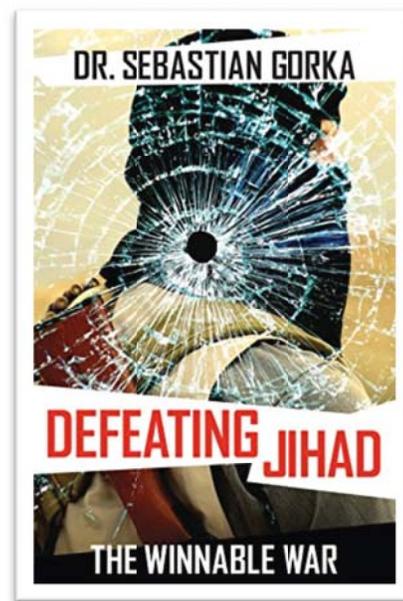


## Brief Reviews, Summer 2017

**Defeating Jihad: The Winnable War.**  
By Dr. Sebastian Gorka. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2016. 256 pp. \$27.99.

Those looking for a comprehensive and detailed program for defeating jihad might be disappointed in Gorka's study as his recommendations are confined to the last five pages of the book. The bulk of the work is a rehash of related topics that may be enlightening for those new to the field but familiar for those more acquainted. Thus, the reader is offered a recap of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the U.S. responses, and their after-effects; a standard summary of the life of the prophet Muhammad; the meaning of the "greater" and "lesser" jihads; and a survey of the modern theoreticians regularly associated with the present-day articulation of jihad such as Sayyid Qutb, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, and al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri.

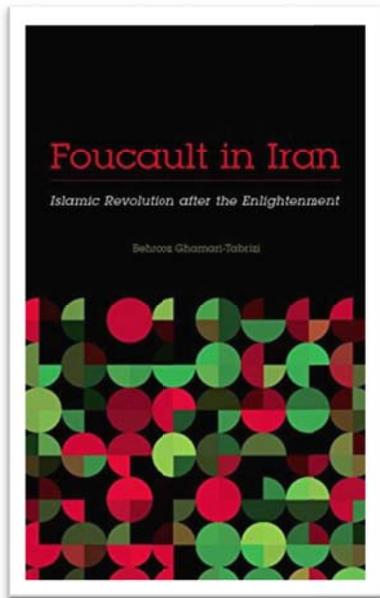
Gorka's recommendations for defeating jihad are good (if unoriginal). First: "Deploy the truth: You cannot win a war if you cannot talk honestly about the enemy. ... [W]e must use the term 'jihadist' to describe groups like the Islamic State." Second: "Take a step back: Help others fight their own wars." And finally: "Winning the war at home: [calls for] education and human intelligence. ... [W]e need to establish a nationwide program of education and training in the enemy threat doctrine of



global jihadism across the armed services as well as federal, state, and local police forces and the intelligence community." All three recommendations are certainly a good start—to which can be added banning immigration of Islamists and monitoring Islamic centers in America.

Western leaders and pundits must understand the ideological fount of jihadism in order to devise a real prescription for combating it. With a high position in the new Trump administration, Gorka is well placed to make this happen.

Raymond Ibrahim  
Middle East Forum



**Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment. By Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 272 pp. \$27, paper.**

This mostly impenetrable book argues against criticism of Michel Foucault, the left-wing French philosopher who romanticized the Islamic revolution in Iran. The author tells us that Foucault did not, as his critics claim, fail to appreciate the fascist tendencies of the Islamist movement headed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Instead, he “contextualized” Khomeini’s turn to the right as an understandable response to the violent opposition of the Marxist-Islamist Mujahideen-e Khalq (MeK). Unfortunately, the reader will not find that conclusion in so many words—or any clear, comprehensible statement, for that matter—in the 192 bloviating pages of this work.

Ghamari-Tabrizi’s *Foucault in Iran* drowns in a sludge of jargon and obscurantism: “The discourse of Arab Spring devoured the

Egyptian liberals and revolutionaries and denied them the impetus to articulate the significance of their uprising notwithstanding the burdens of a universal history.” Got that?

Foucault was roundly criticized at the time by French (and other) intellectuals for embracing Khomeini and romanticizing the Islamic revolution. Ghamari-Tabrizi demurs: “In response to his critics, [Foucault] insisted that the manner in which the revolution was lived must remain distinct from its success or failure. We need to remind ourselves that it was the realpolitik of the post-revolutionary state that colonized the spiritual novelty of the revolt.” Come again?

The few moments of clarity in this otherwise abstruse and useless tome come from the rare snippets taken from essays Foucault penned during his 1978-79 visit to Iran, or from subsequent criticism of Foucault’s romantic indulgence of the Islamist revolutionary orgy. Little emanates from Ghamari-Tabrizi’s keyboard.

Does the revolution that spawned the modern world’s first Islamic regime offer lessons for today’s policy-makers, let alone the students of history? Certainly. You just will not find them in this book.

Kenneth R. Timmerman  
Middle East Data Project, Inc.

**Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon’s Party of God. By Joseph Daher. London: Pluto Press, 2016. 288 pp. \$30, paper.**

Hezbollah (The Party of God) emerged during the turmoil of Lebanon’s 15-year civil war as a champion of the disenfranchised Shiite community of that fractured country. Although Hezbollah has been keen to present itself as the defender of

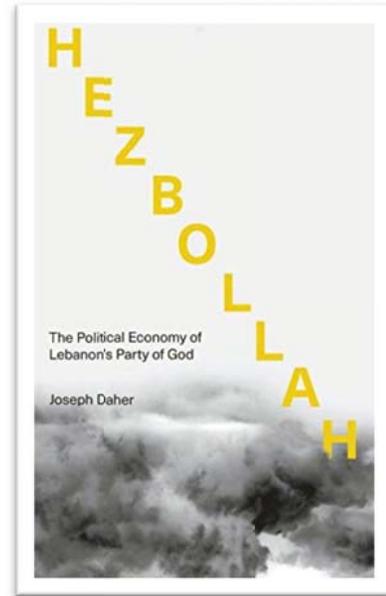
the poor and downtrodden, it did not take long for it to blend into Lebanon's political landscape and capitalist economic system.

There is no question that Hezbollah attends to the basic existential needs of impoverished Shiites, providing them, for example, with schooling and primary medical care and selling them discount cards to buy staple foods at subsidized prices. It also never misses an opportunity to denounce the neo-liberal economic policies of the Lebanese government as acts of aggression against the dispossessed as it did when Rafiq Hariri's government froze public sector salaries and wages and introduced a 10 percent value added tax system in 2002.

However, Daher of Lausanne University argues that there is a gap between Hezbollah's professed objective of spreading its own version of the Islamic way of life and its actual practices. The author demonstrates that, in practice, Hezbollah has abided by the rules of the Lebanese sectarian game, becoming, for example, an active participant in procuring direct investment for its perceived needs from Iran and wealthy Shiite entrepreneurs in West Africa.

Since the 1990s, and especially since Israel pulled out of southern Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah has been building companies and partnering with neophyte Shiite businessmen to preside over dummy corporations that help mask Iranian and Hezbollah involvement. An ambiguous acceptance of economic liberalism has enabled Hezbollah to become a major economic actor in line with the traditional operations of Lebanon's patron-client political system.

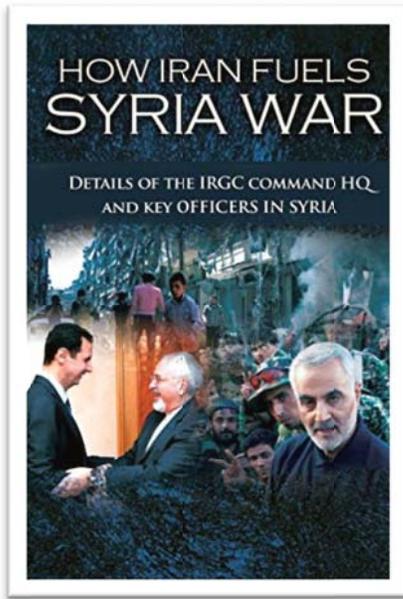
Daher contends that Hezbollah's political legitimacy is no longer predicated on revolutionary clerics driven by religious redemption but by businessmen who make it possible for the organization to provide



welfare services to its constituency, in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. In this, Hezbollah's pattern of domestic interactions is indistinguishable from its rival Shiite Amal movement or other Lebanese sects.

This is an informative book though one with a number of factual errors and some unnecessary filler material. For example, the author states that Amal pulled out of the Free Nationalist Movement, which it never joined, though it had been a member of the Front of Patriotic and National Parties. Daher refers to the "Constitution of 1943" when in fact Lebanon's constitution dates from 1926 but has been amended several times, including in 1943. The book's final two chapters deal with Hezbollah's military apparatus and its perspectives on the Arab uprisings but have little to do with the work's stated focus: Hezbollah's political economy. Despite these limitations, *Hezbollah* provides illuminating insights that both students and scholars will find useful.

Hilal Khashan  
American University of Beirut



**How Iran Fuels Syria War: Details of the IRGC Command HQ and Key Officers in Syria. By the National Council of Resistance of Iran U.S. Representative Office (NCRI-US). Washington, D.C.: NCRI-US, July 2016. 69 pp. \$11.95, paper.**

*Iran Fuels Syria War* demonstrates how Tehran is primarily responsible for keeping the fires of civil war burning in Syria. NCRI-US traces the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Syria; the organization shows how the IRGC divides Syria into military zones with the use of tens of thousands of foreign troops under its control. NCRI-US provides precise details of the scope and structure of the Iranian regime's forces in Syria, insight into Tehran's financial investment there, and the casualties it has absorbed.

Much conventional wisdom focuses on Moscow's bombing campaigns, rather than Tehran's foot soldiers. Of course, Russian airpower deserves attention, but without the forces under Tehran's control on the ground, Moscow's air raids would not be

so effective helping Bashar al-Assad's army to defeat Syrian oppositionists.

The book's main contribution is the path it offers U.S. policymaking to deal with Iran's influence in Syria. NCRI-US urges a combination of force and diplomacy rather than diplomacy without the credible threat of force—the pattern that characterized the Obama administration's approach.

The book's last chapter offers bold steps to consider. NCRI-US argues that the Iranian regime must be excluded from international negotiations regarding Syria. Without this exclusion, negotiations will be unproductive as the ayatollahs are the main source of escalation and expansion of the fighting. NCRI-US recommends doubling-down on removing the IRGC, its agents, and proxies from Syria and Iraq. Shiite Iran adds fuel to the sectarian violence thereby paving the way for the expansion of the Islamic State, aka, ISIS. The organization also urges backing for the democratic Syrian opposition. Finally, NCRI-US calls for a no-fly zone and safe-haven in northern Syria to protect civilians.

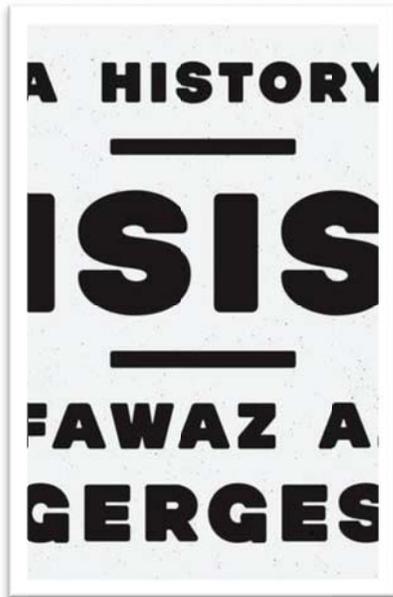
*How Iran Fuels Syria War* offers excellent primary data for intelligence services to compare with information they obtain via other sources and methods. Unfortunately, the authors cannot provide information on their sources, a necessary precaution to protect the lives of NCRI intelligence agents inside Iran.

A word on the NCRI, which at various times has been labeled a terrorist organization or a legitimate, broad-based coalition. As a result, despite its record of successful penetration of the Iranian regime, its revelations do not always garner the kind of attention they deserve. This situation represents a failure on the part of those in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. It can only be hoped that the Trump administration will rectify this mistake.

Eventually, policymakers, journalists, and scholars need to face squarely Tehran's

malevolent role in Syria. When they do, this important and revealing book is available.

Raymond Tanter  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Michigan



**ISIS: A History. By Fawaz Gerges. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. 384 pp. \$27.95.**

The rapid rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2013-14 has attracted the attention of a large number of researchers and has already led to many books on the story of the organization and its significance. Gerges of the London School of Economics and Political Science does an admirable job of locating ISIS within broader contexts of both Middle East societal realities and of prevalent political ideas within the Arab world. The book, nevertheless, suffers from the major drawback of similar books: the impossibility of knowing the trajectory of events after the time of writing resulting in

the potential, rapid obsolescence of the work.

Thus, *ISIS: A History* is most interesting in its earlier chapters, in which the author traces the organization's emergence and trajectory. Gerges correctly notes that "ISIS is a symptom of the broken politics of the Middle East, of the fraying and delegitimization of state institutions." The author focuses correctly on ISIS as a phenomenon that emerged from local conditions, in particular the divisions among Iraq's Sunni Arab population regarding the best way to organize and exercise influence in the context of a post-Saddam, Shiite-dominated Iraq.

The book is similarly useful in questioning the exaggerated claims of those seeking to portray ISIS as a bogus organization, ostensibly jihadist but actually controlled by nationalist, former officers of Saddam Hussein's regime. Undoubtedly, there are a number of such individuals in the organization, but Gerges demonstrates that their role is mainly technocratic; they are, by no means, the secret controllers of the organization. He also correctly locates their presence as a function of the broader sectarian dynamic of Syria and Iraq.

In its latter sections, the book suffers as a result of the rapid movement of events since its composition. Gerges overestimates the weakness of "al-Qaeda Central," given the strength of organizations emerging from al-Qaeda such as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham in Syria. He also underestimates the progress made in the military campaign against ISIS, for example, the newly evident decline in foreign volunteers.

Thus *ISIS: A History* has many useful parts but suffers from the attempt to write a "first draft" of history at a time when the events with which it deals are still in motion.

Jonathan Spyer  
Rubin Center for Research in  
International Affairs

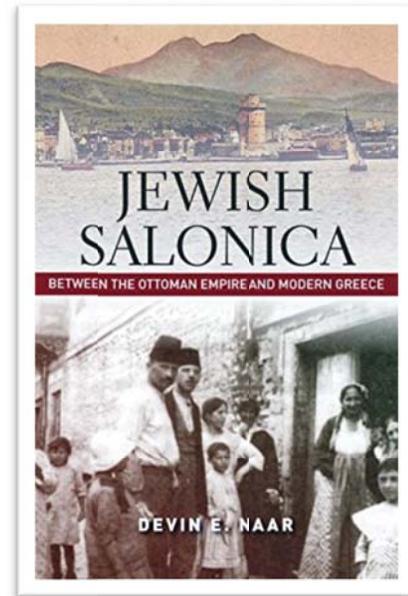
**Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece. By Devin E. Naar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. 400 pp. \$24.95.**

Naar, professor of Sephardic Jewish studies at the University of Washington with a family background in Salonica, has achieved something of signal importance with this volume. He has assembled a uniquely detailed profile of a leading Sephardic community under the Ottoman Empire and the succeeding Greek national state out of archives in Russia, Greece, Israel, the United States, and Spain.

For centuries, the port of Salonica on the Aegean hosted the most influential Sephardic city in the world. Many of its Jewish residents spoke a form of Judeo-Spanish that had been brought to Ottoman territory after the expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492. Because its waterfront—one of the great maritime assets of the Ottomans—shut down completely on Saturdays, it was known as “Shabatopolis,” a “Jewish republic” within the Ottoman Empire. Loyalty to its Muslim rulers extended so far that a prayer for Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r.1876-1909), delivered in 1900, praised the ruling power as a “kosher kingdom.”

In the aftermath of the city’s conquest by Greece in 1912, Salonica’s population included as many as 90,000 Jews, who arguably comprised a majority. The community boasted an extensive network of synagogues, schools, welfare institutions, and political groups as well as, in 1929, seven daily newspapers in Judeo-Spanish.

The synagogues of Salonica reflected the origins of the refugees who established them—six were named for cities in Spain, four traced their history to Portugal, and nine were founded by Jews who had come from Italy. But even before the arrival of these Italian and Iberian refugees, Salonica had a congregation of Romaniote, or Greek-speaking Jews, whose history began with the Byzantines. At the end of



the nineteenth century, thousands more Jews began arriving from Ashkenazi Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and other East European lands from which they fled the growth of anti-Semitic violence.

Throughout the book, Naar focuses mainly on the tensions between assimilation, separatism, and the Jews’ desire to maintain a communal identity. Relations between the Salonican Jews and Greek authorities were clearly not as favorable as they had been with the Ottomans. For one, Greece promoted Athens and its port, Piraeus, to the detriment of Salonica and its commerce.

Nonetheless, Orthodox Christian Greece, having annexed Salonica, was compelled to continue the millet system of representation instituted by the Ottomans, in which Jews (and Christians) were granted considerable self-governance. With the end of Ottoman rule, and the assumption of Greek citizenship by the Salonicans, the Jewish community preserved a considerable degree of autonomy until the Holocaust, at which time, Jewish Salonica was effectively wiped out.

Stephen Schwartz  
Center for Islamic Pluralism

