RECENT BOOKS

SOUL FOOD


Reviewed by Butrus Abu-Manneh

“This book constitutes only an introduction to the issues surrounding beneficence” rendered generously by the Ottoman sultans, their mothers or their wives, concludes Amy Singer (p. 159). Beneficence in this context means in particular the distribution of food to those deemed deserving, because supplying food “constituted a source of legitimacy for the Ottoman dynasty and reinforced its claim for sovereignty” (p. 131). Indeed, “the power to feed fed power” and “provisioning . . . [was] at the heart of Ottoman stability and legitimacy” (pp. 142–43).

Food was distributed in the urban centers in public kitchens (‘imarets), sufi lodges (zawiyas), medresses; etc. By 1530, there were no fewer than 83 ‘imarets throughout the empire, not counting those in Istanbul, Egypt, and the Hijaz (p. 152). With this background, it is possible to understand the establishment of a soup kitchen in Jerusalem. In 1552, Hurrem Sultan (known to Western readers as Roxelana), the favorite wife of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, established a soup kitchen in Jerusalem (‘imaret, or Hasseki Sultan). The whole complex included a large kitchen, a guest house of 55 rooms, a mosque, a caravansary, two hammams, etc. (p. 46) Actually, it was established on the site of a mansion built about the end of the fourteenth century by a Mamluk woman called Tunshuq. Being a large public kitchen, the Hasseki Sultan could serve a loaf of bread and a ladle of soup to about 500 people each morning and evening as charity (pp. 3, 63). The recipients were people “deemed deserving because of their spiritual, social, or economic status” in the city (pp. 6, 64). The waqf assigned for the expenses of this ‘imaret was the largest in Ottoman Palestine (p. 43) and included many villages in Palestine in addition to villages and other endowments in the vicinity of Tripoli in northern Lebanon (pp. 48ff.).

For Singer, the subject merits consideration because the founding of ‘imarets “opens a window on the entire culture of Ottoman Imperial philanthropy” (p. 7); because ‘imarets have received limited attention until now, except by Turkish scholars of a generation or two ago (p. 159); and because ‘imarets were a mark of Ottoman sovereignty that also imparted an Ottoman stamp on the city (pp. 159–60). The author regards ‘imarets as part of several public works undertaken in Jerusalem during the reign of Sultan Suleyman, including the rebuilding of the walls that improved security, restoring the city’s water supply, and constructing fountains (sabils). As a philanthropic endeavor, the ‘imaret was inspired probably “at least as much by imperial exigencies as by the specific needs of the city of Jerusalem” (p. 70).

Primarily it was necessary to feed people whose presence in the city, whether as Muslim pilgrims, merchants, or visitors, seems to have increased after the advent of the Ottomans (p. 36). Moreover, there was an upsurge in Jerusalem’s population due to, it seems, natural growth and migration. Consequently, the population almost doubled within a decade and a half between the end of the 1530s and the mid-1550s (p. 65), a situation that apparently led to the increase in poverty; as an observer wrote at the time, “the poor of this region are many” (p. 113). To alleviate the conditions of the needy might have contributed to the founding of the ‘imaret. In addition, Singer suggests that Hasseki Sultan “pointed directly against the Christian presence and traditions in Jerusalem . . . in fact the ‘imaret is approximately midway between the key Muslim and Christian shrines” (p. 74). I wonder whether this really was a factor in choosing the site of the ‘imaret, especially since, as she writes, there was already “an existing site and available building that provided a ready-made foundation” (p. 66), meaning the Tunshuq mansion, at which it seems the “former practice” of serving food to the poor had taken place (p. 114). Thus it appears that the choice of the site was
not motivated by ideological factors but by pragmatic considerations.

The focus of the book is on the period and circumstances of the initial founding of the ‘imaret. Of the five chapters, only chapters three and four are dedicated to this theme; the other three chapters deal with waqf, beneficence, and the Ottoman policy of providing food in general. Thus, the book contributes to our understanding of Ottoman philanthropic policy in general and of the role of highly placed women in this policy. As far as I know, this is the only European-language book on this subject. Moreover, it provides insight into life in Jerusalem in the mid-sixteenth century. It is not, however, a history of Hasseki Sultan throughout the Ottoman centuries, which is a subject for another work. Nevertheless, the omission of the post-sixteenth-century history of the ‘imaret does not diminish the importance of this book. Indeed, it is well written, well documented, and clear. Finally, it should be added that in certain aspects the book complements Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials (Cambridge, 1994), Singer’s first book about rural administration around Jerusalem in the sixteenth century.

JUDAIZING THE PALESTINIAN LANDSCAPE


Reviewed by Mark LeVine

A Civilian Occupation is one of the more important edited volumes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be released in some time. Focusing on the role of town-planning and architecture—as one contributor describes it, “a different kind of warfare that has been radically altering the landscape of Israel/Palestine” (p. 10)—by Zionist and Israeli planners during the last century, the book features more than a dozen Jewish Israeli and international authors (but, interestingly, no Palestinians) who explore a crucial but still insufficiently understood method through which the Zionist movement and then the Israeli state succeeded in obtaining and retaining control over land. The importance of the information in this volume becomes clear when the reader is informed that the catalog for the exhibition from which this book was compiled in fact was banned by the Israel Association of United Architects after initially being chosen to represent Israel in the International Union of Architects Congress in Berlin in 2002. The reason was specifically that it highlighted “the culpability” of Israeli architects and planners (who, like their counterparts everywhere, long have portrayed themselves as operating apolitically and within the clearly defined scientific principles of their disciplines) in the historical and continuing expropriation of Palestinian land.

The essays in this volume demonstrate the importance of the strategic use of territory in the exercise of state power. Contributions such as Zvi Efrat’s “The Plan” and Oren Yiftachel’s “Settlements as Reflex Action” reveal the strong relationship between supposedly scientific planning and architecture and the drive to “conquer” and settle as much of the land of Mandate Palestine as possible. An interview with an Israeli architect who has designed several major settlements across the Green Line provide a first-person narrative of the intertwining of politics, power, aesthetics, and space, usually to the detriment of the indigenous Palestinian population.

Sharon Rothbard’s “Wall and Tower (Homa umigdal)” which describes the emergence of the wall and tower outposts that often were established surreptitiously in as little as one night by specially trained kibbutz members in the 1930s are revealed to be exemplars for more recent activities by Gush Emunim and the most militant ideological settlers of today. It also reflects the history of Zionism and Israeli society as a specifically “ethnocratic” construct (cf. Yiftachel, p. 33). Other chapters, such as Zvi Efrat’s “The Plan,” demonstrate the crucial role of modernist ideologies in the imagining and shaping of Israel/Palestine as a specifically colonial space. Articles such as “The Mountain: Principles of Building in Heights,” one of the editors’ two contributions, provide new insights into the mechanisms by which the Israeli state has gained control of most of the major high places on both sides of the Green Line since 1948, regardless of the Palestinian presence on or use of the land at the moment of its acquisition.

Some of the material in this book is not new: A report on settlements by

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B’Tselem and a concluding analysis by Meron Benvenisti will not come as a surprise to scholars or activists, while other articles, such as Oren Yiftachel’s “Settlement as Reflex Action,” are taken from journalistic articles rather than presenting detailed new research. But this book really is not intended for Israel/Palestine specialists, who have a number of scholarly volumes and articles to choose from that offer a depth of analysis this book does not (see, for example, Haim Yacobi, ed., Constructing a Sense of Place: Architecture and the Zionist Discourse [London: Ashgate, 2004]; Nezar AlSayyad, ed., Global Norms/Urban Forms: On the Manufacture and Consumption of Traditions in the Built Environment [New York: Spón/Routledge, 2000]; Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu, eds., Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience [Syracuse: SUNY Press, 1997]; Shaul Ephraim Cohen, The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993]; Yuval Portugali, Implicate Relations: Society and Space in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict [New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993]; and any writings by Yiftachel, Dan Rabinowitz, and Sandy Kedar).

Rather, the book’s strength is its concise yet piercing analysis of how built space has served as a primary battleground between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist/Israeli Jews for most of the last century. With its vivid photographs, maps, plans, and clear language, A Civilian Occupation would be equally useful for architects and planners seeking an introduction to the role of their fields in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and as a textbook for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on the history and contemporary political dynamics of Israel/Palestine.

If there is one criticism of the volume, it is that the lack of a Palestinian perspective makes it easy to forget that Palestinians themselves have attempted to build and control the space of the country, often using symbols and tactics that mirrored those of the Zionist movement and Israeli governments. They were far from passive objects of Zionist/Israeli planning, and variously have resisted, emulated, and occasionally overcome the much more powerful institutions of Zionist/Israeli architecture and planning. We can hope that the editors or their Palestinian colleagues soon will offer a companion volume that engages these issues from such a perspective.

THE PRESS AND OSLO


Reviewed by John Collins

In his latest contribution to scholarship on the politics of the news media, Gadi Wolfsfeld (Hebrew University) sidesteps the higher profile issue of war coverage and examines a less glamorous question: How do the media affect processes of negotiation and peacemaking? Using content analysis and interviews with those who create media messages—journalists, politicians, and spokespersons—he examines the constructive and destructive roles played by the media in the Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Jordanian, and Northern Ireland peace processes.

These roles, he argues, are shaped by a series of factors in the political and media environment, including “news values” (specifically identifying immediacy, drama, simplicity, and ethnocentrism), the level of “elite consensus” behind the process, the “number and severity of crises” that occur during the process, the level of media sensationalism, and the extent of “shared media” among the parties to the conflict. All of these factors feed into the politics-media-politics (PMP) cycle, in which “changes in the political environment lead to changes in media performance that often lead to further changes in the political environment” (p. 31). Wolfsfeld then applies these concepts to the three cases, insisting that although “politics almost always comes first,” the media can and do shape the political environment when peace is up for public debate (p. 31).

Wolfsfeld places the Oslo peace process at the center of his analysis, using the Israeli-Jordan and Northern Ireland negotiations for comparative purposes. His lengthy discussion of Oslo demonstrates that the

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Israeli media played a largely unhelpful role, worrying more about the “bottom line” than about reporting on the complexities and possibilities of the process. As the post-Oslo years unfolded, Israeli news outlets opted for increasing sensationalism and melodrama, providing saturation coverage of Palestinian violence and narrowing the range of acceptable public debate. The Northern Ireland case—where the media environment was “more conducive to peace” (p. 159) and where political support for the process was broader—provides Wolfsfeld’s contrasting example, with the Israel-Jordan case lying somewhere in between the two extremes.

Although Wolfsfeld admits that he was not “sufficiently knowledgeable” to examine the Palestinian media in depth (p. 4), he nonetheless makes a number of confident generalizations about its “undemocratic” nature, thus reifying a questionable distinction between “free” (Israeli) and “controlled” (Palestinian) media environments. Much of his analysis, however, actually demonstrates that only a few Israeli journalists—he singles out Amira Hass and Gideon Levy—seem to exercise any sort of freedom. The rest act, in effect, as if they were not “free” at all; that is, they act the way he implies that Palestinian journalists act.

Indeed, the picture that emerges from the book is one of an Israeli media system that is quite controlled ideologically and over-determined by its failure to acknowledge the realities of Israeli state power. Wolfsfeld reflects this situation in his own writing. On the one hand, he rightly points out the ethnocentrism of the Israeli media, with its failure to hire Palestinian journalists and its preferred focus on Palestinian violence. On the other hand, he provides almost no detail on any acts of official Israeli violence, leaving the reader with the misleading impression that most of the violence committed since Oslo has come from the Palestinian side. Similarly, he uses the word “terrorism” only to refer to Palestinian acts, ignoring the growing literature that critiques this term’s tendency to naturalize and justify the violence of the strong by occluding its extent and its effects.

More generally, Wolfsfeld’s rather mechanistic approach has the effect (however unintended) of allowing the most fundamental issues—the corporate structure of most major media, the militarization of politics and political discourse, the overwhelming power exerted by the U.S.-Israeli alliance, the deeper structures of ideology and language—to recede into the background, where they simply appear as givens. Consequently, the suggestions he provides in a concluding chapter, while generally welcome, appear to skirt the most important factors that shape all news coverage.

In the absence of a more critical treatment of the issues, the book’s primary value lies not in the breaking of new theoretical ground (readers seeking this will need to go elsewhere), but rather in the details gleaned through interviews with journalists who often express frustration at their own inability to do meaningful work within a system of professional and ideological constraints. In this sense, Media and the Path to Peace provides further illustration of what critical media scholars established long ago: That the news media are primary mechanisms for the reproduction of asymmetrical structures of power and the creation of “acceptable” subjectivities.

COVERING THE INTIFADA


Reviewed by Ahmed Bouzid

It is common knowledge among those who closely follow the Israeli occupation of Palestine that the Israeli press is head and shoulders above the U.S. mainstream media...
RECENT BOOKS

when it comes to coverage of the occupation. However, the superiority of the Israeli mainstream press over its American counterpart is less an indication of the health of the Israeli press than it is a worrying sign that U.S. journalism is critically ill. Daniel Dor’s important book drives this point home vividly by carefully dissecting precisely how the Israeli press failed to fulfill its basic obligation of informing its readers of the basic facts about the al-Aqsa intifada during its first month. When its role as an unforgiving watchdog of those with the power to kill and destroy needed crucially to be fulfilled, the Israeli mainstream press consciously chose to do the opposite: playing cheerleader and serving as a propaganda platform for the Israeli government, the military establishment, and those who staunchly supported their policies.

The methodology that Dor adopts to make his case is as refreshing in its simplicity as it is sound in its execution. He compares stories fielded by reporters of the three major national Hebrew-language dailies—Yediot Abaranot, Ma’ariv, and Ha’Aretz—with what actually ended up in print and examines editorial interventions for patterns of bias. The result is a solid indictment of an establishment that prides itself on being one of the best journalistic institutions in the world. Stories that echoed the official line, that played on reader angst and anger, and that exploited racist stereotypes and crass ignorance systematically grabbed front-page headlines. Stories that contradicted the official narrative or the notion that Israel was under siege during the first month of the intifada or that showed Palestinians acting as would any humans under violent assault were relegated to the inside pages or altogether suppressed. Cherished myths aggressively peddled by the Israeli government and the military establishment were adopted without challenge: Ehud Barak was generous in his offers; Yasir Arafat, not Ariel Sharon, was the cause of the uprising; Israel was responding with restraint; Arafat was in control of the intifada and could shut it down if he wanted, etc. In essence, the Israeli press “joined the campaign of delegitimizing the Palestinian people as a partner for peace, a campaign at the heart of Prime Minister Barak’s political strategy” (p. 16).

Front-page photographs also systematically showed Israeli soldiers in a “holding pattern,” sitting or milling around, while Palestinians systematically were shown in violent motion. Mention of Palestinian casualties vanished from the front pages two days after the intifada started, while large headlines announcing Israeli casualties persisted, even though the toll on Palestinians was far greater. National clichés thought to be buried long ago were dutifully resurrected. Nothing had changed since 1973, echoed the headlines and the editorials: Israel was again in a state of war, under siege, beleaguered, and fighting for its survival; Israeli actions were invariably reactions to Palestinian provocations; at worst, the army was guilty of regrettable mistakes; at worst those Israeli citizens and Jewish settlers engaged in violence against Palestinians (citizen or otherwise) were committing understandable crimes of passion. A simple formula was observed: If a story reinforces the received framing, highlight it; otherwise, bury or kill it. The consequences are as devastating as they are tragic: The reader is left with an overwhelming sense of powerlessness, a feeling that there is nothing that can be done to avert disaster, because Israel had done all it could do and more.

But evidence that fundamentally contradicted the prevailing view did exist in the dispatches of numerous journalists. For example, one week after the outbreak of the intifada, Ha’Aretz’s Amira Hass reported that “when the PA and Fatah called on the population to protest against ‘Sharon’s provocation,’ the response was lukewarm; no more than a thousand people came to the mosque. Again, as many times before, the PA proved incapable of mobilizing tens of thousands of people for violent and dangerous clashes with the IDF” (p. 25). Ha’Aretz military commentator Ze’ev Schiff noted, “The riots on the Temple Mount broke out following an Israeli provocation” (p. 24), while Danny Rubinstein, also of Ha’Aretz, wrote, “Many members of the Palestinian leadership approached their senior Israeli acquaintances and tried to prevent Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount. . . . The response was negative” (p. 25). What is important to note from these examples is that compelling eyewitness accounts from professionals systematically were given far less prominence than accounts from government officials and members of the military establishment who spoke and acted with a clearly defined agenda of demonizing the Palestinians and presenting a one-dimensional, self-serving rendering of events on the ground.

The abundance of reliable accounts from credible international organizations is illustrated in Israel/Palestine: The Black
Book, edited by Reporters Without Borders. This book gathers sixteen compelling reports highlighting human rights abuses by the state of Israel (ten reports) and by the Palestinian Authority (five reports). It is a must read for any reporter who covers the Israeli occupation and any editor who has a say in how fieldDispatches are presented to readers and what editorial line his or her paper should take (assuming that basic facts intervene in setting editorial lines). A short but powerful introduction establishes the basic parameters necessary to understand the occupation: the context of the creation of the Jewish state, the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the annexation of East Jerusalem, the Geneva Conventions, the first intifada, the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords, the authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority, Camp David’s failure, and the second intifada. The book also provides evidence of just how short of the mark the U.S. media has fallen in its duty to inform, enlighten, and empower its readers. Readily available reports by respected and established human rights organizations rarely are cited in news items, let alone in editorials. Instead, U.S. media, as I have demonstrated in my own books, use loaded words that betray a remarkable unquestioning adoption of the language spoken by the Israeli prime minister’s office: Israel engages only in “retaliations” and “responses”; Palestinians are killed in “crossfires” and “errant shells”; Israelis engage in carefully “targeted” killings rather than political assassinations or discriminate collective punishment; Israelis engage in “sweeps,” eliminate “targets,” mobilize for “incursions,” etc. Readers also have to endure blatant double standards: the killing of Palestinian civilians receives far less urgent attention than the killing of Israeli civilians (to this day, despite protests that are now two years old, CNN has a web site showing a picture and short bio of every Israeli killed in a suicide bombing, but has nothing comparable for Palestinian civilians); the death of Israeli children is treated as a far greater tragedy than the death of Palestinian children; suicide attacks by Palestinians against Israelis are carefully chronicled (the Associated Press routinely publishes such statistics, with summary charts and vivid graphics), with nothing even remotely similar for Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians.

Joshua Muravchik, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, knows full well the essential role entrenched narratives play in ensuring the success of a propaganda project and how dangerous and even fatal to the project anything that undermines them can be. In Covering the Intifada, he angrily pinpoints instances in which he feels the U.S. media veered off the righteous path and engaged in the sinful practice of challenging the received word. What is obvious and axiomatic to Muravchik is that only Israelis are murdered, only Israeli officials tell the truth, only Palestinians go on rampages, only Israelis truly want peace. Add to these axioms the following: Arafat is evil incarnate; he not only ignited, but orchestrated and sustained the intifada; the Israeli government and its institutions are respectful to a fault of the law and of human rights; the notion that Palestinians are united against the occupation is a silly fabrication; Barak (“very much a dove” [p. 46]) is goodness and tolerance incarnate; Sharon is a realist, but he never lies and truly wants a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

With self-assured relish, Muravchik tears into the miscreants who dare quote Palestinians without providing incriminating evidence that wholly undermines what they say (this he calls setting the story in its “proper context” [p. 41]), who dare challenge the pronouncements of Israeli officials (this he calls “editorializing” [p. 5]), who dare report what they see when the reporting shows Israelis in a bad light (he insists that reporters should remind the reader that Israel is acting in self-defense [p. 56]), who dare hint that Palestinians are acting in self-defense (he denounces this as “false equivalence” [p. 53]), and who dare to take a step back and provide an honest assessment of the big picture as they see it (this he offers as evidence of “outright anti-Israeli tilt” [p. 53]). Not surprisingly, Peter Jennings, known for marginally challenging received views on foreign affairs, bears the brunt of Muravchik’s ire (Jennings is accused of harboring “an ill-concealed animus toward Israel” [p. 105]), while Fox News is singled out as the network that knows how to do its job (as Muravchik understands that job to be [p. 61]).

In short, a more systematic and unswerving regurgitation of the familiar destructive arguments from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Zionist Organization of America, and Hillel campus chapters cannot be found. Indeed, this is an excellent manual for anyone who already subscribes to the gospel according to Ranaan Gissin, Ariel Sharon’s loutish—to borrow the sparkling language
of the late Edward Said—spokesman, and it should make for soothing reading whenever anyone’s conscience should prick him or her for violating the truth in the name of blind zealotry.

**ZIONIST VIEWPOINT**


Reviewed by Laurie King-Irani

To readers hoping to make sense of the tumultuous events that beset Nazareth from 1997 to 2000, Raphael Israeli's book would seem to promise much: richly textured social and historical background about dramatic incidents affecting Christian-Muslim relations in Nazareth and the status of Arabs in the Jewish state. Styling himself as an old "Arab hand,” Israeli lets his reader know that for decades he has devoted considerable attention to the overall situation of Israel's Palestinian minority, albeit from a Zionist apologetic point of view. Here, he attempts to narrate and analyze the 1997–2000 intercommunal crisis known as the "Shihab ad-Deen affair" in Nazareth, Israel's largest and most diverse Palestinian city. This is not an easy task, as Israeli notes while enumerating the challenges that faced the Commission of Inquiry, on which he served:

It became evident that the problem at hand was not merely local and municipal, communal and intercommunal. It was also pregnant with longterm and far-reaching implications for future relations between Muslims and Christians in Israel and in the world. … This necessitated an interdisciplinary approach, a multi-layered analysis and a broad look at the problem. … [The Commission realized that] what was at stake were not only measurable facts and verifiable events, but also legends, guesses, beliefs, rumors, and emotions that no amount of evidence or reasoning could discount or refute (pp. 117–18).

Unfortunately, Israeli's meandering, disorganized, and overly detailed account falls victim to his own reliance on legends, rumors, and fears, most of which center on the demographic danger posed by Muslims in the Jewish state. Rather than delivering a nuanced, fine-grained appraisal of the players and interests that brought Nazareth's municipal government to a standstill and world attention to this Galilean town, he presents a convoluted account and an essentialized cast of characters. Groups are portrayed as monolithic; the pronounced internal diversity of Nazareth is not explored fully; and there is confusion about the role of Muslims in the Communist party. Furthermore, the reader must plod through seven chapters (nearly 90 pages) before arriving at the actual description of the events that culminated in the December 1997 takeover of the plaza adjacent to Nazareth's Basilica of the Annunciation.

Israeli treats Nazareth's history in a way that implies that the city's natural, nay God-given, role is to be a permanent refuge for Christians and a site for Christian devotion and reflection. Israeli makes logical leaps across disconnected historical periods and implies that the contemporary Christians of Nazareth can be considered as descendants of the Crusaders. Though he briefly mentions that the city was destroyed in the late thirteenth century and uninhabited until the early sixteenth century, the romance of the Crusades permeates much of his historical analysis, which tells the reader more about Israeli than about recent events in Nazareth. He even presents the immense Basilica of the Annunciation, built in the 1960s, as the town's main Christian site, allegedly having great importance to all Nazareth's Christians. Based on my experience as an anthropological field researcher in Nazareth in the early 1990s, however, it was clear that many in Nazareth found the church immense, ungainly, and built more for tourists than for the indigenous Christian community. Since 2000, the building of real concern and alarm in Nazareth has been the gargantuan courthouse overshadowing the city from the adjacent Jewish development town of Natzrat Ilit.

This first half of the book leaves the reader with the unsettling feeling that the book's true subtitle could have been "The Muslims are coming! Be very afraid!" Indeed, the main thread connecting the disparate parts of this wide-ranging volume seems to be that Muslims are gaining a demographic majority in the country and pose a political threat to Christians and Jews alike. Painting with a broad and alarmist brush, Israeli alleges that Nazareth's Islamist parties have adopted the Hamas charter, although he provides no solid

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Muslim activists, led by a local lawyer. On December 21, 1997, a group of Shihab ad-Deen protesters that the municipality of Nazareth, led by Communist party stalwart Ramiz Jeraisy, put forward their demands to the Islamists and the Communist mayor from pursuing redress in the judicial arena.

The contradiction may stem from Israeli’s misunderstanding of the sociological dimension of Nazareth’s Islamists: the vast majority of the new political movement’s rank and file is comprised of internal refugees from surrounding villages destroyed in 1948. Though they and their families have lived in Nazareth for five decades, original inhabitants of Nazareth still refer to them as laajji’een (refugees). In nearly a quarter century of controlling the city council, the Communist party dominated the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and did little to address the needs of this large and growing sector, which also constituted the bulk of Nazareth’s poor. This situation represents not so much a clash of civilizations as a social class conflict. Nasraawi (Nazarene) Muslims were usually politically and residentially distinct from internal refugees.

In the most valuable part of the book, Israeli correctly notes that the core of the Shihab ad-Deen controversy was a legal dispute that the municipality of Nazareth, led by Communist party stalwart Ramiz Jeraisy, should have won hands-down in a court of law. On December 21, 1997, a group of Muslim activists, led by a local waqf official, occupied a site on a key plaza adjacent to the basilica, pronounced the site holy waqf land, and shut down construction work on it. Their actions were illegal under Israel’s civil law code, but from the outset, according to the author, the Shas and Likud representatives in the government made deals with the Islamists behind the scenes in a vote-getting endeavor that failed spectacularly. Further, Israeli dismisses the Commission of Inquiry, on which he himself served, as a fig leaf (p. 116) meant to cloak government representatives’ backroom negotiations with Islamists and their promises to give them either all they had asked for (an 87-meter minaret on the site) or various compromise solutions. In none of his previous books has Israeli expressed such cynicism about Israeli politics.

In the final analysis, however, Israeli has not succeeded in presenting “an interdisciplinary, multi-layered analysis and a broad look at the problem.” Rather, he has provided a staunchly Zionist view of the conundrums facing Arab citizens of Israel, focusing particularly on the growing demographic weight and supposedly boundless fanaticism of anti-modern, anti-Western Muslims, while decrying an insidious collaboration between Israel’s rising Islamist groupings and right-wing and ultra-religious Zionist parties eager to accommodate Islamists’ demands so as to harvest Arab votes in national elections.

FLORA AND FAUNA IN THE HOLY LAND


Reviewed by Sandy Sufian

Probably the most extensive English-language account of environmental issues in Israel to date, Pollution in a Promised Land provides an insightful look at the animals, plants, soils, and water resources of modern Israel. Alon Tal, founder of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and the Israel Union for Environmental Defense, delivers a passionate, complex rendering of transformations of Israel’s environment primarily since its founding. Anthony Toth’s recent review of Pollution correctly critiques the intensely personal nature of Tal’s writing, his characterization of a “Jewish State in the Land of Israel as a moral imperative” (p. xvi), and his struggle to reconcile Zionist ideas and settlement practices with their often deleterious ecological consequences (see Anthony B. Toth, “A Personal View of Zionism and the Environment,” H-Levant, March 2003, www.h-net.org). Yet this work breaks ground in that it is one of the few comprehensive narratives on the ecology of Israel and the rise of environmentalism.

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there. This lack of work on ecology, environmental health, and development—scholarly or otherwise—constitutes a major gap in research on Israel/Palestine in particular and on the Middle East in general. The book can serve as a basic text from which to write more in-depth analyses on the history and politics of human ecology in Israel/Palestine.

To be sure, the book is written more as a journalistic account than as a scholarly, historical analysis. Tal dedicates pages to the personalities of environmental activists and policymakers. He relays entertaining vignettes, but pays less attention to chronological grounding or engagement with debates in environmental history and theory, such as the meanings of landscape or sustainability (see further John Brinckerhoff Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape, Yale University Press, 1984). Tal’s jumping back and forth in time sometimes leaves the reader confused and contributes to an inability to closely trace events and their outcomes.

The author’s overarching argument is that Israel’s environmental problems largely stem from and reflect its small territorial size yet growing population. Future issues, the author believes, will be exacerbated by these same reasons. Worldwide environmental problems are crystallized in the Israeli state because of these factors, thus making Israel an instructive case study that environmental scholars should consider. In this respect, Tal’s argument is compelling, yet it gets buried at times in the detail and length of the volume, and therefore does not seem completely fleshed out.

The chapters are organized according to themes, such as campaigns on forestry, wildlife and nature reserves, the establishment, successes and failures of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), the urban landscape, and governmental environmental agencies. This format delivers a multi-layered narrative that shows how state-building processes, governance, jurisdiction, disease, social movements, Zionist ideology, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are inextricably linked in and to environmental issues.

Tal begins by describing the connections between Zionism and a love of nature in the Yishuv period (Zionist settlement before statehood). His portrayal is at first critical—and returns to this tone at points throughout—but he then lapses into an apologetic, romanticized view of Labor Zionist ideologies toward exploring and settling the land. Tal’s command of scientific details, however, such as descriptions of species, salination processes, animal behaviors, and environmental health, is superb. He connects disease eradication efforts with environmental decimation (pp. 158–59) and shows how wildlife changes mirror human development and demographic transformations (p. 196). He also effectively conveys a sense of the biodiversity in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Palestine. This expertise compensates for the scant attention to theoretical analyses typical of scholarly environmental studies and potentially provides the groundwork from which to theorize.

As an activist first and foremost, Tal’s interest lies in the successes and failures of grass-roots organizations, policies, and policymakers in Israel.

Perhaps the most compelling section for a JPS audience is chapter ten, which is on Israel, Arabs, and the environment. Here Tal critically delves into issues of environmental justice with regard to Israeli Palestinians, the Bedouin, and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. He shows how systematic environmental discrimination, particularly regarding sewage treatment, groundwater contamination, and general access to clean water and air, are linked to the politics of citizenship and lead to differential morbidity profiles between the Jewish and Arab sectors within the Green Line and across it. He also reveals how the historical expropriation of land complicates the successful implementation of environmentally conscious programs for Israeli Palestinians and their relationship to Israeli environmental organizations. Tal concludes, however, on an optimistic note, arguing that since environmental issues know no borders, they offer a constructive space for cooperation and reconciliation in the interest of all.

ANTI-SEMITISM AND ORIENTALISM


Reviewed by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin

“It should be clear that The Jew, the Arab is about Europe,” writes Gil Anidjar in the
preface to his book, pointing out “that except for short asides, Israel and Palestine will not occupy, in any direct manner, a prominent place in this book” (p. xi). Indeed, this exceptional book is first of all a striking and path-breaking inquiry into the foundations of European political theology in which the author reveals the central role of the association—as well as the separation—of the Jew and the Arab in the construction of Western thought. At the same time, however, this remarkable study also opens new dimensions for the discussion of Zionism and the question of Palestine, as well as about the current global “war against terror” and the theological. The double figure of the enemy emerges as essential to the construction of political theology. The author reveals the central role of the Arab as a major subtext of the book.

The fundamental importance of Anidjar’s book is the manner in which it links the question of the Jew and the question of the Arab, as well as Orientalism and anti-Semitism, not as similar or comparable subjects, but as one and the same: “The history of Europe teaches us that every statement or image engaging either Jew or Arab,” he said in an interview, “has always been a document about both Jew and Arab.” Anidjar expands Edward Said’s discussion of Orientalism, combining it with the current debate on political theology. Rejecting the distinction between the issues known as “Europe and the Jews” and “Islam and the West,” he provides a new and fascinating framework of discussion that clarifies the central role played by the Jew and the Arab as the enemy. He does not mean that the image and role of the Jew and the Arab are the same. As Anidjar emphasizes, “one of the dominant ways in which this association was reinscribed and made operative was precisely by insisting on the difference, even the opposition between Arab and Jew, by locating each of them in distinct discursive spheres” (p. 35). Each term receives distinct determinations as distinct enemies: the Arab is military and political, the Jew is theological. The double figure of the enemy emerges as essential to the construction of the European political system since its inception. And their very separation is at the root of the European political body.

Having pointed out these striking links—colonialism and political theology, Europe and its enemies, the Jew and the Arab—Anidjar takes his reader on a fascinating tour of Western thought, from early Christianity through medieval articulations of the political and the theological to a discussion of major texts of modernity. Space here permits only brief mention of the issues discussed and their significance. For example, the first part of the book outlines the state of the concept of “enemy”—a concept that, Anidjar points out, has generated hardly any systematic attention. Starting with Jesus’s admonition to “love thy enemy,” the discourse on the enemy in Christian theology is examined, as are the ways in which it prepared the ground for, and was later directed against, the Jew and the Arab. Major figures in this previously unexamined history include Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Hegel, Freud, Carl Schmitt and, finally, Franz Rosenzweig. Through this discussion, which many readers may find dense and difficult, Anidjar also suggests reading Jacques Derrida’s notion of “Abrahamic” as archaeology of The Jew, the Arab.

The second part of the book consists of a series of close readings of major texts and moments in the history of the West. Each chapter provides surprising and illuminating insights and, on the whole, a new perspective. Anidjar starts by reading together two famous fictional characters from different Shakespearian plays, Othello, the Moor, and Shylock, the Jew. Such a comparative reading has never been done. Such an absence itself is symptomatic of the systematic separation that the book uncovers and explains. Here too, Anidjar’s illuminating readings clarify both the link and the distinction between the two characters.

In “Muslims (Hegel, Freud, Auschwitz),” Anidjar continues to explore the operations and functions of this relation between the Jew and the Arab in the writings of Kant, Hegel, and Freud, concluding with a gruesome culmination, the final “integration” of the Jew and the Muslim in the Auschwitz concentration camp. As Primo Levi and numerous others have testified, the Jew became a “Muselmann.” This unprecedented account of a well-known, if chilling, figure of Holocaust history and memory challenges common readings and compellingly prevents the possibility of ignoring those aspects that are essential to understanding this history.

Anidjar’s book therefore should be seen as a major contribution to an understanding of anti-Semitism. This is so precisely because it interrogates the very foundations
of the discourse of anti-Semitism and reveals the ideology behind the current separation of the Jew and the Arab, between “anti-Semitism” (as exclusively anti-Jewish) and Islamophobia. The Jew, the Arab simultaneously adds a fundamental element to the critique of Zionism, which is established explicitly on the division between the Jew and the Arab, and the total identification of the Jew with the Christian West. Anidjar starts his investigation of the “Muselmann” with a reading of the 1949 story “The Prisoner,” by the Israeli author Samech Yizhar, which raised a controversy over its representation of Jewish fighters and their conduct toward an Arab shepherd during the 1948 war. Yizhar’s novels served to preserve the image of the Israeli fighter, while emphasizing the “moral dilemmas” of soldiers, suppressing the history of transfer and dispossession of the Palestinians. What Anidjar shows, however, is that the representation of the Arab prisoners is nearly identical to representations of the “Muselmann” in Auschwitz. Yizhar’s canonical text is a clear manifestation of the way Zionism adopted anti-Semitic positions and images, and integrated the very discourse that led to the extermination of European Jews.

Along with his demonstration of the central role played by the distinction, indeed, by the separation between Jew and Arab in modern Jewish discourse in general—Franz Rosenzweig’s attitude toward Islam in his theological book, The Star of Redemption, is here, no doubt, exemplary—Anidjar also offers a counter-approach. What he proposes is nothing less than to rewrite Europe from the point of view of the enemy: the Jew, the Arab. Such perspective is not based on the notion that the Arab-Jew be reclaimed as an ethnic-cultural identity, although Anidjar recognizes the value of this struggle. Rather, it is offered as a political-philosophical approach that rejects the division between the Jew and the Arab, that opposes dominant and unreflected constructions of enmity, thus offering an alternative to the Zionist colonial politics of separation, interrogating, finally, the alliances of established Jewry in its support of these politics and Christian and post-Christian anti-Islamic wars.

MARXIST VIEW OF GLOBALISM


Reviewed by Adam Hanieh

In late 1999, Adel Samara spent 23 days in a Palestinian Authority (PA) prison as one of the signatories to the bayan al-isbreen (petition of twenty)—a document criticizing PA corruption and the political direction of the Oslo process. In his most recent English-language book, Samara presents the theoretical approach that informed this political stance. In a wide-ranging exploration of topics including nationalism, the political economy of corruption, Palestinian history, and globalization, Samara presents his analysis in the context of the social relations characterizing the global economy. His framework is classical Marxism, with a strong reliance on the core-periphery models of dependency theory.

Following the dependency theorists, Samara understands the central contradiction in the world system as the division between the center—or core—of the global economy and the periphery. Liberalization, “free” trade, and open markets mean that the products consumed in the core countries are produced in the periphery. Development of national heavy industry in the periphery is blocked by the core, which “appoints its rulers as agents for transferring their countries’ surplus to the center either in the form of net capital or paying high prices for cheap imports” (p. 5). Integral to this order is the formation of a “globalized public sector,” which Samara argues is a new feature of the era of globalization. Third world governments have dismantled their domestic public sectors rapidly, their functions replaced on a global level by the activities of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and other international bodies.

At the level of the core, a “capitalist class alliance” has emerged across the major capitalist countries reflecting the stratification of the global economy. Occupying the lowest rank in this “social structure of accumulation” (p. 7), the third world bourgeoisie receives political, financial, and military support for its role in protecting and facilitating

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the transfer of wealth from the periphery to the core.

In the case of the PA, Samara sees the grants and loans from donor countries as “rent” for the PA’s political positions. Corruption has been institutionalised through the system of *wasta* and the close ties between the PA state bureaucracy, an emerging capitalist class, and the large, traditional families. The leftist opposition has been largely co-opted into tacit support for this system through its integration into salaried positions within non-governmental and international organizations.

As an alternative model, Samara puts forward what he calls “Development by Popular Protection” (DBPP). Based on the experience of the first Palestinian intifada, DBPP embraces a popularly backed system of production and consumption that takes place outside the control of the state. It focuses on locally made products organized through cooperatives, accompanied by the boycott of goods from the “imperialist center” (p. 22) and rejecting support from foreign finance. It is clear that Samara envisages the DBPP as a longterm political project. He goes to great lengths to stress that this model differs from those that emphasize state- or ruling-party led “delinking” from the international economy. Instead, DBPP aims at fostering the population’s self-reliance as the central political task. This process encourages the capacity to build and sustain effective opposition and the development of popular consciousness.

In a provocative overview of current left-wing positions, Samara presents a radical critique of binational and one-state solutions, going beyond the generalities that typically surround this debate. By repositioning this strategic discussion in the context of regional and international power dynamics, he believes that the solution must be attained at the level of a radical transformation of the Arab region as a whole.

Samara contends that the most recent round of globalization is driven by a strategy of divide-and-conquer aimed at fragmenting states such as Egypt, Iraq, Sudan, and *al-Maghrib al-Arabi*, on an ethnic or religious basis (p. 34). This process is aimed at destroying a sense of Arab unity, which for Samara continues to extend across the artificial borders created by imperialism. The fragmentation of Arab unity in the wake of the 1967 defeat and the subsequent decline of Nasserism has brought with it what Samara terms the “Internalization of Defeat”—an abandonment of social and political struggle and the de facto acceptance of U.S. dictates in the region. During the current intifada, however, there has been resurgence in expressions of Arab unity, one example being the support for anti-normalization campaigns throughout the region. In contrast to classical Marxist interpretations of nationalization, Samara sees the material basis for Arab unity in the potential that greater cooperation promises for socioeconomic development. While a cultural basis for Arabism exists in the shared language, tradition, and history, it is the common interest of joint development that forms the “new discourse of this nationalism” (p. 44).

This book suffers from editing and stylistic problems. Nevertheless, it remains a timely and interesting contribution toward an understanding of the years preceding the current intifada.

**EVANGELICAL NUANCES**


Reviewed by Donald E. Wagner

Virtually all the present discourse concerning the political and religious influence of the Christian Right on U.S. politics classifies the movement as “evangelical.” Whether it is the *Washington Post*, the *Nation*, *Mother Jones*, or “60 Minutes,” journalists and analysts generalize about evangelicals as if they were part of a monolithic body. On the contrary, Protestant evangelicalism is a complex movement with a variety of theological tendencies and political trajectories ranging from the politically progressive former president Jimmy Carter to the fundamentalist Christian social and political agendas of Ralph Reed and Pat Robertson.

Gary Burge brings impeccable evangelical credentials from what might be characterized as the American evangelical “center.”

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He is a professor of New Testament studies at the flagship college of American evangelicalism, Wheaton College in Illinois, which includes among its alumni the evangelist Billy Graham and Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Dennis Hastert (R-IL). Burge also has authored two previous books about New Testament studies and a 1993 volume on Christians in the Middle East. His latest volume brings a refreshing and highly informed evangelical Christian perspective to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, placing him perhaps as far from the views of Rev. Jerry Falwell and U.S. Representative Tom Delay (R-TX) as the writings of Edward Said are from those of Daniel Pipes and Richard Perle.

Burge writes as an evangelical who has a passion for biblical justice and the norms of international law, and he brings to the book twenty years of travel and study in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. He is as familiar with the Israeli security arguments as he is with the biblical arguments, yet he demonstrates equal familiarity with and knowledge of the impact of Israeli settlements, closures, and the separation wall on the Palestinians.

Burge reminds his readers at the outset, "As an evangelical I have a theological interest in Israel's history and future . . . . And yet I am confused and troubled when I try to interpret the meaning of this small country and I learn about one more village story, one more set of keys to a lost home, one more house being bulldozed, and more refugees being pushed away from their homeland" (p. xii). What makes this work an important contribution to the discourse is that Burge writes to evangelicals as an insider. He addresses the arguments employed by the Christian Right concerning Israel and the Palestinians (which on the political level usually match policies of Israel's Likud party) and offers a compelling alternative.

The initial chapters provide a useful introduction to the geography of the Holy Land, with biblical and contemporary references. Burge then provides a fast-paced history of Israel/Palestine from Abraham to Abraham to the second intifada, all within thirty pages. Some historians may fault him for what has been omitted; I would have preferred a more detailed treatment of the rise of Zionism as a reaction to European anti-Semitism and a stronger analysis of the British role in thwarting Palestinian aspirations in the post-World War I era. One undoubtedly has to make choices in such a brief historical overview, so I was grateful for his accurate analysis, particularly his treatment of the nakba, where he employed the term "ethnic cleansing" with reference to depopulation of Palestinian towns and villages during 1948–49.

Burge shows his erudition in the chapters that focus on biblical interpretation. After carefully analyzing the nature of the biblical promises (especially those concerning the "land"), he notes that "land promises" must be linked inextricably to the Covenant between Israel and Yahweh. As such, the promises to Israel always carried various conditions and responsibilities. If Israel chose to ignore the ethical standards set forth in the Torah, it could (and did) lose residency in the land (Leviticus 20:22). He adds, "Keeping the land is hinged to keeping the Law" (p. 81).

The chapter "Modern Israel and the Land" complements the biblical material, pressing the discussion toward the moral implications of the biblical promises (and conditions). Burge argues that modern Israel is practicing a form of "apartheid," an argument that is well documented with convincing data, such as comparative water usage in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, discriminatory practices within the state of Israel toward its Palestinian population (quotas on Palestinian university students, limited services and revenue available to the Arab municipalities in comparison with Israeli Jewish areas, etc.), and the extensive number of Palestinian homes demolished for reasons not applied equally to the Jewish Israeli sectors.

Burge calls for "A New Evangelical Outlook" and points to a number of Christian authors, organizations, and polling data that indicates a readiness for change. He cites a poll conducted by the respected evangelical journal Christianity Today (with 2.5 million readers) indicating that 88 percent of those polled believe that "Christians should hold the State of Israel to the same standards of justice and human rights as any other nation." He then directs his readers to be aware of the "living stones," or Palestinian Christian leaders who by their very existence challenge evangelicals to open their hearts and minds to the plight of the Palestinian people. He also points to a variety of evangelical organizations, such as World Vision and Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, that provide alternatives to such Christian Zionist organizations as Bridges for Peace, Stand for Israel, and the International Christian Embassy-Jerusalem, all of which come under critical analysis in the volume.

Burge has written a valuable and thoughtful book not only for evangelical Christians,
but also for students of the Middle East who might benefit from an alternative evangelical voice to the Christian Zionists who currently dominate the evangelical discourse. This volume would be the perfect gift for an evangelical friend, relative, member of Congress, or others under the spell of the Christian Zionist perspective. Those interested in how a respected evangelical scholar approaches the relevant biblical texts related to the “land” and prophecies concerning Israel can do no better than this book. Let us hope that it will receive broad distribution throughout the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian communities, particularly during this time, when the Christian Zionist perspective seems to be in its ascendency.

DOCUMENTING OCCUPATION

Palestine Is Still the Issue: A Special Report by John Pilger, written and presented by John Pilger, directed by Anthony Stark. Carlton International Media, Ltd., 2002. 55 minutes. Distributed in the United States by Bullfrog Films. $250.00 to buy, $85.00 to rent (reduced rates for activists and grass-roots groups), VHS and DVD.

Reviewed by Bashir Abu-Manneh

John Pilger has made a well-informed and engaging documentary against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. His argument is clear and consistent throughout: the root cause of violence in Israel/Palestine is Israeli colonialism. Israel has dehumanized the Palestinians and subjugated them to the longest occupation in modern times, and the Palestinians have been resisting the occupation and fighting for their freedom and independence. These facts are uncontestable, and Pilger presents them very well, mixing interviews, authorial commentary, and historical narration to convey a picture of a whole society degraded and denied its fundamental national and human rights.

The film opens with a series of voices. For example, Mustafa Barghouti states, "There is only one way of ending this, it's ending of occupation because occupation has become the cancer that is eating the lives of both people." Rami Elhanan, an Israeli whose daughter died in a suicide bombing, says, "What the occupation did for us it reduced us into animals in a way that sometimes I am ashamed to say I am an Israeli." And, finally, Ishay Rosen-Zvi, a refusenik, adds, "This is a huge bluff of the Israeli establishment . . . that every criticism of its policy is anti-Semitism." The thrust of the film is to show how Israel has intensified its assault against Palestinian society since the outbreak of the second intifada and is seeking to crush the Palestinians into submission. Pilger's visit to the Palestinian Ministry of Culture sets the tone from the beginning: The vandalism, excrement, and destruction capture the essence of Israel's Operation Defensive Shield, a devastating reinvasion of heavily populated areas of the West Bank in the spring of 2002. For Liana Bader, head of the Cultural Department in the Ministry of Culture, this is the outcome of "the systematic terrorism of the Israeli state."

Pilger shows how ordinary life in Palestine has become "a maze of controls, roadblocks, checkpoints." And these controls remind him of apartheid: "This is how I remembered apartheid South Africa. The hidden effect is the same: Humiliation and anger and death." Newborns die at checkpoints. Curfews grind life to a halt. Settlers grab more land and monopolize water resources. Israel builds more roads for exclusive use by Israeli Jews and walls to seal itself off from the Palestinians and to seal the Palestinians off from each other. House demolitions are common, and collective punishments are the norm. The majority of Palestinians are poor and their children traumatized. A whole nation thus is reduced and dehumanized on a daily basis. In today's Palestine, Pilger concludes, "Fear has a permanent presence." His film shows how life under the shadow of Israeli terror has become a living hell.

As a result, Palestinians, though determined to resist, feel angry and abandoned. Dr. Mona al-Farra, a Gaza resident, states, "I feel that nobody is taking care of us." Barghouti feels impotent and helpless. A sense of powerlessness is pervasive. The resistance this feeling has generated, suicide bombing, is one of despair and hopelessness. Waafa Idris, the first female suicide bomber, is a clear example: as an ambulance volunteer she witnessed the horrors of occupation on a daily basis and decided that death is preferable to a life of degradation and injury. It is a choice Israeli brutality pushed
her to take. As Israeli historian Ilan Pappé explains, “The way out of it is to provide the circumstances in which these young people would find avenues of hope instead of avenues of despair.” For the Israeli father who lost his daughter in a suicide bombing, understanding why it happened is key: “You have to ask yourself: have you contributed in any way for this despair, for this craziness... Understanding is part of the way to solving the problem.”

The Israeli government is oblivious to such humanism. Dore Gold, advisor to Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, casually affirms Israel’s right to determine Palestinian destiny: “What we’re speaking about is our willingness to negotiate with the Palestinians their self-government.” With endless U.S. backing, Israel has continued to build and fortify illegally what Pilger calls “a network of armed colonies,” carving up around 42 percent of the West Bank and dominating Palestinian communities. Oslo is the name of this “classical colonial fix” (Pilger’s phrase): A partially empowered Palestinian elite and a totally disempowered mass population are both subjected to the diktats of Israeli security needs. Palestinian sovereignty has become a meaningless proposition.

Even though the PLO has led the Palestinians into this catastrophic bind, Pilger is uncritical of its politics of capitulation. By invoking positively the PLO’s 1988 Algiers decision (renouncing “terrorism” and acknowledging the existence of Israel, as the U.S. demanded), Pilger clearly accepts the limits this has put on the pursuit of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. That is why he problematically concludes his film by claiming that the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 22 percent of Palestine occupied by Israel in 1967 would constitute justice for the Palestinians. Such a solution to the Palestinian issue would leave most Palestinians dispossessed and refugees. If the PLO exploits the necessity and paramountcy of decolonization to legitimate a politics of surrender, then Pilger lets them get away with it. It is very unfortunate that such a staunch supporter of the oppressed worldwide should advocate such a partial realization of Palestinian rights and justice.

SHORTER NOTICES


Originally published in 1988, this volume is one of the few histories of the Arab-Israeli conflict that gives similar weight to developments before and after 1948. Smith, a history professor at the University of Arizona, takes the reader through Palestinian history from Roman and Byzantine times to Ottoman rule and the British Mandate before ending with the road map of mid-2003. The fifth edition contains a rewritten chapter, “Israeli-Palestinian/Arab Negotiations and Agreements, August 1993–May 1999,” and a new chapter covering events up to mid-2003. Conceived as an introductory text, each of the 12 chapters now includes a brief chronology and excerpts from one to five key documents. Thirty photographs and 20 maps supplement the sometimes dense narrative. While Smith approaches the subject with a historian’s objective detachment, he also does not conceal his sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians since 1948. He argues that the George W. Bush administration’s hands-off approach to the conflict has encouraged Israeli settlement expansion and an escalation of violence in the region. Unfortunately, however, he makes no policy prescriptions with respect to altering U.S. positions.


Elizabeth Laird sets before herself a daunting task: To write a convincing work of young adult fiction centered around one of the most devastating conflicts of the twentieth century and now, sadly, the twenty-first century as well. The protagonist, Karim Aboudi, is a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy living under Israeli military occupation in Ramallah. Laird masterfully interweaves his daily preoccupations—putting up with his older brother, maintaining a secret friendship, searching for a decent soccer patch—with the wider, grimmer world about him. Each day Karim struggles to forge a normal life amid arbitrary curfews and school closures, land expropriations, and armed patrols. Readers may find Karim’s positions on the use of violence uncomfortable, but this, perhaps, is precisely Laird’s aim. She deftly
explores a wide range of viewpoints within Palestinian society: from the corrosive and emboldening power of anger to, ultimately, the dehumanizing effects of military occupation on both its perpetrators and victims. In the end, the story is a haunting celebration of that most simple and elusive feat: survival.


Eleven Quakers and three “friends-of-Quakers” visited the Middle East in June 2002 as part of an International Quaker Working Party to analyze ways to seek justice and reconciliation among Palestinians and Israelis. In the course of the group’s three-week sojourn, the members of the group interviewed more than 90 persons from various perspectives in several countries. This collection brings together a number of real life stories that illustrate the deep complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This collection consists of three parts. Part one chronicles life and violence in the Middle East through stories the group heard during its visit. Part two discusses various key issues facing future peacemakers, from the plight of the Palestinian refugees, to settlements, to Jerusalem. Part three focuses on peacemaking. The twelve appendices include lists of interviewees, a history of the Quakers’ involvement in Israel/Palestine, key U.N. resolutions, and a brief history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. A 50-page study guide is included for stimulating discussion of the book.


This collection of eleven articles, and an introduction, studies some of the internal social forces that buffet contemporary Israeli society. Part one examines critical issues in Israeli politics, including corruption, political finance, and the judiciary. Part two focuses on the religious-secular struggle, the influx of Soviet Jews in the 1990s, and the future of Israel’s Palestinian citizens. Part three discusses socioeconomic issues and the impact of globalization on Israeli society. The final two sections deal with issues relating to the Palestinians, the peace process, and the ironic role of Israel as a “diaspora Jewish community.” Except for two Canadian scholars, the authors are Israeli academics, and all but one—a Palestinian—are Jewish; most are political scientists. As editor, Alan Dowty sets the mood of this collection in his introduction, “The Tribalization of Israel?”


Academic and writer Gilbert Achcar lived in Lebanon before moving to France. This work brings together twenty-two of Achcar’s major writings on issues relating to the Soviet and U.S. invasions of Afghanistan, the Palestinians, Islamic revivalism, Israel, Lebanon, and Iraq. They were written between 1980 and 2003. As Achcar describes them, “They can thus be seen as a sort of Marxist chronicle of some key moments in the tumultuous history of the Islamic East during the last two decades of the twentieth century” (p. 7). He decries the “clash of civilizations” theory for explaining the tumult in the modern Middle East in favor of what he calls the aftershocks of the “aggressive intervention of two imperial barbarisms: the capitalist West and . . . the Russo-Soviet empire” (p. 7). Achcar prefaces his articles with an introduction entitled “U.S. Imperial Strategy in the Middle East” and concludes with “Letter to a Slightly Depressed Antiwar Activist.” Between these poles, he analyzes a host of events and issues in the Middle East from a Marxist perspective that seeks to shed light on the fundamentals he feels underscores the history of the region in recent decades. Of particular note are several articles on the al-Aqsa intifada, the direction of the PLO, and the Israel-Palestinian peace process.

In this essay, Nassar connects international terrorism with globalization, seeing them as linked through what he calls the migration of dreams and the migration of nightmares. He argues that globalization leads to high expectations (“dreams”) among the poor and oppressed. The disparity between these dreams and the reality of modern globalization leads to violence (“nightmares”) that often migrates back to the developed world. Nassar sees the root of terrorism in the struggle for power and wealth.

The author then spends the next chapters detailing case studies of ethnic conflict, noting the migration of dreams and nightmares in each case: Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Colombia, Chechnya, and the Congo. Nassar also examines Islamic terrorism in an anti-imperialist context, through case studies on Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Serbia. His study, based on secondary sources as well as his own experiences growing up in Jerusalem in pre-1948 Palestine, offers details often missing in similar studies.


IISS’s update on global military conditions is an invaluable reference book covering each country’s military situation. Part one provides a region-by-region analysis of military developments followed by a country-by-country listing of military personnel as well as the number and name of military hardware used by each branch of the military. Part two provides macroeconomic data, such as GDP, defense expenditures, and demographic data. Middle East analysts will be interested in such data as the following: In 2002, Israel’s defense spending per capita was $1,499, the third highest in the world—after Qatar ($2,857) and Kuwait ($1,582)—and well ahead of U.S. spending ($1,138). And in 2002, Israel ranked behind Germany (number seven) and Italy (number eight) as the world’s ninth largest arms supplier, selling $400 million worth of weaponry. The United States, Britain, Russia, France, China, and Ukraine were the six leading suppliers.


IISS’s most recent Strategic Survey complements its Military Balance by providing a narrative and an analysis of political, military, and economic developments for each major region as well as key countries during 2003 and the early part of 2004. Although much of the study does not go significantly beyond conventional newspaper coverage, it provides a useful overview for readers unfamiliar with certain regions or countries. The analysis of the Middle East conflict is critical of both the “disintegration of Palestinian politics” and the hands-off approach of the United States, which is “engaged in a self-centred war against terror and a state-building project that has exhausted its diplomatic interests and capabilities.” The IISS authors recommend that the United States reengage in the peace process by adopting a value-neutral stance. This would imply, among other steps, compelling the Palestinian Authority to disarm Hamas and persuading Israel to reengage with Syria, which in turn would facilitate restraining Hizballah.


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