“many of the region’s” problems predated the Cold War and in many cases survived it” (p. xix). The Balkan region remains notoriously averse to cooperation and still comes across as surprisingly quarrelsome, given that all of its countries are at this point either members of the European Union or striving to get there. However, in that process the burden of this region’s past is manifesting in ways that are difficult to understand outside historical perspective. With Slovenia and Croatia vigorously disputing a small stretch of maritime boundary, Bosnia struggling to maintain its unity, Serbia not recognizing Kosovo, Greece challenging the very name of its Macedonian neighbors, and Hungary building a fence on its southern border, there is little doubt that this volume presents a relevant and useful read not only for historians of the Cold War but also for all those engaged and interested in contemporary European integration of the Balkans.


Reviewed by Artemy Kalinovsky, University of Amsterdam

Ever since historians turned their attention to U.S.-sponsored modernization programs, one of their most persistent criticisms has been that intellectuals and policymakers extrapolated from Western European and U.S. experience and applied their findings wherever U.S. foreign policy led. The persistent failures of modernization programs could thus be explained in part by the confrontation between neat models proposed in Ivy League universities and government departments and the much more diverse and complicated reality on the ground. Nathan Citino’s marvelous new book, *Envisioning the Arab Future: Modernization in U.S.-Arab Relations, 1945–1957*, complicates this narrative. Drawing on an impressive array of sources in Arabic and English, Citino argues that Middle Eastern intellectuals were themselves active agents in defining and implementing modernization. He further undermines the one-directional model by showing how the ideas of some of these intellectuals reverberated back in the United States.

As Citino shows, Arab elites traveled the world looking for ideas to transform their own societies. Although these elites had always been mobile, Citino notes, “the speed of post-1945 travel . . . offered Arabs a range of experiences that included opportunities to assess the competing Western development models of capitalism and communism” (p. 20). Both the United States and the Soviet Union were popular destinations. Rarely did the travelers return with an uncritical view of the country they visited. Most famously, the Egyptian intellectual Said Qutb articulated a moral critique of the United States and the Cold War and laid out a vision for a third way guided by Islam. At the same time, many of these elites subscribed to the idea of “modernization as linear, structural change pursued according to a developmental
‘system’” (pp. 45–46). But the possibilities afforded by new modes of travel shrank the gap between what these elites saw as their present state and possible alternative futures.

U.S. modernization theorists, policymakers, and oil executives, meanwhile, relied on local intermediaries and historiography to write the United States into visions of the future for the region. U.S. historians and social scientists derived their understanding of tradition and reform from local historiography, some of it produced as part of 19th-century debates about decline and reform. Drawing on accounts of Ottoman decline and Kemalist modernization, this scholarship “bridged previous regional reform movements with American policies toward the postcolonial Middle East” (p. 65). Of course, such readings of history were selective and could be adjusted as circumstances required. Turkey could be portrayed as a model of authoritarian reform leading to democracy in the postwar period, but a military coup in 1960 (the first of several) prompted the political scientist Dankwart Rustow to write instead about the military as a “guarantor of the ultimate values of society” (p. 92). Reading of the Ottoman past did not necessarily produce a more nuanced understanding of the Middle Eastern present, but it did affect how actors understood the region.

In two chapters on urban planning and agricultural reform schemes, Citino further challenges the dichotomy between centralized planning and local knowledge. By focusing on the way urban planners and architects sought to improve housing arrangements and family life, Citino draws out how Cold War modernization affected intimate spaces and the politics of gender relations. Both Arab and U.S. reformers distinguished between plans that drew on local traditions and expertise and those constructed according to stereotyped models. Yet this desire to draw on and demonstrate respect for local practices often undermined other aspects of the modernization agenda. Hassan Fathy, an architect and planner who worked in Egypt, Iraq, West Africa, and ultimately Chicago, criticized development experts who were offended by poverty but ignorant of local practices. His own plans fused modern knowledge of materials and hygiene with detailed observations of daily life. Fathy’s insistence on respect for local tradition led to creative architectural designs that took account of local habits of socialization and comportment in the design of kitchens and laundry facilities yet also reinforced women’s domestic roles and even seclusion (p. 135).

Like most scholars of the Middle East, Citino treats the Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel as a major turning point, but he contextualizes that defeat within a broader set of economic and political challenges to elites within the United States and the Middle East. Both secular and Islamist intellectuals turned away from linear notions of progress and emphasized cultural heritage. In the book’s final chapter, Citino returns to metaphors of speed and flight but shows how, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these metaphors were increasingly invoked to show the failures of earlier modernization projects. Speed and modern technology were used by writers criticizing the indifference of elites and their distance from the people. The airplane became a target of rebels, in the Middle East and beyond. Hijacking, practiced by Black September and the People’s Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and in the United States by
groups like the Black Panthers, was part of a “moment in global history when postwar乐观ism began its initial descent” (p. 273).

Citino’s focus on hijackings is not incidental. Rather, he seeks to “remove the phenomenon from the shadow of 9/11” (p. 285). His book is successful in this and much more, uncovering the entangled history of modernization in the United States and the Middle East in the twentieth century.


Reviewed by Gregory Weeks, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

With the continued release of previously classified or hidden documents, we are starting to understand more about Operation Condor, the coordinated effort developed by five South American dictatorships to terrorize and exterminate their political opponents in the mid-1970s. Founded in 1975 by the Chilean military government of Augusto Pinochet, it was responsible for intelligence sharing and murders across the continent. Fernando López’s exhaustively researched book aims to provide a fresh perspective on the existing literature (especially the work of J. Patrice McSherry, who wrote the preface).

The book has three intertwined arguments. First, these countries had much greater difficulty joining forces than typically realized. Second, the role of civilians—from both the Left and the Right—needs more attention. Third, the militaries intentionally overstated the threat posed by the Junta de Coordinación Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Coordinating Group, or JCR), a regional unified Marxist guerrilla force. Instead, the primary goal of the endeavor was to attack the political opposition and disrupt its connections to transnational human rights organizations.

López argues that for the involved countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) internal problems paved the way for what were otherwise unlikely partnerships. Historically, these countries did not generally have close ties and at times were even actively hostile. Indeed, Argentina and Chile almost went to war during Operation Condor. Hence, they had no prima facie reason to cooperate closely even when they sought to crush what they considered to be the same enemies. The regimes faced economic recession, difficulties establishing legitimacy given their undemocratic nature, and international condemnation for repression. López argues that, when combined, these factors prompted governments to look outward as a way to shore up political support in a manner that otherwise might not have occurred. Chile, which suffered acutely from these problems, was by this logic a probable candidate to spearhead such an effort. Overall this is a reasonable hypothesis, though one wishes that Lopez had explained why aggression might also have been a logical outcome.