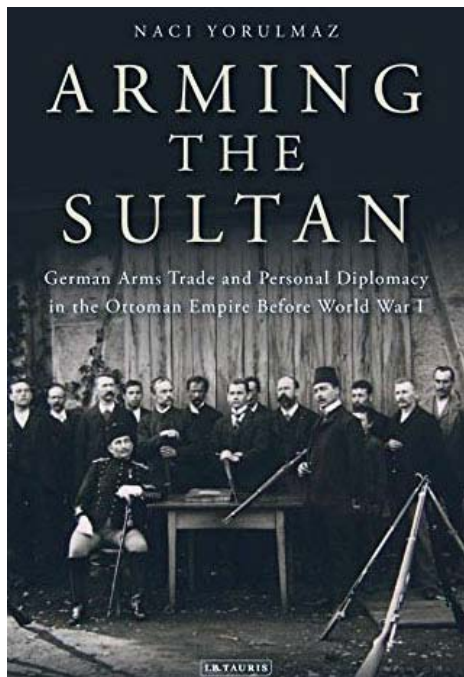


## Brief Reviews, Summer 2015



**Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire before World War I.** By Naci Yorulmaz. London: I. B. Tauris, 2014. 349 pp. \$110.

Turkish historian Yorulmaz examines the symbiotic relationship between the relatively new empire of Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany and the Ottoman Empire under Abdul Hamid II in the period before the conflagration of World War I. In the space of three decades following 1884, Berlin managed to push aside the French, British, and Russians and gain unprecedented

influence on the geo-political and economic policies of the Ottoman government.

In essence, the kaiser wanted raw materials and markets for his industries; the sultan needed machinery to modernize his state and army. But events on the ground played a major role in effecting both leaders' thinking.

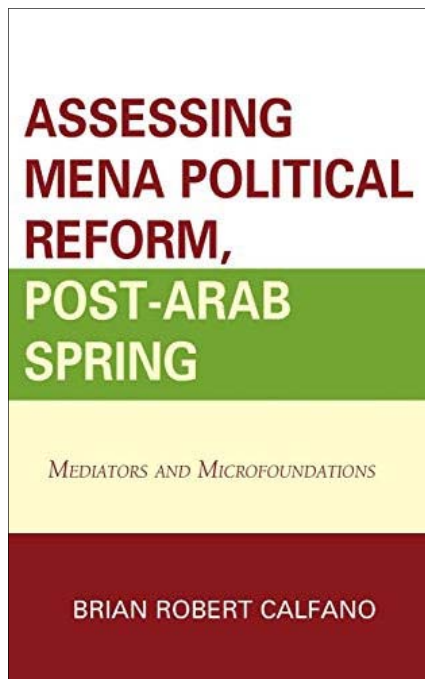
The relatively late birth of the German empire (1871) meant that Wilhelm had to watch the scramble for Africa by Europeans from the sidelines. He wrote of his uneasiness at being "squeezed in the heart of Europe by colonizing neighbors" and sought outlets both for his own ambitions and those of his industrialist subjects.

From the Turkish perspective, closer relations with nascent Germany were precisely what the sultan felt necessary. The sultan had lost two-fifths of his realm and one-fifth of his populace by an 1878 treaty orchestrated by the French, British, and Russians. Earlier outreach for military assistance to the former two was sidelined in favor of greater and greater German influence. Baron Colmar von der Goltz was dispatched by Berlin to help reorganize the Ottoman army, and his students led Turkish troops in World War I. German-manufactured guns were shipped through Ottoman territories on German-made rails and boats by Krupp, Krause, Loewe, Mauser, and Maffei.

Yorulmaz offers a worthy comparative study with a rich multitude of sources. The book is solidly based on diverse Ottoman, German, British, and U.S.

primary documents and should appear on the shelves of any scholar interested in this period, which gave birth to the contours of a Middle East whose disintegration we are witnessing before our eyes.

Wolfgang G. Schwanitz  
Middle East Forum



**Assessing MENA Political Reform, Post-Arab Spring: Mediators and Microfoundations. Edited by Brian Robert Calfano. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014. 239 pp. \$85.**

Although the optimistically named “Arab spring” dislodged a few dictators, is life in the Middle East and North Africa (the MENA of this book’s title) better than before? Calfano and eleven other experts look at a wide range of variables (Islam, politics, oil, media) and usefully conclude that “there is much potential for reform, but

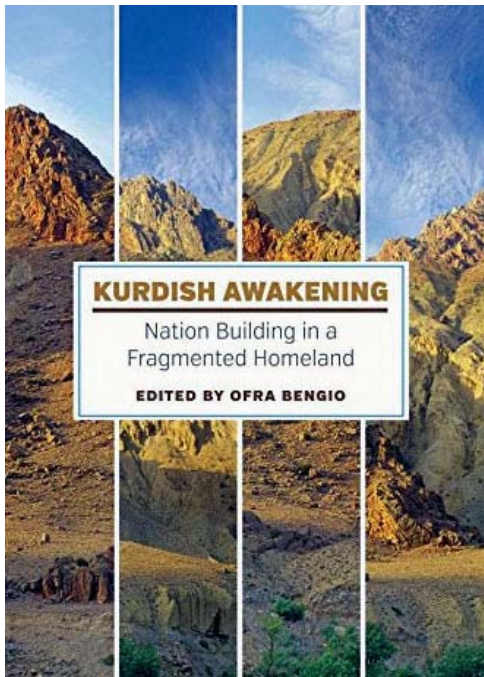
a great deal remains to be done in securing positive political change for residents across the region.”

Calfano and colleagues are cautious, shying away from assuming that “the Arab Spring really constitutes a birth or rebirth of democratic or liberalizing tendencies—at least in any linear way.” They provide nuanced explanations. The reader learns, for example, that power-sharing relationships between political parties and governments—such as in the Maghreb states of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—are crucial in deciding the capacity for reform in the post-uprising era. Calfano et al. help account for the differences between Arab and Iranian pro-democracy movements by showing that the latter was not as successful due in part to the Iranian regime’s ability to exploit anti-imperialism and authenticity, two dominant ideas that influence Muslim identity.

Oil revenue, usually considered the means within the region by which repressive and regressive regimes remain in power, is also a potential catalyst to encouraging dissent and introducing democratic reform. Monarchies are more likely than republics to promote reform. Internet use within MENA, touted by many during the season of Arab unrest as a means to accelerate democratization, is cut down to size, its power shown to be restricted by uneven network penetration.

*Assessing MENA Political Reform* would have been better with more attention to the roles of youth, the military, and superpower politics. Less uneven chapter lengths—varying between thirty-four and seven pages—would also have been helpful. A firmer proofreader’s hand would have been most appreciated as well.

Saliba Sarsar  
Monmouth University



**Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland. Edited by Ofra Bengio. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014. 384 pp. \$60.**

Bengio, arguably Israel's leading scholar on the Kurds, has edited a rich and timely volume on the subject, assembling contributors who employ original sources in Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic to present new insights.

Divided into five sections, based mainly on contemporary geographic configurations, *Kurdish Awakening* begins with three general essays on the Kurds. Benyamin Neuberger presents a comparative analysis of Kurdish nationalisms in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria; Michael Eppel examines Kurdish tribes and emirates and how their historical memory influenced Kurdish identity before the rise of contemporary nationalism; Eli Amariyo looks at how tribes have contributed both to the development of Kurdish nationalism and its retardation.

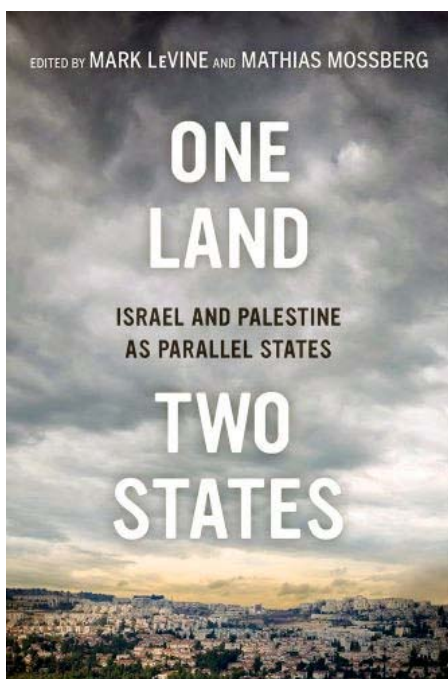
The second section deals with Iraq. Sherko Kirmanj argues that the lack of core Iraqi national values contributed to a stronger Kurdish identity. Rachel Kantz Feder analyzes various Iraqi Kurdish draft constitutions, none of which have been ratified. Ronen Zedel examines four novels written in Arabic by Kurdish authors, illustrating the complexities of the protagonists' multiple identities.

Moving on to Turkey, Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak looks at nonviolent Kurdish political movements and their relationship to the much more powerful and violent PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) while Duygu Atlas analyzes changing state policies toward the increasingly active role of Kurdish women. Section four begins with a broad overview of the Kurdish community in Syria, followed by a closer examination of how Kurdish youth in that war-torn country have been alienated from traditional Kurdish parties.

The final section focuses on Iran where author Nader Entessar argues that the Kurds have constituted an important part of the overall Iranian identity while still aspiring for autonomy in modern times. Hussein Tahiri reflects on those aspirations by showing how the short-lived "Mahabad Republic" (1946) continues to inspire contemporary Kurdish nationalism. In her conclusion, Bengio demonstrates how the recent rise of the Kurds may alter the geopolitical map established on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I.

The volume is richly documented and also contains a useful list of acronyms, a thorough subdivided bibliography, and a concluding index. All in all, *Kurdish Awakening* is one of the best recent collections on the Kurds.

Michael M. Gunter  
Tennessee Technological University



**One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States. Edited by Mark Levine and Mathias Mossberg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 296 pp. \$65 (\$29.95, paper).**

*One Land, Two States* offers a preface, introduction, and eleven essays by divergent contributors. It purports to propose an “out-of-the-box” approach to the resolution of the century-long conflict between Jews and Arabs over the territorial expanse that covers much of the biblical Land of Israel. Regrettably, it does nothing of the sort.

Having despaired of the dominant paradigm—division of the territory into two states for two people—which the editors admit “has not yielded any results that can constitute a solid foundation for an end to conflict, or even building stones for such a foundation,” the book raises an even more improbable notion: Their professed revolutionary innovation consists of the

application of something called “parallel sovereignty” in which multiple sources of political power govern the same geographical space.

At least one of the contributors, Jens Bartelson, seems to be aware of the implausible nature of this proposal. Thus he cites Hans Morgenthau’s unequivocal characterization of the indivisibility of sovereignty from *Politics among Nations*<sup>1</sup>: “If sovereignty means supreme authority, it stands to reason that two or more entities—persons, groups of persons, or agencies—cannot be sovereign within the same time and space.”

However, despite this cogent characterization, he and the other contributors proceed undeterred to expound solutions in which two sources of sovereignty would be applied separately in the territory currently under Israeli control: one to the Jewish population and one to the resident Arab population. They show some awareness of the problems that arise with regard to taxation, traffic regulation, law enforcement, demilitarization, foreign policy decisions, and, of course, declarations of war. Yet they offer no mechanics to resolve such conundrums, contenting themselves with glib declarations that solutions would be “worked out.”

They concede that, in vital spheres such as police, judiciary, and military, some superior decision-making mechanism would be required beyond those parallel sovereignty mechanisms—in effect admitting the need for a unitary source of authority. But they do not indicate who would control such mechanisms. After all, unless both sides have equal representation in such an authority—ensuring deadlock in virtually

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<sup>1</sup> New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2005.

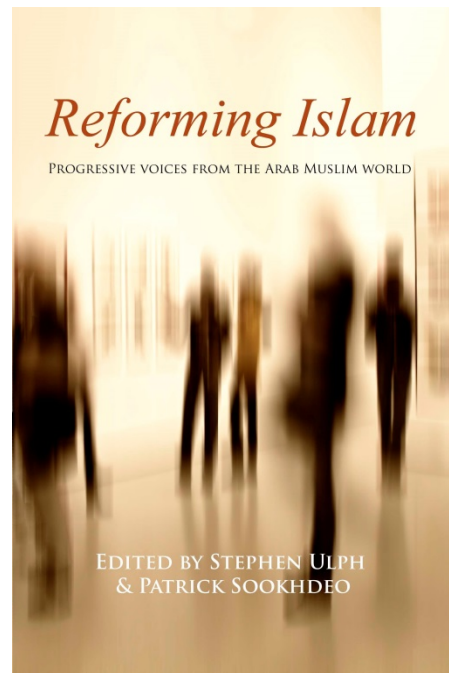
any dispute—why would one side agree to a lesser say in such a body?

The book is also permeated with anti-Israel innuendo largely detached from any historical or political context. Thus, in the editors' preface, one reads: "Since 2005, Hamas has moved toward the mainstream, participating in elections in the Oslo framework, restraining attacks against Israel carried out mostly by others." Could they really have missed the news reports on the three major Israeli campaigns—Cast Lead (2008-9), Pillar of Defense (2012), Protective Edge (2014)—to quell Hamas' volleys of rockets on civilian targets in Israel?

One essay contains this strangely optimistic sentence about equal rights with respect to gender and to sexual orientation: "The two states would most likely have to have identical regulations in these areas to allow for smooth future relations." How could a serious person, knowing the huge gaps between Israeli and Palestinian societies, expect "identical regulations in these areas"?

This ridiculous and illusionary compilation is so hopelessly detached from reality it should be deemed science fiction masquerading as scholarship. If it has any value at all, *One Land, Two States* serves as an instructive illustration of the extent to which academic endeavor has descended in a desperate attempt to preserve the delusion that both Jewish and Palestinian-Arab national aspirations can be fulfilled in the sliver of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Martin Sherman  
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**Reforming Islam: Progressive Voices from the Arab Muslim World. Edited by Stephen Ulph and Patrick Sookhdeo. McLean, Va.: Ilmuslih Publications, 2014. 513 pp. \$99.99.**

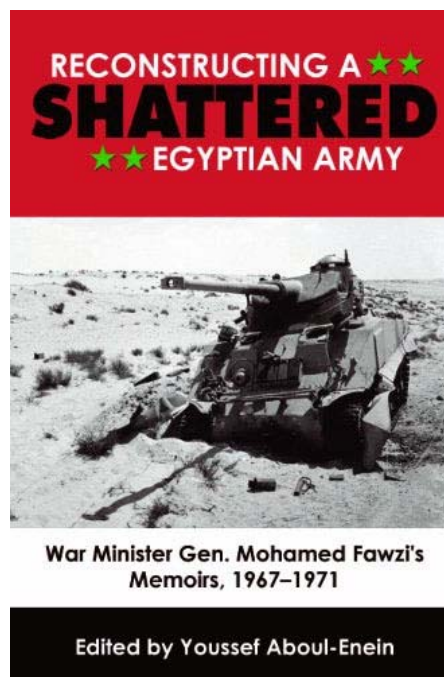
*Reforming Islam* offers a cutting-edge compilation of viewpoints of progressive Arabic-speaking Muslim intellectuals derived from the website Almuslih.org. Its writers use historico-critical methods pioneered by Christians and Jews to examine their own scriptures, thereby defying traditional Islamic notions of a divine, infallible Qu'ranic text. The contributors also reject the non-negotiable status of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunna. Indeed, *Reforming Islam's* authors obliquely challenge Western critics who invoke the very same notion to refute any possibility of Muslim reform.

One contributor, Said Nachid, provides compelling historical evidence to refute notions of immutable textual authenticity and notes that the Qur'an has been distorted by both Sunnis and Shiites. Other authors examine the historical context of modern-day Islamism, identifying the fall of the Ottoman Empire and simultaneous European expansion as playing a significant role in fomenting the reactionary movement of pan-Islamism, which was intended to "shore up the ramparts [of the Muslim world] against economic and ideological penetration."

Almuslih.org scholars agree on an urgent need for intellectual reform of a "Bedouin culture that is fundamentally xenophobic" and accounts for many of the psychological problems of contemporary Arabs, which include a "predilection for the absolute," suspicions about external conspiracies, and the "exoneration of Muslims of any criminality." They conclude that any attempt at reforming Islam "requires a process of de-sanctification." Further, they suggest that cynical Muslim leaders and clerics exploit textual literalism for monetary gain and power.

These reformists challenge the strident voices of Islamism and give a measure of hope that the tyrannical supporters of Islamism will not be able to stifle truth and progress. *Reforming Islam* provides a valuable reference guide to all those who wish to "legitimize the discussion of Islamist political agitation and militant violence as manifestations of a religiously-defined problem with modernity."

Christine Williams  
advisor to Muslims Facing Tomorrow



**Reconstructing a Shattered Egyptian Army: War Minister Gen. Mohamed Fawzi's Memoirs, 1967-1971. Edited by Youssef H. Aboul-Enein. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 256 pp. \$64.95.**

The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars have been extensively researched in the English-speaking world, mainly from Israeli or Western perspectives. The publication in English of Egyptian general Mohamed Fawzi's memoirs is, therefore, a welcome addition to the literature. Fawzi was general commander of the Egyptian armed forces following the debacle of the Six-Day War in 1967 and, a year later, was promoted to minister of defense. In that position, he directed the reconstruction of the army as well as its conduct in the War of Attrition (1967-70) between Israel and Egypt along

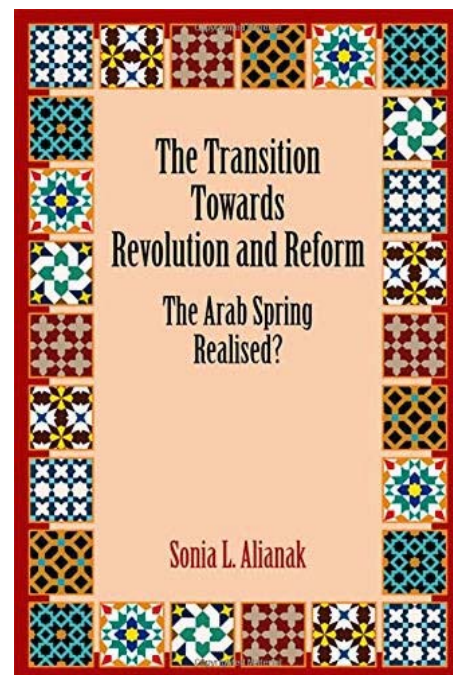
the Suez Canal. Under President Anwar Sadat, Fawzi initiated the strategic-operational planning of the offensive that was ultimately launched on Yom Kippur, October 6, 1973.

Fawzi's version of the dramatic events during this period sharply criticizes his predecessor, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer (and indirectly, President Gamal Abdel Nasser), for inadequate preparation of the armed forces for fighting, including during the ill-fated and massive involvement in the Yemen civil war (1962-68). Amer is also blamed for poor command and direction of the army in June 1967 and for political intrigues soon after, which culminated in his failed anti-Nasser coup. Although Fawzi's account of his own central involvement in the army recovery and of Egyptian combat operations within Israel-held Sinai during the inter-war period is often overstated, there is much to learn here about the political and military situation that led to defeat in the Six-Day War, subsequent power struggles within the Egyptian regime, the increasing Soviet military involvement, and the rebuilding of ground, naval, air, and air-defense forces that led to the assault on Israeli positions in the Sinai in 1973.

The work is not free of erroneous translations of military terms, especially the Arabic for "brigade," which is mistakenly translated as "division," thereby absurdly multiplying threefold the strength of Egypt's army during its confrontations with the Israel Defense Forces. Furthermore, notwithstanding its title, the book cannot be considered Fawzi's memoirs in the conventional sense. It is actually a volume of essays (previously published in the journal *Infantry*) written by the editor, currently a commander in the U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps, based primarily on selected sections of Fawzi's memoirs.

Utilizing translated extracts, it is Aboul-Enein who examines and analyzes the performance and accomplishments of the Egyptian armed forces in a manner that often makes it difficult to distinguish between Fawzi's words and the author's own insights. That said, the book remains an important source for non-Arabic speakers studying the history of a critical period in the Middle East.

Yigal Sheffy  
Tel-Hai College, Upper Galilee



**The Transition towards Revolution and Reform: The Arab Spring Realised? By Sonia L. Alianak. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. 224 pp. \$120.**

*Transition* is a readable and useful addition to the literature on a momentous period that addresses a fascinating question: How did some Arab regimes successfully

ride the wave of change that hit the Middle East in early 2011 while others fell? The seeming greater durability of Arab monarchies compared to republican regimes is perhaps the most interesting phenomenon noted by Alianak, and the one she examines most closely.

The author, an associate professor in political science at the University of Texas, focuses on four case studies—Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. The middle two states are republics that saw the toppling of their authoritarian leaders as a result of internal unrest in 2011. The other two are monarchies that experienced widespread unrest and agitation but emerged intact through a judicious combination of reform and repression (different amounts in each case, as the author notes).

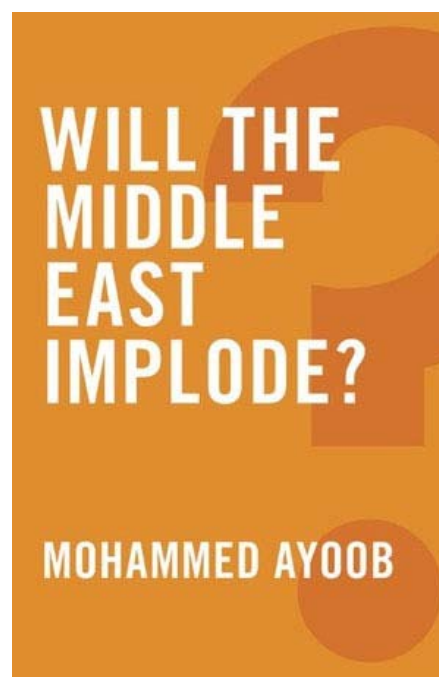
Choosing Morocco and Jordan as her case studies of monarchies permits Alianak to avoid the easiest explanation offered for monarchical survival—namely, the fact that many of them have small citizen populations and great, energy-based wealth. Examining two monarchies where these variables do not apply gives her observations greater cogency and persuasiveness.

Alianak has devised two theoretical paradigms to explain the course of events—the “hierarchical dissonance” and “pendulum” models. The former posits that attempts at revolution occurred when “rulers and ruled experienced an intolerable dissonance in their respective values or priorities,” coupled with a feeling by the ruled that existing governmental structures afforded no possibility of change. The pendulum model attempts to explain the process whereby leaders seek to cope with this dissonance in values through “co-optation, repression, democratic experiments, and religion.” The reviewer found this model less useful because the pendulum metaphor seemed a somewhat superfluous concept for

explaining the process whereby a threatened leader will adopt measures intended to preserve his rule.

The author concludes that monarchs lasted because they could claim Islamic and tribal legitimacy, which allowed them to stand above the fray of politics. In contrast, Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt could not marshal such support.

Jonathan Spyer  
GLORIA Center



**Will the Middle East Implode? By Mohammed Ayoob. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Publishers, 2014. 192 pp. \$45.**

Ayoob ostensibly seeks to answer whether the Middle East will implode as a result of the Arab upheavals since 2010. But Ayoob, professor of international relations at Michigan State University, does not even bother to define what he means by



“implode,” so how can he answer his own question?

The author employs four themes to discuss the theory of probable regional implosion—the Islamist challenge, regional and global rivalries, deadlock over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Iran and the bomb.

But he commits two major conceptual blunders in the opening pages of the book when he claims that the current upheavals affirm “the sense of affinity and empathy among Arab publics” and “the validity of state borders and existing sovereignties that divide the Arab world politically.” Is the author blind to the poor treatment by governments and Arab publics of Syrian, Iraqi, and other refugees? Has

Ayoob missed the Islamic State’s virtual erasure of the Iraq-Syria border? Moreover, Hezbollah, ISIS, and Jabhat an-Nusra operate on both sides of the Syrian-Lebanese line.

The book’s conclusion warns against expecting to “hear much good news from the Arab world for a considerable length of time.” Does one really need to read a book to know this? *Will the Middle East Implode?* contains almost nothing original but tediously rehashes what the media has reported. It lacks nuance and is a headache to read. It misinforms the student and frustrates the expert.

Hilal Khashan  
American University of Beirut

