
Brief Synopses of New Arabic Language Publications

Annotated Arabic Bibliography: Brief English Reviews of New Arabic Language Releases in Critical Arab Scholarship

Imad Musbah Mukhaimar, *The Crisis of Political Authority: A Study of Arab Political Thought* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2020). 189 pp. ISBN 978-9953-82-915-9

Researcher in Political Science, Imad Musbah Mukhaimar, seeks to provide an analytical and critical review of political power and its crisis in the Arab world, dealing with its sources of legitimacy and its philosophical reference in Arab political thought.

The author argues that the crisis of political power in the Arab world fundamentally derives from its intellectual condition, which is based on the irrational reconciliation between religious-cultural heritage, on the one hand, and Western modernist thought, on the other. He believes that religious-cultural heritage, because of its rigorist nature, has been unable to keep pace with the changes taking place in Arab societies, while Western modernist thought with its legal rationality that strives to grant legitimacy to the use of power has proved to be formal and fake inasmuch as it has neither reflected the reality of the repression and tyranny practiced by political authority on the ground nor has it been translated into real democratic political institutions. As a result, a crisis of political authority in the Arab region has emerged and has not yet been resolved.

The crisis of political power in the Arab world is revealed if we take into account its vertical and horizontal extensions. In this respect, the author explains that the vertical extension of the crisis has been translated into the unbalanced relationship between the ruler and the ruled, which sustains the ruler's exercise of tyranny and his domination over the ruled. As for the horizontal extension, it pertains to the domination of executive authority over legislative and judicial institutions, thus concentrating power in executive authority, which usually undermines the principle of the separation of authority or the system of checks and balances. Consequently, one can hardly speak of any significant progress that has been achieved in most Arab

countries regarding the legitimacy of the authority and the enforcement of anti-corruption legislation and the rule of law.

To deal with the crisis, the author stresses the need for a comprehensive review of how to reconcile religious–cultural heritage with Western modernist thought, after the eradication of tyranny, clientelism, and human rights violations. This revision, however, is likely to take place in light of the change of cultural concepts sweeping the world with globalization, the “information revolution,” and in line with the process of institutionalism in Arab countries.



Mustafa Barghouti, *The Ploy of the Century: Dimensions and Confrontational Strategies* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2020). 181 pp. ISBN 978-9953-82-917-3

On January 28, 2020, US President Donald Trump announced his “peace plan” to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict hailing it as “the deal of the century.” In principle, the deal—which reflects Trump’s vision for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the Israeli vision for peace in the region—was regarded by the White House as the most realistic solution to a problem that has plagued the region for far too long, and would serve as a basis for negotiations that would create a path to prosperity, security, and dignity for both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and generally for all involved.

In this book, however, Palestinian political activist Mustafa Barghouti deconstructs and analyzes “the deal of the century,” and proposes that it should rather be named the “ploy of the century” because of its project to annex and Judaize the occupied West Bank and finally crush the Palestinian cause. He argues that the purpose of Trump’s deal is to eliminate the national and civil rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and even their entire right to exist on the land of Palestine.

The author believes that many factors have led to “the deal of the century,” most notably the “Oslo Accords,” Palestinian internal division, and Arab and international developments that have negatively affected the Palestinian cause. He points to the decline of Arab interest in the Palestinian cause because of inter-Arab conflicts and the Arab Spring uprising that led to civil wars in several Arab countries, in addition to American hegemony that has prevailed for a long period over world politics, including the Middle East,

after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the US war on Iraq. The author underlines other factors that have helped the American administration and the Israeli leaders to put forward “the deal of the century.” The most prominent of these has been the defective performance of Palestinian representatives after the Oslo Accords and the unreserved reliance on US mediation in the peace process by the Palestinians.

For the author, the Palestinians should examine the Oslo Accords in order to learn from the mistakes that Palestinian negotiators have made, which, moreover, have been thoroughly exploited by Israel. Among those mistakes were: the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) recognition of Israel without stipulating in return Israel’s recognition of a Palestinian State, the PLO’s approval of the Oslo Accords without any agreed time frame for the resolution of the permanent status issues such as borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, and water. Barghouti also cites that the PLO’s acceptance of the principle of land fragmentation, stipulated in the “Cairo Agreement” or “the Gaza–Jericho Agreement” in 1994, which resulted in 224 Palestinian communities being segregated in the form of islands in the West Bank and isolated by the Israeli-built apartheid wall, settlements, and barriers. Consequently, Israel faced no difficulties in expanding the construction of settlements in Area (C), which represents sixty-two percent of the West Bank. Likewise, the Palestinian acceptance of the idea of exchanging lands in subsequent negotiations was exploited by Israel to legitimize settlement colonial activity before the eyes of the world on the basis that the major colonies would be annexed to Israel, and then the goal became the annexation of all colonies that would eventually obstruct the possibility of establishing an independent Palestinian State.

The Zionist movement, the author argues, is now implementing the third phase of its project aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause. It is doing this through its attempts to suppress the Palestinian right of return, the right to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, by deporting the largest possible number of Palestinians from the land of historical Palestine, and normalizing relations with Arab countries at the expense of Palestine and its people.

The author believes that the Zionist movement, in the first phase, which extended from the end of the nineteenth century until 1948, worked to establish the Jewish presence in Palestine by settlement, and expand it through Jewish immigration until the implementation of the mass expulsion of Palestinians which led to the “Nakba” and the declaration of the

establishment of Israel. In the second phase, it completed the occupation of the rest of Palestine in the 1967 War and worked on settlement expansion in Jerusalem and the West Bank, blocking the road to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. With the transition to the third stage, however, the author argues that the apartheid system became a political necessity for the continuation of Israeli colonial occupation, specifying the Zionist movement's scheme for dealing with the increasing Palestinian population in the Palestinian territories. Accordingly, Zionism had to execute a gradual ethnic cleansing in the West Bank to put an end to the idea of a "two-state solution."

Elaborating on "the deal of the century," the author seeks to relate the deal to the third phase of the Zionist movement's project aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause. He asserts that the deal is an Israeli project drafted by Benjamin Netanyahu in cooperation with the Trump administration. In this context, he refers to Netanyahu's book *A Place under the Sun*, which he published in 1994 and devoted it to rejecting the Oslo Accords and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. Most of the visions, ideas, and suggestions mentioned in "the deal of the century" are included in Netanyahu's book, the author concludes.

In general, "the deal of the century" assumes that the Palestinians have been defeated and they must surrender and abandon Jerusalem, the right of return, the right to self-determination, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. It accepts the "nation-state bill," which asserts that Jewish settlement is a national value, and also promises to encourage and advance settlement efforts. Moreover, as the author argues, the deal is mainly concerned with how to revoke all United Nations resolutions that favor the Palestinian cause, while stressing the need for all necessary efforts to push normalization between Israel and the Arab countries. It seeks to isolate the Palestinian people and obliterate their cause, on the one hand, and open the way for Israel to dominate the entire region, on the other hand.

Hence, the author stresses the need to confront "the deal of the century" and its sponsor, the Zionist movement, with a comprehensive and strategic response, which requires abandoning all arrangements, resulting from the Oslo Accords, especially the security coordination with the Israeli authorities. The strategic response requires broad engagement in popular resistance and the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against the entire apartheid system. It also requires political efforts to refute and isolate Israeli policies and

unify the energies of all components of the Palestinian people at home and abroad in order to forge economic and financial policies able to support the resilience of the Palestinian people and their survival on their land. Before all, the author asserts that Palestinian internal division must end, and a unified national leadership capable of facing challenges and activating the role of the PLO should emerge to lead the national resistance against the Zionist movement. “The deal of the century” has left no easy choice or hope for the Palestinian people but to struggle for the liberation of their homeland and overthrow the apartheid, oppressive Israeli regime in Palestine.



Muhammad Adnan Mahmoud, *The Role of the United Nations in Iraq* (Beirut: Dar Al-Rafidain, 2020). 213 pp. ISBN 9789922634487

Relations between the United Nations (UN) and Iraq have experienced many pitfalls over the past three decades, specifically after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 687, which authorized the use of military force against Iraq, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In addition, an arms embargo and strict economic sanctions lasted until the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The sanctions were translated, with US support and supervision, into a comprehensive siege of the country. The UN was mainly concerned with how to limit Iraq’s ability to develop “weapons of mass destruction,” ensure the deployment of observers and inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor and inspect Iraqi weapons programs, and manage the oil-for-food program.

Following the US invasion of Iraq, a new UN Security Council Resolution (1483) was adopted in May 2003. It recognized the US occupation of Iraq and paved the way for another UN resolution (1500), by which the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was established in August 2003. Accordingly, the UN was assigned a new role to help Iraq rebuild and rehabilitate the institutions of the Iraqi state in coordination with the “Coalition Provisional Authority” (which was administering the country at that time) and the Iraqi “Governing Council,” which was regarded as a very inclusive council that would lead the transitional period and pave the way for an elected and widely recognized Iraqi government.

UN Security Council Resolution (1500) defined the role of UNAMI in Iraq as providing advice and assistance to the Iraqi authorities during the

transitional phase in various legal, political, economic, social, and humanitarian fields in order to rebuild state institutions after changing the political system and move towards a system “characterized by democracy and pluralism.” In addition, UNAMI had to coordinate UN agencies activities that used to run weapons and oil-for-food inspection programs before the US invasion of Iraq.

UNAMI’s mandate was further expanded with the adoption of UN Resolution (1770) in 2007. Accordingly, UNAMI reaffirmed its humanitarian and development efforts in Iraq through UN agencies, funds, and programs and continued providing assistance to the Iraqi authorities to: advance comprehensive political dialog and national reconciliation, organize elections, plan for a national census, protect human rights, carry out legal and judicial reforms (including the process of drafting the Iraqi constitution), and facilitate a regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbors, particularly on issues of border security, energy, and refugees.

For many observers, UNAMI has achieved undeniable progress towards the fulfillment of its responsibilities, but fell short in completing all its tasks, mainly due to the failure of various factional Iraqi leaders to achieve a real national reconciliation that would end sectarian and ethnic strife in the country. The lack of an American plan to deal with the situation in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the decline of the George W. Bush administration’s credibility after the announcement that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq, and the human rights violations committed by US troops in Abu Ghraib prison also complicated UNAMI’s tasks.

The outbreak of violence that swept across Iraq, however, had a direct impact on UNAMI’s performance. In fact, UNAMI was hit hard days after its establishment when a truck bomb targeted the Canal Hotel in Baghdad on August 19, 2003, killing twenty-two people, including the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Nearly, one month later, the hotel was targeted by another attack, which prompted the UN mission to evacuate most of the UN staff from Iraq and manage its programs from neighboring countries.

There is no doubt that the wars against Al-Qaeda and subsequently the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have led to massive destruction in Iraq and a great number of displaced people, which has required UN agencies to enlarge their scope of work to include the reconstruction of the country. There is a belief that achieving national reconciliation remains the key to

stability in the country. This thorny issue, however, does not seem to have materialized as yet.



Ouafae Sandi, *ISIS: Legitimizing Savagery* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2020). 456 pp. ISBN 978-9953-82-919-7

The emergence of the “Islamic State” (IS) organization, also known as “the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” (ISIS, *Daesh*), has raised many questions concerning its brutal ideology, its ability to attract thousands of foreign fighters, including women and children, and its desire to extend its influence by capturing more territory in Syria and Iraq. This was particularly the case after Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared a “caliphate” and installed himself as Caliph of Muslims in June 2014.

This book assumes that with the announcement of the “caliphate,” and its extremist ideology, IS marked the beginning of a new era in terrorist history defined by its brutality and violence, and the wars it waged in Iraq and Syria. It exceeded the terrorist activities of “Al-Qaeda,” the mother organization, out of which it emerged.

IS was able to attract more than 42,000 foreign fighters from about 120 countries, and the year 2015 witnessed the largest influx of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, especially after IS took control of the Iraqi cities of Fallujah, Raqqa, and Mosul in 2014.

Remarkably, women have joined the organization: more than 550 European women joined and have traveled to areas under IS control. In some countries, women accounted for between twenty and thirty percent of foreign fighters, while the number of underage girls who swore allegiance to ISIS on the internet increased.

The influx of foreign fighters into Syria has raised the issue of regional and international security, amid questions about the nationalities of these fighters, their social, political, and cultural backgrounds, and their intellectual and ideological orientations. How they were recruited and what were the most appropriate means to contain the risk of their expansion in the region was also a key point of consideration.

In this regard, many researchers argue that several European governments and intelligence services have facilitated the flow of suspected terrorists in their own countries to Syria to be rid of them without having to resort to

European laws, which usually do not allow governments to easily expel suspected extremists, without legal and political accountability. Such foreign extremists were also employed in other conflicts between major powers and regimes to achieve strategic gains in the region as in the case of the “Arab Afghans” whereby the United States took advantage of the defeat of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan without getting involved in a costly direct war with the Soviets. Moreover, the “Islamic State” organization, despite its bloody reputation, has sought, by all available means, to create an image of the ISIS community which matches the dreams of many Muslims who believe in the pride and dignity of Muslims under the caliphate. Thus, regardless of the chaos and sectarian divisions that the terrorists cause in the Arab region, a substantial number of Muslims were ready to respond to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi’s call for all Muslims to migrate to the “land of Islam” as a religious duty, and to strive for the victory of religion and the elimination of “infidel and apostate regimes” wherever they were to be found in the Arab world with which there could be no peaceful coexistence according to Al-Baghdadi.

Certainly, one could hardly expect that the IS organization would win against the international coalition wars led by the United States in Iraq and northeastern Syria against ISIS extremists. Nevertheless, the author affirms that despite the defeat of “ISIS,” the security and military approach adopted by the coalition as a solid strategy to combat terrorism would not be sufficient to eliminate terrorism. Therefore, the author stresses the need for a parallel soft strategy to combat terrorism, by addressing the conditions and causes that led to the incubating environment which led to extremism and the growth of terrorist organizations. This requires addressing important issues in the Arab region, including religious discourse, culture, education, arts, literature, media, and the like.



Karim Mroueh, *Treasures of Human Thought* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publ., 2020). 303 pp. ISBN 9786140130623

This book comprises a collection of texts from Karl Marx’s thought and from the thinking of the early Marxists thinkers and social leaders, selected by the Lebanese Marxist intellectual Karim Mroueh, to show that Marx’s thought and the ideas of Marxists that complement his thought were not rigid and

steeped in the past but future thinking as the pioneers of this thought, though they belonged to their own era, and their own ideas were the ideas of a particular time and place, they defended their concepts in their own contemporary period while looking ahead to the future. They re-read Marx's ideas in the light of current changes of the day, thus enabling researchers and intellectuals to build on the past.

Within this context of intellectual communication, the author assumes that Marxist dialectical materialist thought could interact with the new conditions of the current era, as people cannot think in isolation from the class interests and class battles that pervade society. Accordingly, a new project inspired by Marxist dialectical materialist thought could bring about change in the Arab world, provided the new historical conditions of the contemporary world are taken into consideration for the sake of humanity and in pursuit of a better life for the future.