Amila Buturović presents four interconnected essays that theoretically and historically contextualize and interpret the Bosnian poet Mehmedalija Mak Dizdar’s “Kameni Spavač” (“Stone Sleeper”). These essays show why Dizdar chose the stone tombstones of medieval Bosnia-Herzegovina (stećci) as a site of national unity, and how, by giving a textured yet ambivalent voice to the texts and images engraved on them, he made them operate as a literary construction of nationhood. That is, by animating the stones (hence the title of this volume), he provided a local and sacred space in which the dead and the living could imagine a bond of kinship.

Buturović, appealing to a variety of theoretical understandings of nation, begins by exploring the cultural, historic, and literary meaning of what it meant to be Bosnian in the time preceding the writing of “Stone Sleeper,” suggesting that Bosnian identity was at once national and territorial.

At the national level, Bosnian identity was forged by the confessional affiliations defined by the Ottoman millet system—that is, one belonged to the Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, or Jewish nacija (nation). Yet, although the millet system was a discourse of difference, it was also a system in which the different millets interacted with intimacy, sharing, for example, the vernacular language of South Slavic.

In the post-Ottoman period, Austro-Hungarian official categories redirected the idea of nation to narodnost (“peoplehood”). There were three narodi in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Serb, Croat, and Muslim. As this “peoplehood,” or “Volk,” of the Austrian period became the framework of a unified Yugoslavia, Bosnia became an anomaly: it was not a republic unified like the other five republics, by narodnost; rather, Bosnia was unified by an idea of territoriality, in which “being Bosnian” reflected language, dress, behavior, and “mentality.”

But since Bosnia was given no national identity (like Serbia and Croatia), it became no one’s homeland, undermining the sense of territorial connectivity. Furthermore, the Muslims (much as the Jews and Gypsies), although given a political space, had no geographical space at all and thus were territorially orphaned. It is at this critical moment, in the 1960s, that the “stone speaker” intervenes, asking, “When will your Home/Be your Homeland instead?” Thus, Dizdar attempts to recapture and reify the emotion of territorial unity by locating it in a shared Bosnian past and in a specific Bosnian place. That past is the pre-Ottoman Bosnian church, and that place is the sacred soil of the medieval Bosnian cemetery.

Dizdar was born in 1917 in Stolac, Herzegovina, close to stećci-filled cemeteries with their motifs of vines, suns, moons, and human figures. These caught his poetic and his scholarly attention: his work, Stari Bosanski Tekstovi (Ancient Bosnian Texts), remains a foundational text in Bosnian medieval literature. What convinced Dizdar to make the stećci the centerpiece
of a new national identity was their connection to the medieval Bosnian church, which Dizdar saw as being influenced by the Bogomils. The Bogomils were a Bulgarian and Balkan dualist church that, based on European Manichaeanism, believed that the forces of good and evil were in constant conflict but that good would prevail. In fact, “Stone Sleeper” suggests that a shared Bosnian spirit of defiance, a resistance to hierarchies and invasions, springs from this urge toward the good. Most important, Dizdar saw the Bosnian church as representing a simple Christianity, with a simple eschatology (“for death is just a path/To rise from the nest to the skies with the blest”) to which contemporary Bosnian readers of all confessions could relate.

Thus, with “Stone Sleeper,” Dizdar moved the “national clock” back to a time predating Islam in the Balkans, bypassing existing national categories in the discourse on nationhood. In doing so, he constructed “a new location as the cradle of national culture that provides all Bosnians...irrespective of their attitudes to imperial legacies, with a sense of common beginnings, cohesiveness, and continuity” (p. 82).

In the final chapters, many of Buturović’s arguments about the goal of recuperating and spatializing the voices of the past in the service of nation are tied to actual poetic texts. As we learn about these connections, we slowly learn something about the structure of the poem—that it consists of cycles, for example—and something about the actual images and texts that are carved on the stecci. In one verse, Dizdar animates the motif of the Bosnian kolo dance with a rhythmic text while appealing to a common struggle and a common goal:

Hand in hand  
bound in a bond  
Hand on hand  
Salt on a wound (misery in misery)  
Earth pulls down heavy  
Heaven is high

Although there are many examples of the poetic text, the chapters are heavier with interpretations that are linked not to the poetry itself but to a cornucopia of theoretical considerations that explain its underlying themes. This makes the reading extraordinarily rich as well as extraordinarily difficult for a reader not already familiar with Dizdar or “Stone Sleeper.” It is difficult to move from complex and nuanced ideas about, say, postcolonial theory or liminality, to the actual poem, or from mention of a recuperation of a Bosnian ethic to what that ethic actually is, and it is never possible to move to Dizdar himself. Buturović suggests that Dizdar’s use of Arabic script to protect an earlier poetic text from discovery shows that he is both a Muslim and a political activist. Yet his biography is never addressed.

A fifth essay, by Dizdar’s translator, Francis Jones, follows. Here, the process of rendering a sense of place, culture, and medieval language into English is usefully presented along with selected verses. The exquisite translations leave the reader hungrying for both the entire poem and a discussion of the poem as a unit, allowing him or her not only to understand but to feel how “something sacred shows itself to us.”

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REVIEWED BY AKRAM KHATER, Department of History, North Carolina State University, Raleigh; e-mail: akram_khater@ncsu.edu

Inventing Lebanon is a recent addition to a growing list of scholarly works that aim to historicize sectarianism in the Middle East. Kais Firro tries to go beyond the prevalent notion
of primordial sectarian relations that supposedly dominate and define the region. In particular, he tackles a subject that many have considered the quintessential example of a historical sectarianism: the construction of a confessional Lebanese nation. Firro’s main argument is that sectarian interests and affiliations were as much the result of the establishment of the “National Covenant” as they were the reasons behind its creation. He contends that the colonial creation of Greater Lebanon forced divergent ethnoreligious collective identities into a single state that in turn forced these communities to negotiate a modus vivandi to safeguard their interests even as it allowed for venues of cross-confessional cooperation. He holds further that the contradiction between these two aims underlies the uncertain nature of Lebanon as a nation.

In the first part of *Inventing Lebanon*, Firro looks at the idea of Lebanon as a nation; in the second part, he focuses on the political machinations that were animated by that idea as much as they gave it definition and life. The first chapter looks at the competing ideas that sought to define Lebanon alternatively as an eternally autonomous and uniquely cosmopolitan nation, as a part of a civilizationally defined Greater Syria, or as a small piece of an ethnically Arab world. In the second chapter, Firro leaps forward to look at contemporary scholars and their attempts to grapple with Lebanon’s sectarianism. He explores how various authors sought to explicate Lebanon’s confessional system and its persistence against the backdrop of the bloody civil war of 1975. Firro notes that explanations for Lebanese sectarianism fall into three categories. There are those, predominantly Christian, who consider Lebanon’s confessional divisions of identity and power an asset that should be maintained as the underpinning of Lebanon’s “uniqueness.” Other scholars, primarily Muslim, see confessionalism as a byproduct of colonialism that has distanced Lebanon from its “natural” Arab milieu and argue that only a return to that milieu will overcome the unnatural divisions even as it guarantees the rights of all religious communities. Finally, Firro notes a third tendency that argues that sectarianism is really the product of elites who have established these divisions to perpetuate their political or socioeconomic interests.

From this point, the book takes a completely different—and rather jolting—turn. Here Firro traces the development of the “National Covenant” between 1922 and 1943, the period of the French Mandate. He writes about the formation and dissolution of alliances among Lebanon’s political elites along confessional lines, as well as across them for “clannish” or self-interested goals. For example, he recounts the attempts in 1930 by Émile Eddé to institute cuts in educational spending that would have closed 111 state schools. This decision would have touched a disproportionate number of Muslim students, since most Christian students attended private schools. In response, an Islamic Congress was convened—which included Sunni, Shi’i, and Druze representatives—to protest this discrimination and to affirm Lebanon’s Arab identity. Yet shortly thereafter, during the 1932 contest for the presidency, Muslim and Christian elites crossed confessional lines to strike political alliances for “personal” and “clan” considerations. Thus, the Muslim deputies in Parliament rallied around Bishara al-Khuri in opposition to the Muslim candidate, Shaykh Muhammad al-Jisr, while Eddé and other Maronite elites supported al-Jisr against the wishes of the French high commissioner and the Maronite patriarch.

Firro elucidates a pattern to these vacillations. The initial reaction of the majority of Sunni Muslim elites to Greater Lebanon was to reject it in favor of an Arabist position that sought to unify the country with Syria. However, as it became evident that the French were not going to allow that to happen, and as the rejectionist position of these elites was undermined by Muslim figures from lesser families (urban and rural) who collaborated with the French, they began to negotiate a greater share of power within Lebanon. Similarly, some Maronite elites realized that their attempt to monopolize control over the country’s political and economic resources were not going to be successful and thus began to negotiate a more conciliatory position that would reduce their power in exchange for guaranteeing Muslim support for an
independent and sovereign Lebanon. Between these two polarities, the Druze, Shi‘i, and Greek Orthodox communities sought to guarantee themselves some share in the administration and resources of the country through tactical use of confessional interests. The culmination of all these political “games” was the creation and entrenchment of the “Lebanese system,” which consecrated confessional politics even as it continued to allow for cross-confessional alliances.

The story that Firro tells in the second part is certainly as intriguing in its detail as the first part is a helpful summary of the historiography of confessionalism. However, one is hard-pressed to find the connection between the two parts of Inventing Lebanon. It is this disjunction that weakens an otherwise good piece of scholarship. Since the second part of the book does not appear to engage the first part in any coherent sense, one is left wondering why the first part was included at all. Intricate details in the second, narrative part at times dilute the author’s main point, particularly in the absence of a stronger analytical framework that would have given more meaning to the story. A more systematic connection between the two parts would have provided a meaningful critique of the existing historiography of Lebanese confessionalism, even as the story was given a greater narrative coherence and analytical relevance. Finally, it would have been more advisable to translate all French text into English to make the work more accessible to those who do not read French. The work also suffers from editorial mistakes that detract from its content. Despite these issues, I still recommend Firro’s Inventing Lebanon to those specializing in Middle East studies as a good source for understanding the history of the creation of a confessional nation in Lebanon.

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ROBERTO MARÍN-GUZMÁN AND ZIDANE ZÉRAOUI, Arab Immigration in Mexico in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Assimilation and Arab Heritage (Monterrey, Mexico and Austin, Texas: Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey and Augustine Press, 2003). Pp. 212.


REVIEWED BY THERESA ALFARO VELCAMP, Department of History, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, Calif.; e-mail: alfaro.velcamp@sonoma.edu

Roberto Marín-Guzmán and Zidane Zéraoui offer pioneering scholarship in the fields of Latin America and the Middle East in their laconic manuscripts on Arab and Palestinian migration to Mexico and Central America. The two authors jointly published Arab Immigration in Mexico, which in large part derives from Zéraoui’s 1997 work with El Colegio de México (Destino México: Un estudio de las migraciones asiáticas a México, siglos XIX y XX, ed. María Elena Ota Mishima). Marín-Guzmán has impressive publications on the topic of Arab immigration to Mexico and Central America in his own right, such as those published by UNESCO in 1997 (El Mundo Árabe y América Latina, coordinated by Raymundo Kabchi). Drawing on these earlier works, the two scholars offer access to their works to English-speaking (and reading) audiences for the first time by providing synthetic overviews of why Arab and Palestinian immigrants migrated to Mexico and Central America, where they settled, and how they “assimilated.”

Arab Immigration in Mexico aims “to explain the Arab immigration in Mexico, and to describe the economic, political and cultural contributions of the Arab immigrants in Mexico” (p. 17). The monograph is divided into eight chapters, excluding the introduction and
conclusion. Chapter 1 provides an overview of Arab immigration to Mexico beginning in the 19th century and continuing through five temporal periods to 2000. The chapters that follow are shorter and touch on various subjects, including the state and city of Veracruz as the premier Mexican port of entry (chap. 2); the first Arab immigrants in Mexico (chap. 3); characteristics of the Arab immigrants (chap. 4); economic contributions of the Arab immigrants, with a subsection on the Lebanese (chap. 5); religions of the Arab immigrants (chap. 6); Arab social, religious, and cultural organizations in Mexico (chap. 7); and reflections on the integration of Arabs into Mexican society (chap. 8). This core of the manuscript spans to page 112, yet the book extends another one hundred pages to include extensive appendixes covering Zéraoui’s quantitative research conducted at the Mexican national archives.

Zéraoui draws on myriad sources, with a particular emphasis on the Mexican immigration cards gathered in the 1930s–50s. He carefully describes the limitations of the cards (recording 7,533 Arab immigrants), noting that deceased Arabs and those immigrants who had “integrated” were not included in the sample (pp. 57, 62). Zéraoui then compares his research in the Mexican national archive (Archivo General de la Nación), located in Mexico City, with his findings at the municipal archives in Tampico, in the state of Tamaulipas (a northeastern state located along the Gulf of Mexico). According to his research, early Arab immigrants began arriving in the 19th century and possibly reported “their origins as other nations that were more accepted in Mexico” (p. 58). Zéraoui’s conclusions seem to suggest that Arab immigration, in fact, began earlier than the Mexico City archives suggest. Zéraoui’s ability to transcend federal records and explore immigrant histories at a local level is to be commended. The 135 detailed endnotes guide readers to other areas of scholarship in the field—in particular, to Doris Musalem’s excellent work on Palestinian immigrants in Mexico (also found in Destino México). Readers interested in primary sources, however, will need to consult these authors’ works (mentioned earlier) for citations to specific documents and details of their interviews.

Perhaps the biggest weakness of Arab Immigration in Mexico is that it aims to accomplish too much in its limited pages. In an effort to illustrate the presence of Arabs in Mexico both historically and in contemporary political and cultural terms, some chapters leave the reader with more questions than answers. Questions arise as to why Zéraoui and Marín-Guzmán chose to use the term “Arab” to describe these immigrants to Mexico while shying away from analyzing how labels are applied to the immigrants at different historical moments. They begin a thoughtful discussion on pages 59–61; however, when examining a predominantly Christian Lebanese migration (see table 2, p. 41; table 19, p. 91; appendix 4), it would be helpful to note that many Lebanese Maronites would not call themselves “Arabs.” Although this may appear to be a question of semantics, how these immigrants identify themselves and how they have been identified by Mexicans have become important issues, especially as the authors later note that each religious group has had its own assimilation process (p. 93). The authors claim that Maronites, Jews, and Orthodox Arabs “arrived in Mexico in order to establish themselves permanently or, in some cases, to be able to cross the northern border” (p. 93). Palestinian, Muslim, and Druze Arabs, they claim, aimed only to make enough money to return home. The evidence to substantiate these claims is anecdotal and derived from various Lebanese organizations (chap. 7) and from prominent economic and cultural successes of Arab immigrants, mostly Lebanese, in the late 20th century (chap. 8).

Do economic, political, and cultural successes then equate to “total assimilation”? The detail provided in chapters 7 and 8 is impressive, yet the notion that success in Mexican society equates to total assimilation needs further scrutiny. For instance, the authors assert that “the discriminations and slanderous epithets were directed against particular individuals and never against the whole Lebanese group” (p. 107, n. 133). However, according to Diario Oficial on 15 July 1927, the Mexican Migration Department did indeed have strong anti-Arab and
anti–Lebanese sentiments and banned the entrance of people of Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Arabic, and Turkish origins into Mexico.

The bibliographies of *Arab Immigration in Mexico* and *A Century of Palestinian Immigration into Central America* draw on a similar core of scholarship from El Colegio de México in Mexico City and the University of Texas at Austin. In research methodologies, the books depart from each other. Marín-Guzmán, for instance, uses thirty-five interviews conducted in San José, Costa Rica, between 1993 and 1996 to describe the “reconstruction” of Palestinian immigration in Central America. He bases his reconstruction on the oral tradition of the Palestinian immigrants whom he interviewed, as well as on letters from his informants. With an ambitious agenda, Marín-Guzmán, in only 174 pages, covers 100 years and six Central American countries (Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Belize). His focus on Palestinian migration beginning in the late 19th century until the 1967 Israeli occupation contributes to the emerging scholarship on non-European immigration into Latin America.

Unlike *Arab Immigration in Mexico*, Marín-Guzmán’s book is clearly delineated into four chapters. In his introduction, he states that the purpose of his short book is “to study the process of Palestinian immigration into the republics of the region, and to analyze the different activities the Palestinian immigrants and their descendents have engaged in these host countries” (p. 27). Chapter 2 describes the periods of immigration and the specific case studies. The remaining chapters include a conclusion and an epilogue. Table 1 (p. 25) shows that in 1955 there were 549 Arab family names in Central America, including 289 Palestinian family names. Marín-Guzmán then includes the names of the Palestinian families and their places of origin in appendixes 1–6 (pp. 95–109). His discussion of Palestinian immigration to Honduras relies heavily on Nancie González’s *Dollar, Dove and Eagle* (University of Michigan, 1992) and could more fully engage the compelling scholarship of Darío Euraque and Bill Crowley.

The case studies of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica are more developed than those of Guatemala and Belize. However, Marín-Guzmán returns to the notion that “total assimilation” for the second generation equates to the loss of Arabic and less interest in defending the rights of Palestinians (p. 19). With this framework (as in *Arab Immigration in Mexico*), the text assumes total assimilation of immigrants to host countries with little reflection on the possibilities of nuanced or dual identities (pp. 45, 53, 73). Moreover, the reader does not hear what “total assimilation” means to these Palestinian immigrants and their descendents. For the Costa Rican case, Marín-Guzmán illustrates in table 6 (p. 64) that the majority (52.38%) of the Palestinians are Catholics. He notes that the more recent Palestinians immigrants are urban and professional Muslims, unlike the Lebanese immigrants in Costa Rica (p. 63). Because of the sources available, the Costa Rican case study is the most comprehensive and engaging. The studies of Guatemala and Belize are much more limited.

With the exception of the 1904 Costa Rican immigration restriction, a picture is painted in which Central Americans mostly accepted Palestinian immigrants. Can this acceptance be explained by small numbers of Palestinian immigrants to the region? Did Hondurans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Costa Ricans, Guatemalans, and Belizans conflate Palestinians with Jews and with other Arabs? Scholars such as Darío Euraque, Ignacio Klich (Argentina), and Jeffrey Lesser (Brazil) have been exploring the problematic nature of such labels as Arabs, Jews, and Turks (or *turcos* in Latin America) that result from the Ottoman period forward. For many issues, such as how Palestinian and Arab immigrants are received in Central America, readers may wish to explore earlier works by Marín-Guzmán, especially his 1997 articles published with UNESCO.

Both books could be used in specialized undergraduate courses. For students new to studying Latin America, the books present notions that all Arabs and Palestinians quickly adapted, assimilated, and economically rose to dominance. Such notions can be challenged and debated
in the classroom. Reflecting the biases inherent in oral interviews, few of the reported anecdotes reveal economic failure or corruption on the part of Arab and Palestinian immigrants in Mexico and Central America. Although some Palestinian and other Arabs did achieve some economic success, not all prospered. Arab Immigration in Mexico and A Century of Palestinian Immigration need to be read with this idea in mind to be useful in a Latin American or Central American course. For courses about the Middle East, the texts would need to be supported by other, engaging scholarship in the field, such as Akram Fouad Khater’s detailed work on emigration from Lebanon to the United States (and return migration) and Lelia Fawaz’s study, Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut (1983). A more developed analytical approach to the complexity of Middle Eastern history and the scholarship would be essential in using either of these works in the classroom.

As Zéraoui and Marín-Guzmán offer readers very broad historical narratives of Arab and Palestinian immigrations to Mexico and Central America, they also provide clever insights into data collection in the emerging field of non–European immigration in Latin America. Most important, these monographs demonstrate that Arabs and Palestinians are important to the historical record and that these immigrants contribute to the complexity of Mexican, Honduran, Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, Guatemalan, and Belizan societies.

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REVIEWED BY MICHAEL M. GUNTER, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville; e-mail: mgunter@tntech.edu

This is a genuinely interesting and useful analysis of the failed antecedents (approximately to 1938) of contemporary Kurdish nationalism as it largely played out in what became modern Turkey. Indeed, “Failed Antecedents of Contemporary Kurdish Nationalism” might have been a better title for the book.

More precisely, Martin Strohmeier is more concerned with the attempts to create Kurdish nationalism in this earlier period than with analyzing why these efforts seemingly failed. Thus, his treatise offers to English-only readers a wealth of material previously available only in scattered pieces.

Using short, pithy chapters, Strohmeier divides his work into three sections. Part 1 analyzes the attempts before World War I of aspiring Kurdish nationalists to awaken their would-be compatriots to their cause through newspapers. Part 2 deals with the Bedir Khan brothers’ (Tureyya, Kamuran, and Celadet) development in the 1920s of a Kurdish movement in exile (mainly in Syria), the failure of their transnational Kurdish party Khoybun, and the negation of Kurdish nationalism by Sukru Mehmed Sekban. The third and final part analyzes a little-known novel (Der Adler [Eagle] von Kurdistan) co-written in the 1930s by Kamuran Bedir Khan, which failed to become a Kurdish national epic but does give valuable insights into what he saw as the characteristics of the imagined Kurdish nation. Throughout this book, there is much useful data about which a short review such as this can only suggest.

These early would-be Kurdish nationalists grappled with many problems, including the nature of the Kurdish relationship with the Turks and the primitive state of affairs in Kurdistan. “All Kurds were deeply if variously enmeshed in social, ideological, economic and personal relations with the Turks…. These bonds hampered the development of a self-assertive, robust
and distinct Kurdish identity” (p. 54). In addition, the Kurdish “language was a shambles, not fit for education or literature; their culture was backward, and their history was a mystery” (p. 45). Furthermore, “a language-factor potentially more divisive than dialects was the problem presented by Turkish speakers among the Kurds” (p. 61).

Then, following World War I and the subsequent rush to create nation-states in the Middle East, the Kurds had no one to counter the appeal to Muslim loyalty of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk). “Kurdish leaders such as Serif Pasha appeared to be traitors willing to sign away the fatherland to the Armenian enemies” (p. 70). “The making of their (Turkish) nation was to depend on the unmaking of any plans the Kurds had had for their own nation” (p. 84). In addition, by helping the Turks rid “the area of Armenians, the Kurds had unwittingly forfeited their historical status and value to the Turks as counterweights to the Armenians” (p. 87).

By contrast, Mem u Zin—the Kurdish national epic dating from the 17th century—“constitutes the backbone of the argument that Kurds are a nation capable of attaining a high level of civilization, and possessing a language which can yield great literature…. The epic lends itself astonishingly well to the exigencies of national identity building because of its many-faceted appeal to diverse groups in Kurdish society… and has become almost a ‘Declaration of Independence’ in Kurdish history” (p. 27).

Following the failure of the Shaykh Said and Ararat rebellions in the 1920s, the Bedir Khan brothers broke completely with their residual Turkish loyalties and sought to develop, with French support in Syria, a full-blown Kurdish nationalism. In Les Massacres Kurdes en Turquie and The Case of Kurdistan Against Turkey, “the Turks are portrayed as having pursued throughout the whole of their co-existence with the Kurds and other races the aims of extermination and assimilation…. The Turks, descendants of Attila and Jingiz Khan, are an unchanging entity, barbaric and evil by nature” (p. 104). Although “propagandistic in its simplistic, misleading, and distorted interpretations of Kurdish and Turkish history” (p. 111), “Tureyya’s [Bedir Khan’s] publications had a tremendous influence on later writings on the Kurds…. The statistics on deportations and losses contained in his booklets as well as his equally propagandist versions of historical events were integrated into many subsequent accounts of the Kurdish national struggle” (p. 114). However, Strohmeier concludes that, for “the progress of Kurdish identity-building as manifested in nationalist writing, we must regard Tureyya’s publications as being of seminal importance” (pp. 100–101).

Part 3 deals with Der Adler von Kurdistan, a formalistic and forgotten attempt by Kamuran Bedir Khan to write a novel to project the Kurdish cause on the magnitude of Franz Werfel’s classic The Forty Days of Musa Dagh for the Armenians. Strohmeier demonstrates how a close reading of this short book “reveals a unique and fascinating attempt to fashion an image of Kurdishness incorporating the entire panoply of the imagined Kurdish nation and depicting their brave and just struggle for freedom…. their heroism, patriotism, reverence for their land, identification with their mountains; their pride in their language and heritage; the beauty of their folk tales and songs, the rich variety of their material culture; their strong and patriotic women; the solidarity among Kurds from all backgrounds” (p. 203).

Strohmeier’s book also contains a bibliography, an index, and an appendix containing excerpts from Kurdish nationalist writings, as well as some photographs of the Bedir Khan brothers and their intellectual adversary, Sukru Mehmed Sekban. The scholarship is sound, accurate, and well balanced, and it relies on appropriate sources. Thus, this analysis of a failed nationalism ironically will become a useful contribution to understanding the background of what subsequently has become a powerful Kurdish nationalist challenge that has already helped to alter the very nature of the Kemalist Turkish state.
Mohammed Hafez’s *Why Muslims Rebel* is a theoretically informed and persuasive study of Islamist movements’ turn to violence. Using social movements theory, this welcome addition to scholarship on political Islam sets out to debunk “deprivation theories” of the rise of violent Islamist movements. In direct contradiction to Ted Gurr’s classic *Why Men Rebel* (1970), Hafez argues that violent Islamist insurgencies “are not primarily an aggressive response to economic deprivation or psychological alienation produced by severe impoverishment or failed modernization.” Rather, they are “defensive reaction[s] to predatory state repression that threatens the organizational resources and lives of political Islamists” (p. xvi). Hafez uses Islamist pamphlets, reports from human-rights organizations and newspapers, and a range of secondary sources in Arabic and English to investigate violent Islamist insurgency in Algeria and Egypt in the 1990s. He bolsters his case by providing more schematic comparisons with other countries where Islamist violence has not occurred on a similar scale, as well as with states where it has.

In this carefully comparative work, Hafez examines the role of political processes, mobilizing structures, and ideological frames in promoting violent insurgencies. In chapter 2, he analyzes the nature of political exclusion in Algeria (where the electoral victory of Front Islamique du Salut [FIS] was annulled by a military coup in 1992) and Egypt (where a series of illiberal electoral laws and pre-election crackdowns excluded the Muslim Brotherhood from participation in the elections). Drawing comparisons with Jordan, Pakistan, and Tunisia, Hafez shows that political exclusion by the state is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of insurgency. In chapter 3, Hafez delineates those characteristics of state repression that more definitively result in the Islamist organizations’ turn to violence. He shows that only when state repression is deployed indiscriminately (rather than selectively) and re-actively (rather than pre-emptively) Islamist organizations resort to violence. He argues that reactive state repression after a period of mass mobilization and organizing allows the movements to gauge their own strength, command enough resources, and have enough at stake to fight back. He tests his hypothesis by sketching insurgencies in Tajikistan, the Philippines, Chechnya, and Kashmir. The two chapters analyzing political processes that lead to insurgencies are the book’s most successful chapters. Although violence in Pakistan, where exclusion has been only partial, is not definitively explained, these chapters are clear, coherent, and convincing.

In chapter 4, Hafez examines mobilizing structures and argues that political exclusion and indiscriminate and reactive repression lead the insurgents to transform their organizations into exclusive structures. Exclusive movement organizations have the benefits of greater protection against counterinsurgency measures and greater internal cohesion, but their very exclusivity intensifies intramovement competition, institutionalizes underground mobilization, and consequently prolongs violent insurgency. Although this chapter offers a fascinating study of the fragmentation of violent Islamist organizations in both Egypt and Algeria, it leaves an important question unanswered: why did the leaders of Egyptian Jama’a Islamiyya issue a unilateral cease-fire in 1997 if, in fact, that year saw more intraorganizational competition, which, as Hafez’s theory tells us, should lead to further bloodshed and the protraction of insurgency?
Chapter 5, where Hafez attempts to explain the relationship between ideological frames and anticivilian violence, is the book’s weakest chapter. Hafez points to three mechanisms of “moral disengagement” that legitimate attacks on civilians: ethical justifications (“we have a righteous cause”), advantageous comparisons (“we have suffered more”), and displacement of responsibility onto the victims (“they brought it on themselves”). Problematically, Hafez categorizes these mechanisms as antisysemic. One can argue that states (the United States foremost among them) readily use these same justifications to explain their killing of civilians. In addition, one is not entirely convinced that post hoc justifications for violence would necessarily encourage anticivilian violence itself. There are more complex social and institutional–organizational mechanisms at work that are not explored here.

Overall, the book is accessible, sound, and effectively presented. Arabic names are clearly transliterated, and I found only one typographical error (Ann Swidler’s last name is rendered in the text and in the bibliography as Swindler). However, a few quibbles remain. First, the Palestinian struggle against Israel (pp. 158–59) is an instance not of Islamist insurgency but, rather, of nationalist struggle against foreign occupation, and the Lebanese Hizbullah (p. 159) has not conducted a domestic insurgency as in Algeria or Egypt. Instead, it has fought a war against a foreign state. Similarly, the Chechynan and Kashmiri rebels are nationalist/secessionist and different from those of Algeria and Egypt. Second, in at least two places Hafez explains the state’s use of repression by claiming that Islamist “violence begets repression” (pp. 78, 83). This brief allusion to the circularity of violence and repression only occludes Hafez’s clear argument and brings up more questions than it can answer. Another persistent question that Hafez leaves unanswered is the reason behind Islamist organizations’ attacks on soft targets before state repression. Admittedly, the number of such attacks increases dramatically after state repression, but nevertheless the reader wants to know more. Fourth, although Hafez wants to shift the focus away from the socioeconomic background of the Islamists, some explanation of how and whom the organizations recruited would have been helpful. Finally, it is perhaps a credit to the clarity of Hafez’s rendering of his cases studies that I was left wondering why so many of the Islamist movements’ turns to violence seemed to happen in 1992. Further research may be needed to show whether global reasons (such as the end of the Cold War and the United States’ shift of focus to Islamism) could have encouraged further state repression of Islamist movements at that time.

Despite these questions and critiques, Hafez’s book is a very welcome addition not only to Middle East studies, but also to sociology and politics curricula. Chapters can be profitably assigned to undergraduate students, and all can benefit from Hafez’s careful argument about political processes, useful deployment of cross-case comparisons, and successful framing of his argument within the larger theoretical literature.
reflects Fuller’s intellectual odyssey into the world of political Islam, which in its modern forms has largely developed on his watch.

Fuller’s book begins promisingly. He usefully begins by defining an “Islamist” as “one who believes that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion” (p. xi). While many who write for public audiences seek to elide “Islamist,” “fundamentalist,” and “jihadist” into one threatening ball of pathological behavior, Fuller manages to define the word “Islamist” in a way that concentrates on the mainstream of the phenomenon rather than on its most radical extremes.

The first part of the book explores the growing intersection of Islam and politics in the 20th century, portraying it as a response to internal and external factors and, not least, the colonial legacy and the failure of secular politics to deliver either freedom or prosperity in the modern period. Fuller’s account reflects thousands of conversations he has had on these subjects with Muslims, but he does not situate this discussion in either the Western academic debate or the public debates going on in Muslim communities. One is left with Fuller’s conclusions, but it is hard for an uninitiated reader to understand how he arrived at them or to get a sense of what is contested and what is generally accepted in what he says.

Fuller’s predilection for presenting conclusions rather than the reasoning that led him to them is even more evident in his chapter on Islam and terrorism, which feels as if it was dropped into the middle of the book after 11 September. He asserts, for example, that “[n]early all Muslims including a broad range of Islamist leaders, immediately condemned the attack as a crime against the tenets of Islam” (p. 84). He offers no examples or qualifications, and he appears untroubled when he notes the lingering assumption of many that the attack was not done by Muslims at all but was, in fact, a Mossad plot. Similarly, he writes that “[m]ost Muslims, including most Islamists admire U.S. political values, even when uncomfortable with many U.S. social values (or absence thereof)” (p. 86). What is one to make of contrary views that one has read in the press, on Islamist websites, and elsewhere? In yet another instance, Fuller asserts that Islam unambiguously condemns violence against civilians and cites Khaled Abou El Fadl, an erudite and learned U.S.-based scholar. Abou El Fadl is one authority, but he is neither the most authoritative nor the most influential. His judgment of what is and is not permissible under Islamic law is hardly the last word, especially in the face of the large number of Muslim clerics—such as the al-Jazeera personality Shaykh Yusuf Qaradawi and the former Egyptian Mufti Shaykh Nasr Farid Wassel—who have ascertained various exceptions to rules barring such violence. Not only does Fuller not engage with contrary ideas; in those instances where he acknowledges them, he swiftly marginalizes the extremists and moves on.

The remaining chapters return to his earlier theme: that political Islam is a natural outgrowth of Islam and the historical experiences of Muslims. He calls for understanding toward authoritarian Islamist regimes such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Sudan, asserting that their authoritarianism is an outgrowth not of Islam but of these countries’ authoritarian past and their troubled present. He argues that the true judgment of Islam in politics can come only after an Islamic regime arises in a democratic state, and he points hopefully to Turkey as an example.

Time after time, Fuller emphasizes exculpatory evidence for Islamic thought and minimizes the debates going on within it. At the same time, he has a far keener eye for incriminating statements from Western figures than from Islamic ones. He argues, for example, that Islam has no historical beef with Judaism or Christianity and suggests that “any latent tensions with Jews were rekindled, redramatized and intensified 1,400 years later by contemporary hostility between the modern state of Israel and the Muslim world.” Western hatred runs deeper, apparently. The next paragraph quotes the evangelist Franklin Graham saying, “The God of Islam is not the same God... It’s a different God and I believe it is a very evil and wicked
Does anyone doubt that intolerant, xenophobic, and hateful utterances have come from Muslim clerics? Indeed, they are legion, but Fuller neither contextualizes nor explains them because he determines that they are not mainstream.

Most of this book is about the past and the present, but it is clear that when Fuller looks forward, he cannot envisage a democratic future for the Middle East that does not contain a special role for Islam. That judgment is likely right, and for many of the reasons Fuller cites in his book.

Sadly, however, this book is unlikely to create the debate it clearly hopes to incite. Academics will be put off by the author’s lack of engagement with the academic literature, the sweeping breadth of the material, and the author’s tendency to use bullets and italics—rather than grammar and language—to emphasize his key points. A popular readership will have a hard time absorbing it, because it contains few of the anecdotes, quotations, and illustrative details that help make complex topics digestible. Finally, those critical of political Islam will dismiss Fuller as a mere apologist.

This is a shame, because this book is based on considerable experience and contains many savvy judgments. It is clearly empathetic to the struggles of Muslim-majority populations to shape their own societies and to define the place of those societies in the global community, and one can learn much from it. But in that struggle is a remarkable vitality, and that vitality is missing in this otherwise valuable book.

Salma Ismail defines Islamist politics as “the activities of organizations and movements that mobilize and agitate in the political sphere while deploying signs and symbols from Islamic traditions. It is also used to refer to political activism involving informal groupings that (re)construct repertoires and frames of reference from Islamic traditions.” This is distinct from re-Islamization, or “the process whereby various domains of social life are invested with signs and symbols associated with Islamic cultural traditions.” Islamism encompasses both. In light of these terms, Ismail’s rethinking is primarily concerned with asking how and why Islamist politics—and therefore Islamism—has moved away from direct confrontation with the state and toward mutual co-optation that leads to a greater re-Islamization of society. To answer these questions, she applies a critical-historical and anthropological approach to Islamist politics.

Before addressing her conclusions, it is necessary to elucidate further her points of departure. She adopts Talal Asad’s view of Islam as a “discursive tradition” because it “underscores the dynamic processes of power and resistance involved in the production of practices and ideas authorized as Islamic” (p. 17). Consequently, she criticizes as inadequate the essentialist, static, text-based vision of Islam she finds in the works of John Esposito and J. O. Voll. Rather than emphasizing Islamic traditions, norms, signs, and symbols, she asserts that these are constantly reworked, redefined, and reconstructed. She argues that it is groups and individuals who are the historical actors, not the slogans or religions they invoke. This brings her to what constitutes politics in general, and Islamist politics in particular.
Ismail is critical of those who use a political economy approach suggesting that individuals and groups will always respond in the same way to top-down political and economic forces. On the national and neighborhood levels, politics is shaped by power relations and struggles for hegemony. As a result of these power struggles, Islamist politics has shifted its focus from God’s governance to public morality—that is, re-Islamization. While Olivier Roy views this shift as a sign of the failure of Islamism, Ismail sees the shift as part of a dynamic political process and evidence of Islamism’s continuing impact and significance. These arguments are spelled out in chapters 1 and 6 and supported in chapters 2–5.

Chapters 2–4 analyze the power struggles and political dynamism that have shaped the development of Islamist politics on the national and local level in Egypt, while chapter 5 provides points of comparison by looking at the same issues in Algeria and Tunisia. Chapter 2 shows how the conservative Islamist position grew in strength from the conflict between the state and the radical Islamists. Ismail analyzes the sermons, tracts, and newspaper articles of conservative ulama, which highlight their focus on cultural confrontation, religious ritual, and public morality rather than politics or economics. In this process it is not clear who is co-opting whom. Chapter 3 argues that, because “public morality has emerged as an area of convergence among the various groups” (p. 59), the power struggle has shifted away from Islamic government toward Islamic law. She then analyzes how different groups initiated or responded to some of the high-profile court cases of the early 1990s, such as the case against Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and against immodest movie posters. In chapter 4, she explains the success of Islamist groups in terms of their implantation and rootedness in the microeconomies and societies found in the popular neighborhoods and old quarters of the cities. She relies on secondary anthropological and urban studies and reports in the Egyptian newspapers on the location and nature of Islamist uprisings, the government response, and the profile of those arrested in those responses. Chapter 5 traces the evolution of Islamist politics in Algeria and Tunisia, focusing on the power struggles on the national level but also on urban studies of the role of Islamists within neighborhood networks. Although Ismail cites two interviews conducted in Tunis, she relies overwhelmingly on secondary articles and monographs. Nevertheless, the chapter works well, providing insightful points of similarity and difference with developments in Egypt.

The chapters on Egypt reflect years of research; in fact, they have all been previously published. Moreover, it is clear that this material has not been updated or synthesized for this book. For example, in chapter 2 Ismail speaks of Shaykh Sha’arawi as still living, mentions his death in passing in chapter 3, and makes no reference to the more recent cause célèbre, ‘Amr Khaled. Nevertheless, the book brings together a collection of solid comparative and complementary studies of the evolution of Islamism in the 1990s—studies that remain very prescient. After reading Ismail’s book, I feel that I understand better my Cairene neighbors and students at the American University of Cairo. Re-Islamization is a sign not of political failure but of personal empowerment for a disfranchised and disenchanted populace/public. As she points out, commanding right and forbidding evil “is a claim to power which requires no sanctioning from the state” (p. 79). Nevertheless, she also expresses remorse that Islamism has become an agent of control rather than of liberation and has supported rather than challenged oppressive regimes and exploitative economies.

Ismail does an excellent job of placing the evolution of Islamism within its anthropological, sociological, political, and historical contexts. However, the players and patterns she describes—ulama cooperating with the state to increase their authority and neighborhoods isolating themselves from the state to increase theirs—is certainly familiar, if not normative, in Islamic history. Thus, she highlights how the relationship between tradition and interpretation, Islam and re-Islamization, and Islam and Islamist politics requires constant rethinking.

REVIEWED BY MICHELE PENNER ANGRIST, Department of Political Science, Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.; e-mail: angristm@union.edu

This insightful book asks why capitalists and workers have been reluctant to press for democratization in late-developing countries, given that many of the classic works in political economy characterize one or both of these social forces as having been the champions of democracy in the West. Eva Bellin’s answer is that, while both capital and labor had a material interest in challenging dictatorship in early-industrializing countries, in late-developing states often it is decidedly not in these classes’ interest to “rock the authoritarian boat.” State policies typically have favored the interests of private entrepreneurial classes, and the private sector tends to depend on state assistance (e.g., market protection and technical help) to survive in a globalizing world. Capitalists do not challenge authoritarian states, therefore, because they are relatively well treated and because falling out of the state’s good graces could spell material disaster. They also worry that the existence of radical movements, fueled by the widespread poverty that often characterizes late-developing countries, might mean that democracy would destabilize economies and threaten capitalists’ interests. While capital’s lot is considerably better than that of organized labor, many states have granted unions important policy concessions in return for their political support. As a result, union members are far better off than workers in the informal and agricultural sectors, and they, too, back the authoritarian state. Both groups are reluctant to see democratization render states obliged to respond to a wider array of societal interests, a development that would undermine their own comparatively privileged access to decision makers.

Bellin’s book has two audiences. The author derives her overarching theoretical argument from the Tunisian experience. Her contribution to the field of Middle East studies is her painstakingly researched survey of the relationship between the Tunisian state and its private capital and labor classes, respectively, over time. Since independence, the state has been a sort of midwife to private industrialists. State support for this class took a variety of forms: rhetoric in the early years; joint ventures and infrastructural support during the 1960s; a broad array of more aggressive policy interventions in the liberalizing 1970s; and market-oriented reforms from the mid-1980s onward. The state–labor relationship is more complex. Until 1970, the state sponsored the labor movement but kept it politically subordinate; in the 1970s, a more confident state granted legal and policymaking concessions to labor, which had become increasingly militant; from 1978 to 1987, the state harshly repressed labor; and President Ben Ali has rehabilitated labor in carefully controlled fashion. Bellin arrives at these findings based on appropriate secondary sources and extensive primary sources. The latter include both documentary data and numerous interviews with businesspeople and labor activists. The former are particularly helpful to the author as she attempts to quantify the growth and power of these social classes—a difficult task. The latter are as invaluable for grasping contemporary state–labor and state–business relations as they are difficult to procure, given the oppressive research environment Ben Ali’s regime has created.

The second audience for the book comprises those in the field of comparative political science. Here Bellin’s text is attractive in two primary respects. The first is her general argument regarding how the political dispositions of social classes are likely to vary, depending on the world-historical context. Notably, while the author developed the argument from the Tunisian case, the book’s final chapter extends the analysis to several additional cases. In so doing, it offers additional evidence for the validity of her propositions. Bellin shows that
in Indonesia, South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico, capitalists were diffident about democracy when their development and well-being depended on state sponsorship or they feared that democracy would empower anticapitalist extremists or otherwise result in destabilization. Tellingly, in South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico, capitalists became democrats when they lost state sponsorship, no longer needed such sponsorship, or no longer feared what democracy might bring. The author uses the Mexican, South Korean, Egyptian, and Zambian cases to show that labor’s enthusiasm for democracy varied inversely with the degree to which labor’s status depended on state largesse. These additional cases not only help establish the plausibility of Bellin’s arguments; they also allow her to undercut rival explanations for class dispositions toward democracy—including levels of economic prosperity and cultural endowments.

Comparativists should also value the illuminating manner in which Bellin draws on broader literature to disaggregate and define the concepts of “power” and “autonomy” when assessing classes’ ability to press states into adopting their policy preferences. Capital’s power potentially derives from three sources: the pivotal role it plays in the economy (structural power); the influence it exerts over the media and educational institutions (ideological power); and through financing political actors, lobbying, and serving in public office (instrumental power). Labor’s power derives from its capacity to mobilize support for politicians and its ability to disrupt economic operations via strikes; the latter in turn depends on structural factors (e.g., levels of worker concentration and labor scarcity); the state-defined legal context in which workers operate; and the leadership, culture, and organization of labor unions. “Autonomy” refers to classes’ ability to “conduct themselves independently in the political arena” (p. 49), something that turns on “the degree to which [their] well-being is beholden to the goodwill of the state” (p. 127). Importantly, Bellin shows that “power” and “autonomy” do not always go together; the two phenomena can be quite independent of each other.

This is a smart, elegantly written book rich in empirical detail and theoretical argument. In just one place does the book lose its impressive clarity: in the Tunisian case study, Bellin dissects and attempts to measure the power and autonomy of both capital and labor, arguing that both will affect their capacity to influence state policy. By the final, comparative chapter, outcomes appear to turn on autonomy alone—earlier discussions of power seem to drop out of the equation with no comment from the author. Also, the study is not without lacunae that are a byproduct of its ambition. Bellin treats the private capitalist class essentially as a unitary actor, a defensible analytic move but one that nonetheless obscures differences in the preferences and stature of various segments of that class—for example, inefficient versus competitive businesses with ostensibly diverging views vis-à-vis globalization—that are potentially important. Her exploration of the relationship between class and democracy focuses exclusively on urban groups when the literature she is in dialogue with often models regime outcomes as dependent on the disposition of capital and labor, taking into account as well their relationships to rural elites and mass forces. None of these three observations, however, take much at all away from what remains a well-researched, well-written, thoughtful, and convincing text.

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REVIEWED BY FRED H. LAWSON, Department of Government, Mills College, Oakland, Calif.; e-mail: lawson@mills.edu

Arguably the most intricate set of overlapping strategic relations in the contemporary Middle East consists of those involving Syria, Israel, and various actors based in Lebanon. It is a brave
scholar who sets out to disentangle these connections and to do so in a way that might shed new light on such complicated questions as, “How does Lebanon figure into Syria’s domestic and foreign policies, especially with respect to peacemaking with Israel? Where does the United States stand in regard to the peace process and what are its real commitments to both Israel and Syria? What are the conditions and implications of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Palestinian peace accords and treaties with Israel for Israeli–Syrian peace negotiations? [and]...Were there any ‘missed opportunities’ for peace, and why has peace been elusive so far?” (p. 2). Crucial aspects of these variegated problems are almost certainly going to get short shrift in any monograph.

And so they do in Robert Rabil’s ambitious book. Chapter 1 offers a competent survey of the historical trajectory of the Syria–Israel conflict from 1948 to 1975, highlighting the contradictory objectives and deep-seated misperceptions that repeatedly pushed the two governments into war with each other. Chapter 2 recounts the tale of Syrian and Israeli military intervention in Lebanon from 1975 to 1991, reaching two conclusions that are so widely held that they have become clichés: by the time of the Taif Accord, President Hafiz al-Asad’s “aim of controlling Lebanon had been largely achieved militarily, politically, and legally” and “with Syria controlling Lebanon, Hizbullah has become the most significant instrument at Damascus’s disposal to put military pressure on Israel” (p. 80). Chapter 3 shifts gears to explore U.S. policy toward Syria, Israel, and Syrian–Israeli peace from 1991 to early 2002. Each of these three topics merits an entire chapter of its own, so one is not surprised that the treatment remains superficial or to learn that “U.S. foreign policy toward Syria has been ambivalent, for better or for worse.” The reader cannot help but wish, though, that the author had devoted a bit more space to elaborating and justifying the startling claim that “this ambivalence often translated itself into a tacit bias toward the Syrian position on how to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict” (p. 108).

Chapter 4 presents an overview of Syria’s domestic politics, with particular attention to the years after 1970; it includes short excursuses on Syria’s deepening links to Lebanon (pp. 127–32) and the images and attitudes that constitute “the Syrian regime’s psychological barrier to negotiating peace with Israel” (pp. 143–44) but ignores the contributions that have been made by Alasdair Drysdale, Eberhard Kienle, Hans Gunter Lobmeyer, Elisabeth Longuenesse, and Elizabeth Picard, among others. A parallel overview of Israel’s domestic affairs is presented in chapter 5. The two countries’ divergent positions regarding control of the Golan and the distribution of water make up chapter 6. Chapter 7 traces the course of bilateral negotiations from the summer of 1992 to the spring of 2000, a subject more thoroughly and deftly handled by Helena Cobban in yet another volume missing from Rabil’s library.

By chapter 8, it is apparent that none of the questions posed at the outset is going to receive the sustained attention it deserves. The Shabaa Farms are allotted one paragraph in the conclusion (p. 271) and Hizbullah not much more (pp. 272, 276–77). Yet the rambling discussion of “missed opportunities for peace” is by far the most stimulating chapter in the book. Rabil summarizes a wide range of informed opinion regarding the hotly disputed issues of whether Israeli leaders proposed significant concessions during the second half of the 1990s; whether the Syrian leadership recognized such concessions, only to reject them; and whether the United States facilitated or hindered the peace process. His own analysis is unconvincing: Syria’s refusal to accept Israel’s terms reflects “the premium an Arab, especially an Alawi Arab of peasant origins such as Asad, would put on the issue of ‘dignity,’ the dignity of retrieving in full what was lost in defeat” (p. 259). Yet the range of debate that is captured in the text is impressive and relies on hard-to-find source material. Moreover, the arguments advanced by these writers provide important insights into current Syrian–Israeli relations that are sure to benefit academics and policymakers alike.
This brief volume (the text runs to only 184 pages) is an effort to place Pakistan’s armed forces in historical perspective. Earlier books by other authors centered attention on a particular service, and especially on the Pakistani army, but this is the first attempt to address all the services in a single volume. The author, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, has devoted his professional life to the study of Pakistan’s military establishment and comes well equipped to inform the reader about recruitment, force levels, training, and weapons systems connected with the modernization of one of the world’s largest armed forces. A prominent member of the faculty at Quaid-i-Azam University, and a former holder of the Iqbal chair at Heidelberg University, he currently mentors the Policy Research Institute in Islamabad. Cheema’s many publications have focused on security issues, and he is no stranger to the questions that burden Pakistani officialdom—or, for that matter, Pakistani society. What is of principal interest in this volume is the Pakistani view of global conditions and how they affect the Pakistani nation. Thus, there is an attempt to deal with the Pakistani ethos and how Pakistani society has been shaped and molded by the country’s relations with its near and distant neighbors. Paramount in this regard is the outlook of the Pakistani armed forces and how they sees their role in an unstable world.

Cheema’s treatment of salient matters is more conversational than studied. He gives limited attention to nuclear weapons, to Pakistan’s relations with India, or to Pakistan’s long association with the United States. On the question of the country’s nuclear capability, he is less concerned than the outside world about the capacity of Pakistan’s armed forces to control the nuclear weapons in its charge. Cheema cites the “hypocrisy” (p. 172) of those who would deny Pakistan a handful of nuclear weapons in a world brimming with tens of thousands of such devices. Moreover, he argues that Pakistan and India engaged in their celebrated wars during the first twenty-five years following their independence and avoided a renewal of hostilities in the subsequent twenty-five year period. Indeed, the author believes that peace is more likely between India and Pakistan because they possess such awesome weapons and that such understanding is now gaining support in important world capitals. Cheema urges mutual restraint on both Islamabad and New Delhi where nuclear weapons are involved. The limited deterrence of Pakistan’s nuclear strategy acknowledges India’s superiority, but the author nevertheless believes that Pakistan’s program is sufficient to cause the two countries to find common ground for diplomatic settlement, notably on Kashmir.

Cheema does not examine Pakistan’s love/hate relationship with the United States in detail, but he makes it quite clear that Washington has been a fair-weather friend, often disappearing from the scene when its own interests seemed little served by its Pakistan connection. By contrast, he asserts that China has been a steady associate and that positive feelings toward Beijing by the full spectrum of Pakistani society demonstrate how the people of Pakistan measure their government’s relations with the great powers. Pakistan’s relations with Afghanistan are given minimum attention, but there is an attempt to summarize the strained relations between Islamabad and Kabul from partition in 1947 through the Soviet invasion of the mountainous state. Virtually nothing is said, however, of Pakistan’s military extension into Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989—or, for that matter, about the deployment of Inter Services Intelligence operatives in Afghanistan in an effort to influence domestic changes in
that country in the post-Soviet era. Nor should the reader look for the Pakistani army’s role in aiding and abetting the Taliban as it sought to seize control of the country.

In defense of the author, it should be stated that the book was completed in 1999 and first appeared in 2001. This slightly later edition makes reference to 11 September and the immediate aftermath, particularly Pervez Musharraf’s decision to stand with the United States in its declared war on terrorism. But there is almost no follow-up analysis as to what Pakistan’s future may be as it is again tied reluctantly to American initiatives. Nor does the author dwell on the Islamization of the Pakistani armed forces, their proclivities toward fundamentalism, or the struggle between religious and secular elements within the armed forces. The chapter devoted to the armed forces in politics is not especially informative, and Cheema seems content simply to summarize the rule of Pakistan’s central military personalities—that is, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zia ul-Haq, and now Pervez Musharraf. By the same token, insufficient attention is given to the emergence of Bangladesh. Cheema describes the mistakes made by the army high command in the aftermath of the 1970 elections that precipitated the civil war and brought India’s intervention and ultimately Pakistan’s dismemberment. But the only conclusion apparently drawn is the need to bring the armed forces under more direct civilian control (p. 180). The army’s reluctance to accept any form of direct civilian control, however, is demonstrated with the extended period of martial law imposed by General Zia ul-Haq from 1977 to 1988, and subsequently by Musharraf from 1999 to the present.

A major theme of this volume is Pakistan’s military strategy, but Cheema is also cognizant that the country’s armed forces continue to base their strategizing more in reaction to external events than in matters demanded by the society it is charged with making secure. The most useful sections of this book therefore are not rooted in Pakistan’s defense policy or civil–military relations, or foreign-policy gambits, but in the separate chapters describing the evolution of the Pakistani army, navy, and air force. In this respect, the book is a good, fast read, a virtual overview of the growth, role, and status of the Pakistani armed forces as the country attempts to maneuver into the current millennium.

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REVIEWED BY NAJIB GHADBIAN, Department of Political Science, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; e-mail: ghadbian@uark.edu

Balancing Act is a timely contribution to understanding U.S. foreign policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict. The book seeks to describe and explain U.S. attempts to be an evenhanded and balanced broker in one of the most protracted contemporary conflicts. From the outset, the author distinguishes between the claim of “neutrality” and actual policy. There is a palpable recurring pattern: “the US declares a ‘balanced’ approach, attempting to straddle Israeli and Arab sensitivities, only to end up taking the Israeli position in the end” (p. vii).

Vaughn Shannon suggests a level-of-analysis approach to look at various influences on U.S. foreign policy. The first level is the geostrategic influence, which focuses on the geopolitics and material factors, such as oil, and the shifting balance of power in the international system. The author’s working hypothesis regarding the geostrategic effect is that the protection of Middle Eastern oil from external and internal threats is an overarching strategic goal to which other objectives are subordinate.
The second influence is domestic, concentrating on political forces that impinge on various American administrations with the threat and promise of votes and donations. The domestic sources of U.S. foreign policy emanate from congressional–executive relations, interest groups, and electoral politics. The main domestic hypothesis here is that the United States tends to be pro-Israel as a rule. This is due to the apathy of the general public regarding the Arab–Israeli conflict and the lack of a competitive coalition similar to the pro-Israel lobby. The domestic political influence (in Israel’s favor, for the most part) may be at odds with strategic national interest (preserving the flow of “Arab” oil). The act of balancing Arab sensitivity due to strategic concerns against Israeli sensitivity for domestic reasons is the essence of U.S. foreign policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The final level of analysis is that of the individual decision makers. It is the way in which the perspective of the American presidents and their advisers affects their balancing of strategic and domestic influences. The key assumption of this level of analysis is that the decision makers’ beliefs and perceptions may explain idiosyncratic developments rather than patterns. Employing this lens helps explain how certain presidents have felt on some issues, such as the disdain that George W. Bush consistently showed toward Yasir Arafat.

Shannon uses a historical approach to test the contending hypotheses about the relative weight of the different influences on U.S. policy. He traces U.S. decisions and actions toward the Arab–Israeli conflict since World War II. The purpose of this exercise is to describe and analyze U.S. behavior based on historical evidence so that patterns can be identified and explained by their international, domestic, and individual sources.

The book is divided into nine short chapters. In chapter 1, Shannon lays out the context and perspectives, emphasizing the importance of subjective views of the participants regarding the key issues of the conflict (i.e., the Palestinian state, refugees, settlements, and Jerusalem). Chapters 3–8 trace chronologically the international, domestic, and individual bearings on U.S. behavior in the quest for the appearance of balance. During each period, special attention is paid to the most salient influence. For instance, chapter 3 illustrates the emerging potency of the Cold War and the power of Jewish influence. Chapter 4 reveals the crystallization of the special relationship between the United States and the state of Israel. The final chapter concludes with an assessment of the balance sheet and its implications.

The author highlights some clear patterns that have emerged over time. The first pattern is the United States’ attempt to maintain evenhandedness. Second, there is a fairly conspicuous bias in favor of Israel, both in the definition of situations and in policy. This is why some analysts believe that “the ‘balancing act’ is just that: an act” (p. 128). Third, presidents who have dared to challenge Israel have tended to be Republican more than Democrat. The book concludes with two recommendations: one in favor of continuity; the other urging change. For continuity, Shannon advocates continued aid and support to moderate regimes in the Middle East: Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. What needs to change in the pursuit of regional stability and winning the war on terror, according to the author, is the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. While Shannon acknowledges the obstacles to realizing this objective, he believes that the United States and the international community could unilaterally recognize such a state.

But the recommendation of unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state, while admirable, is unfeasible as long as Israel and its supporters remain opposed to it. The thorough historical analysis in this book illustrates how various U.S. administrations have followed rather than led when it has come to making unpopular choices regarding the Arab–Israeli conflict. Why should we expect any future U.S. administration to go against the dictate of the pro–Zionist lobby?

Another issue involves some minor factual mistakes, which could be easily corrected in future editions. The author states, in the context of describing negotiations on the “Syrian
track,” that the United States hosted Hafiz al-Asad and Shimon Peres in Maryland in late 1995 (p. 96). The head of the Syrian delegation was the foreign minister, Farouq al-Shari’. Al-Asad never headed any delegation to public negotiations with Israel, nor did he ever pay any official visit to Washington. Another error is naming members of the Quartet (the international entity overseeing the implementation of the road-map agreement) as the United States, United Nations, United Kingdom, and Russia (p. 124); the European Union, not the United Kingdom, is the third member.

On balance, Balancing Act is well researched and analytically sound. It is recommended for policymakers, journalists, and upper-level undergraduate and graduate classes related to Middle East politics, U.S. foreign policy, and the Arab–Israeli conflict, especially after publication of an affordable paperback edition.

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REVIEWED BY JACQUES WAARDENBURG, Department of History and Sciences of Religion, University of Lausanne; e-mail: jacobus.waardenburg@dtheol.unil.ch

The central question of this book, whose title can be translated “The Arab East at the American Hour: From the Gulf War [of 1991] to the Iraq War [of 2003],” is as follows: what happened in the Arab East, including Egypt, during those years, and what role did the United States play? Henry Laurens, who is a professor of history at the Collège de France in Paris, has attempted to write a contemporary political history of one of the world’s most contentious regions.

Although developments in most countries of the Arab East are discussed in this book, the author focuses on two important relationships during this period. The first is Iraq and its relations with the United States, and the second is the Palestinian relationship with Israel and the United States. The advantages of this approach are clear. It allows the author to trace the course of events, tensions, and conflicts surrounding each case during these roughly fifteen years of history. Laurens tries to do justice to the multifaceted nature of the Arab East as a region by not offering a political, economic, or any other kind of theory to explain the history of this region. Nor does he hold any particular party as being responsible for all the mishaps of the recent past.

Perhaps the section that deals with Israeli–Palestinian relations is the most rewarding. Laurens divides the post–Yitzhak Shamir era into periods beginning with that of Yitzhak Rabin (June 1992–November 1995), which coincides with the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians as envisaged by the United States. The author summarizes the weaknesses of the Oslo Agreements (pp. 57–58, 133–35), such as the fact that it did not freeze settlement activities in the occupied territories.

The second period corresponds to the reign of Benjamin Netanyahu (April 1996–May 1999) and saw the peace process being paralyzed. Laurens maintains that it was U.S. President Bill Clinton who succeeded in pushing Netanyahu and Yasir Arafat into signing the Wye Plantation Agreement (October 1998), which further transferred territory to the Palestinians and settled many security issues. He rightly affirms that the Israelis’ stress on security and attachment to the land of the forefathers largely serves to unify an increasingly “multicultural” Israel. It is precisely these elements, however, that constitute the main obstacles to peace, as well (p. 107). The author maintains that Israeli policies of closing off roads in the territories, and thus communication and supplies—all carried out in the name of measures against
terrorism—are in fact also meant to press the Palestinian population to surrender in a war of attrition. Contrary to the expected outcomes, these measures have incited Palestinians to engage in protests, disturbances, and suicidal attacks. In this connection, Laurens manages to analyze the respective assumptions of Israelis and Palestinians with regard to “rapprochement” (pp. 133–37) and reminds us that Ehud Barak’s ideas at the time that he ascended to the leadership of the Labor Party did not differ much from those of Netanyahu (p. 99).

The period of Ehud Barak (May 1999–February 2001), who wanted to push on to the final phase, led to the failure of the peace process, which was later sealed by his successor, Ariel Sharon. Still, a memorandum of agreement was signed in Sharm al-Shaykh (September 1999) that set 13 September 2000 as the deadline for the definitive final agreement followed by Arafat’s threat to proclaim a Palestinian state if no agreement had been reached by then. Alas, the final negotiations organized at Camp David were badly prepared for. They were also held against the will of the Palestinians and did not lead to the hoped-for definite agreement. As a historian, Laurens mentions various reasons for the failure (pp. 143–49, 162–64), such as the more positive but ineffective parameters of Clinton (December 2000) as well as the nature of the discussions in Taba (January 2001) as reported (not accepted by Israel) by the European Union’s delegate, Miguel Angel Moratinos (pp. 157–62).

As is well known, Sharon’s visit to the Esplanade in Jerusalem (September 2000), the subsequent violence, and the second intifada and suicide attacks led to his being elected prime minister (February 2001). For him, the only solution is a military one. As a result, all of the parties are now “imprisoned in violence” (p. 165). Laurens repeatedly refers to the disproportionate suffering of Palestinians compared with that of Israeli civilians. All of this, in the end, goes back to the policy of colonizing the occupied territories as pursued by all Israeli governments since 1967 (pp. 87–97).

Something similar holds true for the United Nations’ embargo of Iraq, which began in 1992 at the insistence of the United States. As with the Palestinians, a military option was chosen in Iraq that effectively rendered the civilian population into hostages. In neither case, however, was there proof or even the probability that this option would lead to the desired outcome. Instead, it suggests a worse-than-colonialist attitude toward the people concerned and a simplified, utterly wrong conception of who was considered the enemy. One can conclude that this type of approach is less than intelligent and finally self-destructive.

This is a timely book that invites the reader to engage in historical reflection. It does not read the past according to a preconceived scheme or judge it from an established perspective. Rather, it enables the facts to speak in a human context. It suggests that only tenacious historical research will establish the right connections and measure the extent to which everyone concerned, inside and outside the region, has been misled about what has been going on. Finally, it must be said that while this book primarily addresses the nonspecialist reader, it also poses serious questions to specialists. The statistical tables, along with statements and documents that are often quoted in full, further add to the value of this book.

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REVIEWED BY MICHAEL AXWORTHY, independent scholar, Cornwall, U.K.; e-mail: lo.cory@virgin.net

Terrorism, Afghanistan and America’s New Way of War is an ambitious, lucid, and stimulating book that describes the political and military response of the U.S. government to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington of 11 September 2001. Its author, Norman Friedman,
weaves military analysis cleverly into his narrative of political events, as he has done in earlier books on the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf War, showing an ability to cut through to essentials that characterizes the best military historians. But the book has some shortcomings.

One of its central themes is that the U.S. defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan demonstrated the growing importance of a new “network-centric” military doctrine, which relies on remote sensors and computer-driven command-and-control systems to deliver smart weapons, precisely and with devastating effect, from a relatively small number of offensive units. Friedman’s argument is that networked air strikes, combined with action by coalition partners such as the Northern Alliance on the ground (supported by Western Special Forces), are the way that the United States will fight future wars. He admits that what happened in Afghanistan did not entirely fit that model, because not all the necessary systems were yet available. But overall his argument is convincing, and the technical military issues are presented clearly, without excessive jargon to confound the uninitiated.

The purely military sections form only a relatively short part of the book. Having given an account of the 11 September attacks, Friedman runs through the history of the U.S. response to terrorism back to the early 1980s, criticizing the insufficiently robust policy of the Clinton administration and CIA shortcomings. He accounts for the origins and development of al-Qa’ida, suggesting that Osama bin Laden’s main aim is to foster fundamentalist movements in Middle Eastern states, encouraging them and drawing attention to himself through attacks on the United States. He considers the recent history of Afghanistan and how that application of the theory of network-centric warfare developed from experience in earlier conflicts in the Gulf, Bosnia, and Kosovo. He then describes the coalition building and the preparations for and actual conduct of the war in Afghanistan.

It was perhaps inevitable that there would be some fuzzy patches in the detail of this broad canvas, but a glance at the bibliography suggests that Friedman could have avoided some of them by relying less heavily on journalistic articles and on books of doubtful value. He repeats unsubstantiated reports that “Arab-looking” passengers were seen running away from grounded airliners on 11 September, leaving box cutters on their seats, and that fundamentalist Muslims in New Jersey were told to train telescopes on the Twin Towers because something big was about to happen.

On the central questions, Friedman assembles his evidence and presents his judgments more convincingly, leaving us in little doubt about his overall alignment. His view is that Arafat chose a renewed intifada after the Barak plan because he could not face the prospect of peace, and that until Palestinians and others accept Israel’s right to exist, negotiations toward a settlement will be fruitless. He is accordingly skeptical about the arguments for removing what are called the root causes of terrorism, noting deeper motives behind anti–Americanism and the fact that Osama bin Laden’s version of it had more initially to do with hostility to U.S. bases on Arabian soil than any other factor. His judgment is that anti–Americanism is fairly intractable. Given that, it is important to deter terrorist aggression by acting firmly against governments that sponsor or harbor terrorists. The true root causes of terrorism may be the long-standing failure of states in the Middle East to deliver representative government or economic prosperity for their people, fueling discontent that emerges in fundamentalism. The United States should therefore do more to encourage political and economic freedom. Whether one fully agrees with these positions, Friedman presents the arguments for them in a balanced and trenchant way.

But Friedman does not consider the argument that, leaving Israel aside, important elements of American problems in the region stem from past errors in U.S. policy. In the period of the Russian occupation of Afghanistan and later, CIA support flowed to Sunni Muslim groups, including the Taliban and al-Qa’ida, via Pakistan. The United States and other Western nations supported Saddam in the Iran–Iraq War of the 1980s and betrayed the Shi‘is of Iraq.
after the Gulf War of 1991. In each case, the U.S. decided on these actions because of an overriding fear of Iran: this fear is central to the story of what went wrong in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran has threatened the United States and attacked U.S. interests, but not on the order of those made by Saddam and al-Qa’ida. And Iran had some legitimate grievances (notably, the shameful USS Vincennes incident). Iran would never have been easy to handle, but U.S. mishandling of Iran since the trauma of the embassy hostage episode has helped create its most serious security threats: al-Qa’ida and Saddam. Friedman does not address the central question of why the United States perceived Iran as more of a threat than the factors that later emerged as the most serious dangers.

Iran is only one example. Friedman’s book indicates that the United States also badly misunderstood the nature and limits of Saudi Arabia’s friendship, if it can be called that. Might the origin of those failures go so deep that they still cause misunderstandings about the region today? When Friedman tells us that the CIA may not have had anyone capable of speaking Afghan languages—or, indeed, anyone with much understanding of Afghanistan at all—in the autumn of 2001, that appears sadly plausible. The United States has many experts on these regions in its universities and elsewhere, but few of them appear in Friedman’s bibliography. It is as if the U.S. military/security sector sees the regional experts as somehow unsound and untouchable—and, perhaps, vice versa. That could allow people on both sides to get away with unrealistic arguments and positions within their respective coteries that would quickly be blown away if they engaged properly with each other, as they should. If so, that situation is one that the United States can ill afford.

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REVIEWED BY MARK RUPERT, Department of Political Science, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.; e-mail: merupert@maxwell.syr.edu

The historian Richard Crockatt paints on a broad canvas to untangle the mutual incomprehension between mainstream America and the peoples of the world whose lives are more or less continuously and profoundly affected by the exercise of U.S. global power. This thoughtful and judicious book maps the complex and contradictory relationship of U.S. supremacy in the post–Cold War world; the self-referential political culture that has historically motivated the broad U.S. public to support the global projects undertaken by American state managers with little understanding of, or attention to, the actual consequences for the lives of non-Americans; the resentments and resistances that U.S.-centered and massively unequal globalization has engendered worldwide; and the ways in which militant ideologies of “political Islam” have drawn energy from these. Crockatt identifies a confluence of political, economic, and cultural processes that together have generated something like a global-political perfect storm of dominance and resistance, terror, and increasingly terrible “war on terror.” “The main claim of the book,” he writes, “is that September 11 must be understood in light of the interaction between America’s dominant international position since the end of the Cold War, the rise of political Islam, and the complex set of phenomena that comes under the heading of globalization” (p. ix).

Crockatt’s first order of business is to understand the idiosyncratic way Americans see the world and their place within it. He notes that most Americans reacted to the attacks of 11 September with “shock and bafflement,” seeing the attacks as coming “out of the
blue” (p. 8), with little or no awareness of their contextual relationship to America’s global role. Not for the first time Americans framed their narratives of world politics in terms of a threatening intrusion, a malevolent disruption of the “normalcy” of daily life in America that required a putatively extraordinary U.S. response. It was seen as yet another American “loss of innocence,” but how is it that Americans are capable of repeatedly losing their virginity?

In this Crockatt detects a culturally based historical pattern, “a central tension in American history: the coexistence of an ambition for power and growth with an aspiration to exemplary status as an ideal republic” (p. 23). Crockatt briefly summarizes America’s historical expansionism and contrasts the increasingly pervasive exercise of U.S. power with what he calls the “official story” that has been widely accepted by generations of Americans: “the self-image of the United States as a peace-loving beacon of democracy and a benign distributor of goods to a grateful world” (p. 27). This comfortable (and resilient) self-image is made possible by key historical features of American political culture, which Crockatt clearly identifies. America’s founding mythology is understood in terms of an emancipatory struggle to construct an exemplary democratic republic in the face of overwhelmingly superior colonial power. This American genesis story is then projected as a transhistorical identity, the unalterable essence of national character. Viewed in these terms, it is almost inconceivable that postcolonial America could be a colonial power in the same way that Britain or Belgium was. Americans are further armored against imperial self-awareness by the ideological separation of economics from politics:

The United States’ core value system does not admit the possibility that the economic structure itself—the capitalist system—may exert a malign influence, that it may exploit what it appears to benefit. Individual malefactors may and do exist; evil is a fact of life. However, to see the motor of the American productive system as inherently dangerous to the lives and liberties of other nations hardly enters into the consciousness of those who see its benefits in the form of high standards of living and consumption as self-evidently good and of benefit to all [p. 31].

This powerful mythology of essential republican innocence Crockatt dubs “Americanism.” He then places anti–Americanism in relation to it as the equally essentialized ideological mirror image, representing America as the very embodiment of the dark side of modernity. “If the peculiar blindness of Americans is to regard themselves as acted upon by the world rather than acting, the peculiar blindness of non–Americans is to regard America as the source of all the things they dislike in the contemporary world” (p. 57). Briefly mapping the worldwide intensification of such sentiments, Crockatt argues that in the eyes of much of the world, “the empire has subsumed the democratic republic” (p. 70). He concludes that “anti–Americanism in the Muslim world is a special case of the general anti–Americanism in much of the ‘Third World’” (p. 69).

But, of course, Islamic militancy cannot be reduced to anti–Americanism. Crockatt sketches the rise of political Islam over the past generation and the ways in which it has drawn strength from a confluence of historical processes: the pressures of modernization, which is both too fast and too slow; the failures of Arab nationalism; the unresolved plight of the Palestinians and America’s complicity in Israeli expansionism; imperial petro-politics, which have put America in bed with repressive forces throughout the region; and such formative events as the Islamist-led Iranian Revolution and the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad.

In the context of a post–Cold War world in which American power is unrivaled, in which American-led globalization has produced cultural change and historic levels of inequality, in which institutions and processes of global governance have emerged but are limited in capability and subject to U.S. power, and in which Americans and non–Americans understand in almost diametrically opposed terms the world they must live in together, the stage is set for mutual incomprehension and conflict, terror, and counter-terror.
In a grand synthesis, Crockatt ably weaves together the strands of this tragic tapestry. This is a rewarding read and a fine teaching text, rich in opportunities for reflection and discussion. Perhaps ironically, though, the very ideological disjunction that the text so ably identifies means that it is unlikely to be equally beneficial to American and non–American audiences. In particular, Crockatt bends over backward to avoid the reflexive and unreflective anti–Americanism that is so widespread in today’s world and to help his readers approach “America” in a more judicious manner. But in doing so, he may underemphasize those aspects of his broad canvas that might be most instructive to American readers: the ugly history of U.S. imperialism and the justifiable reasons that so much of the world is suspicious of U.S. power.

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REVIEWED BY MICHAEL BONNER, Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; e-mail: mbonner@umich.edu

This monumental book addresses the questions “of who the pre–Islamic Arabs were and of their relationship to other groups in Arabia and adjacent regions.” It is meant to provide “a legible introduction to the subject which can be understood by a reader with some general knowledge about the ancient history of the Mediterranean and the Middle East” (p. xi). The task is daunting, but the author proves more than equal to it.

At the outset, the question regarding the identity of the Arabs is posed linguistically and rather literally. After considering some of the modern meanings of the word ‘arab, Jan Retsô moves back to the early Islamic period. There ‘arab appears in contrasted pairs together with terms such as ‘ajam, musta‘riba, mawlá, and so on. The discussion of each of these is subtle and sometimes surprising. Most intriguing is the relationship of the ‘arab to the qurrā’ or ahl al-qurā, “people of the villages” (pp. 48–51). It emerges that ‘arab did not, at the time of the rise of Islam, commonly designate “the members of the tribes that at some point became Muslims.” After all, the earliest Islamic fighters were known as muhājirūn, not ‘arab (p. 70). The tribal system familiar to us for early Islamic history, as well as the designation of its members as ‘arab, are thus products of the Umayyad period (661–750). Outside observers likewise did not—at least, at first—refer to these people as “Arabs.” This means that before Islam there was no concept of a nation of ‘arab, composed of a number of tribes all descending from an eponymous patriarch, similar to the nation of Israel familiar to us from the Bible. All this is not surprising, but it is presented convincingly and documented thoroughly. More controversial is the idea that the a’rāb, whom we think of as “nomads,” were not identified that way in the earliest Islamic texts, including the Qur’an. This term referred to a juridical status rather than a way of life: the a’rāb were the opposite of those who “emigrated,” performed muhājara (pp. 86–87). Later, Retsô claims that this status had southern Arabian roots.

The argument here is subtle, and the source material is rich. However, we may ask whether this focus on the meaning of a word is the most desirable procedure. There is some danger, after all, in viewing the early Islamic community as composed of distinct groups, such as muhājirūn, ahl al-qurā, mawlá, a’rāb, and, for all that, ‘arab, when these were—as Retsô himself shows—shifting and at times overlapping terms. One answer is that those historians of early Islam who are not interested primarily in the origins and development of words must
nonetheless avoid constructing social groups entirely out of such terms as these. This book will give them a sense of the complexity of the terminological and other issues involved. Thus far, I have accounted for only a fraction of the book, which then goes back to discuss the earliest Arabs known from cuneiform sources; Arabs in the Old Testament; the ages of the Achaemenids and of Alexander and his heirs; the “Nabataean problem”; the Arabs and the Roman Empire; and the Arabs as they appear in Talmudic and southern Arabian sources. The author shows a remarkable command of texts and modern scholarship in an enormous array of languages. He does not, however, make much use of the pre–Islamic (jähili) poetry in Arabic, probably because of the methodological problems it poses. Similarly, Retsö expresses discomfort with ancient Greek geography and other works imbued with classical learning, such as Pliny and Ammianus, although he certainly makes good use of these authors. In general, he is more comfortable with documentary sources and with literary sources that reflect official points of view.

But, of course, this subject matter is notoriously tricky, as Retsö shows again and again. Beginning with that same ancient Greek geography, “Arabia” could refer to the entire peninsula, but it more commonly designated a smaller region directly facing whoever was doing the naming. The designation “Arabs” similarly referred to a variety of groups. Beginning around A.D. 300, however, in the northern borderlands other names (Saracens/Tayyaye), that had previously appeared together with “Arabs” took the place of this older designation, although southern Arabian sources continued to mention “Arabs.” Retsö connects this change in terminology with a major social change: the “beduinization of Arabia,” which Dostal and Henninger identified earlier. The matter is more complicated than this, however. In particular, a tension between ethnic designation (Arabs as a people) and functional designations (Arabs as warriors or priests associated with sanctuaries) is never fully resolved.

Until recently, we did not have an up-to-date, one-volume survey of pre–Islamic Arabia in English. That situation changed with Robert G. Hoyland’s Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam (London: Routledge, 2001). Hoyland’s work is easier to handle than Retsö’s and provides a first stop for those who want to enter this extensive and varied terrain. For those who want to venture farther, Retsö’s book will be indispensable, even if some readers may in the end prefer to use it as a kind of reference work. The reviewer must point out that despite the author’s desire to provide a “legible introduction” to the Arabs before Islam, the book’s print is crowded and small, and a thorough reading can cause some eye strain. The effort, however, will be amply rewarded.

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REVIEWED BY MAHMUD HAWARI, Saluhuddin Y. H. Abduljawad Senior Research Fellow, Oriental Institute, University of Oxford; e-mail: hawari@btinternet.com

The Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) is the architectural and visual focus of the Old City of Jerusalem. The sacred precinct, with its magnificent gem-like monument—the Dome of the Rock—and the al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as dozens of other domed structures, arcades, light, and serenity, comes near to being one of the glories of the world. It has symbolic and religious implications for the three great monotheistic religions, which add to its undeniable impact on the visitor.
Numerous studies have focused on the architecture and history of art of the monuments on the Haram. However, few studies have attempted to examine the various conceptions regarding this holy site. In that respect, Andreas Kaplony’s book represents a breakthrough. Covering the period from Byzantine rule in 324 until the Frankish conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, he traces the emergence of conceptions with which the major religions share the Holy City. He also examines their interactions as well as the political circumstances and religious axioms that give each conception its specific form. His analysis is based on a thorough description of the Haram—focusing on topics such as names and traditions, architecture, rituals and customs, visions and dreams—and on the establishment of as many parallels as possible.

The book is divided into two major parts. The first part is devoted to conceptions related to Jerusalem. It shows how Jerusalem has developed from a city of one religion into a holy place shared by three religions. This shared holiness has been one of Jerusalem’s exceptional and most constant features ever since. To comprehend the emergence of the Muslim city in the period 635–1099, the author examines the preceding Christian/Byzantine period. He claims that both Christian and Muslim conceptions are closely linked; the latter are mostly reactions to conceptions of the earlier period. An analysis of the changes yields four periods, each showing a distinctive profile of sources.

During the pre-Marwanid period (324–685), Christians, Jews, and Muslims regard the area unanimously as the place of the former Temple, which leads to three conceptions. In the Christian conception, the Temple is replaced by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; the Jewish conception relates to the Temple’s ruinous state as temporary and believes it should be rebuilt. The Muslim conception, which prevailed for nearly a half century, regards the former Temple, which has been replaced by the Ka’ba, as a place that lost its importance. The Muslims build a mosque in the area and orientate it toward the Ka’ba.

The Marwanid period (685–813) witnesses an extensive building scheme that equates the Muslim mosque with the Temple precinct. At the same time, the south building (i.e., the Aqsa Mosque) is recognized as the Muslim Friday congregational prayer mosque. This grandiose architectural project, comparable to the Friday mosques of Damascus, Medina, and Mecca, competes with the monumental Byzantine churches and demonstrates the political supremacy of Islam. The mosque of Jerusalem is seen as a place of extraordinary spiritual power, of distinct holiness. Traditions charge the whole area with special holiness, the scene of eschatological events such as the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey. Architectural activity declares this sanctified landscape with a number of holy spots, of which the Rock is the holiest.

In the High Abbasid period (813–969) a new conception emerges in which ritual deals more and more with the area’s reputation as a place of immense spiritual power. Not only has the conception of the Muslim Temple become weaker, but its respective political goals are slowly forgotten. Christian traditions identify the area with the Temple of Solomon, while Jewish sources and traditions resume the concept of the former and future Temple.

The Fatimid period (969–1099) develops out of the double conception of two mosques inside each other—the whole precinct and the south building. The Fatimids rebuild the mosque after it is devastated by a series of earthquakes and provide it with all the elements characteristic of the great Fatimid mosques. They also enhance its status vis-à-vis the Dome of the Rock and begin calling the south building the al-Aqsa Mosque. Christians and Jews continue to identify this area with the Temple but also call it the mosque of the city.

The second part of the book contains a catalogue of the places (numbering 209) arranged according to the four periods. Each place is dealt with in terms of name, position, physical shape, traditions, rituals and customs, and visions and dreams.

Kaplony’s research is based on broad and extensive primary and secondary sources in several languages. What is most impressive is his use of the primary sources to elucidate his thesis, ranging from reports of Christian pilgrims such as Etheria (c. 400), Theodosius
(c. 518–30), and Arculfus (680) to Muslim traditions in praise of Jerusalem (Fada′il Bayt al-Maqdis) as quoted by many chroniclers, including al-Wasiti and Ibn al-Murajja (first half of the 11th century); Muslim geographers such as al-Istakhri (9th century), Ibn al-Faqih (902), al-Muqaddasi (985), Ibn Hawqal (c. 988), and Nasir-i Khusrau (1047); and the Jewish Arabic letters from the Cairo Geniza (first half of the 11th century). He also relies on the many inscriptions that are associated with the buildings and places in question, which have been meticulously published by the Swiss epigraphist Max van Berchem. In addition, he makes use of the abundant modern archaeological and architectural research that deals with existing monuments and remains of other buildings.

The study is not only exhaustive in scope. It also offers a new perspective on the development of perceptions regarding the Holy City adopted by the believers of the three major religions. This book is an excellent contribution to the growing literature on Islamic Jerusalem, and it will indubitably be of interest to scholars and students of medieval Islamic history.

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**REVIEWED BY JUDITH MENDELSOHN ROOD, Department of History, Biola University, La Mirada, Calif.; e-mail: judith.rood@biola.edu**

With today’s focus on jihadist, exclusivist Islam, it will surprise many readers unfamiliar with Middle Eastern history that Jewish women frequently turned to Islamic courts for favorable rulings on property disputes with their husbands and heirs. Ruth Lamdan’s encyclopedic examination of the Jewish legal culture in 16th-century Palestine and the Mediterranean world gives us insight into why this was so.

The work focuses on the experience of Sephardic Jews (Sephardim) expelled from Spain in 1492 who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. It is no longer widely known that in 1453, after conquering Constantinople, the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad the Conquerer (1451–81) invited Jews to settle in his domains. Even more famously, Bayezid II (1481–1512) invited those fleeing the Inquisition to settle in Ottoman Syria and Egypt, which were conquered in 1517. Tradition has it that he asked Ferdinand, the Spanish king who had expelled the Jews and Muslims from Andalusia, whether a ruler who improved his own country, thereby enriching another kingdom, could be considered wise. These invitations led to a Jewish revival in Safed in the Galilee and in Jerusalem, where the traumatized refugees from Spain began to rebuild their shattered lives.

Lamdan sets out to examine whether the Sephardim influenced the traditions of the Arabic-speaking Jews (M esta‘rabim), North African Jews (Maghrebim), and Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim already living in Ottoman lands. She asks how this “meeting of different cultures” was reflected in decisions based on normative Jewish law (Halakhah) that evolved in the refugee communities of the Levant during this period. “Did it help mitigate the intractability of the sages, and if so, how was this expressed in practice? Finally, how far did the Halakic status of women correspond to their actual status, as reflected in society’s attitude towards them in everyday life?” (p. 7). In answering these questions, Lamdan has produced a compendium of source material on the status of women in 16th-century Palestine, from Halakic responsa literature (she’elat v-teshovot; lit., questions and answers; a body of judicial opinion analogous to Islamic fatwa literature), the Cairo Geniza, homilies, local regulations, travelers’ literature, Islamic court records, and even ballads. She sheds light on the superstitions and
ignorance of those days by discussing texts relating to love spells, charms, witchcraft, and bizarre treatments for difficult childbirth (p. 87). Making excellent use of the scholarly works based on these genres, Lamdan meticulously traces the nuances of the many difficult issues facing these women: rabbinical prejudices regarding women generally and issues relating to childhood; marriage (including fascinating discussions of cases involving polygamy, marital disputes, divorce, levirate marriage, deserted wives); extended-family life; motherhood; social, economic, and religious life; and education. She homes in on well-chosen cases and brings the reader close to the jurisconsults and the atmosphere in which they made their rulings, and to the men and women involved in litigation.

The Babylonian Talmud described women as “a separate people,” and Lamdan sketches out their legal, social, and economic predicament in colorful and sometimes surprising detail. In so doing, she introduces the reader to normative Jewish law and its interpretation. She provides a helpful glossary and biographical sketches of the leading Jewish sages, jurisconsults, and “decisors,” enabling nonspecialists to follow her sources. The book is well indexed, with extensive footnotes. The peculiarity of the word “pressurize” instead of the word “persuade,” “coerce,” or “force” reflects Israeli usage and is the only noticeable translation issue in the book.

The author is not always consistent in her analysis. While she finds the rabbis inflexible, her cases show that the authorities did try to prevent greater harm by ameliorating the conditions facing women—but always to preserve the strength of the family through male control of property. Nevertheless, she bridges the gap between those who have studied Jewish law and those who have studied Islamic law; between legal scholars focusing on theory and historians focusing on political and socioeconomic developments; and between specialists and generalists. The work is therefore accessible to everyone interested in legal history, Jewish and Islamic history, Levantine history, and women’s studies.

Lamdan, an Israeli Jew, writes poignantly in conclusion, “Such a work would be incomplete without reference to the sorry fact that over the past five centuries, little has been done to improve the status of women in rabbinical courts. In the 20th century, as in the 16th century, there are hundreds of ‘chained’ women in the State of Israel whose husbands refuse to grant them a get [bill of divorce], and who are at the court’s mercy if they wish to start a new life. Today, too, the rabbinical courts (which rule on matters of Jewish personal law) are powerless to compel recalcitrant husbands to grant a divorce, and are unable to provide a solution for their wives…. This failure has alienated large sections of the community from the rabbinical courts…. The rabbinical decisors fear they will lose control of their well-ordered masculine world and the lives and property of their wives and daughters…. In practice, the rabbis are not concerned with the wishes, feelings, or motives of women” (p. 267).
the Ottoman period, as well as comparative studies of urban patterns, have familiarized us with similarities and differences among these cities and with shifting patterns of urbanization over time. Not surprisingly, the largest cities—Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut—have received the most attention, although recently studies of smaller cities (notably, Jim Reilly’s study of Hama and Beshara Doumani’s study of Nablus) have appeared. Thomas Philipp’s study of Acre fits into the latter category. Making thorough and thoughtful use of all available sources (local histories, Ottoman archives, French consular reports, and travel literature), Philipp provides a detailed and in-depth study of the geography, politics, commerce, administration, and society of Acre and its region, a welcome addition to the historiography of Ottoman Syrian cities.

Acre is a particularly interesting case study because its history was quite different from that of other Ottoman Syrian cities. During the 100 years covered in this study, Acre underwent radical transformation. Little more than a village among the ruins of the Crusader city in 1730, by 1785 Acre had become the third-largest city in Syria, the capital of a politically integrated region in southwestern Syria, and the most important seaport on the Syrian coast. Its decline was equally precipitous. By the fourth decade of the 19th century, it was once again an insignificant coastal town. Philipp’s purpose in this work is to narrate and explain both the rise and the subsequent decline of this city.

Philipp argues that this dramatic history was directly linked to the two major structural changes that were affecting the Ottoman Empire as a whole: the decentralization of the state, reflected in the growing power of provincial notables, and the beginnings of the transition to the European-dominated world economy. The particular way in which these two processes intersected in southwestern Syria in the 18th century precipitated the rise of Acre and its subsequent downfall between 1730 and 1831.

Before 1730, Acre was an insignificant town on the geographical periphery of the Ottoman Empire, away from the major economic and military lines of communication in Syria. As a “frontier” town with no settled hinterland, it was a backwater in the early centuries of Ottoman rule. This peripheral position, however, worked to its advantage as political and economic conditions changed in the 18th century. Political weakness at the center of the Ottoman state created the possibility of new political centers. Philipp discusses in detail the rise to power and rule of the powerful notables who took advantage of this vacuum and dominated Acre during this period: Umar al-Dhahir, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, and Sulayman Pasha (chap. 2). On one level, these rulers were classic examples of 18th-century Ottoman provincial notables. At the same time, they were different from many other notables. They achieved an unprecedented degree of political autonomy because of French interest in raw cotton, the measures taken by Acre’s rulers to facilitate this export trade, and the wealth they were able to accumulate as a result. “Political power and economic interests were joined in an unprecedented symbiosis” (p. 102). Philipp discusses the economic relationship between the French and the local rulers at some length, focusing on the policy of “state monopoly.” By prohibiting direct contact between the French and the local population, the rulers of Acre reaped the benefits of French demand for raw cotton without having to share the profits with other groups. The economic boom produced by this trade attracted immigrants to the city and resulted both in significant growth in population and major urban development.

According to Philipp, Acre was the first place in the Middle East to be effectively integrated into the world economy. However, the benefits of this relationship did not last. As the world market changed in the early 19th century, the rulers’ policy of economic monopoly undermined the government’s ability to respond to these changes and hastened France’s departure from Acre. Furthermore, it had a stifling effect on the local population. The government dominated all areas of the economy, becoming the biggest contractor and employer, as well as establishing a monopoly on trade. As a result, there were no guilds and there was no urban elite, both of which played such a critical role in other Ottoman cities. Philipp’s discussion of urban society
and the relationship between government and society (chap. 5) is one of the most interesting in the book. Unlike other Syrian cities, Acre lacked the urban institutions, intermediary social groups, and established urban fabric not only of the “great” Arab cities such as Aleppo and Damascus, but also of smaller cities such as Hama and Nablus. Unfortunately, there are no extant religious court documents to provide a clearer picture of this “frontier” society of immigrants.

Philipp’s study of Acre offers a persuasive and well-documented argument that makes an important contribution to our understanding of several issues. One is the process of integration of the Middle East into the world economy. He underscores the fact that this process began well before Muhammad ʿAli and the Egyptian cotton boom and therefore reinforces the importance of scholarship on the 18th century for understanding the social transformations associated with modernity. The experience of Acre also reminds us once again that the process of integration into the world economy was not a monolithic one. The degree of integration and its impact on different regions of the Middle East was contingent on when this integration occurred, on local power structures, and on the composition and responses of local elites, as well as market forces and the interests of European players. Philipp also underscores the variation in the relationship between the Ottoman central government and the various provincial actors during this period of decentralization. There were different degrees and kinds (political versus economic) of autonomy even when the Ottoman state was least able to exercise control beyond the core areas of the empire.

Overall, this is an important and welcome contribution to the historiography of Ottoman Syrian cities and to the discussion of the early stages in the transformation to modernity. The depth and detail of this case study make it particularly valuable for scholars of the Middle East and graduate students, although less accessible to nonspecialists.

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REVIEWED BY NARGES ERAMI, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York; e-mail: ne52@columbia.edu

This is a work of history and economics and a description of how technology transformed 19th-century Iran. It is certain that such changes had social, cultural, and economic ramifications. Willem Floor mainly delves into the last, but his work and his reading into the various travelogues, missives, and official reports could aid in a different reading of the Qajar period. The sources are impressive in their detailed description of the manufacturing of each handicraft. In many ways, this is a history of modern life in Iran, for each of the handicrafts described in this book had a profound effect on everyday life and even national identity. International economic pressure altered everyday lives, and Floor depicts this issue by recounting observations made and historicizing these accounts for each handicraft. Eight handicrafts are discussed in detail, chosen by the author to represent the manufacturing of these goods in Qajar Iran.

How did 19th-century Iran react and position itself vis-à-vis foreign (mostly European) powers economically? This is the wider question answered in chapter 1. The Persian government did not simply “neglect” traditional crafts. The government did respond throughout the 19th century in many ways, from making direct investments to encouraging direct and indirect European involvement in rapid industrialization and setting up tariffs to encourage local
and national industries. Floor shows that some traditional handicrafts suffered from foreign competition during this period, but other handicrafts flourished—such as the handwoven carpet industry. Although this particular commodity is not discussed in this book, Floor has devoted a separate monograph to the topic.

“Western penetration had come to Iran as a political and military threat” (p. 21), Floor writes, and this continues to be the manner with which foreign goods were received by the government. Using a multitude of sources, Floor shows how the government fought foreign competition by employing policies to bring materials and factories that built such goods to Iran to promote buying “Persian goods only.” These costly policies failed “because the government was too weak, too ignorant with regard to economic affairs and the requirements of modern technology, and in fact unable to protect its nascent industry” (p. 33).

In the exegesis of the eight handicrafts, the reader moves through the struggles of Qajar Iran with its competitors. Most crafts do not fare well—ceramics, for example. One learns that ceramics, and specifically the art of the craft, were not autochthonous to the famous cities of Kashan and Yazd. Glass also suffers, for the manufacturing of this commodity never constituted an important national industry for several reasons. The most important are the lack of technology and the success of foreign imports. Paper, soap, and mining and metalworks all suffered the same fate. Even with government intervention, the manufacturing of all of these goods eventually suffered against foreign competition, which offered better quality and lower prices.

The gem of the book is the chapter on lighting. All forms of lighting are discussed, dating back to the Safavids. The chapter covers rural and urban areas. The history of public lighting—discussions of the oils, candles, and gas lamps used prior to the establishment of electricity—is especially important. The manner in which 19th-century Persia modernized, publicly and privately, through the transformation of modern life via lighting is extremely important in the history of technology in the emerging nation-state of Iran. As with other handicraft products described in this book, the candle industry tried to transform itself in the face of foreign competition, but local factories failed to produce competitive products because of the lack of know-how and of technology and materials. Floor’s meticulous research depicts different types of households and how they used light. Before public lighting, people walked around in the darkness or carried personal lanterns, not just for safety, but for a more important reason: “having a light indicated to the night watch that one was good people” (p. 155).

It is in the discussion of sugar, tanning, and leather crafts that a different view of Qajar Iran is presented. Although sugar was largely imported, the craft of producing sweetmeats flourished in Qajar Iran, for sugar products played an important social, political, and cultural role. Tanning and leather crafts are the successful manufacturing products of this monograph, with the city of Hamadan leading the industry in the region. “The trade in skins, pelts and derived products was important to Iran…. [I]t yielded foreign exchange, because Iran, in financial terms, exported three times more skins and leather products than it imported in 1914” (p. 405). Nineteenth-century Iran did quite well in exporting “goat, sheep and lamb skins” and furs and pelts to Russia, India, and Turkey.

Floor expertly depicts the many different cities, regions, and villages in which each craft was most famous, including details of the guilds involved, the sources of raw materials used, and even detailed accounts of the manufacturing of particular products by the artisans in their own words. Drawing on the writings of the 19th-century French scientist Olmer, who studied traditional Persian industries, and Tahvildar, an Isfahani official-turned-historian, Floor describes local handicrafts with an authoritative voice making extensive use of quotes. Readers who are not familiar with the Qajar period may want to learn more about these and other writers who provide the sources for this work. The overall quality of the scholarship rests on the synthesis of various resources to add to our knowledge of the Qajar period. Scholars
of this period will benefit from this original work. This book is invaluable to the history of technology in the Middle East.

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REVIEWED BY F. E. PETERS, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University; e-mail: frank.peters@nyu.edu

Caveat emptor, if there be such for Jews and Muslims, the somewhat misleadingly renamed work that has passed in review twice before—originally in Paris in 1989 as De l’instruction à l’émancipation: Les enseignants de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle et les Juifs de l’Orient, 1860–1939, its most descriptive title; then, in 1993, in an “expanded, updated and revised” English translation as Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860–1939 from the University of Washington Press; and now again, from the same publisher, without benefit of expansion, revision, or updating, as Jews and Muslims. Although the title has been revamped, Aron Rodrigue’s book is still, as it was from the beginning, a collection of documents originally in French, most of them letters, from the staff of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and dating from its founding in 1860 to the outbreak of World War II.

That chastisement aside—and perhaps, after all, we cannot have too much of a good thing—this book by Rodrigue, who is now a professor of Jewish studies and history at Stanford University and has gone on to write both broader and more detailed studies of the Sephardim, remains an interesting and highly instructive archive on the course of Middle Eastern colonialism and Westernization. More specifically, it provides a privileged view into both the ideals and aspirations of the Ashkenazi Enlightenment and slow deterioration of Sephardic Judaism at the turn of the 20th century.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle was a prodigious and prodigiously influential educational initiative by French Jews that opened its first school in Tetuan, Morocco, in 1862. By 1939, it was operating 127 schools, with nearly 48,000 students across the Sephardic diaspora from Morocco to Iran. In the main, they were partially secularized primary schools, separate schools for boys and girls (oddly, there were three co-ed Torah–Talmud schools in Algeria) that were set up after a French model though with considerable Judaic refitting (pp. 25–33). The teachers, who were trained at the alliance’s école normale in Paris, were generally recruited from within the school system, and most came from what was, in the 19th century, the Sephardic heartland: Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria (pp. 34–67).

The alliance teachers were thus Sephardic men and women for whom such training and such a post, which underlined their promotion into the Western elite of their communities, was an enormous step forward and upward in the larger society that regarded the West with increasing respect and admiration. Their mission was to lead others along the same path, an enterprise that was to prove, in Rodrigue’s words, “extraordinarily corrosive to the position of Jews in Muslim lands” (p. 6). The alliance, whether it intended it or not, was in the vanguard of European, and particularly French, colonialism in North Africa and the Middle East in the second half of the 19th century, which was clearly a source of pride and, at the same time, of apprehension to these alliance teachers, with their finely attuned sense of the politics of the place (pp. 179–203).
But these high-minded missionnaires laïques may have been working an even more profound damage on Sephardic Jewry itself. The alliance had in mind not merely the protection of the Sephardim but their “regeneration,” and the letters of their newly Westernized teachers are filled with frequent and often fierce critiques of the belief and practices of the Sephardim they were sent out to “civilize” (pp. 105–24). At the same time, the local rabbis often, and not unnaturally, looked on them as dangerous intruders and forbade children to attend their schools. The alliance’s success in teaching French and its lack of skill and enthusiasm for Hebrew instruction (pp. 125–34) merely drove the point home.

Rodrigue’s rich and varied collection of texts, with his own enlightening commentary, are no mere ethnography of Sephardic Jewish life before that world was shredded almost beyond recognition (see especially pp. 135–78). They are also interesting and illuminating communiqués from the 19th century’s culture wars by some of its most animated warriors, who, in one place or another, had to wrestle with colonialism, nationalism, and Zionism (pp. 245–66). Whatever it is next called, Rodrigue’s book will still be well worth reading.

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REVIEWED BY MICHAEL M. GUNTER, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville; e-mail: mgunter@tntech.edu

Late in life, Merrill D. Peterson, a professor emeritus of history and the author of numerous earlier books on American presidents and history, “became fascinated by . . . the genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks during the First World War” (p. xi). He argues that “in the absence of any public retribution for the crime against the Armenians . . . the crime festered in the hearts of the Armenian people until it became a hallmark of their national character” (pp. 122–23). Much of his short book deals with the activities of the Near East Relief organization from 1915–29.

Although he writes well and thus makes a strong emotional case for the Armenians, Peterson fails to examine the Turkish side of the issue. The result, therefore, is simply the most recent one-sided restatement of the Armenian accusations of genocide at the hands of the Turks during and after World War I without looking at the overall context of what actually happened.

Throughout his book, Peterson attempts to document his case with only Armenian or pro–Armenian sources and totally neglects contrary evidence, even from Armenians themselves. Some of his sources are reputable, but others are biased or outright forgeries. His citing of the so-called Talaat Pasha telegrams or Andonian documents as “evidence” of premeditated Turkish genocide is a good example. Although the “original” telegrams have long since conveniently disappeared, Peterson considers them genuine and does not even bother to mention scholarly work by Sinasi Orel and Sureyya Yuca (The Talaat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction? [1986]), which makes a strong case that they are forgeries.

Even Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1913–16 and the author of one of the most damning denunciations of Turkish actions, was not a completely credible source when he “cited” Talaat Pasha’s anti–Armenian sentiments, called Mustafa Kemal Atatürk “‘a brutal monster’ who held tens of thousands of Armenian women in slavery”
(p. 147), or termed Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire “in reality advance agents of civilization” (p. 3). According to Peterson, Lord James Bryce, the compiler of the other most damning contemporary account of the Turkish actions, possessed “authority [that] was unimpeachable” (p. 7) and “could not be dismissed as a war propagandist” (p. 45), although this is exactly what Arnold Toynbee, then his young assistant, later called their work (without, however, negating all of its accuracy).

Contemporary Armenian writers such as Vahakn N. Dadrian is “a leading scholar” (p. 23) and Richard G. Hovannisian “the distinguished Armenian American professor” (p. 174), while Bernard Lewis (who questions the Armenian claims of genocide) is approvingly referred to by another Armenian scholar as someone who “had obviously left the field of scholarship and entered the arena of politics” (p. 172). Heath Lowry, a professor of history at Princeton University, was involved in a “noxious scandal” (p. 173) because he questioned the authenticity of Hitler’s reputed statement about who today remembers the Armenians.

Admiral Mark Bristol, the pro-Turkish U.S. High Commissioner in Constantinople after World War I, “held a venomous prejudice against Armenians” (p. 94), while Garejian Pasdermadjian (Armen Garo) is favorably referred to as the Armenian minister plenipotentiary to the United States after World War I (p. 98), without any mention that before the war he had been a member of the Ottoman Parliament who had deserted to the Russian enemy to fight against the Turks. An Islamic mullah is quoted as telling “giavoors . . . Mohammed had ordered him to sacrifice 100 Armenian male children . . . in your sanctuary . . . to be decapitated one by one at the altar” (p. 44). The Kurds are said to have “alternately worshiped Allah and the Devil” (p. 23) because they supported their Turkish co-religionists against the Armenians.

Without even bothering to mention that the Turks were fighting for their very existence after World War I against the Armenians in the east and the Greeks in the west, Peterson blithely asserts that “Kemal’s army continued to massacre Armenians” (p. 117). He also neglects even to mention the Greeks’ Megali Idea to conquer Anatolia and restore the Byzantine Empire after World War I, when he declares that “Kemal’s army had driven one and a half million Greeks from the Pontus, killing 360,000 in the process” (p. 124) and that Smyrna was “restored to Greece in 1920” (p. 129). Peterson’s population figure for the Greeks living in the Pontus, of course, is a gross exaggeration, while one wonders what he means by “restoring” Smyrna to Greece, as the Byzantine Empire had been extinct since 1453.

In his brief discussion of Armenian terrorism against Turkish diplomats and others during the 1970s and 1980s, Peterson fails to cite the relevant literature and even partially rationalizes the terrorism when he declares that “the cry for revenge was a desperate plea for attention. In the absence of a tribunal to which the aggrieved might turn, unsurprisingly, some took revenge into their own hands” (p. 167). Similarly callous is his brief statement about “renewed warfare against the Tartars in mountainous Karabagh” (p. 171) following Armenian independence in 1991, which neglects to mention that one of the first things the newly independent Armenian state did was to attack its neighbor Azerbaijan and conquer some 40 percent of its territory, which it still occupies to this day.

As for the claim that “international law assumes a successor government is liable for actions of its predecessors” (p. 166), scholars would argue that it is not so simple to maintain that modern Turkey is the legal successor to the Ottoman Empire. “The reunion of Cyprus . . . with mainland Greece” (p. 92) in 1913, of course, should instead read Crete. In addition, the Ottoman Empire did not “expire . . . on October 30, 1918” (p. 61) but lingered until 1922.

Although the Turks were certainly not innocent bystanders in all this, there is clearly more to the story than Peterson knows or is willing to analyze. What is needed, therefore, is a thorough and objective analysis of what really happened.

REVIEWED BY CHRIS RUNDLE, University of Durham, Durham, U.K.; e-mail: chris@rundlec.freeserve.co.uk

This is a clear, readable, and thoughtful account of recent Afghan history that will be of interest to the expert and general reader alike. It covers the period from 1880, when the “Iron Amir” Abdur Rahman Khan came to the throne, to 2001, with two chapters added to take account of developments after 11 September.

The early historical background is well presented; here Rasanayagam has had the benefit of material collected by the late Louis Dupree, whose encyclopedic book Afghanistan remains an essential reference work, and of the Tarzi family’s knowledge of events under the monarchy. For the later chapters, he has drawn on his own experience as director of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees office in Peshawar in the 1990s and contacts established with Afghans, Pakistanis, and U.N. personalities. Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan has contributed a foreword.

While the book follows a generally chronological sequence, in the second chapter there is a discussion of the Afghan monarchy from the time of Abdur Rahman to the coup that unseated Zahir Shah in 1973. Here the basic political forces in Afghanistan—the state and the tribal and ethnic groups—are introduced, and reference is made to the new urban, educated, and increasingly Westernized social group that had its heyday in the 1960s. Like those in Paris and elsewhere in the West, students at Kabul University were indulging in “free-wheeling debates and attacks on the status quo” (p. 26). One thing lacking is an attempt to evaluate the character of Zahir Shah, who is merely stated as having reigned while his uncles ruled. When this reviewer was in Kabul in the late 1960s, Zahir Shah was widely considered more comfortable in the role of gentleman farmer than that of monarch. When he paid a state visit to London in 1971, the queen remarked on his charm. Perhaps he was too gentle a character ultimately to hold the kingdom together. But it should not be forgotten that his reign lasted forty years.

Describing the democratic experiment that took place in the last decade of Zahir Shah’s rule, Rasanayagam asserts that, although many of the delegates to the Loya Jirga that debated the 1964 constitution were illiterate, they had great verbal facility, and this led to a more animated discussion than might have been expected. The constitution that they approved provided a starting point for the constitution adopted in January 2004, which was debated at considerably greater length—and with greater heat—by a more literate membership. But there was more to argue over in a postconflict situation.

In both cases, the place of Islam was of particular importance, and throughout the book the author is at pains to describe its various facets and their relevance to the political scene. Thus, Pakistan’s links to the Taliban are examined in detail, and the point is made that the ulama and village mullahs of Afghanistan, marginalized during the period of state building, were sympathetic to the Taliban’s philosophy, even if the impetus for the movement came from madrasas in the Pushtun belt of the North-West Frontier Province. In one of his rare expressions of strong feeling, Rasanayagam criticizes Pakistan’s Westernized elite for corruption and their failure to provide social justice, which created fertile ground for the growth of radical Islamic tendencies. In places, his discussion of Islam ranges too widely for comfort, as in a description of Islam in Iran. (Here he seems to be relying on an article by Bernard Lewis.) Thus, Ayatollah Montazeri was not opposed in principle to Khomeini’s idea of vilayat-i faqih,
nor does the Guardian Council control the judiciary, army, and security apparatus. In the penultimate chapter, which has the title “Holy War, Unholy Terror,” a description of early Islam and its relevance to al-Qa’ida’s terrorism is useful but breaks no new ground and may be considered unnecessarily long.

Chapters on the Soviet occupation and withdrawal, the fragmentation of Afghanistan after the withdrawal, and the rise of the Taliban contain a wealth of material concerning the communist movement, the mujahideen, Afghan refugees, and the role of the United Nations, as well as that of the United States and the Soviet Union. Rasanayagam is critical of the United Nations’ reluctance to condemn outright states that continued to interfere in Afghanistan after the Geneva Accords. He provides considerable detail of the United Nations’ later difficulties with the Taliban, described by Lakhdar Brahimi as “an organization that hands out edicts that prevent us doing our job” (pp. 198–99).

Although the story ends in 2002, the book sets the scene for an understanding of more recent developments. Early on, it indicates that the development of civil institutions in countries such as Afghanistan will require a long haul. It ends by warning that, after years of war and anarchy, the old tribal mindset based on patronage is still there. A major task in post-Taliban Afghanistan will be to see that the tribes and ethnic groups “become the partners, and not the rivals, of a national government” (p. 266). The problems encountered in arranging the presidential election in October 2004 and preparing for parliamentary elections in 2005 illustrate how difficult that task could be.

It is a pity that this informative book has an index that is inadequate and in places inaccurate. But the book can be highly recommended.