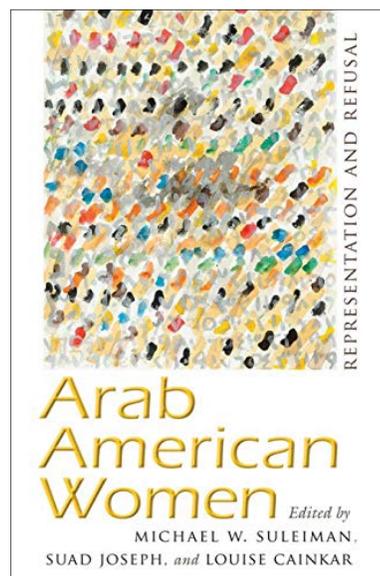


## Brief Reviews, Spring 2022

**Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal.** Edited by Michael W. Suleiman, Suad Joseph, and Louise Cainkar. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021. 480 pp. \$55, paper.

For many centuries, the word *Arab* meant roughly the Bedouin. In the age of nationalism, it came to define nearly all those who spoke Arabic as a mother tongue (though not Jews and some others). This eventually transmuted into the political movement of *Arabism*, especially during the glory years of Gamal Abdel Nasser, 1956-67. Such concepts as [Arab socialism](#) and the [Arab mind](#) became prominent. By 1980, however, the self-evident hollowness of the Arab concept had become only too obvious, and the term receded from political and cultural life, becoming limited mainly to matters having to do with language, such as Arabic literature.

But in the backwater of the American academy, that 40-year-old memo has not yet been received and both *Arab* and *Arab-American* remain topics of much interest. Indeed, the editors of the book under review celebrate their volume as nothing less than a conceptual breakthrough in the study of “Arab American Women” (note the lack of hyphen, whatever the significance of that may be). The volume’s many authors cheerfully ignore this little problem about the inutility of their topic as they pursue such inspired topics as “Scheherazade and the Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab American Literature” and “Dangerous Women/Women in Danger: Gendered



Impacts of Hate and Repression, 9/11 and Beyond.”

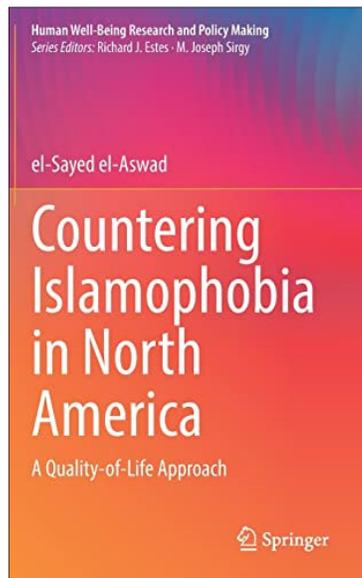
But the problem of legitimacy does occasionally rear its head. For example, Joseph acknowledges in fusty and obscure academese that the term Arab-American raises issues because it effectively focuses on reluctant Christians while largely ignoring Muslims:

The homogenizing done under the sign “Arab” is complicated by the fact that the majority of Arab Americans until the decades after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and perhaps even now were and are Arab Christians from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine—many of whom do not consider themselves Arab. Arab American studies as a scholarly endeavor is constantly

inventing a people and deconstructing its own invention.

It is high time to retire, not elevate, the slippery term Arab-American in favor of others, such as Muslim-American and Arabic-speaking Christian American. Then, we can accurately begin to assess the situation.

Daniel Pipes



**[Countering Islamophobia in North America: A Quality-of-Life Approach.](#)**  
**By el-Sayed el-Aswad. New York: Springer, 2021. \$74.99 (\$59.99, ebook).**

The Muslims-as-victims campaign has turned into a significant cottage industry, with university centers, academic organizations, and a vast, if repetitive, bulk of writing devoted to showing that Muslims, due to no fault of their own, suffer from a range of unprovoked maladies and unjustified biases at the hands of nasty Westerners.

In a typically banal example of this

genre, Aswad's *Countering Islamophobia in North America* diligently ignores the many Muslim activities that drive anti-Muslim sentiments. An anthropologist of Egyptian origins who has taught at Wayne State University, Aswad mentions ISIS all of three times but the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and the 1979-81 Iranian hostage crisis only once each. More notable are those individuals, groups, and concepts that do not appear a single time: Iranian leaders Khomeini and Khamene'i, al-Shabaab, and the Shari'a. The Taliban of Afghanistan are never discussed; the group comes up just once, in the context of a Florida teacher, who allegedly called a 14-year-old Muslim student a "raghead Taliban." The persistent maltreatment of Jews and Christians in Muslim-majority countries goes entirely unnoted.

Likewise, jihadi murder sprees on American soil go blithely unmentioned, including Nidal Hasan, who killed 13 in 2009 at Ft. Hood; Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, the married couple who killed 14 in 2015 in San Bernardino; and Omar Mateen, who killed 49 in 2016 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. Other major incidents, such as the Boston Marathon jihad of 2013, also find no place in this study. Revealingly, the first World Trade Center attack of 1993, which killed 6 and injured over 1,000, comes up not in the context of the harm done to Americans but only its having "increased prejudice and violence against American Muslims."

Lesser aggressions also have no place in Aswad's analysis. When it comes to the treatment of women, for example, he never mentions polygamy or polygyny, female genital mutilation, honor killings, *taharrush* (mass sexual assault), or the euphemistically named grooming gangs (in fact, rape gangs). The Rushdie rules (which prohibit the free discussion of Islam) are, of course, absent.

Aswad and his ilk present no context for non-Muslim fears about Islamism, Islam, and Muslims as though these were spontaneous acts of prejudice. He also neglects to mention why no comparable fear of Hindus or Buddhists exists; or why, if their treatment is so awful, Muslims keep demanding to enter the West (most recently, Afghans and those dupes who traveled to Belarus).

In all, this shoddy book deserves the utter oblivion it will undoubtedly enjoy. But, along with its many companions, it might do real damage when taught in classes by the likes of el-Sayed el-Aswad.

Daniel Pipes

**European Islamophobia Report 2020. Edited by Enes Bayrakti and Farid Hafez. Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021. 886 pp. Gratis.**

This massive tome, now in its sixth annual edition, draws on thirty-seven authors and covers thirty-one countries. Published in conjunction with seven “cooperation partners” (pointing to the establishment nature of this topic), it, for some reason, hides the blatant [Turkish government role](#) that the prior five editions proudly displayed. The study leaves the gate asserting that, in 2020, “the state of Islamophobia in Europe not only has not improved, but has worsened, if not reached a tipping point.” Worse, “French and Austrian Muslims have been left in the hands of brutal state violence.” Not only that, but the editors are grandiose about the importance of their topic for all of Europe: “Islamophobia not only directly devalues the lives of otherized people, but questions the humanity of a society that pretends to stand for the equality of all humans.”

As one might expect, those 886 pages are replete with instances of horrible things done and said against Muslims. As one might

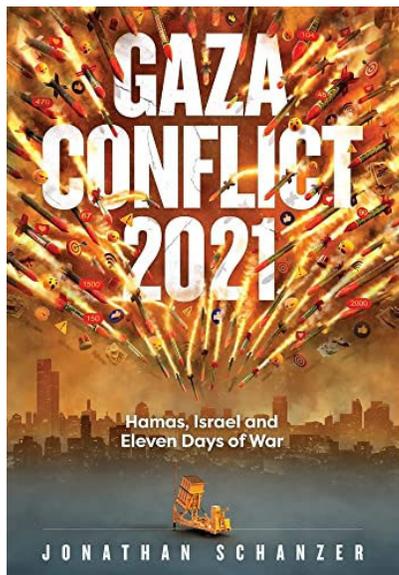


equally expect, many of the instances are not so horrible:

- The Swedish minister of education: “the government has decided to stop the establishment of new religious schools.”
- A Bulgarian prosecutor accused a wrestler with a Syrian father of participating in “terrorist activities abroad” based on photographs the then-16-year-old teenager posted on social media of himself in 2015-16 in Syria, in which he wore a military uniform and held weapons.
- The Austrian police raided suspected members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.
- A former Finnish minister of the interior encouraged the current minister of the interior to pass tougher immigration laws.
- An Irish group complained about an athletic stadium being “saturated in the blood of terrified animals slaughtered without any form of sedation” (with no mention of the identity of the perpetrators).

Most amusingly, an example of Kosovo's "Islamophobic" media consists of ... an article published in *The Washington Times*. If these instances constitute "Islamophobia," it is no wonder that Muslims keep flocking in ever-larger numbers to Europe in the hope of starting their lives anew.

Daniel Pipes



**Gaza Conflict 2021: Hamas, Israel and Eleven Days of War. By Jonathan Schanzer. Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2021. 284 pp. \$29.95.**

In *Gaza Conflict 2021*, Schanzer has produced a useful, informative, and unpretentious work, with insightful analysis that avoids the temptation to prescribe a solution to one of the most intractable conflicts in recent decades—one that stubbornly eludes any semblance of resolution.

Schanzer sets the Gaza predicament in a broad context. Rather than confine his analysis to a bilateral dual between Hamas

and Israel, he widens the scope to include multiple extraneous influences—both malign and benign—that mold the conduct and outcome of the conflict.

Among the malign actors are the “usual suspects”: Iran, Turkey, and Qatar. To these, he adds a rarely mentioned and under-reported protagonist, Malaysia, which, according to Schanzer, “has long been an important jurisdiction for Hamas” to which its operatives traveled to develop operational tactics, cyber capabilities, and weapons procurement and production, such as rocket technology.

Among the more benign actors, he identifies the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sisi's Egypt, whose interests in Sinai, Gaza, and beyond he sees as increasingly aligning with those of Israel.

The author deftly sidesteps most of the many politically-correct pitfalls of conventional wisdom. He takes the media, particularly the American media, to task for shoddy and shallow coverage of Hamas: downplaying its brutality, its massive squandering of international aid, its diversion of funds from their original humanitarian purposes to the development of offensive military capabilities, and its commission of serial war crimes.

Schanzer sees the Biden White House and U.S. State Department as being generally understanding and supportive of Israel during the May 2021 campaign. Only the Israeli bombing of al-Jalaah Tower, which housed the offices of Associated Press and Aljazeera, precipitated some U.S. disapproval. This occurred despite intelligence corroborating Israel's claims that the building was used for terrorist activity. Indeed, in Schanzer's view, “America's policy should be one of support for an embattled ally that has consistently gone out of its way both to shorten the length of its conflicts with a brutal terrorist organization and to minimize [civilian] casualties.”

However, he foresees that as the “United States looks to pivot toward a policy of countering revisionist powers such as Russia and China, putting the war against terrorism in the rearview mirror, the Gaza problem will remain.”

Indeed, Schanzer leaves the reader with no illusions as to where the fault for the recent—and inevitable future—violence lies: squarely on the shoulders of the Islamist Hamas, whose “*raison d’etre* [is] the destruction of Israel.” He predicts that as “Hamas exists to fight Israel ... [and its] patrons provide funds and other assistance for exactly that reason ... [w]ar will unfortunately come again.”

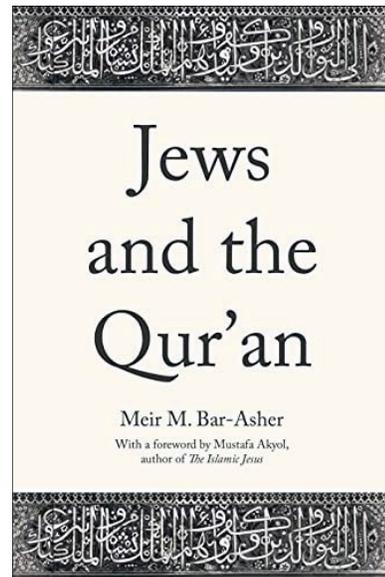
Martin Sherman  
Israel Institute for Strategic Studies

**Jews and the Qur’an. By Meir M. Bar-Asher. Trans. by Ethan Rundell. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021. 167 pp. \$24.95.**

Bar-Asher, professor of Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, tackles one of the most delicate and subtle questions of religious history and current politics in this slender but packed book: what is the place of Jews in the Qur’an? (Before going further, note that he ignores the powerful body of revisionist history, limiting himself only to the increasingly discredited conventional history.)

For starters, Bar-Asher sifts through Jewish life in Arabia before the Qur’an and concludes that, basically, no reliable information is available. When looking at the Islamic scripture, he finds,

The image of Jews and Judaism that emerges from the Qur’an varies according to whether those meant are the biblical Hebrews or the contemporaries of Muhammad.



To simplify, the former are praised, and the latter are condemned. (In this, one sees an early version of the contemporary “people love dead Jews” phenomenon.)

Favorable Qur’anic verses portray Jews as the chosen people or as the Israelites who exited Egypt and arrived in the Promised Land or those who received the Torah. Unfavorable verses focus on idolatry, which Bar-Asher calls “tangible proof of the Hebrews’ and then the Jews’ rejection of monotheism”; on the weird Qur’anic assertion that Jews believe one Uzayr to be a prophet or even the son of God; or on the calumny that Jews murdered their own prophets.

In all, an “overarchingly negative vision of the Jews supplied a basis for de-legitimizing and belittling them.” Unsurprisingly,

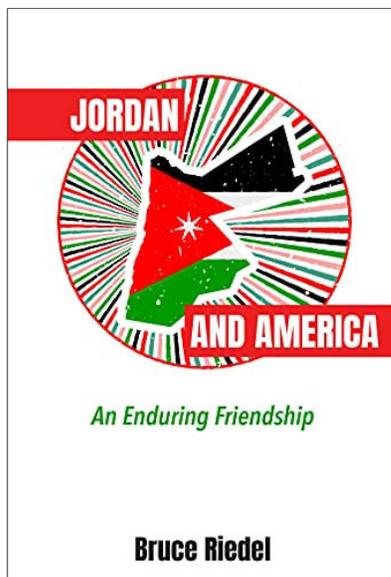
The severe criticism leveled by the Qur’an against the Hebrews of the Bible, and then against the Jews of later generations, occupies a larger place than do its positive judgements.

Cognizant of their contemporary role,

Bar-Asher comments that Qur'anic verses "can become 'explosive' when they are intentionally decontextualized so as to be brandished against the Jews and Christians of our day," and he provides a number of examples.

The author also takes up a range of other fascinating topics, such as the Qur'an's deeply ambivalent relationship to the Bible; the "transformed into apes and pigs" passage; the treatment of biblical accounts in the Qur'an; a comparison of laws in Judaism and in the Qur'an; and how Sunnis and Shiites historically have viewed Jews. Bar-Asher has written a small gem.

Daniel Pipes



**Jordan and America: An Enduring Friendship. By Bruce Riedel. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021. 228 pp. \$28.99.**

In July 2021, U.S. president Biden thanked King Abdullah II for Jordan's "enduring and strategic" relationship with the

United States. Washington and Amman have indeed been close since 1999 when King Abdullah ascended the throne, but it was not always the case. In his new book, former CIA analyst Riedel chronicles this relationship from the Truman administration through the initial months of the Biden administration. Riedel surveys well-known highs and lows, bringing personal insights from his 30-year government career.

The book is peppered with colorful facts from dozens of biographies and interviews. Even those familiar with the history of Jordan will be interested in how U.S. ambassador Harrison Symmes was expelled from the kingdom in 1970; how the assassination of former Jordanian premier Wasfi al-Tal soured King Hussein on Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, and when, before the 1991 Kuwait War, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher told Hussein, "Your Majesty, you have no more of a role in the Middle East."

The book also has conspicuous omissions. Riedel skips any reference to the visit with President Truman by an envoy of the kingdom's founder, the first King Abdullah. We also hear little about later U.S.-Jordanian intelligence cooperation, one of the most robust elements of the bilateral ties, an aspect of the "enduring friendship" about which Riedel should bring special insights. Nor does Riedel discuss the U.S. Agency for International Development's outsized role in Jordan, the largest such mission in the region.

Also missing are descriptions of recent irritants. Riedel mentions, for example, the 2016 killing of three U.S. Special Forces troops at the hands of a Jordanian soldier, observing, "It was a sad end to the Obama years." More "sad"—but unnoted in the book—is that the kingdom initially tried to cover up the murders and was reluctant to put on trial the Jordanian soldier, who hailed from a prominent tribe.

These gaps are annoying, as is Riedel's occasional bias. For example, he points out that King Abdullah found it difficult to work with a senior National Security Council staffer during the Bush administration. Then, in a non sequitur, he criticizes President Trump for not mentioning human rights, political reform, or democracy at the 2017 Riyadh summit. Riedel does not say if these were priorities for other U.S. presidents; he does not mention human rights until nearly the last page when he describes Jordan as "a relatively benign police state."

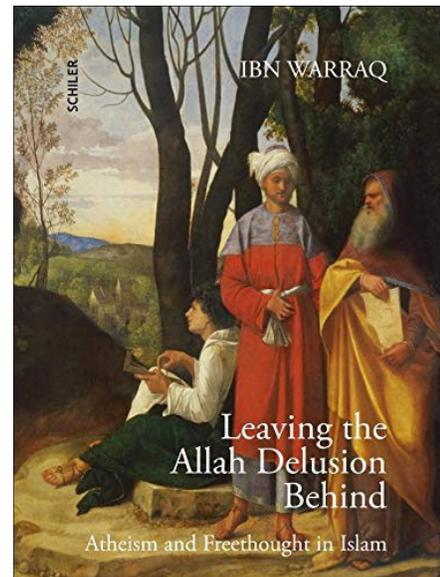
In the end, Riedel is optimistic about U.S.-Jordanian relations even as he argues that Jordan "can do better." Regrettably, Riedel's policy recommendations are relatively thin and focused on reform of the kingdom's powerful intelligence service. While the book is a useful historical overview, given the importance and depth of the relationship, the topic deserves further discussion.

David Schenker  
Washington Institute  
for Near East Policy

**Leaving the Allah Delusion Behind: Atheism and Freethought in Islam. By Ibn Warraq. Berlin/Tübingen: Schiler & Mücke, 2020. 745 pp. €68.**

Having written and edited a small library of books on Islamic topics, the pseudonymous Ibn Warraq has now collected some of his writings on ex-Muslims in a book with four parts: freethought and atheism in classical Islam; the mysterious *Treatise of the Three Imposters* (a reference to Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad); the influence of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Tufayl on Western freethinking, and atheism among Muslims in the modern age.

The author kicks things off with his characteristic verve:



Greeks and Aristotle lead to Muslim Materialists, and Averroes, who in turn leads to the thirteenth and fourteenth century Renaissance in Europe. Averroes's influence extends to Jewish philosophers whose influence on the European Enlightenment leads to the modern world.

This is intellectual history on a grand scale, of the sort that hardly any member in good standing of a university history department would dare offer, but the sort that makes the pace quicken and the mind race.

No less emphatically, Ibn Warraq explains his purpose:

A history of atheism and freethought in Islam [is] a moral necessity; it gives necessary succor to ex-Muslims, and provides evidence that many in Islamic civilization have shaken off the intellectual shackles of Islam, and, what is more

important, atheism can provide a new identity, and show a means of living moral lives without the aid of Islam.

The body of *Leaving the Allah Delusion Behind* then takes up such disparate topics as the *dahriya* (materialist) movement in Islam, the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the impact of medieval Arabic philosophy on Spinoza, and the number of converts to Islam in the West. Of particular note are the large surveys of ex-Muslims on Facebook and of female ex-Muslims.

Ibn Warraq concludes that ex-Muslims

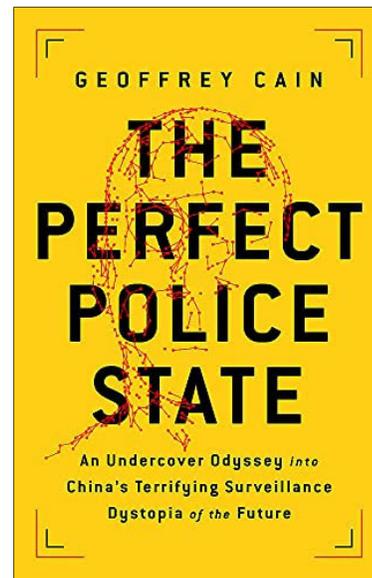
can no longer be dismissed as fringe lunatics, uneducated or incoherent. They hold degrees in science from prestigious universities in the West, where they are no longer afraid to speak up. They have organized themselves into groups that support each other, forming ex-Muslim councils, or writing their own atheist blogs.

*Leaving the Allah Delusion Behind* serves as a monument of homage and encouragement to ex-Muslims.

Daniel Pipes

**[The Perfect Police State: An Undercover Odyssey into China's Terrifying Surveillance Dystopia of the Future.](#) By Geoffrey Cain. New York: PublicAffairs, 2021. 287 pp. \$17.99.**

Prior colonial rulers—the Spanish in Mindanao, the Dutch in Aceh, the French in Algeria, the Russians in Central Asia—have sought to control their Muslim subjects and defang Islamic sentiments, always failing. Can the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the territory historically known as East



Turkestan and renamed Xinjiang by its Chinese overlords, succeed in this task?

As Cain's title suggests, he believes it can. An investigative journalist and technology writer, he emphasizes the mix of the indomitable CCP will and twenty-first-century methods. From first-hand experience and extensive interviews alike, he reports that there exists no "surveillance state so well-honed and menacing as this one," not even North Korea's. Xinjiang's government does not merely surveil and monitor its subjects but seeks "to purge their thoughts" of bad ideas, a wholly different undertaking and one intimately tied to the Uyghurs' Turkic and Islamic identities. The goal is cultural genocide without killing. As an apparatchik in a detention camp put it,

We are the surgeons who operate on your brains, your ideology. Your minds are poisoned. Now, we will give you medicine. You must be grateful to our great nation for this medicine.

Cain describes in detail the impact of a state-imposed video camera in a Uyghur

household. Of course, this effort requires the active participation of high-tech companies, and they (Microsoft, in particular) have been only too willing to oblige.

He calls CCP control over Xinjiang an “apartheid relationship.” As might be expected, this has turned some nominal Muslims into active ones: “I decided I was, in my heart, Muslim, because China kept pushing me away, as some kind of other.”

The human costs are already stunning and only getting worse:

Every Uyghur I interviewed from 2017 to 2020 had at least two family members and three friends who had disappeared. ... about one-third reported that their entire families were gone, and they were the only ones who had escaped.

Cain predicts that the technology and methods tried out in Xinjiang will eventually extend to other places.

Daniel Pipes

**[The Scramble for Europe: Young Africa on Its Way to the Old Continent.](#) By Stephen Smith. Cambridge, Eng.: Polity, 2019. 197 pp. \$69.95 (\$22.95, paper; \$18, ebook).**

Smith, professor of African studies at Duke University, looks at demographics to reach deep conclusions about the future of Europe and Africa. Consider some raw facts: when Europe’s “scramble for Africa” took place about 1885, Europe (excluding Russia and what is now Turkish Thrace) had an estimated population of 240 million people and Africa 100 million. Today, those numbers are 600 million and 1.25 billion. In 2050, predictions peg them at 600 million and 2.5 billion. Over the 165-year period, then, Africa will have grown ten times faster than Europe.



Noting these numbers and the desperation of many young Africans to reach Europe, Smith holds that

neither Europe nor Africa has yet taken the full measure of the challenge that lies ahead. The two continents are still unprepared for a migratory encounter of unprecedented magnitude.

He proceeds to explore this challenge in his absorbing book, what he wryly calls the “scramble for Europe.”

It will not parallel the nineteenth-century version’s competition by elite Europeans for commodities, markets, and “a place in the sun,” but it will concern ordinary Africans, primarily young males with disposable income (to pay for their travels) and “infinite aspiration,” seeking their fortune. Looking at historic precedents, primarily the U.S.-Mexico border, Smith predicts that “more than 100 million Africans are likely to cross the Mediterranean Sea” over the next two generations and that one-quarter of Europe’s population will become what he calls Afro-European.

A former journalist at major left-wing French publications (*Le Monde*, *Libération*), the author does not trouble himself with the legal status of migrants, much less does he “lie awake at night trembling at the prospect of an ‘Africanization’ of Europe.” To the contrary, Africans who find jobs “provide European economies with the brains or brawn in demand, and ageing societies with ... youth and diversity.” He disdainfully dismisses “the European fantasy of Muslim conquest.” “Fortress Europe” he calls “notorious in the eyes of many for being a losing battle fought for a shameful cause.” Any attempt to stem African migration through security measures alone is “destined to fail.”

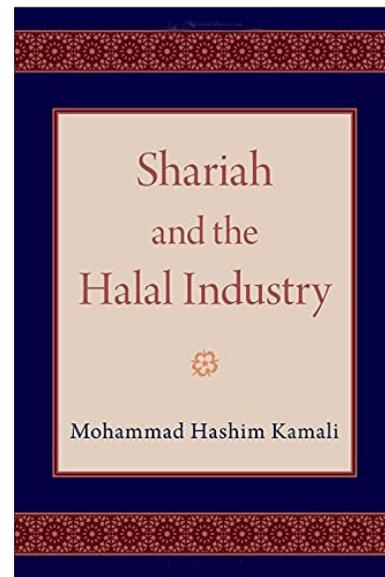
His worries lie very much elsewhere, in Africa turning into “an abandoned hulk” as its most dynamic elements “decide to leave for Europe [and] give up on their homeland.” He understands the motives of the individual Africans but believes “they are wrong—headed in the wrong direction ... for the destiny of their continent.” Indeed, they are selfishly looking out only for themselves and “are running away” from Africa’s future. Overall, Africa has much to lose from this population transfer.

Well, that is one conclusion from the crucial facts that Smith has eloquently pointed out.

Daniel Pipes

**Shariah and the Halal Industry. By Mohammad Hashim Kamali. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 352 pp. \$99.**

The Qur’an, in accordance with the verse, “God wants that which is easy for you,” (2:185) teaches that everything is to be considered *halal* (permissible) unless there is a detailed scriptural edict that makes it *haram* (impermissible). Despite this leniency, an



aggressive, largely petro-dollar-financed, radical movement has sought since the 1970s to impose a suffocating stringency that sees only one correct view. That in turn birthed the halal industry—about which Kamali’s book is the first full-length study. *Shariah and the Halal Industry* is well structured, with an introduction, twenty-six chapters, four appendices, and a glossary. It demonstrates how extremist legalism has promoted an economic agenda that the Kuwait Finance House estimated in 2018 to amount globally to US\$6.4 trillion.

Medicine offers one example of the halal economy. The law of *darura* (necessity) in Islam stipulates that, in times of dire need, that which is normally forbidden is allowed. Medicines and vaccines being necessities, their containing alcohol or pork derivatives has historically not been a problem. Lately, however, efforts in some Muslim majority countries seek to ensure that all medicines and vaccines meet strict halal requirements. Halal parks in Malaysia produce these updated medicines and vaccines.

Halal tourism offers another example: “The hotels in the halal sector serving

Muslims will not serve alcohol and have separate spa facilities and swimming pools for men and women.” While the author focuses on Muslim majority countries, he notes that Europe, North America, and Australia present emerging markets for halal-compliant regulations.

The reader may note that it is no longer the duty of the individual Muslim to avoid alcohol but rather the responsibility of the establishment (even if non-Muslim owned) not to serve alcohol. Although gender segregation is not practiced by all Muslims, it is now sought as a norm in non-Muslim-majority countries catering to Muslim tourists.

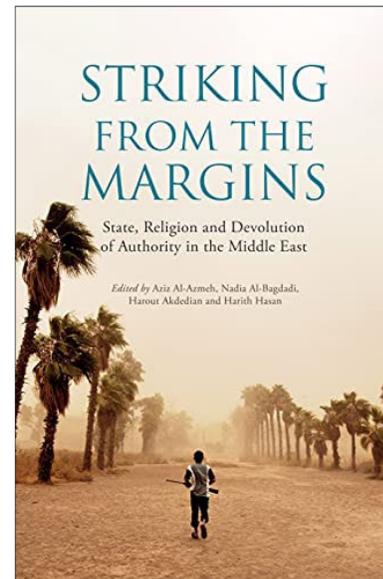
The author criticizes what he calls “halal phobia” in some non-Muslim majority countries while not considering that some may view the halal phenomenon as a form of economic jihad. He notes, “As with the Islamic banking and finance industry, it [i.e., halal] is more market driven than knowledge driven.” The author’s belief that “halal phobia” could be countered by new advertising strategies may explain why, in countries with increasing Muslim populations, there is fear of Shari‘a implementation.

Kamali provides a useful introduction to an emerging industry.

Khaleel Mohammed  
San Diego State University

**Striking from the Margins: State, Religion and Devolution of Authority in the Middle East. Edited by Aziz Al-Azmeh, Nadia Al-Bagdadi, Harout Akdedian and Harith Hasan. London: Saqi Books, 2021. 426 pp. \$39.95, paper.**

*Striking from the Margins* presents fifteen authors stepping away from outdated and narrow-minded methods that have become standard for analyzing and understanding the Middle East.



Chapters focus on the period surrounding 2011, examining how states from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea have reckoned with the energies unleashed during the “Arab Spring.” Stathis N. Kalyvas points out how models by political scientists such as James Fearon or David Collier fail to explain civil wars in countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa, as in Lebanon or Iraq. By delving into group relations, networks, social structures, state and militia presence, and religion at the local level, the authors highlight a complexity of changing dynamics beyond culturalist analyses.

One of the book’s favorite terms, “state atrophy,” refers to the breakdown of centralized state government in countries such as Iraq and Syria. For example, Harout Akdedian proposes viewing state atrophy and the neo-liberal turn in Syria as an explanation of why religious entities evolved into political influences. In contrast, popular arguments claim the “return” of native religion was due to secularism being inherently unnatural in the region. The authors challenge this idea of Muslim predisposition to toxic practices, calling identity politics more

relevant to the world of poetry than humanities.

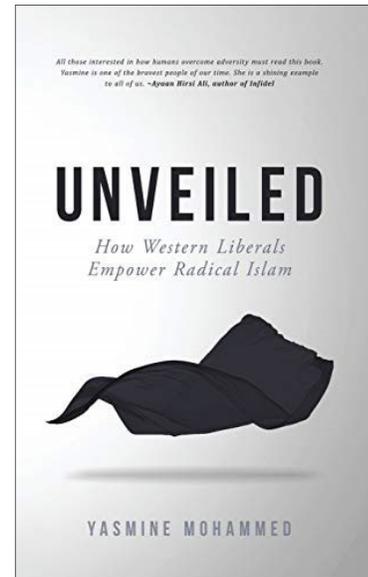
Instead of subscribing to the familiar frameworks of tribalism, the authors propose that circumstances including state devolution or weakening economies are a more holistic way to understand what creates space for marginal social groups and ideologies to become mainstream. The rise in violence and sectarianism in the region is enmeshed with the evolution of these marginal ideas. Patterns of state atrophy and the subsequent malleability of power and religion in countries including Syria and Iraq are repeatedly exposed in this book. For example, Harith Hassan notes how actors on the margins of society, the Shiite Marj'iyah, were empowered following the fall of Saddam Hussein and the Baath party ideology.

As the Middle East becomes increasingly visible at many levels through the lens of social media, snapshots and caricatures no longer suffice as critical analysis. There is a gap in the academic world that beckons for a movement beyond the prevailing ideological interpretations. *Striking from the Margins* is a crucial piece in the formation of new frameworks.

Elizabeth Pipes  
New York University

**Unveiled: How Western Liberals Empower Radical Islam. By Yasmine Mohammed. Victoria, B.C.: Free Hearts Free Minds, 2019. 278 pp. \$23.**

The subtitle promises a dry analysis, but Mohammed delivers instead an intensely personal autobiography that mainly revolves around two themes: her demonic Islamist mother and the process of liberating herself from this mother by repudiating both the maternal and the Islamist bonds. As Mohammed, a Canadian of Egyptian heritage, explains about the latter:



First, I was a nonpractising Muslim, then I didn't believe in any organized religion, then I was spiritual but not religious, then I was agnostic, and then finally I identified as atheist.

The author barely mentions her two formidable family connections: She is the great-grandniece of Mohamed Naguib, the first-ever president (1953-54) in Egypt's history until he was shoved aside by Gamal Abdel Nasser; and she was married to and had a child by Essam Marzouk, a violent jihadi now thought to be either dead or rotting in an Egyptian jail. Fittingly, that marriage was pushed on her by a mother who herself lusted for the future son-in-law.

The shocking portrait of an Islamist mother leaves little to the imagination. Says that unnamed mother when the two argue over Mohammed's choice of clothing:

I pissed you out. You hear me?  
You are my urine. You are  
nothing but my bodily waste! I

excreted you! You are just a turd that I should have flushed! You have no right to question me. You are nothing.

As this quotation suggests, the passage from Islamist childhood to an “unveiled” adulthood can be a harrowing one, and those who navigate it successfully become strong and resolute standard-bearers of their new way of life.

Beyond the affecting story of Mohammed’s liberation stands a case study of one woman’s slow and agonizing realization

that, while living in the modernity of contemporary Canada, she inhabited a bubble of medieval prejudices and horrors. The reader will agonize at the slowness of this process, which appears to have taken about twenty-five years from start to conclusion, but the very length of Mohammed’s evolution both enhances its credibility and offers important insights into this painful undertaking shared by so many others.

Daniel Pipes  
