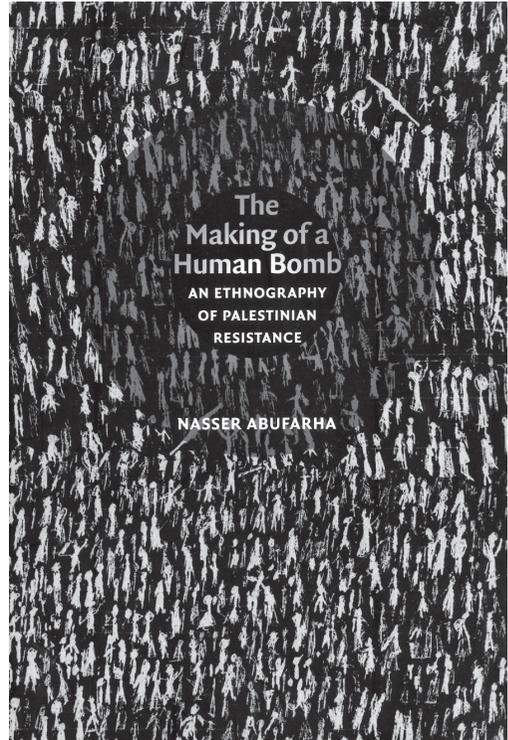

Brief Reviews

The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance (The Culture and Practice of Violence). By Nasser Abufarha. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. 277 pp. \$84.95 (\$23.95, paper).

The Making of a Human Bomb looks at suicide terrorism from the perspective of the perpetrator and the society from which the phenomenon emerges. The intersection of culture and violence is a significant marker of Palestinian society as evidenced by the brutal Fatah-Hamas rivalry, the long tradition of blood feuds, and “honor killings” of women; an analysis of that society would make for a compelling and valuable contribution to the literature. As a product of Palestinian society, Abufarha could have brought a unique viewpoint to the table with an ability to offer an insider’s view of a group of people so often discussed but so little studied.

Such hopes are misplaced: Abufarha has wasted this potential by normalizing violence in Palestinian society and repeating tired tropes about colonialist victimization to rationalize acts of mayhem. Despite his cultural, religious, territorial, and social accessibility to the region of Jenin, home of many a suicide bomber, the genuine insight of an academic is absent from the book. Whatever ethnographic research is present, it is filtered through a deeply subjective and selective outlook, riddled with holes and resulting in a series of historical and scientific inaccuracies that conform to a political agenda and create problems with validity and reliability.

Thus he can write, “Killing celebrated by individuals, groups, and communities does not represent a psychological pathology, but rather a cultural expression.” He refers to Israelis as “Zionists targets” or “immigrants” and to Israel as a “colonial” and “expansionist” state and portrays the Palestinian *fellaheen* (farmers) as fighting against “colonialist Israel.” This, in turn, allows him to portray the indiscriminate



killing of Israeli civilians as justified behavior: “Palestinian groups developed Palestinian martyrdom operations as a means of resisting state expansion and asserting Palestinian identity and rootedness.”

It is unfortunate that the author’s deep emotional involvement and identification with one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused him to abandon his role as a researcher of the Palestinian suicide attack phenomenon and instead present his research as a moral justification of this form of terrorism. Beyond the Israeli victims, it is the Palestinian children who are harmed by such socialization and indoctrination, preparing them to become *shaheeds* (martyrs), leading them and their society to a literal dead end.

Anat Berko
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and George Washington University

The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey. By Banu Eligür. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 317 pp. \$85.

In an era when an overwhelming majority of articles and books published on Islamism are apologetic in nature and often fall short in terms of academic and scholarly integrity, Eligür's study constitutes a shift in research design, data, analytical strength, and discursive qualities.

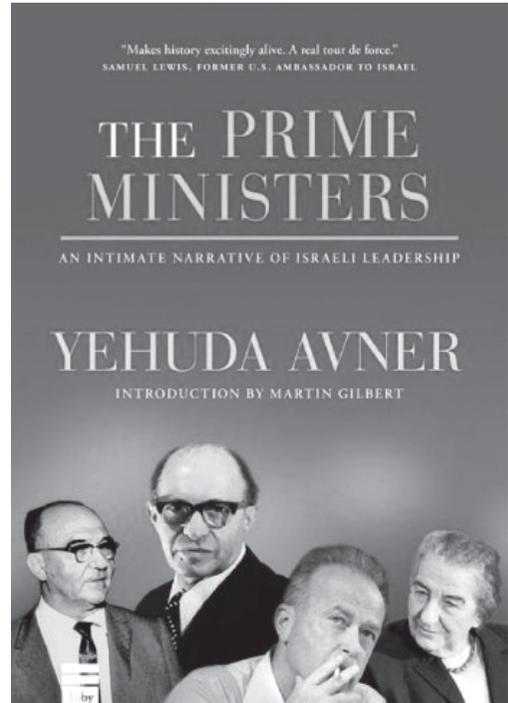
Eligür of Brandeis University's Crown Center for Middle East Studies utilizes a wide range of primary and secondary sources as well as interviews to write what is perhaps the most successful scholarly attempt to explain the rise of political Islam in Turkey.

The author argues that "grievance-based" cultural approaches are inherently flawed explanations for the Islamist mobilization in Turkey since the 1970s. Those who "regard political Islam as a protest movement against modernity and Western colonial domination" have failed in understanding the situation in Turkey. As Eligür argues, "Turkey was never subjected to Western colonial domination. The Turkish revolution, which introduced a secular state, was a successful struggle to forestall Western imperialism and domination." Eligür's theoretical approach combines a number of crucial themes in a powerful framework: social movements' mobilization, dynamics of organizations, and the use of political opportunity structures thereof.

It is in this triangle that she locates Turkish Islamism's success especially after the 1980 military coup. By eradicating the "Turkish leftist danger," the coup leaders invested in a "Turkish-Islam synthesis" and planted the seeds of radical and neo-liberal Islamism, a blend of neo-capitalism and soft Islamism, in Turkey.

The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey is a remarkable book, providing the best work on the rise and development of Islamism in Turkey, offering significant insights into the major political actors of the modern Turkish Islamist *da'wa* (proselytism), from Erbakan to Erdoğan.

Kemal Silay
Indiana University, Bloomington



The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership. By Yehuda Avner. New Milford, Conn. and Jerusalem: The Toby Press, LLC 1, 2010. 715 pp. \$29.95.

Former Israeli ambassador Avner offers a literary, distinctive, and colorful look into the inner sanctums of diplomacy and politics of the Jewish state. As speech writer and secretary to prime ministers Eshkol and Meir, adviser to prime ministers Rabin, Begin, and Peres, and ambassador to the court of St. James, Avner is uniquely positioned to bring to light the qualities and the temperaments of these leaders, so influential in laying the foundations of the state of Israel.

Most significantly, Avner shows through firsthand accounts that Israeli prime ministers on the left and the right worked diligently toward peace against seemingly insurmountable odds. His distinctive contribution is to disclose the brainstorming that took place behind closed doors before and after difficult decisions were made public.

The Prime Ministers illustrates how Israeli



statesmen have dealt with and represented the Jewish state to the global community, highlighting the quandaries in which civil servants often find themselves. Israeli ambassadors to the United States, for example, are required to negotiate the political Beltway—as well as the American Jewish community at large—as representatives of the State of Israel, not as commanders or even policymakers. Yitzhak Rabin, for example, was revered as the Israel Defense Forces chief of staff and later the prime minister who dared to embark on the Oslo peace process. But although Rabin understood the need to make a case for Israel in the U.S. political system, as ambassador to the United States in 1968, he was not savvy enough to know what methods might actually backfire. In the eyes of polished diplomats like Abba Eban, Rabin did not seem suited for the role; Eban often complained to Begin and other members of the Israeli parliament about Rabin's vocal support for Richard Nixon, jumping into what Eban argued should be a non-issue in U.S.-Israeli relations. By 1992, when Rabin was elected prime minister for the second time, it was clear he had

learned from the past. Managing to find just the right combination of toughness and flexibility, he charmed Washington and specifically then-president Bill Clinton, who considered him a seasoned diplomat and warrior.

Avner also offers valuable insight to those of his countrymen who would pursue a diplomatic career: “[I]t is not enough for an Israeli ambassador here to simply say ‘I’m pursuing my country’s best interests according to the book.’ ... An Israeli ambassador who is ... unwilling to maneuver his way through the complex American political landscape to promote Israel’s strategic interests would do well to pack his bags and go home.”

This historical account gives the reader special insights into the internal, as well as personal, workings of the Jewish state and is of particular value for understanding the nature and complexity of the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

Asaf Romirowsky
Middle East Forum



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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Signed, Judy Goodrobb, Managing Editor.