

Winter 1993

Pentagon correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, Cooley is aware of the range of foreign policy tools at the disposal of the US. As a former Middle East correspondent, he is also aware of the environment in which those tools must be employed. The work is spiced with many personal stories which generally improve the quality of the presentation.

A minor problem with *Payback* is that the writing style tends to drift into the overly dramatic upon occasion, using phrases such as “drawn daggers” and words such as “wimps.” Khomeini is portrayed as absorbed with malicious glee over the deaths of Americans, and the now disgraced brother of Syrian President Assad is portrayed at one point as earning “brownie points” with the US. Perhaps Cooley wishes to emphasize that this is to be a popular book as well as a professional one, and many of his observations are worthy of consideration by a wider audience.

Nevertheless, while Cooley has a number of tactical recommendations as to how the US could have protected its interests, it is not clear that he has presented an alternative set of foreign policy principles. The US clearly should have gathered better intelligence, built better embassy fences, and not launched bombing raids when the sun would be in the pilot’s eyes. On a higher level all serious US observers agree that greater efforts should have been made to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear and chemical weapons. Yet, should the US have refrained from helping Iraq on other levels when Iran was sending what Cooley calls the “wind of hate” across the Middle East? Should the United States have deemphasized its ties with Israel or Saudi Arabia because of shortcomings Cooley points out. These hard questions do not seem to be answered in a clear or consistent way and at times one is not sure whether Cooley has implied an answer or not.

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Rezun, Miron. *Intrigue and War in Southwest Asia: The Struggle for Supremacy from Central Asia to Iraq*. New York: Praeger, 1992.

Books on Southwest Asia, more so than studies on the Middle East, pursue the themes of intrigue, conspiracies, and the “Great Game.” Miron Rezun’s book is no exception to this rule. Since it was written at a time when *Perestroika*- and *Glasnost*-related events were heightening the omnipresent fissiparous tendencies in the Central Asian region of the USSR, the author seemed to have decided to include two chapters on the Central Asian political movements — one on Basmachism/Turanism and the other on the issue of rising Islamic consciousness. The latter movement is handled in a peripheral manner, however. The remaining main chapters (excluding introduction and epilogue) deal with Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq.

While I write a review of this book — at a time when there is no more Soviet Union, when the Central Asian republics are independent, and when the Afghan quagmire as we have known it has entered history — I find myself asking how relevant Rezun's analysis is for our comprehension of the present realities in Southwest Asia and for our extrapolation of the future. The political upheavals that have taken place in Southwest Asia and the Soviet Union in the past few years would make all analyses dated. However, in the strategic sense, one must look for linkages between the turbulent past and the fluid present, in order to make intelligent judgments about the future.

Extrapolating from Rezun's analysis, it can be safely stated that Southwest Asia is destined to experience more turbulence involving the actors that are covered in this book. Iran is likely to pursue its leadership role of the region, a role to which its rulers have aspired over centuries. The extreme manifestation of this role might emerge in the Iranian surge to become a hegemonic power. However, given the pragmatic character of the Rafsanjani government, Iran appears to have opted for a more benign course of action in the 1990s. Gone are the days, i.e. the 1980s, when the Peninsular sheikdoms were wary of the potential exportability of the Iranian revolution. The focus of Iranian activities in the Persian Gulf and North Africa appears to be a promotion of Pan-Islamism, and not necessarily the firebrand version of revolutionary Islamism that was so ardently emphasized during the day of Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini.

Iraq, though no longer a major military power in the aftermath of its defeat in 1991, remains an important political actor. No one — not even Iran or the US — wants to see the disintegration of Iraq. Its eventual emergence as a major military actor would take a long time, however. A militarily strong Iraq is not likely to have Saddam Hussein at its helm.

The Central Asian republics continue to remain enigmatic entities. Even though they are currently a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), it is hard to predict as to where their growing Islamic consciousness would lead them. In this sense, Rezun's chapter on Azerbaijan is more relevant to the future course of events than the one on "Basmachism."

From a strategic perspective, this book presents an interesting, though not a terribly original, perspective: "that there are underlying realities, hidden agendas, and hidden ambitions that escape us when we undertake the study of conflict [in Southwest Asia]." (p. 131) The best-written chapter — though most dated of all the chapters in this book because of the collapse of the Najibullah's regime — is the one on Afghanistan. It provides a number of statements and explanations that go to the heart of the "Great Game"-related thesis presented by the author. However, on Iran and Iraq, Rezun's analysis is a rehash of a number of already-published studies. This book also badly needs a futuristic perspective in the concluding chapter.

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