

Brief Reviews, Winter 2024

Apparatchiks and Ideologues in Islamist Turkey—The Intellectual Order of Islamism and Populism. By Doğan Gürpınar. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 183 pp. \$34.67 (\$ 39.99, paper).

Technical University associate professor Gürpınar is a controversial academic in Türkiye, coming under fire in Istanbul for being pro-Erdoğan, anti-Erdoğan, liberal, fake liberal, anti-Kurdish, pro-Kurdish, a left-winger, a liberal, and more. He was probably none of these.

When Erdoğan launched a courtroom battle against Kemalist generals who he viewed as an existential threat to his Islamist regime, jailing scores of them on what later turned out to be fabricated evidence, Gürpınar's 2012 tweet left a bitter taste: "In 20 years' time we will remember [Erdoğan's] Justice and Ruling Party [AKP] with gratitude." No one does so.

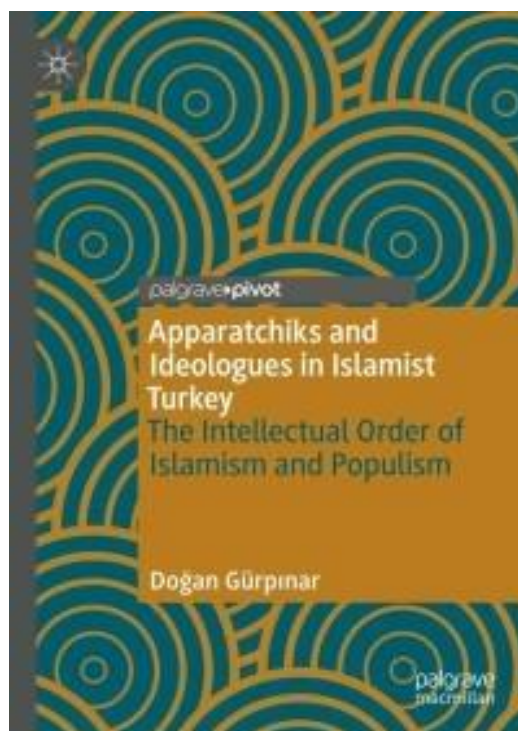
Gürpınar has produced an interesting intellectual history of the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkish state. In fact, *Apparatchiks and Ideologues* is a page-turner. It takes a connoisseur of Turkish politics on a journey to the country's 20 years under Erdoğan's rule, sharing knowledge and intellectual experience in a masterful book that tells the fascinating story of those apparatchiks and ideologues who shaped Turkish life.

Gürpınar notes the contrast between the utopian early Leninist regime and the stagnant Brezhnevite regime.

Whereas engaged intellectuals trumpeted these regimes at their inception, the regimes in time instrumentalized intellectuals as regime apparatchiks because they

continued to seek intellectual and moral vindication. The AKP's evolution replicated this pattern, which also transformed its intellectuals and their discursive maneuvers.

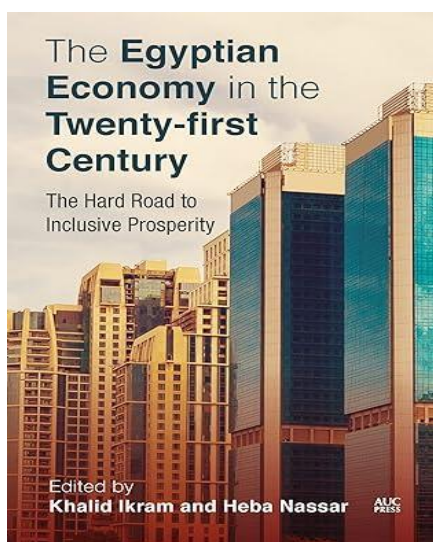
This book offers an overview of the AKP-aligned intellectual scene in its complexity. Behind that complex scene the reader will conclude that Erdoğan's greatest service to his country has been to show to a generation of younger Turks what it is like to be living under an Islamist, one-man rule.



Burak Bekdil
Middle East Forum

The Egyptian Economy in the Twenty-First Century: The Hard Road to Inclusive Prosperity. Edited by Khalid Ikram and Heba Nassar. The American University in Cairo Press, 2022. 476 pp. \$94.99.

Following up on Ikram's masterful 2018 book, *Political Economy of Reform in Egypt*, that analyzed why Egypt has for decades under-performed economically, he and co-editor Nassar have assembled a set of fourteen essays, two-thirds by Egyptians, on what Egyptians need to do to achieve inclusive prosperity and cushion the country against external shocks. Like Ikram's 2018 volume, the essays here have the great strength of almost exclusive focus on what Egyptians need to do, rather than on blaming external actors or an unjust world economic order.



Furthermore, they analyze the deep problems and constraints facing Egypt without fixating on trendy bogeymen like climate change. For instance, Khaled AbuZeid's chapter on water challenges is rich in detail about how water is used in Egypt and what can be done to improve it.

Nor does he obsess about the poor water management practices of Nile River countries upstream from Egypt, a subject on which successive Egyptian governments have been near hysterical.

Nearly half of this volume is six essays about the human factor—demography, poverty, urbanization, street children, higher education, and water. Unlike most developing countries, Egypt's population growth remains high. As the editors write, "The problem is not merely that Egypt's population has been growing rapidly; its age structure and fertility characteristics are like to create a boost or 'echo' in the growth rate in the succeeding decades." Add to this the constraints of 98 percent of the population living on 4 percent of the land: "Between 1947 and 2020 the cropped area increased by only 50 percent while the population increased by some 400 percent." Agriculture, Egypt's traditional strength, cannot create the 2.7 percent annual job growth needed to absorb the additions to the labor force. That means doubling the annual job growth from the 300,000 (mostly informal) jobs the World Bank reported were added each year from 2009 to 2019. That higher rate of job creation would require GDP growth of 6 to 7 percent a year, which is about 50 percent higher than the average over the last 60 years. The other chapters in this section analyze many of the factors holding back such a faster growth, including the shortcomings in the education system.

The other half of the volume is on development strategies, growth drivers, and policy instruments: trickle-down strategies, the digital economy, the "missing middle" between poor and rich, energy, foreign trade, fiscal and monetary policy, and a final chapter on institutional constraints. These chapters admirably offer a sober assessment of Egyptian government policy. For instance, Ahmed Farouk Ghoneim explains how a

host of government policies—many of them “non-transparent,” in his polite phrase—had the result of promoting imports and discouraging exports, which held back growth and contributed to a large foreign debt. Noha El-Mikawy and Mohammed Mohieddin’s chapter on institutional constraints brings out how poorly Egypt does on governance, accountability, and the thoughtful enforcement of laws, much less freedoms of expression and organization.

The book is a model of how to analyze a country’s economic situation. It is rich in information and solid analysis, presented in a manner easily accessible by the general reader but well versed in economic theory. The authors do not blame external actors for Egypt’s problems, nor do they call for implausible actions by the international community. The picture they paint is realistic. Egypt does not by any means face a catastrophic future, but bold action is needed for the country to achieve its potential. To be sure, it would have been interesting to have had more on some politically charged topics like corruption and the pernicious effects of the army’s involvement in more and more economic areas. But that would have been a heavy lift for authors living in Egypt, where the government less and less tolerates open examination of these sensitive areas. Indeed, given the current Egyptian atmosphere, the authors are remarkably frank.

Patrick Clawson

Washington Institute for Near East Policy

La Fin du Judaïsme en terres d’Islam.
By Shmuel Trigano. Denoël, 2009. 512 pp. €30.

Between 1945 and the 1970s, several thousand years of Jewish existence in Muslim-majority countries came to an end. This phenomenon of deportation and persecutions affected approximately one



million people but went unnoticed in the upheaval of the post-war period.

Trigano, a historian of Judaism, remedies the inattention by uncovering what is almost a hidden history by gathering texts regarding that Jewish exodus. He explains the characteristics of Judaism in the Islamic context, defined by the status of dhimmi that eventually the European colonizers abolished. He analyzes the conflict between Jewish and Arab nationalisms in the twentieth century. A variety of historians examine the processes that shaped the exodus of the Jewish communities from the eleven countries under consideration. Some texts are long and meticulously researched, while including an analysis of the historical, religious, and political territory, others less so, but all of them are captivating.

The essays show that persecutions and anti-Jewish hatred were less intense in the Maghreb than in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The first three of these latter countries were steeped in the Islamism promoted by Amin al-Husseini, being close to Palestine and their armies having fought Israel in 1948, suffering a humiliating defeat. As for Yemen, the dhimmi condition had

been among the worst anywhere.

The chapter regarding the Morocco exodus, long held secret, is the most detailed, examining the complex tangle of international political actors and negotiations. That said, it is a pity that Operation Mural, in which David Gerald Littman played a major role in safely transferring 530 children to Israel in July 1961, goes unmentioned.

Two elements of this book are innovative. First, all the authors evaluate the Jews' dhimmi condition to have been a determining factor of their relations with their Muslim environment. This perspective places these events in Islamic historical settings. Second, relying on archival documents of Ruth Tolédano-Attias, my husband, and myself, they show for the first time the full breadth of efforts arising from various backgrounds that enabled the rescue of Jews from Muslim countries.

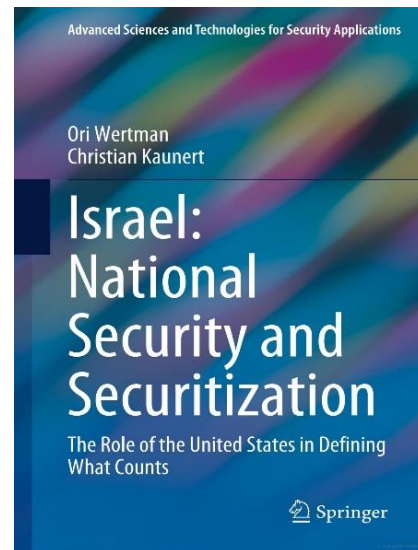
Bat Ye'or

Israel: National Security and Securitization. By Ori Wertman and Christian Kaunert. Springer Cham, 2023. \$109.99.

This type of book gives political science a bad name. It comprises an indecipherable concoction of semantic gobbledygook, liberally peppered with tiresome repetition with virtually identical texts appearing on successive or almost successive pages and glaring grammatical errors—leaving the reader to puzzle over whether it was ever submitted for the review of an editor.

Its lamentably shuns any trace of the straight-forward for the agonizingly and needlessly abstruse. Indeed, it is a book that appears to revel in calling a "spade" a "manually operated device designed to generate elevation differentials in the upper

levels of the crust of the Earth."



Moreover, its deplorable defects in style are matched only by commensurate deficiencies in substance.

The focus of the book purports to be the concept of "Securitization," which the authors attempt to present a one-size-fits-all analytical framework that can be applied to case studies as diverse as a stunningly successful preemptive military strike (the 1967 Six-Day War) and a failed diplomatic initiative (the 1993 Oslo Accords).

However, despite the centrality of the concept to the book, try as I may, I could not find any clear definition by the authors of what they meant by the term, other than some critical references to the use by others of the notion, forcing the luckless reader to scourge the internet to acquire an inkling as to what the authors carry on about.

In broad brushstrokes, "securitization theory" adopts a decidedly conspiratorial and manipulative approach to national security, according to which issues are not threatening in themselves; only by referring to them as "security" issues do they become security problems, thus facilitating the enlistment of greater resources to contend with them. In

other words, Israel could neutralize the danger posed to it by Hezbollah by refraining from alleging that it poses a danger.

In summation, this is a book that is virtually unintelligible, riddled with non sequiturs, and should be given as wide a berth as possible.

Martin Sherman
Israel Institute for Strategic Studies

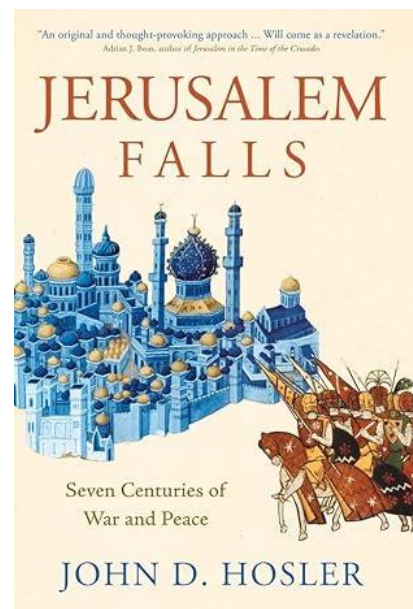
Jerusalem Falls: Seven Centuries of War and Peace. By John D. Hosler. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022. 384 pp. \$35.

Hosler, one of a dying breed of military historians (he teaches at the US Army's Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth, Kansas), looks at the much-studied city of Jerusalem through an original lens: by giving as much weight to the times between wars as to the wars. He finds a hopeful message from long-ago times. "Real accord between bitter religious enemies was reached in the Middle Ages, and not just once but multiple times across centuries, in diverse contexts and in the midst of near-constant warfare."

Jerusalem Falls covers a tempestuous 630 years, from the Iranian conquest in 614 CE to the final medieval Muslim seizure in 1244. (After that, it remained fairly quietly under Muslim control for 673 years, until the British took it in 1917 and a new tempestuous era began.) Through the many attacks (Hosler counts 19 of them; in a subsequent [interview](#), he mentions having discovered one more, making 20 in all), "a general theme of religious concord and toleration can be found in the story of Jerusalem's medieval sieges." Indeed, this discovery lies behind the book's writing: "the positive elements born from such a rough tolerance have been almost wholly de-emphasized in modern histories of the period

and in modern political discourse in general. Rather, previous treatments have tended to imagine the past as a story of the unending, and unendable, clash of civilizations."

Of the many conquests, this reviewer found that of 1229 the most interesting, partly because of its general obscurity, partly because of its lasting significance. Hosler argues that actions by the city's conqueror in 1229, the Holy Roman Empire's Frederick II, "have resounded through the last eight hundred years." That is because Frederick "confirmed a running political-religious tradition that had been established in the seventh century and maintained in various formulations thereafter: Muslim prayer on the Temple Mount, Christian prayer in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and a tolerated, piecemeal Jewish presence in the city at large."



So it is, Hosler concludes, that "medieval conquests, which seem so far removed from the vicissitudes of the modern Middle East, left an indelible stamp on Jerusalem's present status."

Daniel Pipes
Middle East Forum

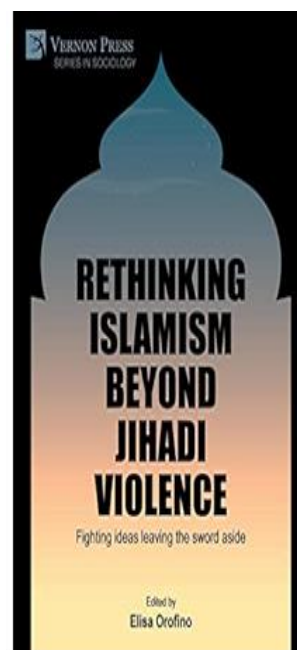
Rethinking Islamism Beyond Jihadi Violence: Fighting Ideas, Leaving the Sword Aside. Edited by Elisa Orofino. Vernon Press, 2023. 412 pp. \$20.68 (\$57 paper).

In his introduction to *Rethinking Islamism*, Lorenzo Vidino, Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, praises Orofino for assembling “a diverse team of experts that dissect different aspects of the less discussed but unquestionably largest part of Islamism: the non-violent one.” Undoubtedly, the initiative to analyze non-violent Islamism as an ideology in its own right, rather than some sort of diluted jihadism, is an excellent one. The book, however, is only occasionally excellent as it consists of a disparate set of chapters, ranging from instructive to puzzling.

The idea that Islamism has been repeatedly misunderstood by many scholars who flattened its ideological complexity, is repeated throughout—a problem that the work intends to remedy. It would be easier to enthusiastically support this (much needed) attempt to nuance Islamism if it hadn’t been somewhat damaged by the author’s unfortunate categorization of the Taliban, a Deobandi movement, as proponents of “Salafi-Wahhabi ideology” along with Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The same writer later remarks that “Salafi Talibanism has difference from Salafism of ISIS.” Perhaps the main difference is that Talibanism is not Salafi at all and that Deobandism, with its ambiguous embrace of Sufism, has long been denounced by Salafis.

Still in the same chapter, one encounters an even more bizarre claim: “the medieval godfather of Islamism, may be identified to be Mulla Sadra and his transcendental philosophy.” The ‘evidence’ offered for this incongruous link between the two is that Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a 19th century Muslim thinker who sought to

reconcile Islam with modernity, “himself was a reader of Mulla Sadra philosophy.”



Another chapter focuses on Islamic feminism and figures such as Amina Wadud, who is widely reviled by Islamists. Given that the book is supposed to focus on Islamism, the presence of that section remains a mystery. Surely, it would have been more relevant to explore the thoughts of such influential Islamist women as the Egyptian Ni'mat Sidqi whose articles opposing secular feminism resulted in her holding sway over Salafi circles.

Elsewhere, an assessment of the British branch of Hizbut Tahrir heavily relies on the philosophy of Michel Foucault as well as on an anthropological and psychoanalytical understanding of fetishism—none of which seem particularly useful in this context.

Fortunately, the book also includes fascinating chapters on: lesser known Tunisian Islamists who distanced themselves

from Tunisia's main Islamist movement; the early Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood; conversion to Sunnism among Iran's Arab minority as a form of political resistance as well as a genuine act of faith; a detailed exploration of Islamist developments in Tajikistan. "Rethinking Islamism" is at its best precisely when it focuses on rethinking Islamism instead of clamoring its intent to do so.

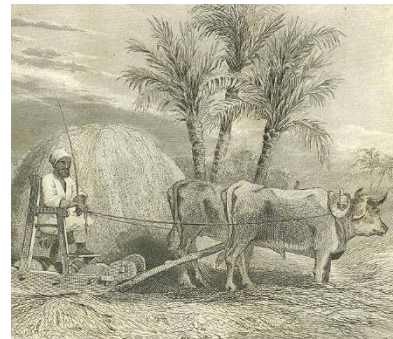
Martha Lee
Middle East Forum

State, Peasants, and Land in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt. By Dr. Maha Ghalwash, American University of Cairo Press, 2023. 328 pp. \$69.95.

Ghalwash analyzes 1848-63, a period of Egyptian history usually skipped over, coming as it did between the dramatic 1805-1848 rule of Muhammad Ali and the boom when the U.S. Civil War caused Egypt to suddenly become a major cotton exporter. Successive chapters treat land laws, taxes on peasants, tax collection system, land tenure, and inheritance by women.

Muhammad Ali had imposed on farmers a government monopoly that brought all the crops and then resold them at much higher prices, using the profits to finance his ambitious wars. But in 1840 the European powers [England, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and later France] forced him to give up his dream of an empire and agree to follow the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention and the related 1840 Convention of London (Egypt was technically part of the Ottoman Empire even if its rulers were in more or less open rebellion against Istanbul). Until his 1848 death, he used various strategies to resist doing so, but his successors increasingly fell in line.

For years, the historiography of this



**State, Peasants,
and Land in
Mid-Nineteenth-
Century Egypt**

Maha A. Ghalwash

AUC
PRESS

period was about Egypt's greater integration into the world economy, with increased trade with Europe leading to the commercialization of agriculture and a resulting stratification of rural villages between the peasant producers and landowners. Ghalwash builds on the more recent approach by historians to attribute the changes in rural society to state policy, not to modernization and market forces. She argues the rulers of this period wanted to preserve a traditional notion of justice in which the ruler had absolute authority but also the responsibility to protect the ruled from abuses. She argues that aggrieved peasants not infrequently complained within legal channels about government decisions, contrary to the older view that peasants vacillated between docile quiescence and open rebellion.

She also argues that contrary to the long-standing view that this was a period in which much land taken from peasants was given to politically well-connected large landholders, in fact the peasants often voluntarily gave up near barren land to concentrate on much more fertile parts of their holdings, with the large landholdings

generally being poor quality land requiring much work to be suitable for crops.

Perhaps so, but in that case, the period she examines was the exception that proved the rule. The overall picture of nineteenth-century Egypt was one of dramatic growth in cash crop agriculture and massive concentration of landholdings in large estates, admittedly with the two most active periods of those processes being in Muhammad Ali's time and the Civil War boom, that is, before and after the periods Ghalwash examines.

Furthermore, however much peasants were active in complaining and demanding changes as Ghalwash argues, the fact remains that power in a rapidly expanding economy was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the elite. Similarly, while the local records she examined in detail show that women often had a more active economic role than shown in the land-tax registers—with women landholders often registering their holdings in the name of male relatives—women faced many barriers and often had a precarious economic position.

It is refreshing and reassuring to find a historian who bases her work on detailed archival research and who is unafraid to go against the political tides which see the rich and powerful—and modern capitalism—as an all-powerful evil force. In many ways, Ghalwash's theses are what would expect from a conservative defender of traditional methods of rule and power, that is, she argues that concepts of justice guided state policy and that peasants had considerable input into decision-making. That is not at all her approach: she is a careful scholar without a political axe to grind. Indeed, in many ways, her approach is like the grand tradition of historians breaking the mold so as to provide a revisionist interpretation that significantly differs from long-standing views.

Patrick Clawson

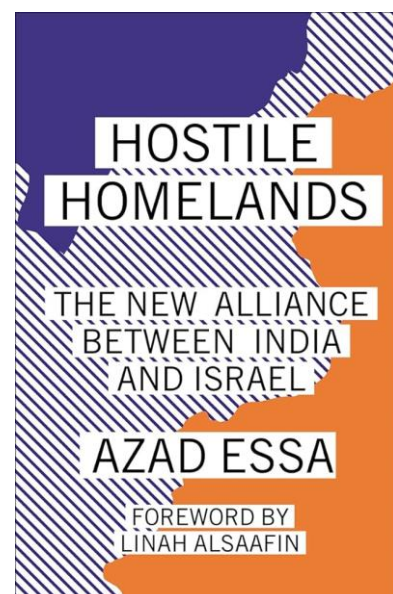
Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Hostile Homelands—The New Alliance Between India and Israel. By Azad Essa. Pluto Press, 2022. 240 pp. \$19.25 paper.

Essa is perhaps the foremost voice decrying close relations between India and Israel. He deems them twin purveyors of “settler-colonialism, occupation and apartheid.”

Indeed, *Hostile Homelands* is just Essa's latest effort. Since 2021, he ran a Substack newsletter titled “Militarists and Vegetarians” that critiques the India-Israel relationship. He writes columns for Qatari-government owned outlets such as Al Jazeera and *Middle East Eye*, his most recent employers, making the same argument. Point being, Essa is a single-minded zealot who focuses on one, very narrow, goal: to portray the India-Israel relationship as something distinctly sinister and dangerous.

Essa's book has five topics: the partitions at the birth of both countries, military cooperation between the two, “Hindutva and Zionism,” Israeli and Indian diaspora lobbies in the United States, and a comparison of disputes over Kashmir and the Palestinian territories. Essa, an ethnic Indian Muslim born in South Africa,



examines these issues from the hard left, more than that of Islam. He frequently uses words like “colonialism,” “imperialism,” and other buzzwords. He relies on quotation marks to indicate claims made by his opponents are pretextual, ridiculous, or otherwise not worthy of his time, i.e., Pakistani “aggression,” “Islamic terrorism,” Muslim “invasions” of India, and so on. He also describes normal things as frightening; the discussion of India-Israel military cooperation turning a thriving but normal military collaboration into something uniquely sinister.

Likewise, Essa disparages Indian and Israeli diaspora lobbying in the United States as beyond the pale, as well as this reviewer and the Middle East Forum,¹ all while lionizing mirror-image activities of groups like the Indian American Muslim Council, Jamaat-e-Islami’s Islamic Circle of North America and Stand with Kashmir. Indeed, he singles out the latter for praise as an effective “grassroots advocacy group” - which is perhaps not surprising, as Essa is married to its co-founder, Hafsa Kanjwal, something he never mentions.

Hostile Homelands does not intend to persuade but to outrage those who already agree with its point of view. Essa dismisses any counterpoint as irrelevant, or a bad joke, and assumes the reader will agree with him.

Clifford Smith
MEF Washington Project Director

¹ Essa also attacks several other MEF staff and fellows. We are writers of “hit pieces” and “rants” that promote “conspiracies,” and participate in the “Zionist Backlash Network.” He blames MEF for causing the Indian

government to ban a website for an organization run by his wife.