined in the context of the relatively low rate of responses obtained in the survey, they hinted at the potential presence of lacunae (gaps) in academic programs that could account, at least in part, for the lack of public interest and knowledge about the Middle East in the United States. This particular observation was found to be consistent with current scholarly

assessments of international education in this country as minimal and relatively ineffectual in counteracting the parochial world-view of American students. The implications of such a state of affairs were outlined by Woyach in 1982, who felt that U.S. citizens were ill prepared on world matters because they held¹² "an elementary conceptual map of the world coded primarily in terms of whether other people or foreign events are good, bad, relevant, or indifferent to American welfare. And the conceptual maps are often based on misperceptions, distortions, and gross simplifications" (p. 18). This scholar attributed the narrowness of this outlook to the inadequacies of public school instruction, which he saw as a combination of ill-trained teachers, undifferentiated textbooks, and institutional resistance to change.

That this undesirable status quo persists today was made clear by Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University in his 1990 Annual Report, where he highlighted the need to "emphasize foreign languages and international studies in order to prepare students for an interdependent world."¹³ In so doing, Bok identified once again a significant flaw in American education.

Existing Programs in Middle East Studies

The survey yielded the following information on available options for specialization in Middle East studies: six universities were found to possess a fully fledged program, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, with a Ph.D. alternative in only one case; three others included a course of study leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree; and an additional two listed a Master of Arts degree in this field. All but two of the remaining institutions offered courses on the Middle East as a component of related programs such as International Relations, Asian Studies, Political Science, and Social Studies among others. It seems logical to assume, subject to further verification, that the curriculum of those colleges that failed to participate in the study did not encompass any specialized offerings related to the subject matter under investigation.

The oldest program in existence had been created in 1788 (reviewed in 1978), and the most recent one had been set up in 1983 (unchanged to date). Elsewhere, revisions had occurred after periods ranging from eight to eighteen years at the undergraduate level, and from six to ten years in graduate schools. Most of the

courses of study were located in liberal arts programs, and the primary reasons cited for their initiation included the need to diversify offerings or to fulfill a need and special interest on the part of a faculty member. The comprehensiveness of course offerings reported by each respondent varied considerably: for full programs, the listings ranged from seven to forty-six courses for a Bachelor's degree, and from two to thirty-three for a Master's degree in Middle East studies. For related programs, the lowest number of catalogue entries was three, and the highest was twenty-eight. Two out of three universities indicated the possibility of expanding offerings "at a future date," but they did so without reference to a specific time frame. As for subject content, Middle East history, languages, and politics constituted the basic requirements for a major in the field.

This information may be taken to serve as a confirmation that the academic community has not, on the whole, exhibited more than a minimal interest in disseminating knowledge about an area of the world that has been viewed as a constant source of unrest in international circles. At the time of the study, the extent of this inactivity could be gauged by the fact that only one new Middle East program had been initiated in the last decade, in 1983. When this fact is viewed in the context of global issues affecting the world community, it is somewhat surprising, given the recurrence of Arab-Israeli conflicts, international and civil wars, and "terrorist" activities associated with the Middle East; it is moreover incomprehensible, given the impact of the Iran hostage situation that involved the U.S. government and its people directly with a seemingly hostile revolution. In light of this fact, one cannot help but wonder what effect, if any, and with what time lag the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait and the subsequent United States-led war against Iraq will have on American education, despite the increased American involvement in the region.

Faculty Members in Middle East Studies Program

An individual's perception of world events and other societies is both culture-bound and ethnocentric by virtue of one's upbringing in a specific environment. Thus, an American's view of Jordan's position today vis-à-vis Iraq will differ considerably from that of a

Jordanian, as well as that of other citizens in Arab countries. In the field of international studies, as well as that of foreign language education, the need to present multiple viewpoints to the students has long been recognized as means of providing them with the "multinational perspective" advocated by Banks to ensure mutual understanding among the people of earth.¹⁴ In university programs, these ideal conditions may be achieved through the size of professorial staff, to ensure a sufficiently diverse presentation of interpretations on world events, and through the implementation of "bipartisan" faculty appointments, that is to say individuals of Middle Eastern as well as American backgrounds in the case at hand.

To obtain information in this area, the questionnaire sought to determine the number of full-time and part-time personnel appointed to Middle East programs, their respective national origins, their professional background, and the extent of their international experience. Responses indicated that one university maintained a faculty of seventy full-time specialists to serve the needs of students enrolled in both graduate and undergraduate courses of study; other institutions combined a staff of full-time instructors (ranging in number from one to seventeen), with teaching assistants (one to six), and part-timers.

At the undergraduate level, none of the faculty members had been born and educated strictly in the Middle East; however, 20 percent of those who had originated from that region had studied there as well as in the United States. Another 10 percent of the professors, all of whom were native-born Americans, had attended universities in both the United States and the Middle East.

Graduate programs were handled by a mixed team of individuals born and educated in this country and Middle Easterners educated here and in their native lands; the two groups were approximately equal in numbers. Three instructors had come from Europe. Similar situations existed in institutions where course were offered and no Middle East program existed.

This information would tend to indicate that staffing may be an area of weakness only at the undergraduate level. There, instruction may suffer from a monocultural, anglocentric bias that is likely to be detrimental to the achievement of an objective international outlook on world interaction in general, and U.S.-Middle East relation in particular.

Student Bodies in Middle East Studies

Personal experience with another way of life is commonly thought to be enriching. Although the ideal situation would be a total immersion in the day-to-day existence of members of a foreign society, a viable alternative may also be found in the interactions that take place on campus between American and foreign students, especially among those who are enrolled in the same programs. To ascertain the nature of student experiences in an informal context, the researchers requested data on the size of the student body and on their national origins.

The collected data revealed that the ratio of learners enrolled in Middle East programs to the total school population was generally low, ranging from .01 to 1 percent at the undergraduate level, and from 0.7 to 4.5 percent in graduate divisions. In actual numbers, these percentages represented 100 to 1,300 individuals pursuing a Bachelor's degree in this field, as opposed to 10 to 300 young men and women earning a Master's degree. In the former case, the predominant nationality of the enrollees was American (89 to 100 percent), with a minimal contingent of Middle Easterner (5 to 10 percent), and a sprinkling of other foreign nationals. Statistics were somewhat different in the latter situation, where a larger proportion of students came from the Middle East (5 to 50 percent); the American group ranged from 30 to 100 percent of the total student body, with other countries represented as well, but only in scattered numbers.

All but one university planned to increase local enrollment, primarily by means of a systematic recruitment campaign, scholarships, career-oriented courses, and featuring guest lecturers from the Middle East. The method most frequently selected by the respondents as a particularly effective means of attracting new applicants included word-of-mouth advertisement and dissemination of recruitment literature, such as brochures and catalogues.

The distinct university interest in expanding the size of their American enrollment in Middle East studies, combined with the greater exposure of those enrolled in the graduate programs than those engaged in undergraduate studies to bipolar perspective on the Middle East (ensured by the presence of both Americans and Middle Easterners on the faculty) may be taken as positive factor that should, ideally and eventually, result in the propagation of

more accurate information concerning this part of the world than has been heretofore available in this country, both to the general public and public officials.

Course Content in Middle East Studies

The region known as the Middle East suffers from what may be defined as an ambiguous identity. There are, indeed, very few Americans who would be able to name more than six to eight of the most well-known nations located in that area. In fact, some of the "lesser" countries may be overlooked at times by specialists in the field. This fact was noted in the survey, where Afghanistan, Cyprus, and Pakistan were frequently omitted from the respondents' definitions of the Middle East.

Given these circumstances, a comprehensive coverage of the target area is hardly to be expected in university programs. This assumption was tested in the survey. Four key issues in 1987, which the researchers considered to be especially significant to international relations, were selected for inclusion in the questionnaire to serve as an index of course content: the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, recent (since the late 1970s) developments in Middle East-U.S. policies, and the Lebanese-Palestinian question. The Arab-Israeli conflict was omitted not only because it had received disproportionate attention, but also to allow these other issues to stand out in the questionnaire.

Institutional responses showed the first issue to be addressed in at least one and, at most, three courses, the second and third ones in one to four courses, and the last in one to seven courses. The latter topic was clearly the one most thoroughly treated in existing curricula. This was partly because of the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the Lebanese-Palestinian question. Similar trends were noted in those college offerings outside of a specialized degree program, except for the fact that their syllabi stressed new developments in Middle East-U.S. policies over the Lebanese-Palestinian question as a major area of concern.

In terms of subject content, all undergraduate programs highlighted history, and all but two checked Political Science and Religion as essential to an adequate understanding of the Middle East; some also included Language-Area Study but seemingly reluctantly and only as a last choice. Graduate programs, as well,

assigned their priority to History, Political Science, and Religion, but they also added Art to their listing, whereas Language-Area Study was omitted entirely by four institutions. Considered of least importance across the board were the disciplines of Psychology, Philosophy, and Geography. Course offerings elsewhere placed an emphasis on Religion and Political Science at the undergraduate level, and History and Religion at the graduate level.

Worthy of note is the fact that responses to the question on which four courses were most significant for Middle East specialization diverged somewhat from the identifications outlined in the previous paragraph. Here, survey participants cited Middle East Languages and International Relations (or Cultural Anthropology) as being of equal importance to History or Political Science and Religion. There was no reference remotely suggestive of International Communication, Human Relations, or Geography. The pre-eminence assigned by universities to the disciplines was evidently a reflection of the primary objectives of their programs, which was to impart to the students an "understanding of Middle East politics," rather than a more global comprehension of the assumptions and expectations underlying these decrees, and the mode of reasoning followed by those responsible for their definition and implementation.

The Emerging "Expanded" Approach

The inclusion of Middle East Languages and Cultural Anthropology among the four courses prioritized by participating institutions is particularly interesting, for it suggests a possible shift in professorial orientation from the narrow, traditional study of foreign nations, based strictly on concrete aspects of civilization, to a more inclusive one that would consider as well those psychosocial factors reflective of the basic world-view of a given society, which determine its *modus operandi* in international relations. This change in scholarly approach is, indeed, long overdue in a country that has pioneered research in intercultural communication and, as noted earlier, actually established it as a legitimate field of knowledge worthy of scholarly interest.

To illustrate this point, one need only consider the immediate implications of a culture-bound evaluation of contending positions in the current crisis in the Middle East. For U.S. citizens, the Amer-

ican presence in Saudi Arabia and on the Iraqi border was an exercise in brinkmanship conveying a sense of doom, which cannot be easily assuaged as a result of the stereotyped "terrorist" frame of reference associated with anything "Arab" or Muslim in this country. Such misgivings are amply justified, given the equivocal nature of past American foreign policies toward, and transactions with, other governments in that part of the world.

An objective assessment of the situation may be attained, however, through the application of cross-cultural communication principles. Basically, such an approach entails a radical shift in human perception, from a purely ethnocentric, monocultural viewpoint to a broad-based, multinational consideration of all relevant factors, one grounded on a careful examination of the respective positions adopted by all the nations (including Iraq and the United States) involved in the event, as *perceived and interpreted by them*. Without a clear understanding of those internal and external conditions likely to affect the crisis and its outcome, no action should have been taken. Such conditions should encompass both intangible elements, such as the national character and status of each country in the world community, and concrete factors, such as estimates of military capability, based on personnel and armament statistics.

In this respect, a case in point may be derived from past history through a pursuit of a perceptive analysis of the Nazi defeat in World War II, featured in an unusual text on intelligence factors affecting foreign relations, written by Platt, a retired Army Brigadier-General, in 1961.¹⁵ In this landmark document, the writer ascribed the Allies' victory to Hitler's decision not to invade Great Britain after Dunkirk. He further attributed this ill-fated verdict to the German High Command's erroneous perception of the British as "a thoroughly defeated enemy" who would, according to Teutonic logic, inevitably sue for peace in the face of overwhelming odds. It was, he noted, a military error traceable to the generals' failure to factor the English national character (the "bulldog mentality") in an, otherwise, realistic assessment of their opponent's defense capability. This faulty evaluation was, in fact, an ethnocentric blunder that eventually tolled the death knell of the Nazi regime.

Given the cross-cultural limitations of government leaders at present, exemplified in the recurrent frictions characterizing for-

foreign relations, a short-range prognosis on future events in the Middle East would not be overly favorable, were it not for one single redeeming factor—the global nature of international reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis. If any approximation of cross-cultural understanding may be achieved in the current situation, it will arise from a consensus in the United Nations on what constitutes an equitable solution to the problem, for such an agreement may be reached only through public articulation, consideration, negotiation, and resolution of culturally diverse positions on the issue at hand. To this extent, then, the United Nations Organization is a unique force in the world community: by virtue of its heterogeneous membership, it has been led to assume an unanticipated and much needed role in international relations, that of "cultural mediator," whose primary function is to interpret and reconcile the divergent world-views, assumptions and expectations of contending countries.

The expanded role of the United Nations, however, does not release individual countries from their respective responsibilities in the formulation of viable foreign policies. And for those occupying a privileged position among their peers, there is the added obligation of providing guidance for the needed changes in international relations. Such modifications should include a redefinition of *leadership*, a shift in world-view from a monolithic to a pluralistic outlook on world events, and more important still, the creation of a new framework for the determination of international policies consonant with the egalitarian conditions of an interdependent world. Most assuredly, these major changes in the traditional modus operandi of national governments are unlikely to be implemented overnight, even in the United States where the maintenance of a status quo in any human endeavor tends to be equated with fossilization.

In terms of long-range planning, education clearly offers the best opportunity to foster a measure of international sophistication among American citizens. At the university level, there is a need to initiate a comprehensive course of study, designed to develop within selected groups of individuals the cross-cultural skills and language-area expertise that will be required of professionals involved in overseas interactions, if they are to represent the nation's interests effectively in an international community of equals.

If one examines the state of Middle East studies from this premise, the "expanded" approach noted in the responses to the Rutgers University survey may be judged as a step in the right direction. Should this trend persevere, the continued diversification of such programs may be expected eventually to produce graduates endowed with "bicultural or multicultural literacy"—the ability to perceive and interpret foreign events from possibly divergent perspectives and to anticipate the alternative outcomes of policy decisions made in response to these events. Middle East experts empowered with such skills would be of priceless value to international relations, for they would become the cornerstones of the "new diplomacy" in the United States, one truly expressive of democratic ideals.

Instructional Methods and Resources in Middle East Studies

The most common methods of instruction associated with existing Middle East programs included class discussions, individual projects, lectures, collateral readings, and media presentations, in that order, at the undergraduate level; they centered on individual projects, collateral readings, lectures, class discussions, and seminars in the graduate divisions. These preferences for flexible classroom approaches (particularly in advanced studies), which are known to stimulate learner participation in the instructional process, were less evident in courses offered under related majors; there, lectures still prevailed, although some allowances were made by professors for the inclusion of occasional group discussions, collateral readings, and media presentations as an adjunct to teacher-directed presentations. Guest speakers, as a rule, were accorded a low ranking on the survey, a finding that may, perhaps, be ascribed to budgetary restrictions.

Somewhat less progressive tendencies were evidenced in the responses with respect to instructional resources, which placed textbooks unanimously at the head of the list, followed by more diversified options, such as journal articles, trade publications, and monographs.

Given the inflexible nature of time-honored scholarly tradition, the very fact that a variety of instructional strategies are apparently implemented at universities participating in the survey is encouraging, for it points to an awareness, on the part of faculty members,

of the need to expose their students to multiple viewpoints to prevent them from developing a monolithic conception of the Middle East, one that would serve only to reinforce their ethnocentrism and perpetuate their biased interpretation of U.S.—Middle East interactions.

CULTURAL INTERFERENCE IN INSTRUCTION

One of the major problems encountered by university instructors in courses on the Middle East was that of coping with those misperceptions and stereotypes that students bring to bear on the study of the subject matter, most of which are derived from their exposure to the distorted portrayal of foreign nations prevailing in the mass media. Both American and Middle Eastern individuals enrolled in the surveyed programs displayed similarly discriminatory tendencies toward each other's nations. An outline of some of the common misconceptions reported in the collected data follows. They are equally outrageous, regardless of their origin.

First, from the American viewpoint came the following misconceptions:

Misinformation about the Middle East

The Middle East is populated by Arabs and Jews.

All Arabs are Muslims; and Palestinians are a sort of tribe. All Israelis are Zionists and are of European stock; there are no Arabs in Israel.

The Middle East is anti-American.

The Middle East sees only the Arab side in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The United States is always right.

Stereotypes of the Middle East

All Arabs are devious, lascivious; they are terrorists and religious fanatics.

The Middle East is a backward, fabulously wealthy area, fraught with violence.

Arab men oppress women.

From the Middle Eastern viewpoint came the following misconceptions:

Misinformation about the United States

- The United States is a country without religion.
- The United States is controlled by Jews and by Zionist propaganda.
- All Americans have a strange family life.
- The United States has an incomprehensible political system.
- The United States is anti-Middle East.
- The United States sees only the Israeli side of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Stereotypes of the United States

- All Americans are naive and unfriendly; they are uninformed about international events and obsessed with sex; they are materialistic and have little spiritual life.
- The United States is a hostile country and treats the Middle East in an unfair manner; it is an imperialistic country.
- American men are controlled by women.

What is particularly striking about these misjudgments is the fact that they illustrate a well-known phenomenon in cross-cultural communication—the mirror-image effect noted by Bronfenbrenner in her study of U.S.-Soviet interactions.¹⁶ In this process, the mutually negative feelings of two societies toward each other are frequently complementary and parallel in nature. Thus, in the case at hand, both Middle Easterners and Americans hold reciprocal views that “the others” are permeated with violence, hostility, and sexual obsession, and that they treat the other nation in an unfair manner. What is significant is the fact that neither side perceives the irrationality and injustice of such summary judgments, nor do they consider the possibility of accepting part of the blame for their failure to interact positively and productively with each other.

The misconceptions and stereotypes listed in the questionnaire responses are particularly meaningful, for they reveal the depth of ignorance and confusion found among American and Middle Eastern students about their respective countries. This confirmation of cultural illiteracy on the part of individuals who belong to the intellectual elite of both societies, further substantiated the researchers' premise that had originally prompted the study—that the unsuccessful nature of U.S.-Middle East relations over the years could be traced to a combination of natural ethnocentrism and inadequacies in international education.

In all fairness, however, it should be pointed out that the world-views and ways of life found in the Eastern and Western parts of the world are so radically different and mutually incompatible that they can neither be mutually understood, nor easily accepted without assistance. As Fisher noted in his study of international negotiations, there is too much “noise” in cross-cultural encounters to permit an accurate exchange of information, for it interferes with a person's ability to see others as they really are.¹⁷

To explore this notion in the target area, the researchers included an item in the questionnaire seeking to identify specific concepts associated with Middle Eastern and American cultures that would be particularly difficult to understand from an alien frame of reference.

Those Middle Eastern concepts alien to American comprehension included the following:

General Concepts

- The mixture of religion and politics.
- The religious structure, and the pervasiveness of religion (Islam and others) in daily life.
- The legitimacy of martyrdom for religious and political beliefs.
- The antiimperialism and nationalism of the people.
- The Arab-Israeli problem.
- The goals of the Palestinians.
- The Middle Eastern resentment at being unable to rule without external interference.

Cultural Patterns

Individual roles in society (mediator, male-female).

Public modesty.

The stress on appearance at the expense of honesty.

The greater concern for good relations than for efficiency.

The ability to live with ambiguity.

The flexible concepts of time and space.

Those American concepts alien to Middle Eastern Comprehension included the following:

General Concepts

The separation of church and state.

The status of religion as a private matter.

U.S. foreign policies.

U.S. support of Israel.

The U.S. government's inability to understand where its interests lie.

The U.S. stress on democratic principles and procedures.

The unsophistication of Americans about the outside world.

Cultural Patterns

The openness of male-female relations.

The emphasis on pleasure and sex.

The stress on frankness at the expense of appearances.

The greater concern for efficiency than for good relations.

The rigid concepts of time and space.

The critical conceptual and cultural divergences that separate the Middle Eastern from the Western world are so antithetical that they resist reconciliation, and a mere imparting of accurate knowl-

edge through lectures and outside readings is unlikely to produce significant changes within those exposed to it. In recognition of this problem, human relations and cross-cultural training programs always include a practical component, designed to provide the trainees with an experience in culture shock survival under controlled conditions. Such an activity may consist of a simulation game, in which the learners interact with members of an "alien" society and, later on, examine the process they went through in terms of conflicts and alternative resolutions.

Although the survey respondents were fully aware of the difficulties encountered by their students in translating theoretical information into practice at the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor levels of behavior, none of them listed role playing activities as a means of actualizing for them the "worlds" of other societies. They did, however, offer several other recommendations to achieve this goal: exposure to international scholars, media presentations, sharing of personal experiences, and class discussions on aspects of life in a foreign land.

Although the suggested strategies may succeed in lessening the provincial outlook of individuals about foreign societies to some extent, nevertheless, it is doubtful that they would substantially reduce their innate prejudicial attitudes toward alien cultures, much less foster within them those skills of intercultural understanding that are essential to productive international relations. Under the circumstances, the products of such instruction could not, by any means, measure up to those rigorous standards of bicultural literacy that should be expected from bona fide Middle East specialists: the ability to analyze and interpret world events from a dual perspective; and to assist in the formulation of U.S. policies through the accurate prediction of Middle Eastern motives, expectations, actions, and reactions and, in so doing, to correct the flaw of Eurocentric bias noted by Dahlberg in existing theories of international relations.¹⁸

In retrospect, it seems clear that the results of the Rutgers survey do not only confirm those of previous studies cited in the present chapter, namely that the American people are generally lacking in international knowhow, particularly with respect to the Middle East; they also identify one major source of the problem—the inadequacy of Middle East studies in higher education. Quan-

tively, graduate and undergraduate programs and courses currently in place are not sufficient in number to ensure an appreciable dissemination of objective information to educate Americans. And, qualitatively, the nature of those courses of study is such that, despite unmistakable signs of dissatisfaction with the status quo on the part of faculty members and a receptiveness to explore alternative options, university programs must still be rated as primarily traditional and restricted to factual content unlikely to generate the nucleus of U.S. Middle Eastern culture "mediators" so desperately needed today in a world threatened by recurrent international crises.

MIDDLE EAST EDUCATION VERSUS GLOBAL EDUCATION

Although Middle East education is growing slowly, global education has grown rapidly of late.¹⁹ Many educational leaders feel that there is no other curriculum alternative in a twelve-hour world. Positive trends in the teaching of regional and international understandings are beginning to emerge and are being included in the American school curriculum at all levels of instruction. A number of educators and others are taking initiatives to counteract "international illiteracy" and "cultural diversity ignorance" long prevalent in our schools and society. They are calling for a more tolerant, inclusive, and realistic vision of American identity and non-Anglo-Saxon cultures than now exists. One important example of such initiatives is a report, "One Nation, Many Peoples: A Declaration of Cultural Independence," which was submitted to the New York state education commissioner in June 1991.²⁰

The report, according to an editorial in the *New York Times*, "offers a thoughtful approach to social studies, emphasizing analysis rather than rote learning."²¹ It repudiates the prevalent emphasis on Americanization and assimilation of non-Anglo-Saxon cultures; it equally rejects parcelling American history into incompatible histories of diverse ethnic groups. Rather, it attempts to give equal weight to the *pluribus* and *unum*. Thus, in a "key sentence," the report states that "Social studies should seek to make clear the common concerns, achievements and aspirations that are the source of national unity, but also the distinctive historical roles, traditions and contributions of the different peoples who

together have struggled to create the United States."²² The report underscores the "right to cultural diversity" and urges the reflection of "cultural interdependence" in the classroom. Teachers, it maintains, must learn to "struggle with contradictions" and students must be taught to develop concepts rather than master large and ever-increasing amounts of information. The report also provides guidelines for amending the teaching of history and social studies in the state's public schools for giving greater recognition to the role of nonwhite cultures in American society. It also sets to correct a variety of terms wrongly prevalent in books on world history and geography such as *Middle East* or *Far East*. It criticizes many history texts long used in the public schools as insensitive to minority cultures and recommends new approaches. In particular,

Columbus would not be proclaimed as the discoverer of America, but as a voyager to an already settled land. Schoolchildren would then debate among themselves his significance in the continent's history.

Thanksgiving would not be described simply as a joyous holiday. It would be presented as a day that some cultural groups have come to see as a cause for celebration but that other groups believe should be a day of mourning. Schoolchildren would be encouraged to discuss why this is so.

There would be no slaves in the antebellum South. Instead, there would be "enslaved persons," a distinction the panel described as critical to helping schoolchildren understand that slavery was a condition into which people were forced, not a chosen role like "gardener, cook or carpenter."

Its most controversial specifics call[s] for replacing such terms as Oriental with Asian, Middle East with Southwest Asia and North Africa, [Far East with East Asia], slaves with enslaved persons and minorities with "part of the world's majorities."²³

The report also calls for teaching students to see "race as a cultural phenomenon, not a physical description," eliminating the use of white male examples of achievement and updating the obsolete maps in U.S. schools. Most important, in a section that, according to *New York Times*, has already "generated considerable discussion," the report asserts that the existing instruction of the European colonialization of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, among other parts of the world, "inadequately addresses the great

loss of lives and the eradication of many varieties of traditional culture and knowledge." Authors of this chapter may invite attention to a similar tendency in the American media and official establishment who have emphasized the heroic victory over Iraq in the Persian Gulf War, while downplaying the great loss of Iraqi lives and colossal material and environmental damage inflicted on the region.

Although the New York report may become a turning point in multicultural studies in the United States and perhaps the world over, there has already been a steady increase in the number of area and cultural education projects being offered in social studies programs. Mandatory courses in world history and world cultures are being added to statewide high school curriculums across the nation.²⁴ New Jersey for example has recently required high schools to teach a third year of social studies, either *World History or Global Cultures*, to satisfy the need to broaden the education of students for life in the intercultural and interdependent twenty-first century. Also, at the college level, thematic courses in regional issues have been expanded in some instances. Well-supported specialized-curriculum centers for the advancement of learning about specific countries and regions have been established at a number of colleges and universities throughout the land. Most encouraging was the recognition of the need to focus national attention on geographic learning, which led to a resolution passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, setting aside November 15 to 21, as Geography Awareness Week. The government action was in response to the concern that America's young people lacked basic understanding about the world around them.

Indeed, in a place map test administered in 1988 to 11,000 people in nine nations, American and Soviet citizens revealed an astonishing lack of awareness of the world around them. In the survey of their geographic knowledge, the National Geographic Society found that younger people in the Soviet Union, between ages 18 and 24, did significantly better than their American counterparts. Young Americans scored in last place for geographical knowledge among the ten nations in which the test was given. In their ability to correctly locate sixteen places on a world map (one was the Persian Gulf) American adults ranked sixth among the ten

nations where the test was given, with 8.6 correct.²⁵ In examining attitudes on what subjects people considered important to be well educated, knowledge of geography was rated absolutely necessary by 52 percent of Russians, compared with 37 percent of Americans. Knowledge of history was rated necessary by 72 percent of Russians, compared with only 36 percent of Americans.²⁶

The highly respected National Geographic Society has embarked upon a major educational campaign to upgrade geographic teaching and the furtherance of global studies in U.S. schools.²⁷ That organization is undertaking the funding and sponsorship of summer institutes at universities for the purpose of enhancing the teaching of geography education in the United States. Similarly important educational projects have been sponsored and aired by public TV (Public Broadcasting Service). Many private foundations and educational institutions throughout the United States have also shown an increasing interest in geographic education and awareness programs.

Universities throughout the United States are also sponsoring summer institutes, many of which focus on global education, area studies, and social science disciplines. Princeton University, for example, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, presented a 1988 campus summer institute for elementary and high school teachers of social studies entitled, "The Islamic Historical Experience and Its Legacy in the Contemporary Near East." Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, held a similar summer institute in the summer of 1990, supported by a grant from the New Jersey State Department of Higher Education. University of California at Berkeley has been a leader in cross-cultural education programs in recent years. Other major universities such as Chicago, Harvard, and Columbia have also sponsored continuing education on the Middle East. The recent increase in university-conducted workshops and conferences focusing on international education, and timely regional issues, have also contributed much to the knowledge of world affairs for participants attending such meetings.

Despite the relatively recent trend in providing a wide scope of curricula offerings for global studies in the nation's schools and colleges, American students and citizens are considerably less informed about the world than their counterparts in other advanced

industrial nations. Unfortunately, vested interests on the part of a substantial number of faculties in school districts throughout the nation still tend to retain existing concentrations on Western civilization progress in their curriculum offerings. Teachers are inclined to teach what they know best and therefore the introduction of courses or extensive units on the Middle East, despite the acknowledgment of the region's growing economic and strategic importance, appear to lag in establishing content priorities. In addition, the present curriculum provides a full, if not demanding, complement of courses within the prescribed time for instruction. This necessitates making critical decisions about what to relinquish in the program, what to maintain, and what to add.

And, unfortunately, the region where the dearth of knowledge and misperceptions appear to be the most pronounced is coincidentally recognized as the world's most volatile flash point—the Middle East.²⁸ It is this region, more than any other, that requires much greater attention in our schools and colleges and where curriculum implications loom large. Where colleges and universities have heretofore established area studies departments, it is most regrettable that Middle East course offerings still tend to lag in amount and diversity at most institutions of secondary and higher education.

Yet, restructuring the existing Middle East curricula and introducing new Middle East studies programs are now easier than ever before despite many odds. One important facilitating factor is the increasing supply of teaching materials. In particular, in the 1980s an ample supply of instructional resources dealing with the Middle East became available for school use. The Educational Film Locator of the Consortium of University Film Centers listed 115 films with subjects or titles about the Middle East.²⁹ Moreover many videos and film strips have been produced focusing on Middle East topics. The three largest map companies in the United States have manufactured up-to-date 44" x 32" spring roller physical or physical-political wall maps of this very important area of the world. Each company also offers 8 1/2" x 14" desk activity maps of the region.

High school world culture textbooks now generally allocate an equal coverage of Middle East topics with other regions. *Global Insights*, the nation's leading textbook on peoples and cultures,

provides six comprehensive chapters on the Middle East. The treatment covers the environment and people, the mosaic of peoples, the way of life, religion and the state, conflicts, and the Middle East today.³⁰ The *Enchantment of the World* set of sixty-three books about cultures of the world, written for the middle school readers, is considered America's most popular series of books in its category. Six of the titles are about Middle Eastern nations.³¹

Thus, it can be established that a reasonable supply of curriculum materials relating to the Middle East is currently available for school adoption. Regrettably, however, the underlying dilemma for those educators who realize how significant and meaningful the study of the Middle East would be for their students lies in the limitation of time. At the school level, legislatively mandated studies often preclude preempting required courses of long standing. Existing programs that are more familiar to teachers more often than not take precedence over the introduction of new courses or subjects, as vital as they may be. Educational changes, especially in regard to curriculum matters develop slowly. No matter what the urgency, the status quo tends to remain a bedrock force.

Global education and world culture courses are indeed beginning to take on greater emphasis in the social studies curriculum of U.S. schools. This is often manifested by the deemphasis of Western civilization-centered studies. The evolutionary pace for this essential revision must be accelerated. Present-day ignorance and misconceptions held by the young Americans about the Middle East in particular need to be remedied and focused on, and facts constructively taught. Events that will take place there in the years ahead, along with the history and geography of the region, may play a tremendous role in shaping their personal lives, as well as that of all citizens of the world in the twenty-first century.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENRICHING MIDDLE EAST EDUCATION

On the basis of the findings derived from the Rutgers survey and other studies, we support the approach offered by the New York report and offer the following additional recommendations as guidelines for upgrading, revising, and constructing a Middle East curriculum. This should lead to the development of an enriched

and diversified Middle East program, designed to meet the needs of the United States on the eve of a new century. It must be noted that the following recommendations are made for both secondary and higher education; each level, however, has its own particular requirements, and educators designing Middle East curricula should consider the specificities of each case and level of education:

1. An immediate expansion of programs and courses, paralleled by a systematic recruitment of students here and abroad.
2. The inclusion of "immersion" experiences: study abroad for undergraduate students, and exchange internships for graduate students at Middle East universities of comparable status and reputation.
3. A methodical review of existing courses of study to encompass such diversified offerings as Cultural Anthropology, Language-Area Study, Cross-Cultural Communication, and at least one Middle Eastern language taught in its appropriate cultural context.
4. A partnership between Schools of Education and Middle East programs to reach the public schools through a systematic enlightenment of their teachers about international relations in general and the Middle East in particular.
5. A diversification of instructional strategies, to provide students with experiential activities as well as theoretical knowledge about Middle East policies and international relations. Of timely value in this endeavor would be an updated version of a simulation game designed by Travis in 1975 to "teach students about the Middle East Conflict."³² Equally useful would be an interactive pedagogy proposed by Hooshang Amirahmadi and the Bafá Bafá game, a role-playing activity involving students in interlingual-intercultural interactions.³³
6. An understanding of the physical geography of the region and how it affects the geopolitical situation as well as life-styles of the people and their daily living.
7. An identification and characterization of the various ethnic groups that populate the area and their intergroup or international relationships.

8. Understanding the role of the family and social customs and how changes are altering traditional ways, especially amongst the young.
9. Knowledge of the three principal religions of the Middle East and their importance in shaping events there, past and present.
10. Study of the history of colonialism, nationalism, religious factionalism, and territorial disputes that have resulted in years of conflict and strife.
11. A description of contemporary issues in the Middle East today and the efforts of the people there, along with outside forces, to address problems relating to security, autonomy, sovereignty, and land disputes.
12. An appreciation of how the Middle East has played an important role in world civilization throughout much of history and how the region's past has shaped the present.
13. An awareness of the Middle East and its significance to world peace in the immediate future.
14. A knowledge of the factors that have led to the conditions contributing to the millions of dispossessed and alienated peoples in the area.
15. A knowledge of disparities in the region between the "have" nations and the "have not" nations, as well as the wide differences in resources and distribution of wealth amongst the inhabitants of the region.
16. Understanding of the need to hire contract labor from abroad to perform work in countries that are underpopulated, underdeveloped, or where native residents are disinclined to perform certain laborious tasks.
17. An appreciation of the cultural disparities, nationalism, ancient animosities, and territorial rivalries between factions in the area.
18. The need to stress the merit of peoples and nations settling disputes through direct dialogue, communication, and compromise rather than through acts of violence, terrorism, and war.

19. The realization that there is a common thread of universality among all peoples and that diversity and shared responsibility are positive elements in fostering constructive international relations.

A number of general and interdisciplinary strands also need to be woven into the fabric of the Middle East curriculum. They include these recommendations, emphases, and the following forewarning. It is imperative that course content take into account the cultural bias portrayed in the media and reflected by many U.S. citizens against those having Arab or Islamic backgrounds. The stereotypic information about the peoples and cultures of the Middle East needs to be undone. More valid and positive perceptions need to be taught. And, teachers need to be more prudent and selective in their textbook adoptions and reading lists, making sure that there are no glaring omissions in the fair treatment of Middle East issues. They also need to be certain that problems and controversial issues about the region show opposing viewpoints, objectivity, and evenhandedness. The information presented should not be based on false assumptions. Moreover, it is essential that a much wider array of courses concerned with the Middle East, both survey and in-depth, be afforded the students for their general studies requirements.

Curriculum emphasis on Middle East studies needs to include much greater utilization of maps that lead to valid geographic understandings. Even the physical dimensions of the term *Middle East* is often unclear. Geographers, foreign policy makers, media people, students, and many others have been consistently confused by the vague interpretations of its boundaries. The relationship of site and situation to geopolitics must be explored as well.

The Middle East may connote one set of parameters for religious or culture patterns of settlement, another for economic aspects, and a third criterion set by political division. The map of the Middle East provides enriching opportunities for the study of the area's etymology, which can often assist in comprehending historical origins. And a thorough examination of a physical-political map of the Middle East may also aid in explaining underlying causes for events of the past, as well as reasons for current conflicts based on the theory of "geographic determinism." The

instructor must be alert and critically selective when resorting to published graphics and maps of the Middle East. Some may show a distorted projection or indicate subjective or questionable data collected to support a vested interest or special viewpoint, thus misrepresenting validity.

The Middle East curriculum needs to clarify the concept that the physical resources of the region that are so greatly coveted by foreign nations, especially oil and minerals, are not necessarily the resources most valued by the people of the region. Water actually exceeds oil in terms of local importance because its scarcity restricts the growth of Middle East economies. Both agricultural and industrial pursuits depend on its availability, and the inhabitants most often rely on it for survival. This phenomena has usually been overlooked as an important factor in teaching about political unrest in the region. Competition over water rights—which may often result in life-or-death struggles—has been a continuing factor in the area's instability since biblical times.

Teachers should underscore how a succession of powerful foreign forces have craved Middle East resources for centuries. The former USSR's quest for warm water ports to her south, Britain and France's interest in controlling the trade of the eastern Mediterranean, and the existing goal of the United States to maintain access to Persian Gulf oil have frequently clashed with regional and national interests. Middle East countries have often been helpless to prevent their past dominance, exploitation and invasions.

The curriculum essentials of the Middle East need to focus on the common people of the region and their internal and domestic concerns and events, such as injustices, power struggles, population pressures, and other pertinent, perennial aspects of life there. Examples of realistic cases and situations may be highlighted by inviting materials, speakers, and other knowledgeable resource persons to the classroom to share their experiences with students. By using short stories, videotapes of news reports, primary source documentary films, and translations from newspaper and periodical articles a more visual, realistic and current picture of events in the Middle East can be achieved.

Information about Middle East religions and customs must be taught from a neutral stance, and differences must be coupled with emphasis on similarities to the students' own religious heritages.

There should never be subtle or overt indoctrination. The teacher must be certain that religious vocabulary and theological teachings are accurately translated, or even deliberately omitted, to avoid misinterpretations and misconceptions. Teachers and students must also be careful not to equate traditional Moslem, Christian, and Judaic religious beliefs and values with the militant practices of some Middle East groups. It must be emphasized that most inhabitants of the region do not advocate lawlessness, martyrdom, hostage taking, terrorism, *jihad*, the establishment of clandestine brigades, or fundamentalism.

Both micro and macro approaches to the Middle East need to include topical coverage about its economic importance, yesterday and today. As a focal center of three continents its significance to African, Asian, and European trade should not be minimized. Its raw materials and resources are strategic worldwide. Global positions on foreign policy, diplomacy, geopolitical strategies, international relations, and most important, military planning must take the most recent economic statistics of the region into its analyses and projections. Accounts of gross national production figures, trade relationships, per capita incomes, living standards, technological advancements, and employment status are all indicators of the economic and political climates found in the region, often identifying which regimes may be stable or unstable—and to what degree there will be nationalization, socialism, capitalism, or even communist inroads manifesting themselves within the country. Many of the aforementioned factors are curriculum imperatives.

In teaching the Middle East one must stay abreast of all fast-moving political changes taking place. Zionism and communism have made their presence felt there in the twentieth century. So has religious fundamentalism and Arabism as personified by past and present aggressive would-be leaders attempting to dominate Middle Eastern nations through their political and military actions. Soviet and American rivalries with their selective arms sales, political pressures, and economic interests in supporting various states and factions in the region are as keen as ever. The vital interests of the Third World alignments must be treated as well. The issue of petroleum exports and acute socioeconomic disparities have been and remain a major factor in the stabilization and destabilization of the region. The perplexing problems of Lebanon, religious strug-

gles, the quest for ethnic and cultural self-determination, the claims of the Kurds, the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab-Israeli confrontations, and various revolutionary threats deserve periodic reviews. Special attention needs to be directed toward the cause and effect of the Iraq-Kuwait Conflict of 1990 and the subsequent United States-led war against Iraq. The real possibility of a coup d'état or a rapid change in a regime could be imminent almost anywhere in the region at any time.

The age-old history of colonialism, the independence movements, the past centuries of foreign imperialistic rule, religious warfare, expansionism, and the role of the United Nations in the region all need to be listed as topical curriculum guidelines worthy of inclusion in the syllabus. Curriculum implications need to go beyond the study of major problems, and issues. Subtopics such as cultural contributions of Islamic civilization, the kibbutz movement, education, Arabic language and literature, holy places, biographies, religious practices and customs, Muslim women, and village life are but a few of the many interesting subjects that may be treated in depth during a Middle East course. They may be investigated and learned through special lectures, films, assigned readings, research studies, case studies, and the use of an array of oral history procedures with people having direct experience or expertise in the area.

In sum, to achieve a more emphatic understanding of the Middle East it is imperative that the curriculum of the area include the following seven teaching components. Students should (1) understand the basic political, physical and economic geography of the region; (2) become familiar with the correct meaning, pronunciation and spelling of Middle East terms, places, and names; (3) understand the general, if not specific, time chronology of the sequence of Middle East events during past and recent historical periods; (4) study and have an appreciation of the Middle East's predominant religions (Judaism, Eastern Christianity, and Islam) and their roles in shaping modern institutions there and elsewhere; (5) endeavor to be objective and maintain a balanced nonjudgmental, critical attitude about the many emotional and controversial issues in the region; (6) dismiss media-generated stereotypes and exaggerated hype and misconceptions that are often invalid or negative about Middle East people and their customs and charac-

teristics; and (7) be aware of the Middle East's major importance in world affairs and geopolitical relationships.

There needs to be much more critical thinking and problem solving about Middle Eastern issues: the traditions, political behaviors, conflicts, ideologies, economics, tensions, and foreign policy. Understanding would best be served if the curriculum writers and teachers were to put more instructional attention on the underlying causes and effects that go to shape regional matters there. And major inquiries directed toward the "why" rather than the "what" need to be specified within the course guide.

The Middle East curriculum should certainly allow enough pliability and latitude for the instructors and students to introduce for class consideration and evaluation any serious and well thought-out proposal, theory, or hypothesis, no matter how provocative or unique it may appear. The Middle East region is much too strategic and explosive to discount or disregard any possible solution to the seemingly insurmountable age-old problems existing there.

Finally, at the high school level, one possible way for Middle East education to make incursion into the tightly insulated, if not saturated, social studies programs is for the teacher to construct mini-seminar units based on Middle Eastern themes. They can readily evolve around a timely current event or contemporary affair. Here the very effective present to past principle of teaching can be utilized.

These suggestions are not simply the product of interdisciplinary speculations based on data collection, analysis, and interpretation; they also represent a workable plan of action now being enacted at the Middle Eastern Studies Program at Rutgers University. Its implementation has included a variety of activities, such as conferences and seminars on the Middle East, the involvement of Rutgers University professors in widely different subject fields to design and field test instructional modules on aspects of the Middle East as integral components of selected course syllabi, and the introduction of new courses in the target area. Faculty and student responses to these innovations have been, so far, most favorable, as have been the assessments of outside specialists brought in to evaluate program activities and products.

As matters stand now in the real world outside the sheltered

confines of academe, the global involvement of countries in the search for a solution to Middle East crises has clearly placed university programs relevant to this area on the cutting edge of international education. It is, therefore, imperative that institutions of higher education in the United States initiate the revisions tentatively identified by their respective faculties to develop the needed goal of skilled specialists in that field. Simultaneously, a redirection of scholarly attention is needed away from the compartmentalized, classical approach to research of yesteryear, toward a collaborative, interdisciplinary exploration of worldwide issues that threaten peace and human survival. It is only through such innovations that the quality of academic knowledge imparted on the Middle East will achieve the ideal envisioned by Banks—the creation of a society, endowed with a multinational perspective on world affairs, whose leaders understand the intricacies of "foreign" minds and have the vision to formulate policies ultimately beneficial to all humankind.³⁴

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