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BOOKS, SOFTWARE, RECORDINGS AND AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL FOR REVIEW should be sent to MESA Bulletin, Middle East Studies Association, PO Box 210410, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721-0410. Books received for review are listed in the *MESA Newsletter*.

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# Middle East Studies Association BULLETIN

Volume 32 • Number 1

Summer 1998

Editorial	1
Swimming Against the Tide: Personal Passions and Academic Fashions (1997 Presidential Address) LEILA FAWAZ	2
Globalization and the Nation State in the Arab World AHMAD S. MOUSSALLI	11
Between Celebration of Independence and Commemoration of Al-Nakbah: The Controversy over the Roots of the Israeli State BARUCH KIMMERLING	15
Expanding Kurdish Studies NICOLE WATTS	19
Religion and Politics: The Complex Relationship between Islamism and the State MALIKA ZEGHAL	25
The Center for the Study of Developing Countries MUSTAPHA KAMEL EL-SAYYID	29
Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award Competition, 1997	33
Foundation for Iranian Studies Dissertation of the Year Award	35
Albert Hourani Book Award, 1997	36

## Religion, Philosophy & Law

NATHAN J. BROWN, <i>The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf</i> (Bruce Rutherford)	37
ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER, <i>The Rights of Women in Islam</i> (Mine Ener)	38
HEINZ HALM, <i>Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution</i> (Asma Afsaruddin)	39
JEFFREY LANG, <i>Struggling to Surrender: Some Impressions of an American Convert to Islam</i> (Amir Hussain)	40
ANAHIT PERIKHANIAN, <i>The Book of a Thousand Judgements (A Sasanian Law-Book)</i> (J.A. Scurlock)	41
AMIRA EL AZHARY SONBOL, ed., <i>Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History</i> (Eleanor Abdella Doumato)	42
MICHAEL WOLFE, ed., <i>One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage</i> (Michael D. Berdine)	43



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MICHAEL WOLFE, ed., <i>One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage</i> (Michael D. Berdine)	43

HASAN KAYALI, <i>Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918</i> (Palmira Brummett) . . . . .	90
MARTIN KRAMER, ed., <i>The Islamism Debate</i> (Robert Looney) . . . . .	91
KARL LASKE, <i>Le banquier noir: François Genoud</i> (Arun Kapil) . . . . .	92
PIERRE PÉAN, <i>L'extrémiste: François Genoud, de Hitler à Carlos</i> (Arun Kapil) . . . . .	92
ROBERT MALLEY, <i>The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Return to Islam</i> (Jeffrey T. Kenney) . . . . .	94
HISHAM MELHEM, <i>Dual Containment: The Demise of a Fallacy</i> (David Pries) . . . . .	95
TIMOTHY MITCHELL, <i>Democracy and the State in the Arab World</i> (Ahmad Hussein Hasan Hassanin) . . . . .	97
ANDREW J. PIERRE & WILLIAM B. QUANDT, <i>The Algerian Crisis: Policy Options for the West</i> (Azzedine Layachi) . . . . .	98
DANIEL PIPES, <i>The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy</i> (Jeffrey T. Kenney) . . . . .	99
YEZID SAYIGH & AVI SHLAIM, eds., <i>The Cold War and the Middle East</i> (Irene L. Gendzier) . . . . .	100
RAYMOND TANTER, <i>Rogue Regimes: Terrorism and Proliferation</i> (Peter Gran) . . . . .	102

### Iranian Politics

JALAL AL-E AHMAD, <i>Gharbzadegi [Weststruckness]</i> (Valla Vakili) . . . . .	103
MEHRZAD BOROUEJDI, <i>Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism</i> (Farhang Rajaee) . . . . .	104
JAMES GOODE, <i>The United States and Iran: In the Shadow of Musaddiq</i> (Henry Precht) . . . . .	105
HASAN ONAT, <i>Shi'ism in the Twentieth Century and the Islamic Revolution of Iran</i> (Michael P. Zirinsky) . . . . .	106
ANNABELLE SREBERNY-MOHAMMADI & ALI MOHAMMADI, <i>Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution</i> (Fatma Müge Göçek) . . . . .	107

### Arab-Israeli Conflict

A.J. ABRAHAM, <i>The Lebanon War</i> (Imad Harb) . . . . .	108
MICHAEL N. BARNETT, ed., <i>Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom</i> (Esther Fuchs) . . . . .	109
LAURIE A. BRAND, <i>Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making</i> (Bassel F. Salloukh) . . . . .	110
RAPHAEL COHEN-ALMAGOR, <i>The Boundaries of Liberty and Tolerance: The Struggle Against Kahanism</i> (Deborah L. Wheeler) . . . . .	111
MICHAEL COHN, <i>Jewish Bridges: East to West</i> (Antonio Donno) . . . . .	113
HAROLD M. CUBERT, <i>The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East</i> (As'ad AbuKhalil) . . . . .	114
SAMIH K. FARSOON WITH CHRISTINA E. ZACHARIA, <i>Palestine and the Palestinians</i> (Glenn E. Robinson) . . . . .	115
AMITZUR ILAN, <i>The Origin of the Arab-Israeli Arms Race: Arms, Embargo, Military Power and Decision in the 1948 Palestine War</i> (Robert Hazan) . . . . .	116

ELISHA KALLY WITH GIDEON FISHelson, <i>Water Resources and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process</i> (Elizabeth Picard) . . . . .	
EFRAIM KARSH, <i>Fabricating Israeli History: The "New Historians"</i> (William Quandt) . . . . .	
MICHAEL KEREN, <i>Professionals Against Populism: The Peres Government and Democracy</i> (Ziva Flamhaft) . . . . .	
KEITH KYLE & JOEL PETERS, eds., <i>Whither Israel? The Domestic Challenge</i> (Russell Stone) . . . . .	
PNINA LAHAV, <i>Judgement in Jerusalem: Chief Justice Simon Agranat and the Zionist Century</i> (Ilan Peleg) . . . . .	
YEHUDA LUKACS, <i>Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process</i> (Maen F. Nsour) . . . . .	
NAFEZ Y. NAZZAL & LAILA A. NAZZAL, <i>Historical Dictionary of Palestine</i> (I Khalaf) . . . . .	
RICHARD B. PARKER, ed., <i>The Six-Day War: A Retrospective</i> (F. Gregory Gause, III) . . . . .	
GLENN E. ROBINSON, <i>Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution</i> (S Roy) . . . . .	
JAY ROTHMAN, <i>Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nations, Organizations, and Communities</i> (Anthony Bing) . . . . .	
ASHER SUSSER, <i>On Both Banks of the Jordan: A Political Biography of Wasfī al-1</i> (Bassel F. Salloukh) . . . . .	

### Audiovisuals

<i>Islam in Tibet: "The Ornaments of Lhasa"</i> (John R. Perry) . . . . .	
<i>Lebanon: Imprisoned Splendour</i> (Elise Salem Manganaro) . . . . .	
<i>Morocco: The Past and Present of Djemma el Fna</i> (Dale F. Eickelman) . . . . .	
<i>Boujad: A Nest in the Heat</i> (Dale F. Eickelman) . . . . .	
<i>Nasser 56</i> (Donald Malcolm Reid) . . . . .	
<i>One Man's Pilgrimage to Mecca (The Hajj)</i> (Ellen-Fairbanks Bodman) . . . . .	
<i>Salman Rushdie - Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea</i> (Rosalind Gwynne) . . . . .	
<i>The Sultan's Burden</i> (Ellen-Fairbanks Bodman) . . . . .	

### In Memoriam

Correspondence . . . . .	
Index of Essays, Vol. 21 (1987) - Vol. 30 (1996) . . . . .	
Index of Audio-Visuals, Vol. 21 (1987) - Vol. 30 (1996) . . . . .	
Index of Memorials, Vol. 21 (1987) - Vol. 30 (1996) . . . . .	
Index of Communications, Vol. 21 (1987) - Vol. 30 (1996) . . . . .	

Cover: Muhammad Ali mosque, Cairo, June 1987 (Photo by A. Lesch)

ed in the small space he devotes to the post-Kennedy years. It might have  
n.

His story of Musaddiq's fall is, nevertheless, a good read. It would have  
n even more enlightening if he had explained in greater depth how and why  
coup succeeded. And I wished he had speculated about what might have  
opened in Iran, Britain, and the Middle East if there had been no coup. Few  
servers would now approve of the action by the Eisenhower administration.  
t were those officials, lacking our present perspectives, so terribly wrong to  
e the CIA as a means of resolving an endless crisis that seemed highly danger-  
s?

HENRY PRECHT  
*Bethesda, Maryland*

**'ism in the Twentieth Century and the Islamic Revolution of Iran, by**  
ASAN ONAT. 65 pages, endnotes, bibliography. Ankara: Research Foundation  
Public Services, 1996. ISBN 975-95782-2-0

is interesting polemic denies that the Islamic Revolution in Iran is anything  
re than a sectarian Iranian phenomenon. Hasan Onat provides an overview of  
th century Middle Eastern history, Islam, and various Shi'i sects, followed by  
account of religion and politics in modern Iran. He concludes that "to identify  
[Iranian] Revolution and the subsequent developments with Islam is a highly  
ious mistake. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the universality of Islam"  
51).

Onat undervalues the clergy in recent Iranian history. Discussing the con-  
tination of religion and state during the Pahlavi era, he says "there were hardly  
y serious incidents during the reign of Riza Shah" (p. 42). This ignores the  
alry between Reza and Hasan Modarres, which led the Shah's agents to murder  
e chief political cleric. Similarly Onat makes no reference to clergy-led riots  
Mashad at the time Reza Shah forbade Iranian women to wear the chador.  
at is also inaccurate when he says "the earliest confrontation of the [younger  
hlavi] Shah and the ulema took place in 1959" (p. 42). In 1949 a religious  
tivist shot the Shah in the face. Moreover, Ayatollah Kashani's opposition to  
e Shah in the Majlis was an important part of the early success of the National  
ont, which brought Mossadegh to power as Prime Minister in 1951. Kashani's  
bsequent break with Mossadegh played an important part in the vulnerability  
the Front to the August 1953 Anglo-American-inspired *coup d'état*. Had Onat  
ferred to the work of Shahrough Akhavi, James Bill, Richard Cottam, Mark  
asiorowski, Homa Katouzian, Vanessa Martin, and Roy Mottahedeh, he might  
ve given a more coherent account of 20th century Iran.

Most sources Onat cites are Turkish, including some that were first published  
English by Hamid Algar, Fred Halliday, Henry Munson, Daniel Pipes, and  
eda Skocpol. No Iranian sources have been cited, although Onat does mention  
at he travelled in post-revolutionary Iran. He omits many important studies.  
or example, in discussing the revival of Shi'ism in Lebanon, he does not cite  
quad Ajami's *The Vanished Imam*. In his brief discussion of the Tobacco

Protest in the late 19th century, he does not refer to Nikki Keddie's key *Religion  
and Rebellion in Iran*. Although Onat's subject resembles that of Yann Richard's  
*Shi'ite Islam*, he does not refer to either Richard's original French work in 1991  
or to its English translation in 1995.

The chief value of this work, it seems to me, lies in its provenance. It is a  
Muslim and a Turkish view of the Iranian Revolution and of the Islamic Republic  
of Iran. Yet the book's appearance in English suggests that Onat's intended  
audience is not solely Muslim or Turkish. In the absence of any indication to the  
contrary, it would appear to be a work designed to gain foreign support for  
Turkey's opposition to Iran's contemporary foreign policy. Onat's argument, that  
the Islamic Revolution and Islamic Republic are Iranian, should be taken seriously  
but would be stronger if based on the actual history of Iran.

MICHAEL P. ZIRINSKY  
*Boise State University*

**Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian  
Revolution, by ANNABELLE SREBERNY-MOHAMMADI and ALI MOHAMMADI.** 225  
pages, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Minneapolis, MN: University of  
Minnesota Press, 1994. \$17.95 (Paper) ISBN 0-8166-2217-5

"This book is not only an analytic account of the role of the media in the Iranian  
revolution, but also the story of our—the authors'—lives" (p. xi) is how this  
fascinating account of the Iranian revolution begins. Annabelle Sreberny-Moham-  
madi and Ali Mohammadi participated in the revolution and then had to leave  
Iran in 1980. Their voices are subdued in the thorough communications analysis  
of the revolution, which includes a theoretical overview of the role of the media  
in the events, an analysis of the political economy of media in Iran, and a discus-  
sion of the culture and weapons of the secular and religious oppositions that  
culminated in the revolutionary process of Islamicizing knowledge. They con-  
clude by identifying the divide between educated elites and poor masses and the  
potency of oral communication that religion often employs as the two factors that  
may ignite similar revolutions elsewhere. They especially warn us about the  
danger of repressing public discussion on the politics of identity—such a mode of  
action swiftly eliminated alternate and more democratic scenarios in Iran. In the  
last sentence, the Mohammadis bring back their voice as they reflect on the  
impact of the revolution on their own lives: "[F]or us, the wandering Jew, the  
Iranian exile, we two grow old and sometimes wear the bottoms of our trousers  
rolled, and echo along with so many participants of the revolution, "No, this is  
not it at all; that is not what we meant at all" (p. 193).

The Mohammadis' main argument is that the Shah's regime hindered political  
development by repressing modern, secular, ideological, competitive communica-  
tion; what emerged was a dualistic culture that pitted the traditional monarchical  
despotism using the modern mass media against traditional religious authority and  
religiously based popular culture. While economic, political, and social upheaval  
led briefly to a movement of solidarity against the Shah, secular groups lacked

mass appeal and lost out to a populous radicalism that ultimately was coopted by the emerging Islamic state.

In developing their argument, the Mohammadis make excellent use of the literature on the Iranian revolution; they also provide a beautifully documented account of the oral and written knowledge in interviews, reports, pamphlets, cassettes, and rumor that started to shape the revolution. The setting of the stage for the revolution, namely the development of the secular and religious narratives, is probably the strongest part of *Small Media, Big Revolution*. The ensuing discussion of the revolutionary process whereby communications become Islamized is interesting but much briefer and not as analytically vibrant. As a result, the Mohammadis illuminate more what happened (a terrific accomplishment in itself) than what to do with what exists in Iran today: although they point to the growth of an unofficial culture and passive resistance, I hope they will develop this new emerging narrative more fully in another book, one that would also weave more thoroughly into the text their own experiences and positionality.

FATMA MÜGE GÖÇEK  
University of Michigan

### Arab-Israeli Conflict

**The Lebanon War**, by A. J. ABRAHAM. 186 pages, notes, bibliography, index. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996. \$55.00 (Cloth) ISBN 0-275-95389-0

In *The Lebanon War*, A. J. Abraham treats us to a selective chronology of events that transpired during the Lebanese ordeal, mainly from 1975 to 1982. His thesis is that the civil war was instigated and financed by outside forces and that the Lebanese were and remain peaceful people interested only in enjoying the night-life, restaurants, and idyllic beauty that is Lebanon. Obviously, such an interpretation of a tragic period in the country's life smacks of revisionism and drives one to think that, unfortunately, history's lessons are sometimes too difficult to learn. Anyone who knows anything about the Lebanese civil war can attest that it was, first and foremost, an internal struggle shaped by internal contradictions and socio-economic disparities. External events and forces only made the struggle more complicated.

Abraham's work is based on a one-sided reading of events; that of the Lebanese Christian right, especially the Phalange. To him, the civil war was a series of leftist and Palestinian conspiracies, provocations, and attacks designed to destroy Lebanon. Pierre Jemayyil, the Phalangist leader, was an Arab nationalist (no less!) and his and his sons' militia was always on the defensive. He does not mention that the Phalangists prepared for war well before 1975; that they were the first to use ID cards to kill Muslims, thus helping to turn the war into a religious conflict; that Bashir Jemayyil was responsible for the burning of downtown Beirut; and that the Christian militias were sworn to cleanse their areas of any non-Christian Lebanese presence so that they could establish a Christian state.

the rightists' encouragement to Syria to intervene militarily on their side in 1976. He directs his wrath at Libya and the Soviet Union for arming the leftists and Palestinians (ignoring the rightists' suppliers) and laments the Americans' supposed ambivalence to the Christians' plight in Lebanon.

Methodologically, Abraham is on disastrously shaky grounds. The book is poorly documented. He either inaccurately cites Kamal Salibi (1976), Tabitha Petran (1987), B.J. Odeh (1985), David Gilmour (1984), and Walid Khalidi (1978), among others, or misinterprets their analyses. References and citations are conveniently missing at important junctures. For example, this is the first time I read that Kamal Junblat, leader of the Druze and of the Leftist National Movement, was the first to discuss with Israel the possibility of a Druze state in Lebanon (p. 7) or that he proposed the establishment of a "Leftist Arab Peoples Republic in Lebanon" (p. 54).

This is no scholarly work. Its readers will clearly be those who, like Abraham, think that the Christians of Lebanon have been unfairly vilified and have not been properly heard in the West. Nothing sustains the book but a commitment to clear the name of Pierre Jemayyil and his sons of the crime of starting the war. It has no analytical, informational, or intellectual value to recommend it to the scholar, the college student, or the general reader. This is a painful reading to sit through.

IMAD HARB  
University of Utah

**Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom**, edited by MICHAEL N. BARNETT. 296 pages, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996. \$19.95 (Paper) ISBN 0-7914-2832-X

*Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom* is an invitation to social scientists, Middle East studies scholars, and Israel studies specialists to consider Israel in an international perspective, in contrast to the "conventional wisdom" that Israel is *sui generis*, unparalleled by any other state.

Israel's marginal status in Middle Eastern studies is driven by political and sociological considerations. Although there is a large Arab minority in Israel and although many Jewish Israelis have immigrated from Arab lands, Israel is not included in sociological studies of the Middle East. This reluctance to study Israel has originated not only among Arab historians who have argued that Israel represents an alien remnant of Western imperialism but also among Israeli scholars and partisans who claim that Israel has less in common with its Arab neighbors than it does with the West. In his introduction, Michael N. Barnett points out the historical reasons that separated those scholars. And yet there is much that Israel shares with her Arab neighbors: high levels of militarization, high debt ratios, and highly militarized economies.

*Israel in Comparative Perspective* considers both international and domestic issues. In "Israeli Foreign Policy: A Realist Ideal-Type or a Breed of Its Own?"