



Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America (Policy Papers (Washington Institute for Near East Policy), No. 58.)

Martin S. Kramer

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In the days immediately following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the American media turned to Middle East "experts" for over-the-airwaves analysis of the motivation, rationale and ideology of the perpetrators - and, at times, for advice on what the United States should do in response. Not since the Gulf War had so many academics been brought before the cameras and the microphones. Some were insightful, informed and informative. Many, however, were superficial, misguided and plain wrong. As Kramer argues in this examination of the state of his profession, America is ill served by the way in which the Middle East is studied and presented at institutions of higher education across the nation. The academic understanding of the Middle East is framed not by the realities of the region, but by the fads and fashions that have swept through the disciplines, as well as the prejudices that have enslaved the academics themselves. Middle Eastern studies have failed - at a time when understanding of the Middle East has become crucial to America.

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