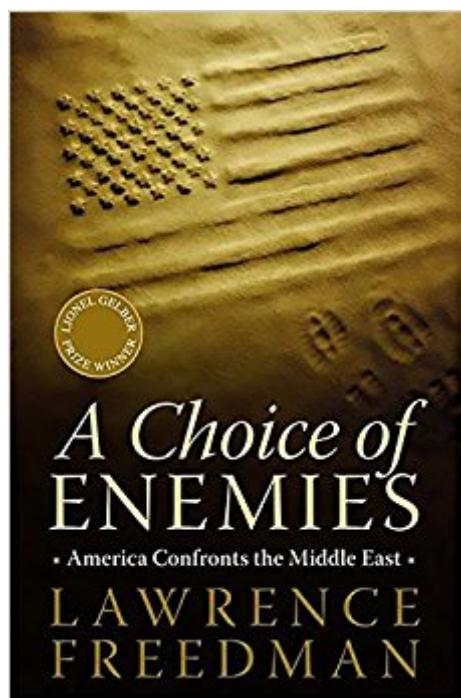


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# A Choice Of Enemies: America Confronts The Middle East



## Synopsis

It is in the Middle East that the U.S. has been made to confront its attitudes on the use of force, the role of allies, and international law. The history of the U.S. in the Middle East, then, becomes an especially revealing mirror on America's view of its role in the wider world. In this wise, objective, and illuminating history, Lawrence Freedman shows how three key events in 1978-1979 helped establish the foundations for U.S. involvement in the Middle East that would last for thirty years, without offering any straightforward or bloodless exit options: the Camp David summit leading to the Israel-Egypt Treaty; the Iranian Islamic revolution leading to the Shah's departure followed by the hostage crisis; and the socialist revolution in Afghanistan, resulting in the doomed Soviet intervention. Drawing on his considerable expertise, Freedman makes clear how America's strategic choices in those and subsequent crises led us to where we are today.

## Book Information

Paperback: 640 pages

Publisher: PublicAffairs; Reprint edition (July 14, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1586487019

ISBN-13: 978-1586487010

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #53,082 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > History > Middle East > Iran #11 in Books > History > Middle East > Iraq #47 in Books > History > Military > Iraq War

## Customer Reviews

Foreign Affairs, July, August œProvocative new book. •Economist, July, 24, 2008 œSir Lawrenceâ™s subtle narrative is a marvel of concision, even over more than 500 pages. By the end it cannot but make the reader wonder how realistic it is to advocateâ† an œintegrated grand strategyâ† capable of being sustained for decades in such a violent and unpredictable part of the world.â† Å Survival: Journal of the International Institute of Strategic Studies œMagestrialâ† [Freedman] is decidedly level-headed, undogmatic, widely informed about things outside his discipline, and alive to the ways in which governments actually workâ† Freedman

is a great archival historian in part because his grasp of the way decision-makers and bureaucracies interact with each other, their domestic political environment and the wider world enables him to read the fragmentary and self-serving sources more astutely than most scholars. He is also a writer who prefers to work in a jargon-free zone. *A Choice of Enemies* displays all these virtues.â • --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sir Lawrence Freedman is professor of war studies at King's College, London. In 2001 he was appointed head of the School of Social Sciences and Public Policy at King's and then in 2003 vice principal for research. Before joining King's he held research appointments at Nuffield College, Oxford, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs. He is the author of several books of history, including *Kennedy's Wars*. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Amazing ride through the last few decades of Middle East Policy. Very even handed and fair through every administration.

This book is a history of how the U.S. formulated and executed Middle Eastern Policy over a thirty year period from the Presidency of Jimmy Carter (1978-1982) through that of George W Bush (2000-2008). It also provides a useful, but concise summary of U.S - Middle East relations from the end of WWII to 1978. Essentially it provides an analysis not only of each presidential administration's Middle East Policy, but provides a description of how the policy formation process of each administration actually worked. Not surprisingly it was different for each president. As the book makes clear, the U.S. has held two remarkably consistent strategic goals for this entire period: the security of the State of Israel; and the security of Middle Eastern oil production. Yet in a volatile region like the Middle East events well beyond U.S. control often erupt to disrupt the most carefully planned policy implementations. Freedman recounts for example how President Carter's tenure was defined by the Iranian Revolution and its subsequent hostage crises, even though Carter really wanted to be remembered for establishing peaceful and enduring relationship between the Israelis and Palestinians. Often the success or failure of U.S. policy in the region was a function of being able to cope with unexpected events or unintended consequences that suddenly threatened one or both of the strategic goals. Reading this book one is struck by how dicey even the best formulated policies are for this region. Of course Freedman devotes a good deal of attention to the current administration and its involvement in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) and Iraq/Iran. He attempts to trace

the thought processes that gradually coalesced into what was known as Operation Iraqi Freedom and its aftermath. In doing so he identifies the emergence of the doctrine of preventive war and concept of a Global War on Terror. He then tries to provide a balanced summary of U.S. operations in Iraq up to the current partially successful surge that has brought a measure of stability to that unhappy country. In the end he suggests that the U.S. might be well advised to adopt a Middle East Policy similar to that suggested by Ken Pollock in his latest book, "A Path Out of the Desert", which the book reviewer of the UK Magazine, "The Economist" suggested should be read together with the Freedman book. Both by most standards are pretty good books.

Mr Freedman explains in, sometimes excruciating details, the events and actors from the 90's leading to the current quagmire in the Middle East. Israel and Palestine are not the main topics, except for the botched attempt to root out Hezbollah in Lebanon. Rightly so because it is the main excuse used by the regimes and the citizens not to tackle more deeply rooted causes of the region descending into mayhem. The author also stresses the need for America to engage into informal dialogues with Iran, akin to the diplomacy going on behind closed doors during the Cold War with the Soviet Union, in order to build up contacts and conduits in case of disaster. If things can go wrong they will go wrong, and the situation is never that bad that it suddenly can't take a turn for the worse. He also makes clear that America works with different timelines than the countries in the region, with electoral campaigns, regular changes of presidents and majorities in government. The Obama administration lost several years dealing with the economic crisis. In the Middle East changes are slow and rotation of political parties usually irregular but violent. US presidents, congress and the general public have very short attention spans, and the thought of leaving the wretched region sorts itself out is strong. It needs to be resisted. The USA is in danger of adopting the ways of the Middle East instead of the other way around. The concluding chapter in just a few pages, sums up in limpid arguments, where the US policies have gone wrong and what should be done. Maybe the experiences of Japan and Germany nation building exercises don't apply as the civil societies are not strong in most of the countries engaged in conflicts with the Western world at large and the US in particular, but there is no other game in town.

Thank you

This book by English professor Lawrence Freedman provides an overview of US policies in the Middle East from the administration of Jimmy Carter through G. W. Bush. The book hits all the key

countries with chapters built around key events such as the Iran-Contra scandal, the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, the first and second intifada in Palestine, and the 9/11 attacks. For each topic, the author explains how events unfolded and how this affected US relations with countries and citizens in the Middle East. The author cites many of the important books already published on the topic, and gives lip service to most of the viewpoints and theories around each event. The latter includes citing the October Surprise element of the Iran hostage crisis, and the influence of Zionists within the US government. The book does a decent job of citing the key political players in each country, from officials such as prime ministers, generals, and presidents, to private figures with large influence such as religious leaders in Iran, key Iraqi defectors, neoconservative movers and shakers in the US, and terrorist leaders in the Arabian peninsula. The book also should be applauded for acknowledging and exploring the government-sanctioned arms trade between the US and Israel on one side, and Iran and Iraq on the other side. However, for all its depth and breadth, the book mostly sanctions the official versions presented in the mass media. This means that the role of oil corporations in pushing the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is minimized. Likewise the Israeli influence in US policy-making is limited solely through the lens of Cold War politics and the Jewish lobby in key US states, with minimal mention of the large economic relations between the US and Israel via major corporations both inside and outside the military-industrial complex of both countries. And of course with respect to 9-11, this book essentially follows the version of events put forth by the 9-11 Commission. So overall, a good but not a ground-breaking or controversial book.

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