



America's Great Game: The CIA's Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East

Hugh Wilford

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The Central Intelligence Agency's reputation in the Middle East today has been marred by waterboarding and drone strikes, yet in its earliest years the agency was actually the region's staunchest western ally. In *America's Great Game*, celebrated intelligence historian Hugh Wilford reveals how three colorful CIA operatives—Kermit and Archie Roosevelt, and maverick covert-ops expert Miles Copeland—attempted, futilely, to bring the U.S. and Middle East into harmony during the 1940s and '50s. Heirs to an American missionary tradition that taught them to treat Arabs and Muslims with respect and empathy, these CIA “Arabists” nevertheless behaved like political puppet-masters, orchestrating coup plots throughout the Middle East while seeking to sway public opinion in America against support for the new state of Israel. Their efforts, and ultimate failure, would doom U.S.-Middle Eastern relations for decades to come.

Drawing on extensive new material, including declassified government records, private papers, and personal interviews, *America's Great Game* shows how three well-intentioned spies inadvertently ruptured relations between America and the Arab world.

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