

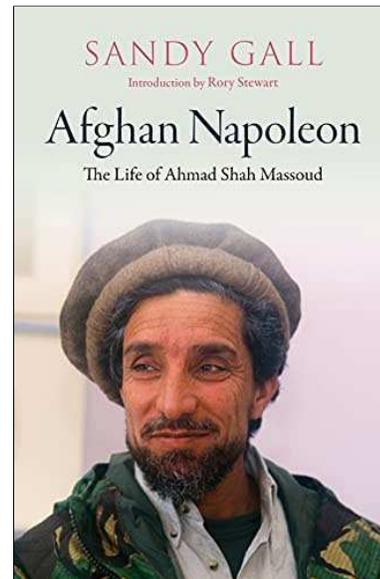
Brief Reviews Fall 2022

[Afghan Napoleon: The Life of Ahmad Shah Massoud.](#) By Sandy Gall. London: Haus Publishing, 2021. 345 pp. \$34.95 (\$22.95, paper).

Counterfactuals may be impossible to prove, but British journalist Gall convincingly demonstrates that the calamity of Afghanistan since 2001 could have been avoided. Ahmad Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance, tried to keep Afghanistan from tragedy and nearly succeeded—before his assassination by al-Qaeda on September 9, 2001.

Gall paints a fascinating picture of Massoud, a middle-class Tajik educated at a French school. He came to be known as the “Lion of Panjshir” due to his fights, first against Soviet occupation and then against various Islamists. Massoud’s forces first entered Kabul after the Soviet exit in 1989. He then worked to form a moderate, representative government. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord who received significant funding from the United States via Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence, proved to be his main opponent, launching a yearlong campaign that frustrated Massoud’s efforts. Hekmatyar’s reckless selfishness and extremism ultimately backfired, leading to the collapse of Massoud’s efforts, but also to the rise of the Taliban in 1996, which then became Massoud’s arch-nemesis.

Remarkably, Massoud accomplished all this not only without help from Americans or Europeans, but with the West functionally in opposition, by its funding his Afghan foes such as Hekmatyar. Most of the West feared that Massoud’s minority tribal affiliation made him unfit as a partner even while his focus on fighting the Soviets earned him loyalty from powerful Afghans of all tribes. Yet Massoud was not bitter. In the months leading up to the

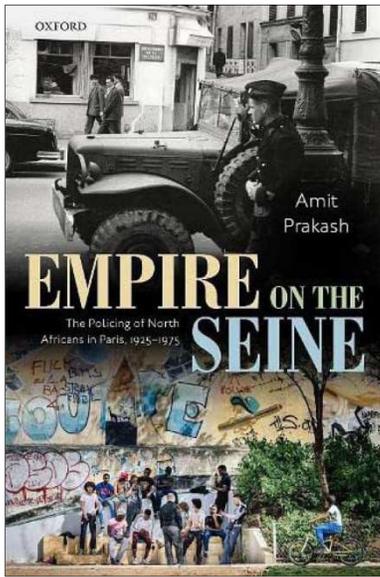


events of 9/11, Massoud visited Europe, warning the West about the Taliban-al-Qaeda connection. Doing so almost certainly got Massoud killed as he was a direct threat to bin Laden, the Taliban, and their Pakistani and Saudi backers.

Massoud frequently met with Gall, and they built up a level of trust that led to Gall being entrusted with Massoud’s diaries. Gall clearly admires Massoud, whom he paints more as a moderate Muslim nationalist than an Islamist, as well as incorruptible, religiously tolerant, supporting democracy, and opposing terrorism. Gall recalls Massoud expressing tolerance toward Jews.

Gall’s book raises the question: What if Massoud had lived? Would Massoud have been able to consolidate a post-Taliban Afghanistan? Would a moderate Afghanistan have shone through to the Muslim world rather than bin Laden’s siren’s call of Islamism? Gall convincingly suggests all were possible.

Clifford Smith
MEF Washington Project



Empire on the Seine: The Policing of North Africans in Paris, 1925-1975.
By Amit Prakash. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 267 pp. £75.

Prakash, a visiting assistant professor of something called International and Global Studies at Middlebury College, invokes Edward Said as he rehearses a wearying catalogue of sins on the part of the French vis-à-vis their North African immigrants over a 50-year period. He claims that the police of Paris in 1925-75 saw North Africans “as inherently violent, criminally predisposed, irrational, and infantile,” and that these views grew out of their “colonial knowledge production,” which categorized North Africans as “undisciplined, irrational, fanatically and dogmatically beholden to Islam, and intrinsically prone to violence.” Such racism then went on to justify hypocrisy, exploitation, surveillance, injustice, and violence.

Prakash opens with an account of a 1961 incident when the police intruded on one Mohammed Drici, beat him up and then, as he was taken to the local station, “shot [him] in the neck from behind. Miraculously, he survived. Despite his wounds, he was not immediately

dispatched to a hospital but instead marched to the local police commissariat. There he was again beaten and kicked by other auxiliary policemen and regular officers.” Prakash presents such unaccountable brutality as typical of the North African experience in Paris.

But, this reviewer asks, if life in Paris nearly resembled a concentration camp, why did North Africans move there? After all, none were indigenous to France, no one forced them, and they knew they were not particularly welcome. Prakash informs us that, already from the 1870s onwards, “the fear of and desire to stem Asian migration made the foreign migrant an object of suspicion and concern for many states.” In 1888 and 1893, for example, decrees required foreigners to register. The numbers of immigrants rose only slowly; as late as 1912, an official inquiry found only 4,000-5,000 Algerians resident in all of France. Then, filling a need for labor in World War I, 132,000 North Africans moved to France in “one of the first official guest labor programs in Europe.” A century later, the number is perhaps thirty to forty times higher and includes multi-generational families.

Mysteriously, Prakash does not confront the paradox of massive North African immigration to a merciless Paris. Just maybe, he ignores it because this sabotages his un-remittingly bleak portrait.

Daniel Pipes

Fighting the Last War: Confusion, Partisanship, and Alarmism in the Literature on the Radical Right.
By Jeffrey M. Bale and Tamir Bar-On. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022. 438 pp. \$135 (\$50, paper).

By “fighting the last war,” Bale and Bar-On mean (to simplify a bit) that critics of the radical Right focus on Nazism when the real problem is Islamism. Old-style right-wingers—“tiny fringe groups of actual extremists, such as

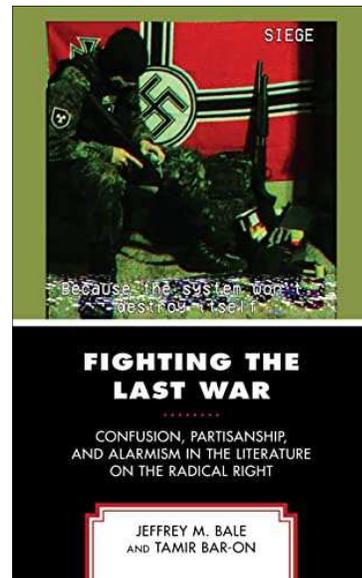
revolutionary neo-fascists and neo-Nazis, armed Klansmen, Christian Identity adherents, Sovereign Citizens, violent skinheads, virulent antisemites, neo-Confederates, racial Odinites, and unaligned white supremacists”—are marginal figures that cannot seriously challenge the existing order. That said, they make a convenient punching bag for the “globalist elites, their media mouthpieces, and the left” who prefer, for reasons of identity politics, to ignore the Islamist elephant in the room. (Also, those actual extremists lack a lobby.)

Bale and Bar-On (confusingly affiliated with, respectively, similarly-named but unrelated institutions, the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey and the Tecnológico de Monterrey) set the tone of the book in their acknowledgements where they thank colleagues and friends in the abstract but provide no specifics because they “felt that it was more prudent not to name others who have offered us assistance in various ways.” This fits *Fighting the Last War*’s sense of siege due to what the authors call

a concerted effort by political and economic elites, the mainstream media, academics, left-wing watchdog organizations, and the new Big Tech oligarchs to delegitimize and demonize virtually every opponent of the currently regnant Western ideology of “progressive” globalism, no matter where those opponents actually lie on the political spectrum.

Accordingly, those now accused of being on the radical Right include advocates of centrist notions such as

patriotism, civic nationalism, preserving national sovereignty, limited government, free speech, evaluating individuals on the basis of their own characters rather than



their race and gender, maintaining the distinctive features of particular national communities, or respecting certain tried and true social customs, traditions, or institutions.

As for Islamists, they are the true “radical right-wingers” who “are not only theocratic, totalitarian, and violent (in the case of jihadists) but also imperialists whose ultimate aim is to conquer the entire world for Islam.” This author has doubts about labeling Islamism as a right-wing phenomenon; that said, the time has come to heed Bale and Bar-On’s excellent analysis: stop fighting the last war and engage in the current one.

Daniel Pipes

[A Good Country: My Life in Twelve Towns and the Devastating Battle for a White America.](#) By Sofia Ali-Khan. New York: Random House, 2022. 397 pp. \$28.99.

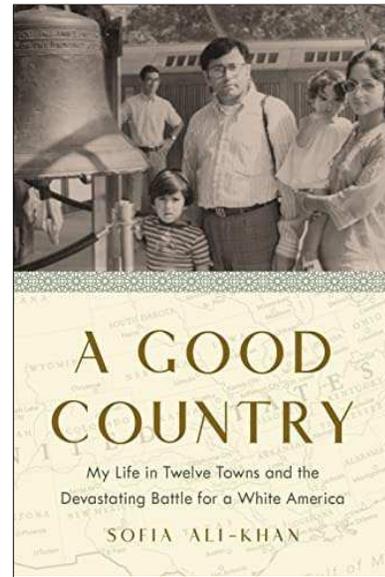
In a shameless, prolonged whine, Ali-Khan tells her autobiography through the device of the twelve U.S. towns she has lived in since her

birth in Florida in November 1974, using them as vehicles variously to impugn the United States. Relying on the well-known rhetorical method of contrasting ideals with realities, this sometime hijab-wearing, extreme left-winger, the child of Pakistani immigrant parents, discovers a differently-flavored depravity in each of them.

For example, take Philadelphia, where this reviewer lives. Ali-Khan's chapter begins with 9/11, which took place almost simultaneously with her move to the city. Rather than share in her fellow-citizens' outrage at jihadis murdering three thousand Americans, she strikes a very different pose, dismissing al-Qaeda as "an international terrorist group that claimed to speak for Muslims" and bemoaning that "my country" instantly turned "their rage toward Muslims." (Do excuse the bad grammar, a constant companion in this book.)

When the U.S. government responded to the attack with a war on the Taliban, Ali-Khan "imagined what American attacks would mean for Afghan civilians ... and was repulsed by my country's misdirected vengeance and blood-thirst." (Note the mocking repetition of "my country.") The result was, "our nation laid waste to large Muslim civilian populations in Afghanistan and Iraq." Even worse, she reports, her country "opened the torture camp at Guantanamo."

Typical of her outlook, Ali-Khan reports that 9/11 and the distancing from a childhood friend had "left me feeling as though I had no skin, as if I were a burn survivor," a self-pity that contrasts with a notable absence of pity for the actual victims of 9/11, many of whom suffered not just imaginary burns but real death. When she eventually leaves the fascinating topic of herself, she almost invariably turns to the reputed sins of the "White America" in her subtitle. Philadelphia's "institutions, arteries, and neighborhoods" she portrays as a two centuries' "record of its efforts to maintain segregation and to protect White prosperity,



while eroding or preventing Black prosperity," as though nothing ever changed.

Those seeking a trashy rant against America will delight in *A Good Country*. Everyone else should avoid it.

Daniel Pipes

[In the Lion's Den: Israel and the World.](#) By Danny Danon. Foreword by Nikki Haley. New York: Wicked Son, 2022. 204 pp. \$28.

Danon is a talented fighter for Israel. This reviewer noted in a [2013 article](#) about him, "Three qualities stand out: a devotion to principle, a mastery of tactics, and the ability to articulate a vision." As a Likud member of Knesset, these inevitably led him to clash with the long-time head of the party, Benjamin Netanyahu, leading to Danon's being humiliatingly fired by Netanyahu in 2014 from his position as Israel's deputy minister of defense. But Netanyahu could not keep his nemesis down, so he did the next best thing and appointed him to a prestigious but potentially career-ending position, that of Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in New York.

Lion's Den tells the story of that five-year assignment, in 2015-20.

As with other accounts from the U.N. swamp (including [my own](#) from 1988), this one features battles heroically fought, sometimes won, usually lost. It is striking, from the vantage point of a few years' distance, how small those battles seem in respect. Danon begins his account with the December 2016 story of UNSC Resolution 2334, the low point of his tenure because it involved the U.S. government turning against Israel. The episode included such dramatic touches as his turning around on arrival in Puerto Rico for a family vacation to return to New York, his being informed by (of all people) a Muslim diplomat of the impending crisis, and failed middle-of-the-night calls to political leaders.

Yet, for all the *Sturm-und-Drang*, who today remembers Resolution 2334, who cares about it, and what legacy does it have? Donald Trump, who would reach the Oval Office less than a month after its passing, denounced the resolution, reducing it to mere symbolism, a token of Barack Obama's anger at Netanyahu and not the harbinger of a crisis in U.S.-Israel relations.

While Danon proved a highly effective

ambassador, bringing imagination and verve to the job, his own list of accomplishments points to their limited impact: he was the first Israeli elected to chair a committee; he facilitated the inclusion of kosher food in the U.N. cafeteria; he won the recognition and the celebration of Jewish holidays, and he got the U.N. to purchase Israeli products.

But if the position has severe limitations, *Lion's Den* offers insight into Turtle Bay and sometimes amusement about its goings-on. One example: Danon contrasts Israel's parliament where people publicly praise you but behind closed doors can say horrible things, with the U.N., where "it's exactly the opposite—people are quite happy to publicly denounce Israel, but behind closed doors, they appreciate and admire us." The book will also likely help Danon to continue his rise in Israeli politics.

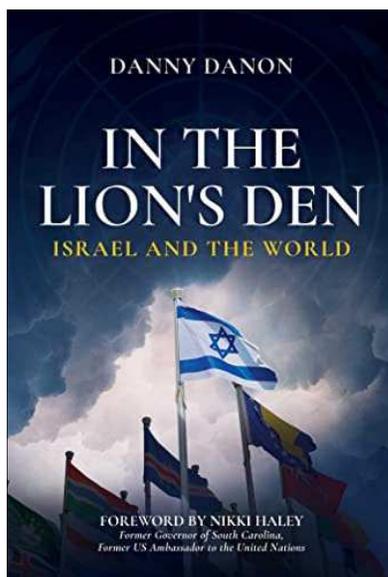
Daniel Pipes

Islam and Nationalism in Modern Greece, 1821-1940. By Stefanos Katsikas. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 265 pp. £64.

Noting the under-researched nature of his topic, Katsikas offers the results of more than twenty years' work in this volume. He defines his purpose as considering "the interactions between modern Greece and its Muslim populations from the Greek War of Independence in 1821 to the entrance of Greece into World War II in October 1940," or in what the University of Chicago assistant professor dubs the "post-Ottoman period" of Greek history.

He starts by emphasizing the "massacres, atrocities, and expulsions of Muslims" in the war of independence. Out of that brutal struggle, and quite contrary to other liberation movements,

the Christian religion was widely regarded as the most significant criterion of Greek nationality, and



therefore it was often given prominence over the Greek language by the overwhelming majority of Hellenes.

Local Muslims were associated with the Ottoman empire and seen as enemies in principle, though their actual treatment depended more on a Muslim's actions, whether pro- or anti- the new Greek state.

Then, in part to appease the adoring Philhellenes in western Europe, the Greek state adopted quite liberal norms towards its tiny Muslim minority. But those were more theoretical than practical in a population of 2,500 that proceeded to dwindle to nearly nothing. The town of Chalkida had 1,500 Muslims in 1832, less than 100 in 1877, and 4 in 1920. Only with the expansion of the Greek state, starting with Thessaly in 1881 and ending with Western Thrace in 1920, did many more Muslims come under Greek rule. This culminated with the great population exchange of the post-World War I period when some 500,000 Muslims left for the dying Ottoman Empire.

That empire had developed a *millet* system in which non-Muslim religious minorities managed their communal affairs, notably the

schools, taxes, and laws. Ironically, the Greeks who had suffered under this order, then went on to apply a version of it to their own Muslim minority, signifying that Shari'a was applied in Greece. Two hundred years later, that order remains in place, despite its wholesale variance from and frequent contradiction to the laws of Greece and of the European Union. No changes, however, seem likely without Turkey's agreement, a distant prospect in an era of protracted tensions between the two governments.

Daniel Pipes

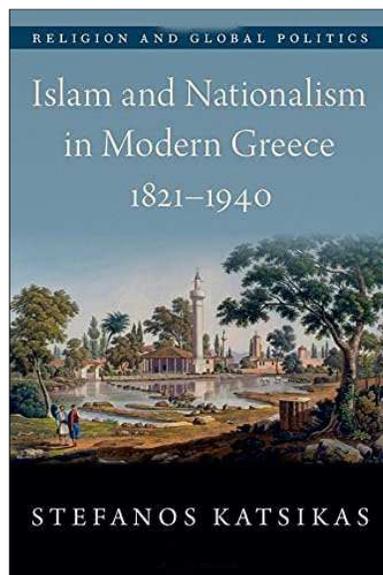
Let My People Know: The Incredible Story of Middle East Peace and What Lies Ahead. By Aryeh Lightstone. New York and London: Encounter Books, 2022. 288 pp. \$30.99.

Let My People Know offers a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most eventful U.S. administrations for the Middle East in recent years by Lightstone, chief of staff to David Friedman, Donald Trump's ambassador to Israel. As Lightstone puts it, his intention is to "bring readers into the room" with him but without "damaging revelations about anyone." He clearly enjoyed his work and felt proud of his achievements, attributes that come abundantly through in the writing.

Lightstone went from being an ordained New York rabbi, educator, and entrepreneur to the ambassador's right-hand man by virtue of his closeness to the new diplomat, both geographically and socially.

The book divides into chapters focusing on various events or topics, ranging from Lightstone's appointment, to his interactions with the professional embassy staff, to the oversized influence of NGOs in Washington's decision-making process.

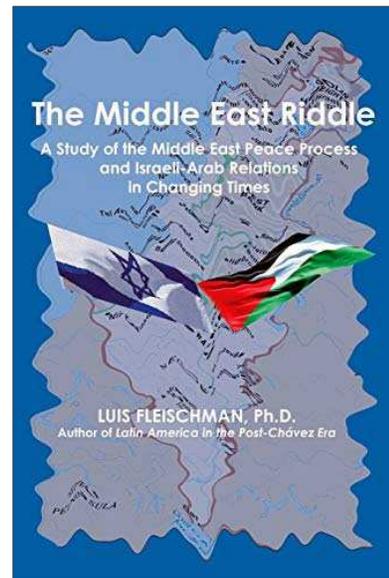
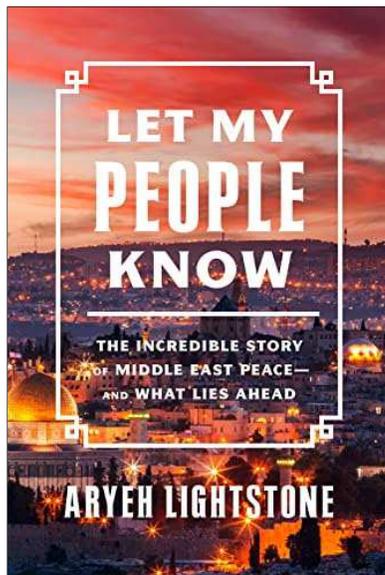
Let My People Know provides a valuable addition to the corpus of books by former



members of the Trump administration and sheds light on how those involved tore up the “peace processing” rule book to achieve significant breakthroughs. Exhibits A and B, of course, concern recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the Abraham accords. Now that the Biden administration has returned to the old play book, this makes for an especially interesting compare-and-contrast.

Lightstone is at his best when writing about personal interactions and the subtext surrounding them, making the book far more readable than a mere a list of events. As non-diplomats, Lightstone and his boss found themselves disdained by the professional staff at the State Department, who considered them undeserving of their elevated diplomatic positions. His book testifies to the error of those assessments; perhaps experience in other professions and skills accrued there served them better than a career in the State Department?

Ashley Perry
Middle East Forum



The Middle East Riddle: A Study of the Middle East Peace Process and Israeli-Arab Relations in Changing Times. By Luis Fleischman. Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishers, 2019. 249 pp. \$24, paper.

Fleischman makes a compelling argument that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement requires the cooperation of Arab states. He also argues for Jordanian-West Bank and Egypt-Gaza federations.

Hatred of Israel, Fleischman contends, is so ingrained among Palestinians that no bilateral agreement is possible. On the other side, he criticizes Israeli settlement policy on the West Bank, presenting it, too, as another obstacle to peace, but less so than Palestinian hostility.

Changes in Arabic-speaking countries, especially the “Arab Spring” uprisings have meant a turn inwards and less concern with confronting Israel, as shown by the Abraham accords, which the author hopes can be a precursor to an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement facilitated by the Arab states. However, he never actually explains how the Arab states might accomplish this but assumes it as a given.

While *Middle East Riddle* contains much of value, depending on Jordan and Egypt to resume their old roles is problematic. Would Jordan's King Abdullah II want to federate with the West Bank? A highly problematic history presumably accounts for his showing no inclination whatsoever to return to the 1948-67 era. Likewise, Egypt's Abdel Fatah Sisi came to power in 2013 via a military coup that ousted the Muslim Brotherhood regime; but a federation with Gaza would legitimize Hamas. In addition, Hamas has smuggled arms to the ISIS subsidiary fighting the Egyptian government in the Sinai Peninsula.

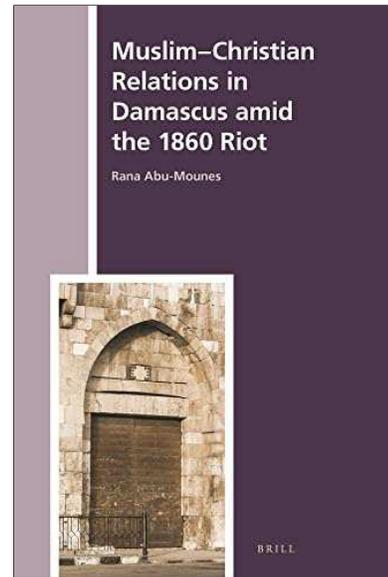
In sum, while Fleischman makes good points, his suggestion to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through federations between Jordan and the West Bank and Egypt and Gaza appears unrealistic.

Robert O. Freedman
Johns Hopkins University

Muslim-Christian Relations in Damascus amid the 1860 Riot. By Rana Abu-Mounes. Leiden: Brill, 2022. 256 pp. \$125.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx stand out as two of modern Europe's most enduringly influential thinkers; Abu-Mounes, author of this well-researched study of a major crisis in Muslim-Christian relations, perfectly exemplifies their influence.

Rousseau developed romanticism, and especially the idea of the noble savage, of the purity of life before civilization interfered and corrupted. This legend latterly transmuted into the idea that the world was a beautiful and peaceful place until Christian Europeans turned up. Today's soft visions of Al-Andalus and American Indians trace back to this outlook. When considering Syria before the Europeans, Abu-Mounes adopts this same inaccurate dreaminess:



Hitherto, the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities who had established themselves in Damascus used to respect each other's beliefs and ways of life. Even though there were sporadic bouts of tension and suspicion between them, they generally lived peaceably together.

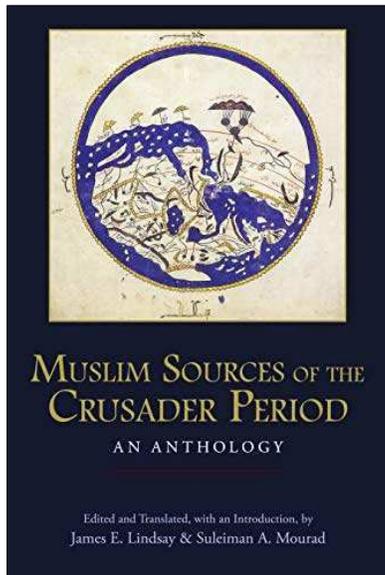
Marx developed the theory of historical materialism that attributes nearly all human actions to economic motives. Religion and ideology merely mask that supreme driving force. Abu-Mounes neatly reflects this outlook too:

It is perhaps easy to explain the 1860 riot of Damascus as religious fanaticism since the aggressors were mainly Muslims and the victims Christians. However, a critical study of how the rioters proceeded and of the selective nature of their choice of victims warrants a reconsideration of the underlying factors that led to the event. ... economic interests rather than religious fanaticism were the main cause for the riot of 1860. ...

This work views the incident as an eruption triggered by underlying tensions and conflicts in society, such as competition for limited resources, educational opportunities, employment prospects, and political power among religious communities.

So, turn to *Muslim-Christian Relations in Damascus amid the 1860 Riot* for specific information about that important crisis, but be leery of the author's gauzy effort to hide its problematic background and religious nature.

Daniel Pipes



Muslim Sources of the Crusader Period: An Anthology. Edited and trans. by James E. Lindsay and Suleiman A. Mourad. Cambridge, Mass.: Hackett Publishing, 2021. 320 pp. \$63 (\$21, paper).

Lindsay (Colorado State University) and Mourad (Smith College) write:

This anthology is an attempt to bring to light a disparate selection

of sources that in our assessment introduce the student of Crusades history to a more complex understanding of the Crusades and the interactions between Franks and Muslims—which ranged from animosity to amity—in the broader context of Islamic history.

The authors succeed in presenting an account of the Crusades from an exclusively Muslim perspective. Their sources, “many translated here into English for the first time,” cover topics and genres including travel and geographical literature, jihadist and juridical directives, chronicles and poetry, treaties and truces.

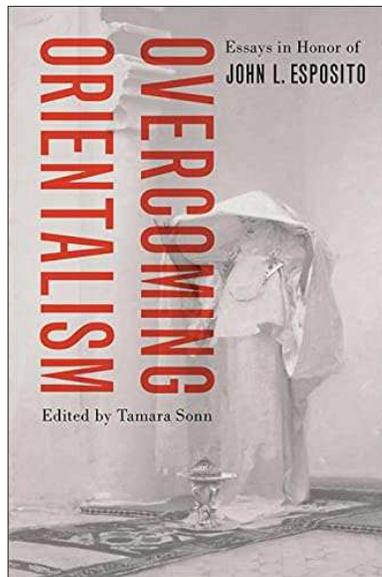
Not only is the book balanced, reproducing the accounts of enmity and amity (the latter admittedly few and circumstantial), but it is objective, not dissembling about the topics that most concerned their Muslim authors yet might cause embarrassment today. Take jihad: After correctly dismissing the “spiritual” or “greater” jihad phantom as being “without foundation,” Lindsay and Mourad assert,

When the authors of the Muslim sources in this anthology used the word jihad, they invariably meant warfare against the enemies of God and the Muslims.

The authors end each chapter with pedagogical questions to prompt the reader to explore. Especially helpful are the many scholarly footnotes to assist the non-specialist in navigating what may be strange terrain, including one that exposes a little-known pun among Muslims, who referred to Christendom's most sacred church in Jerusalem, the Church of Resurrection (*qiyama*) as the Church of Refuse (*qumama*). For students of the Crusades, the book offers several important features, including appendices (an especially useful one is titled “Quranic Verses on War and Peace”), geographical overviews, glossaries, and maps.

Those interested in current events and questions will find that the book unwittingly demonstrates many continuities with the present. It confirms that much behavior now presented as aberrant—intrinsic animosity for non-Muslims, expectations of cowed (*dhimmi*) behavior from subjugated Jews and Christians—the destruction or transformation of churches into mosques, the temporal nature of truces, the eternal nature of jihad, praise for jihadist martyrdom, and the allure of the *houri* (supernatural women who will accompany Muslim believers in Paradise)—were the norm for those Muslim authors excerpted in this very welcome anthology.

Raymond Ibrahim
Author of *Sword and Scimitar*



[Overcoming Orientalism](#): Essays in Honor of John L. Esposito. Edited by Tamara Sonn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 361 pp. \$99.

On the surface, this festschrift is as conventional as it is reputable. Students, colleagues, and a prominent university press celebrate a prolific and influential scholar on

reaching his 80th birthday with a substantial tome of original essays related to his lifelong interest.

But look harder and the apparatus shatters. The title alludes to the greatest intellectual scam of the generation—the claim that Western scholars of the Middle East served as cogs in imperialist machines. The feted scholar has written dozens of books apologizing for a totalitarian ideology, Islamism, while opening an academic center funded and named by a notorious advocate of that same ideology. The book’s editor revels in a university position named after one of the most active political leaders promoting that same ideology.

In other words, *Overcoming Orientalism* represents one cog (as it were) in the great deceit of post-1978 American scholarship, corrupt in its purposes, fraudulent in its ideas, and toxic in its impact. Rather than argue this point for all twelve essays, let us concentrate on a sample chapter, “How Islamic Is ISIS” by Soheil H. Hashmi, professor of international relations on the Alumnae Foundation and professor of politics at Mount Holyoke College.

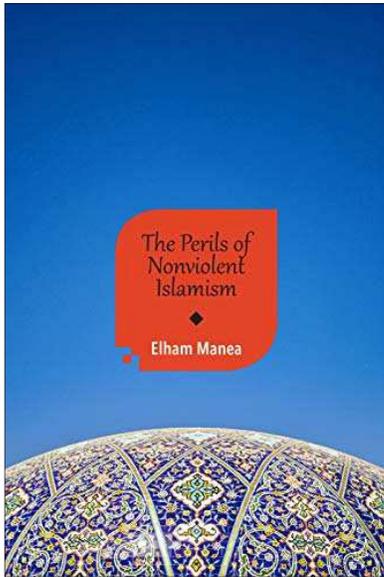
Now, everyone sentient during the ISIS heyday of 2014 knew that the organization adopted extreme Islamic practices, implemented Shari’a law in medieval detail, and sought to expand its caliphate to the entire globe. Some specialists, such as [Graeme Wood](#) and [this reviewer](#), expounded on this argument. But Hashmi, as they say, missed the memo. For him, seeing ISIS as Islamic is “grotesque.” In his view, “ISIS is first and foremost a cult. It is not a social movement, nor a reform movement, nor a group of insurgents or rebels.” It “placed itself well outside” of the “broad interpretive consensus” on Islam.

Lest it be thought that this line of thinking sank harmlessly into obscurity, it bears remembering that a host of important [political leaders](#), including Tony Blair and Barack Obama, echoed this nonsense that ISIS “is not Islamic,” leading to erroneous policies, the

destruction of property, the revival of slavery, and much death.

Such is the legacy of John L. Esposito, perpetuated by this rogue's gallery of sham scholars.

Daniel Pipes



[The Perils of Nonviolent Islamism.](#) By Elham Manea. Candor, N.Y.: Telos Press Publishing, 2021. 210 pp. \$24.95, paper.

As France and Austria crack down on Islamism, and as European Islamists undermine those efforts through accusations of “Islamophobia,” Manea’s book alerts readers to the dangers of nonviolent Islamism and its various political tactics. Formerly deputy chief editor of the Arabic service of Swissinfo, Manea describes how nonviolent Islamism infiltrates Western societies, from the Swedish Muslim Brotherhood to the British Deobandis, and the ideological features it shares with jihadist movements.

To shed light on radicalization, Manea first draws on her own experience as a teenager in Yemen seduced by the appeal of Muslim

Brotherhood circles. She then refers to a number of additional case studies of radicalized Islamists from different backgrounds. She also discusses the more abstract, and conflicting, theories on radicalization developed by French academics Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy.

Manea delves into the politics and Islamist activities in various European countries where Islamist movements are thriving, thanks in part to the misguided benevolence of non-Muslim intellectuals, lawmakers, and activists whom Manea rightfully denounces for their mistaken view of Islamists as the most authentic Muslims.

While *Perils* covers many aspects of Islamism in barely over two hundred pages, Manea avoids intellectual shortcuts in her description of Islamism as an ideology that can neither be completely separated from the religion of Islam nor seen as the most legitimate manifestation of it.

But some important elements are missing. For example, Manea’s fascinating analysis of growing Islamist influence in the education system of several European countries ignores the most obvious counter-example: France’s strictly secular public schools, in which religious symbols are banned. And while Manea often notes that Islamists discriminate extensively against women, she does not explore the inconvenient fact that many women enthusiastically join Islamist movements and sometimes exert significant influence in them.

In the final chapter, Manea exhorts her readers to join the struggle against Islamism. However, she seems only dimly aware that her suggestion to establish “well-designed theological programs” to train imams risks inadvertently reinforcing Islamist influence rather than curtailing it. Nevertheless, *Perils* offers an excellent overview of nonviolent Islamist ideology as well as its Western manifestations and ends with a call to take action against the pink elephant in the room.

Martha Lee
Islamist Watch

Searching for Peace: A Memoir of Israel. By Ehud Olmert. Washington: Brooking Institution Press, 2022. 352 pp. \$27.99.

The first thing of note about this memoir by a former prime minister of Israel? Its publication by a think tank, not a major New York house, signaling the limited appeal of what lies inside. And, indeed, it does lack wide appeal. Through hundreds of pages, Olmert feels sorry for himself, makes excuses for his errors, blames others for his sins, and generally avoids responsibility for his ignominious fall from the Prime Minister's Office to Cellblock 10 in the Maasiyahu Penitentiary.

The author complains of “a prolonged campaign that began immediately after I entered the Prime Minister's Office in January 2006 and ended only after I was behind bars” in February 2016. Why did this alleged 10-year campaign take place? Because “the authorities had conspired against me” and

a tremendous array of forces, based not only in Israel but also in the United States, came to the conclusion early on that the government I led threatened something they held dear.

And what was that something they held dear? The belief “that any territorial compromise in the pursuit of a peace deal with the Palestinians was tantamount to treason.” (One wonders why Rabin did not end up in prison.)

Playing the victim and pointing to conspiracy theories suits Olmert well. So, too, does its converse sin, boastfulness; the ex-prime minister claims he

led the most serious, ambitious effort to reach a final peace

agreement with the Palestinians [that] came within a hair's breadth of resolving the world's most vexing conflict and changing the fate of both our peoples.

In fact, he did nothing of the sort, but rather came within a hair's breadth of greatly worsening the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Yet Olmert does have one major credit to his undistinguished life. As he himself notes, “Successfully destroying the Syrian nuclear reactor was, without question, the most important achievement of my career.” That would be the bombing in September 2007 of a North-Korean installation in northeastern Syria. Olmert's account here is of special interest, and especially concerning the different obstacles that George W. Bush and Ehud Barak placed in the way of the operation. Perhaps the mission's greatest accomplishment was simultaneously to destroy the reactor and not prompt a war. For this, despite his many failings, Olmert enduringly deserves credit.

Daniel Pipes

