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Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945

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plausible—we must first understand the primary causes. For example, what makes a man or a woman reject non-violent means and eschew conventional morality, and turn to terrorism? Such questions must be answered; perhaps Liston will calm down a bit and try to do so in a second book on terrorism.

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Louis, William Roger. *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 594pp.

Perhaps the most enduring legacy bequeathed to posterity by the Second World War was the opportunity for nonwhite colonial peoples to secure their independence. In this impressively researched and solidly documented volume, Professor Louis provides a detailed account and a substantive analysis of the thinking, planning, considerations, negotiations, and circumstances that preceded the dismemberment of the British Empire. As the title indicates, the focus is on U.S.-British relations and the future of British possessions and mandates, although related questions of holdings by other nations, both allies and enemies, are dealt with in the overall context.

Trouble over these issues began with the joint statement by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill of 14 August 1941, the highly publicized Atlantic Charter, which affirmed "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live," and expressed the "wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." The provisions of this Charter were included in the U.N. Declaration of 1 January 1942, signed by 26 nations, and on 23 February 1942

President Roosevelt stated that the principle of self-determination was applicable "to the whole world." Yet on 9 September 1941 Churchill told the House of Commons that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to "India, Burma, and other parts of the British Empire," and on 10 November 1942 he asserted, "We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." These diametrically opposed positions taken by the leaders of the Western Allies did not disrupt the joint effort in prosecuting the war against the Axis Powers but they did provide a divisive issue in war aims and postwar settlements and created dissension in branches of the two governments. By untangling and explaining the diverse approaches taken by planners in the United States and Great Britain, the exchanges between representatives of both nations, and the eventual agreement, Louis makes his greatest contribution.

In Washington, the State Department under Secretary Cordell Hull and Under Secretary Sumner Welles worked to implement the ideas of Roosevelt in regard to trusteeship, i.e., the international supervision of colonies with accountability to the United Nations, self-government, and the objective of independence. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War and Navy Departments strove to carry out the President's concern for security in the Pacific, which required U.S. control of islands for bases and fortifications. Thus the State Department and the military were each pursuing ends that simply were not compatible.

In London a similar but not identical situation prevailed. The Foreign Office was more inclined to a compromise with the American position, while the Colonial Office was adamantly opposed to any tampering with the Empire or Commonwealth system. Australia and New Zealand were additional thorns in

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the side of the Colonial Office, for they endorsed the concepts of international supervision of colonies and accountability. Of great moment were the future of islands in the Southwest Pacific and the role the United States would play in providing security. One of the few issues on which all of the British authorities agreed, from Churchill on down, was that the American idea of "trusteeship" was merely a cover for American imperialism. The British statesmen were perfectly willing to allow the United States to take over Japanese islands, mandated or otherwise, but resented interference with portions of the Empire and Commonwealth that, among other things, would allow freer trade and the intrusion of American products. What struck the British as hypocrisy, or a double standard, was American insistence that no U.S. overseas possessions or any part of the Western Hemisphere could be included in the trusteeship system.

The intricate and tortuous course of deliberations among the departments and committees in both nations are analyzed at great length by Louis, and the factors tending toward compromise were revealed by the controversies that took place within each government. Roosevelt began to weaken somewhat before his death, especially on Indochina, but he held steadfast to his concept of trusteeship as a step toward the specified goal of independence. Harry Truman had no such commitment, and he accepted the advice of those who felt that cordial relations with England and France were more important than Roosevelt's belief that perpetuation of the colonial system would exacerbate international rivalry and provoke another war. The issue was resolved at San Francisco when pertinent provisions of the U.N. Charter were formulated and a face-saving formula was devised that completely satisfied few if any of the participants. Britain kept her colonies and mandates

with stipulations for self-government and accountability, France retained her possessions, and what amounted to lip service was paid to "independence."

Louis does not indulge in moralizing, but he is not sparing in his judgments of the protagonists or the issues. On the basic conflict, he does fault the United States. "The Americans had raised expectations that they might unfurl an anti-imperial banner," he concludes, but "When it came to the test, the United States sided with the colonial powers." In Britain, the avowedly anti-imperialist Labour Party on gaining power found Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin no more intent on breaking up the Empire and Commonwealth than were their Tory predecessors. Still, there was an acknowledgment in London as in Washington that conditions had changed, although few realized that the proliferation of sovereign states would occur as quickly and as drastically as it did.

This is a book not just to be read but to be chewed and digested. The writing style is clear and straightforward, although there are numerous quotations from speeches and writings of the various officials. Some readers may be distracted by the thorough detail in recounting the discussions in different echelons of the administrative hierarchy as the formulation of policy and the complexities of the decisionmaking process are revealed. The organization makes for some duplication, for Louis opens with a lengthy section on "Introductory and Parallel Themes," which provides something of an overview, then proceeds in a chronological manner through the deliberations in each country and between representatives. Also, except for Korea, little attention is given to the aspirations of the peoples whose fate was being determined with little or no consultation. These caveats, of course, are peripheral to the author's major theme, which illuminates the background of an upheaval that has

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significantly altered the world power structure. In sum, this work constitutes a landmark in the writing of diplomatic history.

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Mack, John E. *A Prince of Our Disorder, The Life of T.E. Lawrence*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1976. 561pp.

Patai, Raphael. *The Arab Mind*. New York: Scribner, 1976. 376pp.

Considering the increasing importance that the Arabs with their expanding postoil-embargo wealth likely are to assume, it is disquieting that we in the Western World seemingly have little knowledge about their ancient culture. There seem to be few current general works about the Arabs but there are two rather recent efforts that can provide some meaningful insights.

The first, *A Prince of Our Disorder*, is the product of a practicing psychiatrist and medical school professor. John Mack focuses on the life of a much publicized, but often esoteric, Arabist, T.E. Lawrence, probably more commonly known as Lawrence of Arabia. By examining the multifaceted personality of this unique Englishman, the author skillfully guides the reader through the mysterious mental maze in which the perplexed Lawrence struggled throughout much of his life. From Mack's probe of "El Auren" (as admiring, if not worshipping, Arabs called Lawrence) we can glean useful insights into Arabic culture.

Lawrence, a driven man, wore many hats in life. He was a tormented bastard. He toiled as a student in Jesus College at Oxford University. Shortly thereafter, he began his intense relationship with the Arabs as an archeologist traveling, often alone, throughout most of the Middle East. He later served as an unofficial diplomat and military leader at the apex of his notoriety in the

region where East meets West. During his descent as a public figure, he was a publicity-eschewing recluse who changed his name and served as an enlisted man in the Royal Air Force. Between the extremes of his life, Lawrence was a prolific, if not always profound, writer. His book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, reveals many discerning observations of Arabic culture.

Via some of Lawrence's experiences, Mack leads us through a period in Middle Eastern history that often directly relates to many of the present conflicts in that cradle of civilization. To those interested in learning more about the Arabic psyche, three chapters—"The Background of the Arab Revolt," "Arab Self-Determination and Arab Unity" as well as "Lawrence and Churchill: The Political Settlements in the Middle East"—are particularly helpful.

Mack's book is an excellent appetizer for those who desire more substantive information about the Arabic peoples.

In contrast to looking at the Arabic culture obliquely via Mack's study of Lawrence, the reader of Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind* will be focusing directly on Arabic consciousness. Patai is a highly regarded anthropologist who has lived in the Middle East and spent a lifetime studying the area and its peoples. He examines the entire gamut of this crossroads civilization. The arts, languages, religions, mores and other Arabic attributes are explored. Not surprisingly, there is much attention to and discussion of the Bedouin and Islamic influences.

For those who are hopeful of a meaningful move toward a sustainable peace in the Middle East, a patient perusal of the section entitled *The Psychology of Westernization* can be quite worthwhile. Within that section there are two headings, "Egypt—A Case History" and "The Hatred of the West," that are ruefully revealing. This cultural background is essential to an under-