The coups of Turkey: from Adnan Mundaris to Rajab Tayyib Ortogan [Inqilabat Turkiya: Min Adnan Mundaris ila Rajab Tayyib Ortogan], by Muḥammad Nūr al-Din, Beirut, Reyad El-Rayyes, 2016, 222 pp., ISBN 9789953378404

This volume covers the highly contentious course of military coups in Turkey and their attendant political power relations from the military coup of 1960 through the successive coups of 1971, 1980 and 1997 – culminating with the failed coup attempt against current Turkish president Rajab Tayyib Ortogan. It was this most recent attempt in mid-July 2016 that served to spark memory and direct renewed attention to the matter of Turkish military coups, given its execution by a group of officers – even if this came in the context of the political struggle between Ortogan and his opponent Fathallāh Ghulon, accused of receiving backing from Washington. This is in addition to the background of civilian coups witnessed by the country in the overarching contest over power and monopoly of political decision making.

The 1980 coup ranks as one of the bloodiest military coups in which the streets of Ankara witnessed bloody clashes between students, leftists and others, when leftist, Kurdish and political Islamist movements were targeted in particular. Article 35 of the Law of Turkish Military Internal Affairs has remained the definitive and authoritative legal referent for those generals wishing to impart a patina of legitimacy to their coups; it is a law that has imposed suzerainty of the military over all political affairs over the last decades, up until 2010 when – for the first time – armed forces were actually subjected to accountability before the law in civil court.

In Turkey, however, military coups have not been restricted to the machinations of the barracks, but rather civilians have orchestrated a number of them such as that of Bulent Ojavid against 'Ismet Inunu; that of Mas'oud Yilmaz against Torghut Ozal; as well as that of Rajab Tayyib Ortogan against Najam al-Din Arbakān. Theoretically, this applies to the recent failed attempt of Fathallāh Ghulon and his co-conspirators Abdullah Ghül and Aḥmad Dāwūd Uglu and others; even if it may well be the case – as it appears – that Ortogan himself may have engineered matters in order to dry up opposition, do away with opponents and consolidate his monopoly over centralized political power. In this case, it appears that up until now in Turkey, Ortogan is the record holder for the most successful number of coups against opponents in rule.


For a long time indeed, Lebanese society has been considered a bastion of intellectual renaissance in the Arab world, with the most erudite production in all fields of knowledge – including linguistics, law, history and religion. Similarly, Lebanese thinkers and authors actively participated and played a singular role in the modern Arab revival (al-nahḍah) at a time when, in comparison, most other Arab societies were mired in what has been characterized by some as tantamount to a prevailing genre and oeuvre of intellectual mediocrity. It is this
issue that commends fair and objective consideration for the output of Lebanon in contemporary philosophical thought and its influence.

Developments in thought within Lebanese society during the 19th century set the stage and paved the way for the effulgence of contemporary Lebanese philosophical thought in the 20th century. It was then that in the intellectual milieu of universities, institutes, schools, literary salons and think tanks that such spread rapidly and became the subject for the pens of the greatest Lebanese writers of the time in the fields of thought, literature and the sciences. Originally, philosophy was found in the province of literature, divinities and theology before it came to enjoy the academic station it did in universities of Europe as an independent field of thought, epistemology and sociology.

This book explores the conceptual and existential experiences of the leading philosophers of Lebanon and proves the authentic and original background of this philosophy. The approach adopted is not one of simple historicity, but rather the author seeks to elucidate the possibilities of this fertile epistemological output as its suitability as critical philosophy. Sayf sees that the first philosophy constructed by these philosophers ought to be examined critically in order to distil from it its viable sources that can still yield results. The book calls for a philosophical ‘contest’ between these contemporary philosophers of Lebanon and those in the rest of the Arab world in order to discuss the views predicated on the suppositions of these philosophers and the conclusions at which they arrived.

Jihād: from al-Qā’idah to Dā’ish (ISIS/ISIL) [Sowar Al Jihad: Mn Tantheem al-Qā’idah ila Dā’ish], by Kiylah Salame, Milano, Al Mutawasit Publishers, 2016, 206 pp., ISBN 9788899687236

In this work, the author concerns himself with the particular environments that factor in producing jihadists, wherein he sees that it is the particular environment that plays the decisive role in defining and determine the measure of danger and the extent of the threat posed by them. Kiylah deals with the factors that operate in transforming these jihadists into a major force – the most significant of these being the political interventions of concern to international and regional forces for strategic ends. These have, in turn, entailed the funding, support and deployment of jihadists in purely geopolitical plans and initiatives that bear no real connection to either religion or religiosity. The author posits a sharp distinction between jihadists who are the product of an environment characterized by poverty and marginalization and those who have been mobilized and co-opted to serve the purpose of geostrategic exploits. The first stage – as a result of the adverse environmental factors of reduced circumstance – spawned jihadists of limited capabilities. The second stage, due to external support and facilitation (often at the level of state), gave rise to a much different sort of jihadists who were ultimately transformed into an enterprise of destructive terrorism of the first order.

Epistemology of the social sciences in contemporary Arab and Western thought. [Ibīstimulugiyā al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniyyah fi al-Fikr al-‘Arabi wa al-Fikr al-Gharbi], edited by Shareif Zitouni, Beirut, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2017, 238 pp., ISBN 978-9953-82-775-9

As specified in its introduction, this book endeavours to survey some of the epistemological perspectives on the humanities along two different lines: the first covers views of the domain in the sphere of contemporary Arab thought; and the second assesses Western views of the same. It appears that there prevails a difference in points of view, depending on the standpoint of the conceptual and historical framework and the social reality in
which such was incepted; and such encompassed both individual and society at large in dealing with knowledge. The study aims to elucidate the factors that governed and oriented social life in its various aspects. The first section deals with the social philosophy of Ibn Khaldūn and its epistemological position vis-à-vis the collective socio-cultural legacy (al-turāth): Mohamed ʿAbed al-Jabiri, as a model; the epistemology of the humanities according to Sālim Yafūt. As for part two of the book, this deals with Karl Popper and the humanities and the position of Hans Georg Goddamer vis-à-vis them as well.


This book enquires into the problematic of the collective Arab-Islamic historical-cultural legacy known as al-turāth by examining the work of three major Arab Moroccan thinkers, who belonged to various schools of thought: Mohammed ʿAbed al-Jabri, Muhammad Arkūn and Abdullah al-‘Urwi. The book takes up its study in four sections: the roots of disjuncture/discontinuity in Western thought; the causes and waves of disjuncture/discontinuity in contemporary Moroccan thought; levels of disjuncture; and the position of this disjuncture in the thought of the three aforementioned Arab Moroccan thinkers.

Author Hāmdī posits that the problematic of the cultural authenticity of al-turāth with contemporary Arab thought traces its origins to the context of the various problematics of the Modern ‘Arab Awakening’ (al-nahdah). He asserts the trend towards a disjuncture with the cultural legacy finds its roots in the defeat of Arab armies in the 1967/‘Six Day’ War, which was considered not only to be a military defeat – at the hands of the enemy – but also, and more significantly, a cultural defeat in the sense that it was taken to represent a defeat of the intellect (al-ʿaql) which had been produced by that culture. This concept was drawn from the sphere of Western debate where it had gestated in the search among the branches of the sciences for a modality for the development of the hard sciences in the context of whether or not this was to be achieved by means of continuity with historical accumulation or whether a break and disjuncture from such was demanded. This was before debate was transferred from the realm of the hard sciences to the theatre of the human and social sciences, where – in the end – it was decided that disjuncture and a break with the past represented the way forward.

This study covers the approach to al-turāth according to the various schools and their diverse goals and intentions as well as their different mechanisms and methodologies and their various levels of scientific values and epistemological output. Among the most significant of these trends and schools are: the salafist, the Reformist, the modern usūli (legalist/jurisprudential); the Marxist; as well as the new methodology of critical rationalism.

**Criticism of the contemporary intellectual … the view of ʿAli Ḥarb** [Naqd al-Muthaqqaf al-Mu‘āṣir ... ruʿyātʿAli Ḥarb], by Batūl al-Khansā‘, with a Foreword by Sajān Qazzī, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿārif al-Ḥakīmah, 2017, 157 pp., ISBN 9786144400777

This author of this book deals with the works and theories of ʿAli Ḥarb from the standpoint of the victimized reality of the Arab intellectual in the Arab nation; namely, as noted in the introduction to the book that this is tantamount to:
standing helpless before the reality of the victim. It is as though one possesses obsolete ideas that are no longer suitable for use which place him in a severe crisis. After the collapse of comprehensive ideologies and as a result of the recurrent realities being reproduced throughout the world and in light of the rapid changes ‘on the ground’ – a shifting ground – the intellectual is no longer able to discern a way out of this impasse except through the reading of reality through multiple and various readings with new conceptual tools that assist him in re-forming and recasting his thought and ideas so that he is able to apprehend events that are changing perpetually along with reality and its destiny.

From this point of departure, the author presents the critical strategy of ‘Ali Ḥarb vis-à-vis the major trends of thought and ideology that permeate the mind and thought of the Arab intellectual. In her book, al-Khansāʾ elucidates Ḥarb’s critical method and the mode of deconstruction he employs in order to encourage the intellectual to reconsider his ideals and replace his ineffectual conceptual tools and mechanisms whenever matters dictate their replacement with new ones that will facilitate his intellectual and conceptual production. The book is divided into three parts: inception of the universal intellectual; the philosophical sources of ‘Ali Ḥarb; and ‘Ali Ḥarb and the criticism of the intellectual.


This work endeavours – as it purports – to crystallize a Qurʾānic view on the concept of religious pluralism, especially with regards to the three major religions that are considered to be the Abrahamic faiths of monotheism. Such is attempted by means of analyzing the significations of the particular Qurʾānic verses that appear to affirm the validity of the multiplicity of religions and others which appear to imply the opposite. The work also seeks to clarify the position of the noble Qurʾān vis-à-vis the sending of multiple ‘messengers’ (prophets) and the diversity of divinely imparted religious law as well as the goals of such according to the apparent meaning of the Qurʾānic text itself. This is intended to be in a way far removed from previous conceptions and the extent to which such accumulated opinions and research into the Qurʾān impacted interfaith dialogue, which is certainly mandated between Muslims and the followers of other religions in this day and age.

In its conclusions, this Qurʾānic research calls for various modes and modalities of relations between the adherents of different religions under religious pluralism while simultaneously maintaining genuine religious identity that has lost its essence due to some orientations that study the question only from a certain angle in addition to the sort of relation between ‘I’ and ‘the other’ through interactions specified in the text of the Qurʾān itself. The work addresses a number of cases and issues pertaining to a ‘dialogue of civilizations’ that it advocates instead of Samuel Huntington’s highly contentious view of a ‘clash of civilizations’ and all that has transpired of sectarian strife and civil wars as a result of such a view.

This book presents the history of al-jamāʿah al-islāmiyah (the Islamic Group) in Lebanon and covers its political, media and military operations from the outset of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 to 2000, in addition to its organizational development and the spread of its call/propaganda.

Even though the organizational and administrative reality of the offices and structures of al-jamāʿah al-islāmiyah in Lebanon were far from fixed, the group was able to achieve widespread dissemination of its message and call (al-daʿwah) throughout the far reaches of the country and in the various Palestinian refugee camps.

As for its political performance, al-jamāʿah al-islāmiyah managed to survive the travails and changing political and military fortunes experienced by other Lebanese political groups such as the civil war, the Israeli invasions and the Syrian presence. The group managed successfully to maintain its Arab-Islamic identity during these difficult circumstances within a complex security, sectarian and political environment. In sum, it succeeded in coming out of the virtual minefield with a minimum of losses; and during the 1990s it undertook participation in Lebanese parliamentary and local elections.