Peterson, Dave. *Africa's totalitarian temptation: the evolution of autocratic regimes*. L. Rienner, 2019 (c2020). 279p bibl index ISBN 9781626378247, $85.00; ISBN 9781626378476 ebook, $85.00. This book is designed to warn readers of the perils of postmodern totalitarianism in Africa. Peterson is senior director of the Africa program at National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a privately incorporated but publicly funded organization in Washington, DC, and he has worked there for more than 30 years. His book may support NED’s claims on the US tax payer by upgrading needs for political reform, but his use of the term "totalitarian" is problematic. Though in trying to define the term he cites various authors, he never summarizes those with the purpose of offering a definition of his own. Instead he cites possible indicators, beginning with Freedom House scores and moving on to regime characteristics of monism (conflating state, party, security, society, and the economy), Utopian ideology, and mass mobilization; finally citing indicators such as terror, police torture, surveillance, prisons and prisoners, rogue technology and bureaucracy, and the possible presence of genocide. Peterson’s case studies—drawn from secondary sources and quick business trips—are of Eritrea (the "North Korea of Africa"), Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Equatorial Guinea. He concludes that only Eritrea, pre-2018 Ethiopia, and Rwanda “fully qualify” as totalitarian, with post-genocide Rwanda being the outstanding model of “postmodern totalitarian paradise.” Summing Up: Optional. Graduate students and researchers. -- C. M. Henry, emeritus, University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 57, Issue 7
Mar 2020

Ishay, Micheline R. *The Levant express: the Arab uprisings, human rights, and the future of the Middle East*. Yale, 2019. 338p index ISBN 9780300215694, $30.00; ISBN 9780300249224 ebook, contact publisher for price. The Levant Express is an artistic overview of the Arab uprisings of 2011, replete with specially commissioned graphic designs of railroad trains connoting revolution and progress. Derailed like the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, the Arab Spring has nonetheless sown the seeds of emancipation and human rights, according to Ishay (Univ. of Denver). Ever the optimist, often citing Hegel and Gramsci, she developed her ideas about the Middle East in off-campus seminars on political theory that she conducted with a prince and other elites while teaching at Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi from 2010 to 2013. She suggests that some Gulf states might replace the US, now discredited by the Trump Administration’s policies, to mediate between Israel and Palestine, even if in her view "Palestinians have lost the support of much of the broader Arab world" (p.113). She looks to Russia and the US to instead end the conflict in Syria. She further sees hope in Israeli and Saudi efforts to reconstruct the Hejaz Railway for eventually achieving economic integration and in social media for getting the region back on track. Readers may marvel at her imagination. Summing Up: Optional. General readers. -- C. M. Henry, emeritus, University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 57, Issue 5
Jan 2020

Hansen, Stig Jarle. *Horn, Sahel and rift: fault-lines of the African jihad*. Hurst & Company, 2019. 316p bibl index ISBN 9781849044141, $34.95. Horn, Sahel and Rift is a meticulously detailed survey of dozens of jihadist organizations operating across a wide swathe of African countries from Algeria to the Sahel countries of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad; the Rift countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda extending to Congo and Sudan; and the Horn, consisting of Somalia, Eritrea, and
Ethiopia. The organizations are shaped by the degree of territorial control of the host state and its relative hostility or “friendliness” toward the jihadis. A given organization such as Boko Haram in Nigeria or Al Qaeda in the Sudan may change from being a tool of the government to a clandestine opposition network or an overt one integrated into clans or tribes and exercising "semi-territorial control." For a time, such an organization could enjoy full territorial control until the state and/or outside powers suppress it and reshape its network into semi-territorial control. The author concludes that “ongoing government military offensives transform [organizations] rather than truly defeating them” but avoids any analysis of how outside powers make use of their specters in the new scramble for Africa and its rich mineral resources. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*

**Choice Vol. 57, Issue 3**
Nov 2019

Packer, George. **Our man: Richard Holbrooke and the end of the American century.** Knopf, 2019. 592p ISBN 9780307958020, $30.00; ISBN 9781984883278 pbk, $32.00; ISBN 9780307958037 ebook, $14.99. *Our Man* is required reading, a brilliant sequel to Packer's 2013 bestseller, *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* (2013, FSG), spun out in biographies. Richard Holbrooke's life (1941–2010) spanned that of the American Century proclaimed in 1940 but already declining, in Packer's opinion, during the self-absorbed Clinton administration. The author, given full access to Holbrooke’s personal archives, spent four years reconstructing his career and complex love life and directly cites more than 40 pages of his diary here. Entering the State Department out of college in 1962, Holbrooke was perhaps the most brilliant and enterprising diplomat of his generation. Volunteering immediately for Vietnam, he quickly discovered the futility of American counterinsurgency campaigns, whether in Vietnam or eventually in Afghanistan. He engineered the Dayton Accords to end the carnage in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 but unfortunately never knocked heads for Middle East peace. He avoided the region throughout his career because "it was too easy to piss off American Jewish organizations and hurt himself on his climb" to power and fame in Washington. **Summing Up:** Essential. General readers; upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*

**Choice Vol. 56, Issue 12**
Aug 2019

Krane, Jim. **Energy kingdoms: oil and political survival in the Persian Gulf.** Columbia, 2019. 206p index ISBN 9780231179300, $32.00; ISBN 9780231548922 ebook, $31.99. *Krane (Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice Univ.) combines the theoretically sophisticated analytic style of a newly minted PhD with the jargon-free writing style of a seasoned journalist who has a good sense of humor. Energy Kingdoms* offers a superb panorama of the political economies of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Though these countries already consume a quarter of their oil production and cannibalize their export revenues in an unsustainable spiral, their autocracies have rested until recently on a satiated citizenry accorded incentives to waste energy. Krane shows that these governments are gradually cutting back energy subsidies, altering implicit social contracts under the cover of economic and political crises in the wake of the Arab Spring. The surveys Krane undertook for
his doctoral dissertation indicate greater public understanding and flexibility than previous studies have suggested. That said, Krane notes that one cost associated with the necessary reforms has been increased repression, especially in Saudi Arabia. (The book was completed shortly before the murder in Istanbul of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, inside his country’s consulate.) Krane does not deal with the challenges of diversifying these countries' economies and gainfully employing their burgeoning young populations. **Summing Up:** Essential. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers. -- *C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*

Choice Vol. 56, Issue 11
July 2019


McCarthy (Oxford, UK) presents 14 months of fascinating ethnographic field work interviewing 85 Islamists from Sousse and surrounding villages, the heartland of Tunisia’s political elite before 2011 and home to former prime minister Hamadi Jebali, Tunisia’s first to be elected after the 2014 revolution. McCarthy reaches down from Jebali to two generations of Islamist current and former members of the Nahda movement in its various incarnations since the mid-1970s. The sample includes simple members and local and regional officials as well as five senior leaders, the author’s intent being to develop a “genealogy of meaning-making” in “the lived experience of Islamist activism.” McCarthy registers the local responses to the politicization of the movement in the 1980s and 1990s and its resilience—buttressed by religious faith and informal networks—in the face of prison and subsequent social isolation under Ben Ali’s repressive regime. His pioneering study traces the “conflicting and ultimately irreconcilable differences” between religious and political activism to the final break in 2016 of the Nahda Party from its proselytizing roots, and demonstrates Tunisia’s relevance to other Islamist experiences in the Middle East. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*

Choice Vol. 56, Issue 8
April 2019


From A for “Assigned Residence” to Z for “Zone,” this legal lexicon dissects the legal infrastructure of Israeli control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), defined here as all the territories seized in the 1967 war, notably the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem as well as the West Bank. The authors are distinguished international law scholar-practitioners who base their conveniently cross-referenced analysis on the body of law of belligerent occupation codified in the 1907 Hague Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, and its Additional Protocol I of 1977. The supposedly lawless occupied territories are in fact “brimming with legalism” that Israel's High Court of Justice has attempted to legitimate, in part since 2002
by selectively applying this body of international law. Despite Israel’s “disengagement” from Gaza in 2005, Q for “Quality of Life” demonstrates the law’s tragic relevance to this “sui generis” zone. This reference book is an indispensable guide to the Palestinian-Israeli problem and deserves a place in any public library as well as in research institutions. **Summing Up:** Essential. General readers; upper-division undergraduates through faculty--**C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin**

Choice Vol. 56 No. 3 (November 2018)


Focused on “matters of textuality,” Messick (Columbia) skillfully recovers the practice of Sharī‘a law in the highlands of prerevolutionary Yemen. He reconstructs the “library” of Zaydi Sharī‘a references, revealing differences between Zaydis and Sunnis to be minimal, and gathers a substantial sample of their related “archive” of court documents. Against the traditional view that the theory of a state based on Islamic law is a political fiction, he argues that a millennium of Zaydi rule in Yemen articulated a practical governance of Sharī‘a through a succession of some hundred imams, descendants of the prophet usually also qualified in law. The site of Ibb during 1920–62 was relatively uncontaminated by western imperialism or the brief Ottoman presence after 1878, making it an ideal setting for this historical anthropology. The research involved not only analyzing rolls of up to 13 feet of Arabic script but also “ethnographic sourcing” of the scholars who wrote, safeguarded, or legitimated the Sharī‘a archive and library documents under study by making “extended commitments to people and place … knowing the archive in person, as it were.” **Summing Up:** Recommended. Graduate students through faculty. -- **C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin**

Choice Vol. 55, Issue 11 (July 2018)


This judicious study of Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons, and their proliferation to Iran and North Korea, is the fruit of a doctoral dissertation written by a Pakistani lawyer and police investigator who had served as deputy director of investigations at Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau. He recommended that it not pursue a corruption case against A. Q. Khan, who was revered as "father" of the bomb. In Abbas's view, it would not have been wise for this nascent anti-corruption organization to pick Pakistan’s most popular hero as its first target. Nevertheless, after years of study and interviews with major military and civilian leaders, Abbas concludes here that Khan "artfully deceived the state" at times, even if "on many occasions" the state exploited his services. In 2003, when operations with Libya exposed Khan, General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military ruler, made Khan confess to acting on his own, but he subsequently retracted his confession once Musharraf could no longer keep him silenced. The book rigorously assesses the motives and actions of the relevant state actors as well as Khan and his largely European network of proliferators. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- **C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin**

Choice Vol. 55, Issue 11

July 2018

Morton, son of a British geologist, grew up in Qatar, Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi in the 1950s and 60s, and has written extensively about oil in the Middle East. He does not offer any new theoretical insights about the impact of oil on the “empires” and “anarchies” of the region but rather, addressing general readers, tells the story of oil prospecting, discoveries, and development in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen from the 1850s to 2016. Morton adds occasional details omitted in Daniel Yergin’s The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power (1990); for instance, that Socony (Mobil) was exploring in Palestine in 1914. Despite an insider’s knowledge of British companies operating in the region, his history of the rise of national oil companies and of oil prices in the 1970s seems balanced, as he can also empathize with nationalist grievances against imperial powers. While carefully marshaling all the circumstantial evidence to the contrary, Morton argues that access to Iraqi oil was not the prime driver of the US decision (without approval from the UN Security Council) to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003. Summing Up: Recommended. General collections and public libraries. -- C. M. Henry, emeritus, retired from the University of Texas at Austin Choice Vol. 55, Issue 7 Mar 2018


Masri (Columbia) presents a stimulating account of Tunisia’s democratic transition that deserves to be read widely in the Arab world as well by students of the Middle East and policy makers. Tunisia is indeed the unique success of the “Arab Spring” and deserves the sympathy and balanced appreciation this delightful book presents. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews with dozens of Tunisians and impressive command of the secondary literature about Tunisia’s history as well as recent developments, Masri’s analysis reflects the keen insights of a Jordanian Palestinian Muslim who taught operations management in business schools, founded educational institutions in the Middle East, and currently heads Columbia University’s network of Global Centers. His work nicely synthesizes Tunisia’s Mediterranean identity and traditions of progressive reform, and compares its national identity with those of less open, less secular ones of other Arab countries. Buttressing Tunisia’s transition was an exceptional labor movement, consummate politicians, and a “Tunisian Islam” that developed over a century of reforms. As an educator Masri views Tunisia’s focus on progressive education as a major background condition for the country's transition to democracy, despite too many unemployed graduates. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin Choice Vol. 55, Issue 5 Jan 2018


Here is a fascinating view of critical moments in Egypt's uprisings of 2011 and 2013 and subsequent Muslim Brotherhood protests. Based on two years of fieldwork between 2011 and
2015, Ketchley (King’s College London) compiled a catalog, including videos, of 8,454 protest events. He conducted extensive interviews with activists as well as academics and analyzed the repertoires of contentious politics performed by the former both quantitatively and qualitatively. He shows how differently motivated activists coming from different strata demonstrated in public squares and burned police stations, building on one another's achievements to tire the police and overcome the regime. He also sees through the fraternization of the military with the crowds and the major differences between the relatively spontaneous demonstrations of 2011 and the officially sponsored one of June 30, 2013, engineered to justify Sisi's military coup. He speculates whether Egypt might have had a more successful transition if the Muslim Brotherhood had maintained better relations with other activists rather than withdrawing its support in the streets and engaging in elections. This book challenges some conventional wisdom about Egypt’s uprising but does not compare it with other Arab cases. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 55, Issue 5
Jan 2018

This is an exceptionally well-crafted and objective history of Tunisia’s principal Islamist movement and party, Ennahda, headed by Rachid Ghannouchi. It is based on over 400 interviews conducted over a four-year period of field work in Tunisia, together with relevant documents including WikiLeaks reports from the US embassy in Tunis. It is very reader-friendly, starting with concise political biographies of 23 leading personalities in the movement, many of whom are unknown to the public. It places the movement in the context of Tunisia’s traditions of reform and modernization, cultivated in the nineteenth century, and makes stimulating comparisons between Ghannouchi and Habib Bourguiba, who had condemned him to death. The book also places Ennahda in the context of competing Islamist tendencies and highlights its failure to tame Salafists by co-opting them or by supporting moderate Salafist parties. Ghannouchi has converted the movement into a political party that downplays identity politics but risks defections of activists to more extreme movements. This study, so well grounded in recent history, is essential reading for anyone interested in political Islam or the evolution of regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. Summing Up: Essential. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 55, Issue 4
Dec 2017

This book by a professional military historian documents the growing uses of oil for land, sea, and air operations in World War I, making it the “First World Oil War.” The major consequence of this “industrialized war of attrition” on the western front is “oil imperialism.” Winegard shows how after 1916, oil became not only a means but also an end, shaping British military campaigns and postwar diplomacy. He highlights little-known aspects of the war, such as Dunsterforce, a small, “hush-hush” band of elite volunteers tasked to defend or destroy Baku’s oil installations.
For the sake of oil, Britain also occupied Mosul two days after signing the Armistice of Mudros with the Ottomans, thereby expanding postwar Iraq. In his enthusiastic account of the marriage of war and oil, however, the author often exaggerates, conflating oil with other British wartime objectives, such as the defense of passage to India. The book is disorganized and repetitive and also replete with errors about the oil industry, such as Saudi Arabia’s supplying 14 percent of America’s oil by 1935, three years before oil was discovered there. Summing Up: Optional.

Faculty. -- C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin

Choice Vol. 54, Issue 8
April 2017


In these 21 short pithy essays, Gaza is variously viewed as overcrowded, economically unsustainable, a strip of land, a humanitarian disaster, a heart of darkness and tunnels, a microcosm of humanity and generosity, a symbol of resistance and defiance, an open air penitentiary or, worse, a zoo, a vast torture chamber, a closed cyst (under blockade since 2006), grass to be mowed periodically (by F-16s and other US financed weapons systems), and an archive of the Palestinian condition. The writers include the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) commissioner-general, some Israeli as well as many Palestinian and other academics, artists, and a clinical psychologist. The purpose of Gaza as Metaphor is, in its coeditors’ words, “to humanize it, maybe even to change it … through metaphors” and, despite Gaza’s isolation and destruction, point to “its centrality to the Palestinian cause and to the unfinished struggle for national dignity everywhere.” The book conveys images of the traumatic impact of the 50-day war waged in the summer of 2014, which killed 2,131 Palestinians, including 504 children, 66 Israeli soldiers, and five civilians in Israel, and further ruined Gaza’s infrastructure. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers. -- C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin

Choice Vol. 54, Issue 3
Nov 2016


This flowing narrative of revolutionary Algeria’s international relations in the late 1950s and early 1960s is an important reminder of the legacies of colonial repression and the struggles for national liberation that continue to spark anti-Western sentiments in parts of Africa and Asia. Byrne (Univ. of British Columbia) has dug into the archives of the Algerian revolution in France and Algeria, including police tape recordings of Algerian leaders in French prisons before 1962. He had access to the files of the fledgling Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1960s and could document the development of its archives and its internal deliberations as the newly independent government tried to shape its revolutionary vision of “third worldism” into practical foreign policies. Algeria, as an internal document reported in March 1965, had to have an “indispensable presence” in the global arena because of “our international obligations, our political choices, our prestige among Third World countries.” Byrne’s brilliant focus on Algeria’s external image is less successful, however, in explaining how easily its weak president was toppled in June 1965 on the eve of Algeria’s greatest diplomatic triumph, the stillborn
Second Bandung conference. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 54, Issue 3
Nov 2016

This volume conveniently extends North Africa eastward from Algeria and Tunisia to Libya and Egypt and south from Morocco to the Western Sahara and Mauritania for readers interested in sequels to the Arab uprisings of 2010–11. The editors point to their beginnings in the Western Sahara in November 2010 rather than in Tunisia a few weeks later, where the toppling of President Ben Ali in turn inspired popular movements to do likewise in Egypt, then Libya. The 20 essays are generally of excellent quality, loosely organized around the three themes of “drivers of change,” including West Sahara, the internal dynamics of the six states in the region, including manipulations of Amazigh (Berber) identity, and their international relations. Of particular interest are relations with the US; China; the Gulf Cooperation Council, notably Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates; and international oil companies. Two consultants tell a tale not of wealthy rentier states but of lost opportunities for all three producers, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt. Zoubir and Stephen Zunes point to the region’s growing strategic significance for the US military. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *C. M. Henry, retired from the University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 54, Issue 1
Sept 2016

In this study of six Israeli prime ministers, Aronoff (Michigan State Univ.) finds correlations between psychological profiles and dispositions to change from hard-line positions to peacemaking with the Palestinians. She profiles Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Shimon Peres in this order with respect to their psychological dispositions for change (i.e., ideology, time orientation, cognitive flexibility, risk propensity, and emotional intelligence). For example, Shamir remained a hard-liner because he was rooted in revisionist ideology, stuck in the past, rigid of thought, risk averse, and a loner. At the other extreme, Peres’s Zionism was flexible concerning territory and did not presume time to be on Israel’s side. Originally a hard-line supporter of Ben Gurion and father of Israel’s nuclear capability, he was future oriented, sensitive to changes in the Palestine Liberation Organization, ready to take risks and relate to a wide range of advisers, including young architects of the Oslo peace process. Based on extensive interviews, including with most of the prime ministers or their close family members, she weaves a well-written if incomplete story of critical moments in Israeli decision-making that deserve further research. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All readership levels. -- *C. M. Henry, National University of Singapore*
Choice Vol. 52, Issue 5
Jan 2015

Burki (National Defense Univ.), "a female of Pushtun and Irish heritage who grew up in Pakistan," compares the status of women in her home country with their status in the neighboring Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan and Iran. She discovers many similarities but concludes that the Pakistani judiciary offers slightly better safeguards for women against the tide of misogynist "Shariahization" that has swept across all three countries, beginning with Pakistan in the 1970s. Women have been political footballs in battles raging between secularists and Islamists, and imposing literal interpretations of Sharia law has offered cheap gains for politicians seeking backing from conservative public opinion. Feminists were divided between those seeking reforms for Westernized elites and their poor conservative sisters. Burki sensibly concludes that the "pursuit of unrealistic goals ... based on culturally alien practices" has distracted attention from "the enactment of laws and the provision of essential services that constitute more realistic and achievable first steps toward female empowerment in the long run" (italics in original). Her study is an excellent source of material for systematic comparisons between weak Muslim-majority states and civil societies, especially those undergoing political transitions and coping with political Islam. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. General readers; upper-division undergraduate students and above. -- *C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo*

Choice Vol. 51, Issue 11
July 2014


Originally published in Hebrew by the Academic Press of the Open University of Israel as *The Palestinians: A People Dispersed*, this book is more of a compilation of sources for a graduate student than an original work of research. It is a chronological recounting of the development of Palestinian politics from 1936 to 2011, including the Arab Spring. The book relies heavily on Yezid Sayigh's masterful *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (CH, Dec'98, 36-2403) for 9 of its 15 chapters. A graduate student might continue this reviewer's close study of tracing the footnotes from pp. 315-322 back to Sayigh's publication. Kabha (history, Open Univ., Israel) indeed cites Sayigh's translated Arabic edition, but he does not cite it as the source of many of his other footnotes. **Summing Up:** Optional. Graduate collections. -- *C. M. Henry, National University of Singapore*

Choice Vol. 52, Issue 2
Oct 2014


Laron (Hebrew Univ., Jerusalem) traces the origins of the Suez crisis to great power rivalries over Third World industrialization that conditioned the more immediate causes of the Suez War of 1956, when Israel conspired with Britain and France to invade Egypt, only to be halted by the two superpowers. His sectoral analysis of the British and American "internationalist" and "isolationist" business communities offers a novel perspective on the interactions of their
countries' respective policies toward Egypt before and after the Free Officers came to power. In preserving colonial empires, British and French "isolationist" interests supported the tripartite aggression. Laron's "mirror" Soviet and American strategies, based on "internationalist" constituencies after the death of Stalin in 1953, also point to their convergent interests in Third World industrialization as well as to Cold War rivalries. The author crafts a rich narrative of the early 1950s leading up to the crisis. He commands a full array of the archival sources of the major players, including the Soviet Union. It seems a stretch, however, to situate emergent Brazil, Russia, India, and China in the policies of the superpowers toward Egypt in the mid-1950s. Summing Up: Recommended. Graduate and research collections. -- C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo
Choice Vol. 51, Issue 8
April 2014

Three Algerian academics (including Cherif Dris, who wrote the first chapter) examine the national and regional security perceptions of the regimes of four Maghreb countries (omitting Mauritania), as well as their relationships with outside powers. National state security is confounded with regime security. Why, for instance, does Algeria support self-determination for the west Sahara territory ruled by Spain until 1975 and subsequently occupied by Morocco? Algeria understandably views colonial borders as sacrosanct, but less well known is its military's determination to keep in check Moroccan claims to much of the western Algeria, northern Mali, and Mauritania. Substantial Algerian arms acquisitions ignited an arms race with Morocco that the kingdom can ill afford without help from the Gulf Cooperation Council. Collective Maghreb security seems a distant prospect, though the authors suggest a possible scenario of democratization for all four countries. Zoubir (Marseille School of Management, France) and Dris-Aït-Hamadouche (Univ. of Political Science and Information, Algiers) have many interesting observations about everything from campaigns against al Qaeda in the African Sahel, notably Mali, to food subsidies and salary increases to head off domestic uprisings, and even the outsourcing of EU border control; however, the book could be better organized and security more systematically defined. Summing Up: Recommended. Research and professional collections. -- C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo
Choice Vol. 51, Issue 4
Dec 2013

Pedahzur (Judaic studies, Univ. of Texas, Austin) has crafted a remarkable, crisply written history of the rise of the settler movement after the 1967 War leading to recent triumphs of the radical Right in Israeli policies and elections. The movement's religious fundamentalist component is converging with the nativism and populism that it shares with contemporary European racisms. In its most recent formulations "the democratic principles of the state should be secondary to the ethno-Jewish ones" calling for separation from the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank; loyalty oaths to the Jewish state for the one-fifth of the citizens inside Israel's expanded boundaries who are not Jewish (along with foreign workers and asylum seekers), or
else their expulsion. Pedahzur relies on the elastic concept of a settler network to explain the rise of the radical Right. It consists not only of various extremist parties and factions but also of individuals strategically placed in key ministries and other state agencies that generated "an effective settling machine that had gotten caught up in a state of perpetual motion," regardless of official policies. Israel's 2013 elections preserved the radical Right's parliamentary majority as documented by the author. **Summing Up:** Recommended. General readers; upper-division undergraduate students and above. -- C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo Choice Vol. 50, Issue 11 July 2013


Designed as an introduction to Arab politics, *Beyond the Arab Spring* is divided into two parts. The first part is descriptive country studies; the second explores thematic issues such as political culture, varieties of Islamism, elections, oil rents, economic as well as political liberalization, the new Arab media, and regional and international interactions. Still rooted in the traditional political science binary of authoritarianism versus democracy, the authors analyze the various interlocking factors that contributed to and continue to shape the uprising of 2011, without arriving at any definitive conclusions about directions of political change. They also note how new media are fashioning a fresh "polyphonic and expansive Arab identity" that amplifies public awakenings. There are divisions within the region among competing Islamisms, be they inclusive or exclusive, and between Islamists and other more liberal "revolutionaries," not to mention those forces opposed to all putative revolutions or political transitions. Well documented in the recent literature about persistent authoritarianism and social movements for change, this undergraduate introduction may also serve as a useful reference for more advanced scholars and professionals. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, research, and professional collections. -- C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo Choice Vol. 50, Issue 11 July 2013


Pargeter (Menas Associates) vividly recounts the rise and fall of Libya's dictator. She skillfully uses British and US diplomatic archives as well as most of the standard secondary sources to develop the background to Qaddafi's 1969 coup, and she fills in many interesting details of his reign (1969-2011) with citations from defectors from his inner circle, such as Abdel Salam Jalloud, who had been his second in command for many years. This book is timely for documenting the exciting recent events on the ground that led to Qaddafi's downfall. Additionally, it benefits from the flood of interviews picked up in the Arabic press from leading figures who shed light on earlier events, including his son Saif Al-Islam's reform efforts. Although it is too early to critically dissect these memoirs and somehow infer what was really "deep in his [Qaddafi's] heart," as Pargeter occasionally claims to discover, she gives shrewd guesses, documenting them as well as any observer can, given the current state of research into these tortured years. This is an excellent read for academics and the general public

Eland (Independent Institute) displays a libertarian faith in the ability of unregulated markets to maintain steady supplies of petroleum to meet world demand at affordable prices. He reduces most US initiatives in the Middle East, even sending marines to Lebanon in 1958, to "the mercantilist policy of using force or covert action to ensure such incoming supplies." His book is riddled with misleading statements about US foreign policy and the oil industry. He vastly underestimates the capacities of the Texas Railroad Commission to regulate supply (and hence price) until the early 1970s, and the Seven Sisters to engage in similar self-regulation at the international level. And he minimizes not only the economic and financial effects of subsequent price volatility but also Saudi efforts to dampen it. Would there really be little damage to the world economy if Saudi Arabia were lost to radicals intent on destroying it? The author rightly argues that the reckless US military buildup in the Arab Gulf countries since 1987 may hasten that day. He is well worth reading despite his belief that markets cannot fail. **Summing Up:** Recommended. General readers and undergraduate students. -- *C. M. Henry, American University in Cairo*

Choice Vol. 49, Issue 12

Aug 2012


Maddy-Weitzman (Tel Aviv Univ., Israel) has written the first full-length academic study of the rise of the Amazigh (Berber) identity movement in North Africa. While focusing on the postcolonial states of Algeria and Morocco, especially since the 1980s, he has crafted an excellent history of North Africa that critically highlights Berberist interpretations in competition with the standard Arab Islamic narratives of Maghribi identity. Moroccan King Mohammed VI tried to co-opt the movement as part of Morocco's multicultural (including Jewish) identity, and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika tried to absorb the movement ("We are all Arab Amazigh"), but struggles for greater recognition persist in both Algeria and Morocco. "Amazigh" also means "free man," and indeed the struggles about Maghribi identities contribute to the larger struggle in the region not only for pluralism but for possible federalism and constitutional democracy. Supplemented by some fieldwork in France and Morocco, the Israeli American author deepens academic understandings of the diverse interpretations of identity, and the book should be of interest to scholars and general readers interested in southern Mediterranean cultures. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All readership levels. -- *C. M. Henry, American University of Cairo*

Choice Vol. 49, Issue 7

Mar 2012

Amit (emer., Concordia Univ., Canada) and Levit (Ben Gurion Univ., Israel), respectively a behavioral neuroscientist and a financial analyst, present a concise, carefully documented analysis of the missed opportunities for peace among Israel, the Palestinians, and other Arab neighbors. They persuasively argue for the existence of a hidden agenda, namely that "an equitable peace settlement was never Israel's top priority." They are all the more persuasive for having themselves been committed members of the Labour Youth, the Histadrut's ideological vanguard. As late as 1967, when they were already respectively in their 30s and 20s, they believed the official narrative that Israel had invaded the Golan Heights to defend victimized Israeli settlements from Syrian attacks. Israel's preference in 1967 for holding on to territories gained in its preemptive war over negotiating a durable peace triggered the authors' growing doubts about Israel's unending, supposedly defensive struggles against its neighbors and subject populations. Rather than being a country with an army, Israel became "an army that has a country," refusing any concessions for peace. This expert account should be required reading for concerned Americans. **Summing Up:** Essential. General readers; upper-division undergraduate students and above. -- *C. M. Henry, American University of Cairo*

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Dedicated to the Almighty, this book is an important critique of contemporary Islamic banking. Balala analyzes the root principles of commerce expressed in the Quran and important Muslim commentaries. She challenges the "pedantic restrictions of form over substance" in Islamic banking and argues the need to bring its rules up to date in the true spirit of Islam "catering [efficiently] to social justice and equity." The prohibition of *riba* (usury), for instance, is not really about charging interest, as most traditional Muslim scholars claim, but rather a prohibition against any commercial exchange that exacts inequitable benefits for one party by straying from fair market practices. Debt is not money but rather a kind of right that may be securitized without engaging in medieval juristic gymnastics. Islamic bond issues should be structured so as to converge with English common law practices, which share the same Arab-Islamic origins but were not frozen in time by the 13th-century Mongol invasion that closed Islam's door to legal innovation. This book should be required reading for international business and law students as well as pious Muslims. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. General readers; upper-division undergraduate students and above. -- *C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin*

Choice Vol. 48, Issue 10
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This outstanding study of the former Spanish Sahara documents the largely forgotten cause of self-determination for the indigenous inhabitants of the territory and their descendants living in the Moroccan-occupied territory or as refugees in bordering Algeria and Mauritania. If the West Saharan are ever to gain self-determination, despite US and French support for Morocco's
colonizing enterprise, it will be through pressures on the international community by an 
international civil society of nongovernmental organizations supporting human rights and 
national self-determination. If the issue remains unresolved, it may continue to impede progress 
toward the economic as well as political integration of the Maghreb, and drain Moroccan 
resources needed for development. Zunes (Univ. of San Francisco) and Mundy (PhD candidate, 
Univ. of Exeter, UK) argue that Algeria's role has been exaggerated and that growing Saharan 
opposition to Moroccan rule, even among some of its settlers, may be the monarchy's Achilles 
heel. Despite its apparent impracticality, the universal principle of self-determination trumps the 
monarchy's irredentist claims, and Saharan nationalism continues to develop inside and outside 
the occupied territory. A must read for policy makers and students of northwestern Africa as well 
as for international human rights activists. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. General 
readers, upper-division undergraduate students, and above. -- *C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 48, Issue 7
Mar 2011

Hafez, Kai. *Radicalism and political reform in the Islamic and Western worlds*, tr. by Alex 
$28.99.
Hafez (media and communications studies, Univ. of Erfurt, Germany), who frequently advises 
his government about the Western-Islamic dialogue, wrote this courageous, thought-provoking 
book in 2009, expertly translated into English by British social anthropologist Alex Skinner. 
Hafez evenhandedly critiques the ideological discourses of both the Western and Islamic worlds, deconstructing "Islamofascism," for instance, as well as varieties of Islamic fundamentalism. He 
boldly compares the Turkish military presence at the gates of Vienna (already in 1529) with 
contemporary Western and Israeli military occupations of Muslim territories. Just as the specter 
of the Ottoman Empire once facilitated the rise of Protestantism among threatened Christians, so 
now is Western neo-imperialism radicalizing Islam. The author "cherishes the hope" that the 
West may reverse gears and assume the risk of engaging Muslim radicals to promote democracy 
"in a largely consensual project of modernity" at the expense of incumbent authoritarian regimes. 
This book should stimulate thinking among Western, especially US, policy makers as well as 
students interested either in a more reflective comparative politics or in examining the internal 
contradictions of liberal international relations theory. **Summing Up:** Recommended. General 
readers, upper-division undergraduate students, graduate students, and research faculty. -- *C. M. 
Henry, University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 48, Issue 4
Dec 2010

Pelletiére, Stephen C. *Israel in the second Iraq War: the influence of Likud*. Praeger Security 
Pelletiére skillfully documents the US's disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq as only a 
retired CIA professional immune from domestic political pressures--unlike the US media--can 
tell it. The media, he explains, obliged the political class in the US by "consistently 
misrepresenting the situation." The ideological blinkers blocked any understanding of Iraqi 
nationalist resistance. Pelletiére argues that Israel did not push the US into the war--it was the
Pentagon's push for bases, not Israel or oil, and certainly not weapons of mass destruction that drove the decision for war. However, the neoconservatives who made it happen were interwoven with Israel's right-wing Likud Party, and for the Iraq War adapted the aerial destruction of cities and other counterinsurgency measures that Israel had pioneered against the Palestinians and Lebanese. This book is written haphazardly, and there are a few errors. For example the author writes that Clinton was president in 1991 (p. 50); and claims that Israel pulled out of Gaza in 1994 (settlers were not withdrawn until 2005) (p. 53); however, it still deserves a wider reading than most specialized security studies. **Summing Up:** Recommended. General readers, undergraduate students, graduate students, and professionals. -- **C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin**  
Choice Vol. 47, Issue 12  
Aug 2010

Since the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, comparisons between apartheid South Africa and Greater Israel have proliferated. Badran (Al-Quds Univ., Palestine) presents an original contribution to the growing literature because, while aware of the demographic, economic, and religious differences among the two colonial settler states, she focuses on the similarities and differences between South Africa's white protest movement against the apartheid regime in the 1980s and early 1990s and Israeli-Jewish protest against the prolonged occupation of Palestinian territories. Based on over 40 semi-structured interviews with white South African academics and former leaders of various protest groups and over 50 interviews with Israeli activists, she observes major differences between the two but highlights the significance of liberal minorities in opposing discriminatory regimes. Her study still bears the marks of a turgid doctoral dissertation but will be of interest to scholars of colonial and post-colonial societies and resistance movements. She unfortunately did not project the demography of Israel and the occupied territories beyond 2004, nor, in this reviewer's opinion, did she pay adequate attention to the significant differences among the respective business communities. **Summing Up:** Optional. Graduate, research, and professional collections. -- **C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin**  
Choice Vol. 47, Issue 10  
June 2010

Underlying her provocative title is Hilliard's deep concern for the victims of Western anti-Semitism "trapped" in Israel, a country promoted by the US and its allies because they were unwilling to admit adequate numbers of Jewish refugees into their respective countries before, during, or after the Holocaust. As hopes fade for a just peace between an Israeli and a Palestinian state, Hilliard urges the creation of a post-Zionist state along lines once advocated by Albert Einstein, Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, and many other liberal Jewish intellectuals. Based largely on Israeli and other Jewish sources, Hilliard (Univ. of North Texas) portrays Israel as an economically viable society on the verge of emotional collapse, suffering post-traumatic stress disorder caused by Palestinian suicide bombings and other Arab attacks brought on by its aggressive expansion and colonization policies. Much of its educated elite are leaving the
country, and Palestinians will soon outnumber Jews in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. This book is rich, timely, and disturbing reading, presenting information about "apocalypse fever" and "magical thinking" in Israel that deserves greater publicity in the US. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readership levels. -- C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 47, Issue 9
May 2010

This book, based on secondary sources, is a survey of Algerian history since the 19th century. It is loosely organized around the themes of nation building and national identity. These themes get stretched to include economic policy as well as Islam and Arabism. Hill (King's College London) argues Algeria never recovered from the mission civilisatrice imposed since 1830 by the French occupation and definition of the country. Independent since 1962 after violently rejecting the French presence, Algerians continued to disagree violently about the new definitions imposed successively by Ahmed Ben Bella (1963-65), Houari Boumediene (1965-78), Chadli Benjedid (1979-92), the High Security Council (1992-93), Mohamed Boudiaf (1992), Ali Kafi (1992-94), Liamine Zeroual (1994-98), and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (1999-present), each of whose "nation-building" is chronicled. The historical inventory covers much ground including recent terrorist attacks, but while citing a (very) few sources written in French, it omits critical ones written by major Algerian actors. It is a still a useful, if superficial, summary of events for researchers and might be used as supplementary reading for undergraduates. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, and research collections. -- C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 47, Issue 5
Jan 2010

This book tries to be objective by presenting the spectra of Israeli and Palestinian perceptions of their conflict and possible resolutions. It offers historical background from Ottoman times until the breakdown of the British Mandate and then presents the period from 1948 to 2008 by topic, including "Israel reborn," Palestinian refugee problems, the Palestinian national movement, the uprisings of the "occupation generation," the roles of international and regional actors, and the broken paths to peace since 1991. The design is excellent, the intent is laudable, but the implementation is patchy, although Milton-Edwards (Queens Univ., UK) knows the subject well. Each chapter begins with a summary and concludes with a bibliographic essay for further reading. The four-page chronology is also useful, but the author's presentation is often disorganized and in need of better copyediting. Useful Palestinian and Israeli public opinion polls are not consulted, and demographic data are disorganized and incomplete. The book's pessimistic conclusion suggests continuing domination, if not "transfer," of the non-Jewish majority presently surviving in Israel and the occupied territories. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduate collections. -- C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin
Choice Vol. 47, Issue 1
Sept 2009
Dunning, Thad. *Crude democracy: natural resource wealth and political regimes*. Cambridge, 2008. 327p ISBN 9780521515009, $90.00; ISBN 9780521730754 pbk, $29.99. Against the conventional wisdom that oil rents promote authoritarianism and discourage democracy, Dunning (Yale Univ.) argues that oil rent surges may enhance, not diminish, the prospects for democracy under certain conditions. If the economy is relatively diversified rather than heavily dependent on oil revenues, and if there is sufficient economic inequality, then economic elites will not have adequate incentive to overthrow democracy, whereas incumbent autocrats may liberalize to stave off revolutionary threats. Game theoretic arguments to these effects are supplemented by aggregate cross-national analysis to reach a balanced conclusion about the potentially positive as well as negative political effects of oil rents. Scholars like Michael Ross who have propounded the conventional wisdom recognize the "compelling argument" of this finely crafted study. Rich Latin American case studies further develop the author's argument, although Middle Eastern cases of economic diversification and increasing inequality have yet to be explored. Best suited for energy policy specialists (who may also appreciate the mathematics). **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduate students and above. -- *C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 46, Issue 12 Aug 2009

Zeitoun, Mark. *Power and water in the Middle East: the hidden politics of the Palestinian-Israeli water conflict*. I.B. Tauris, 2008. 214p ISBN 9781845114640, $85.00. This very informative volume about hydraulic aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts elucidates the "asymmetries" and injustices of water distribution between Israel and the occupied territories. Written by a water engineer with extensive experience in other conflict zones, it displays political as well as hydraulic intelligence about the processes of water allocation and exposes the efforts of the international donor community, led by the US, to hide a politics of Israeli hegemony under a fictitious peace process between riparian adversaries. As such, it should be required reading for US policy makers as well as students once the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is resumed after the November 2008 US presidential elections. Zeitoun (London School of Economics and Political Science) argues that water scarcity has technical solutions that the political adversaries seem unwilling to implement as long as the US seems content to push technical solutions without putting equal pressure on the Israelis and Palestinians to implement a just peace. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. All readership levels. -- *C. M. Henry, University of Texas at Austin*
Choice Vol. 46, Issue 2 Oct 2008