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تقرير**الطائفية، السياسة الشعبية والتدخل الأمريكي في العالم العربي****مروان الأسمر***

يناقش هذا التقرير ثلاثة من الكتب الصادرة حديثاً، وهي التقسيم الطائفي: رسم السياسة الجديدة في الشرق الأوسط، ودور السياسة الشعبية في تشكيل الشرق الأوسط، والحرب الأمريكية لأجل الشرق الأوسط الكبير. تتناول هذه الكتب ثلاث قضايا هامة وخطيرة في الوطن العربي، أولاً ما يُسمى بالتقسيم الطائفي عن طريق تفتيت المنطقة حسب الانتماء الطائفي، وثانيها الاحتجاجات الشعبية في الوطن العربي من وجهة نظر تاريخية على مدار ما يقارب ٢٠٠ عام، وثالثها أحدث التغيرات في السياسة الأمريكية الخارجية تجاه الشرق الأوسط.

وتعتبر هذه الكتب ذائعة الصيت جداً وذات أهمية كبيرة في دراسة أحدث التطورات في الشرق الأوسط. ولا تهدف إلى إثارة النقاش فحسب بل إلى النظر بعمق في قضايا أقل ما يُقال فيها بأنها جدلية جداً، كما هو الحال بالنسبة للانقسام السني الشيعي، وكذلك الاحتجاجات الشعبية مثل الربيع العربي، والسياسات الأمريكية في الوطن العربي منذ مبدأ الرئيس جيمي كارتر.

وُبحث جميع هذه المواضيع بأسلوب أكاديمي متين على يد أساتذة جامعيين طالما درسوا هذه المنطقة من وجهات نظر الممارس المتخصص والمحلل الدقيق والباحث في العلوم السياسية والخبير في العلاقات الدولية. وبذلك تقدم هذه الكتب قراءة شاملة ومتكاملة عن الشرق الأوسط.

* باحث سياسي أردني، له باع طويل في الصحافة الناطقة بالإنجليزية ويحمل شهادة الدكتوراه في العلوم السياسية من جامعة ليدز البريطانية.

Sectarianization, Popular Politics and U.S. Intervention in the Arab World

Marwan Asmar

This review outlines three books - *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Middle East*, *America's War for the Greater Middle East* - recently published encapsulating three very important and burning issues in the Arab world. One on the so-called "sectarianization" of the Arab world and split of the region along sectarian lines, another deals with popular protests in the Arab world from a historical perspective over the past 200 years or so and the last American foreign policy towards the region.

These are all very popular books and are important treatise and reflections on the developments in the Middle East and what is happening to the region today. The three books are not polemics but seek to tackle issues that are at the very least controversial dealing with the growing Sunni-Shia divide while urging for a non-simplified perspective of the issue, popular protests as exemplified by the Arab Spring and American policies in the Arab world since the Carter Doctrine.

All these issues are tackled through rigorous academic perspectives by professors who long looked at the region from the viewpoint of the professional practitioner and with the lens of the analyst, the political scientist and the international relations expert. The books provide a rounded, wholesome picture of the Middle East. The first on "sectarianization" is an edited collection with participation of well-known academic writers discussing the subject from all over the region while the second book depicts an almost chronological history of popular protests in the Middle East and building a theory from the "bottom up" as an agent of change. The third book is an essential critique of American policy in the region with the author discussing America's involvement as "permanent war".

He added it was the military which dictated policy rather than policy and diplomacy showing the way, with the U.S. military machine taking the upper hand, pointing out that there was rhetoric disconnected from reality coupled with the lack of creative non-military thinking in Washington that was being driven by the military-industrial complex in America.

“In one arresting book after another, Andrew J. Bacevich has relentlessly laid bare the failings of American foreign policy since the Cold War. This one is his sad crowning achievement: The story of our long and growing military entanglement in the region of the most tragic, bitter and intractable conflicts,” said Richard Betts, director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University.

The author is now a retired professor of history and international relations. He used to teach at Boston University. Prior to that, he served for over two decades in the U.S. army. With a PhD in American diplomatic history, he taught at West Point and at Johns Hopkins University.

Bacevich says that at the end of the Cold War, the United States started a new conflict in the Middle East that continues till the present day, with American forces becoming more involved in the Balkans, East Africa, the Gulf and in Central Asia through a series of military campaigns in the Muslim World.

Such military interventions are divided into pre- and post-September 9/11, the subsequent military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the “bloody mayhem” that was created with America embroiled in a series of conflicts it sees no way of getting out of because of the complexities of the situation and the rise of non-state actors like Al Qaeda and Daesh, the self-styled Islamic State. The author terms the region as being in a “permanent war” and “open-ended war”.

The author succinctly embarks on a framework of what he calls as “connecting the dots” starting with the 1983 Beirut bombing, the Mogadishu firefight of 1993 and the invasion of Iraq of 2003 to Afghanistan and beyond. All this has been made, he argues, related to decision-making by politicians and the military-industrial complex, which incurred enormous military exertions and acted as a “part of a single war.”

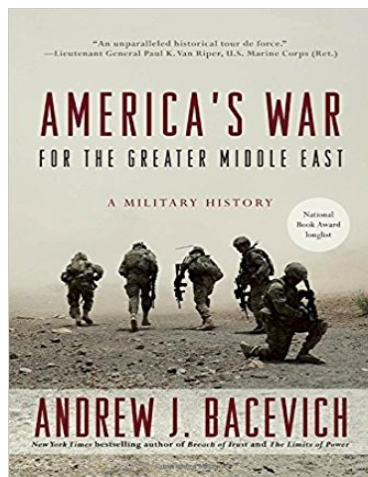
Bacevich handles the treatment of events quite candidly and in a lucid manner, writing with such authority while using public documents, published memoirs and Congressional testimony and one that is solidly researched, pointing out the door to American military involvement in the Middle East related to the U.S. failure to rescue its hostages at the American Embassy in Tehran back in 1979-1980.

However, he states that American involvement was ill-advised and ‘fool-hardy’ with inherited errors that harked on military adventurism and lacked vision with American administrations from Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton to George Bushes, over-promising and under-delivering. The author also blames American public opinion as being concerned with “trivia” rather than putting the brakes on American politicians and military strategists.

Chalcraft embarks on a hefty historical analysis concentrating on the ordinary Arab man-in-the-street, who is so often downplayed in the literature on the Middle East and the Arab world. Aaron G. Jakes writing in the *Middle East Journal* says Chalcraft's book "illustrates that the uprisings of recent years were anything but unprecedented..." and the narrative shows "...that the history of the Middle East is rich with popular movements and struggles" and in this, Chalcraft's sought to show that "...the region's history can be a site for the theorization of popular politics rather than a mere testing ground for theory generated elsewhere..."

Chalcraft is a politics professor in the London School of Economics. His research focuses on labour migration and contentious mobilization in the Middle East. He is the author of *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds of Egypt, 1963 – 1914*; and *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*.

In line with the developments that have taken place in the region, both historical and sectarian, there is a clearly international angle, an almost devouring feel by super-powers, great powers and even small powers in the region because of its strategic location and the oil it has.



America's War for the Greater Middle East by Andrew Bacevich (Random House, 2017) is regarded as a monumental study of the American intervention in the Middle East, from the Carter presidency in the late 1970s to the end of the Obama administration.

It is a historical, military and international relations study of American interventions characterized by what the author has come to call a "long war", set by what is termed as the Carter Doctrine to safeguard the interests of America in both the Middle East and extending to Africa. Hence comes the name, the Greater Middle East.

theoretician Antonio Gramsci who focuses on the superstructure rather than the material base or economic determinism to explain the movement of change.

Chalcraft uses both theory and pragmatism guiding his analysis, divulging deeply into sketching the history of the region through its people and their struggles. He divides the region into four periods, the first from 1798-1914, from Algeria to Egypt, the Balkans, Tunisia and Morocco tackling important topics like urban crowds, uprisings, tax revolt, strikes, insurrections, nationalists, peasants and workers amongst colonizers, constitutional developments, unionization and political parties.

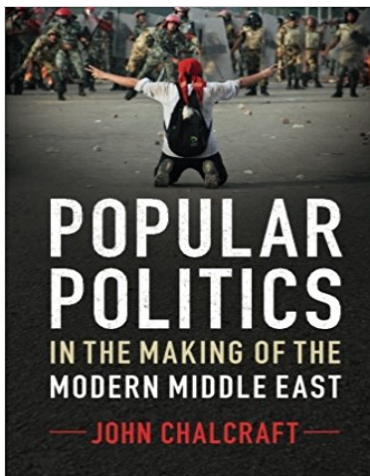
The second period between 1914 and 1952 starts off with the Arab Revolt and the agency of change is jihad in Libya, insurrection in Egypt, uprising, monarchy and nationalism in Iraq, Syria armed struggles and independence and the rise of Young Algerians. Focus is also made on the labor and women movements as well as the rise of fascism, socialism and communism and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. This section ends with the crisis of the Egyptian state and the Palestinian Nakba of 1948, earmarked by negotiations and mass demonstrations especially what Chalcraft terms the Great Revolt.

The third period is from 1952 till 1976 and discusses Nasser's revolutionary coup, hegemonic incorporation of the labour movement in Egypt, coup in Iraq, Ba'thism in Syria, Algerian independence, coup in North Yemen, strikes and protests in Kuwait and Bahrain, armed struggle in South Yemen, labour mobilization in Saudi Arabia, coup in Libya, revolution in Palestine and leftists and Nasserists in Lebanon.

The final period from 1977 till 2011 starts with the Islamic challenge in Baathist Syria, Shi'ism in Iraq, Sunni jihad and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, Iranian Revolution, Hizbollah in Lebanon, the Palestinian Intifada, Algerian civil war, reform movement in Iran, uprisings in Bahrain, BDS movement for Palestinian rights and the Arab uprisings of 2011 with focus on Egypt. This is where the book historically ends.

day of Martin Luther, despite the proliferation of social science about the region in the Western academy. Hashemi and Postel do an enormous service by bringing together in one volume a mass of research knocking down the 'sectarianism thesis.' It is essential for anyone who wants truly to understand this crucial region.”

Hashemi is the Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and an Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies. He is the author of *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy*. Danny Postel is Assistant Director of the Middle East and North African Studies Program at Northwestern University and the former Associate Director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies. He is the author of *Reading 'Legitimation Crisis' in Tehran* and co-editor of *The Syria Dilemma* and *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future*.



Another perspective to what has been happening in the Arab region lies in *Popular Politics in the Making of the Middle East* by John Chalcraft (Cambridge University Press, 2017). The book seeks to look at protest movements in the Middle East as an agency of political change. It starts with protest movements in Algeria in 1783 and ends with the popular demonstrations that shook Egypt in 2011 and resulted in regime change.

In this book, the aim of Chalcraft has been to challenge the “up-down” theories of political change and concentrating on the “bottom-up” theories that regard change as having its own dynamics emanating from below– the popular street – to the top as an agency of social, political and even economic change. He looks at different social theories and contentious politics provided by Doug AcAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly while also concentrating on the theory of hegemony as developed by the well-known Italian

near emulate the kind of strife that has dominated the region in recent years, and more so after the Arab Spring of 2011 and beyond.

The book is an editorial collection of academic chapters, providing breadth and width with Middle East experts from different fields, including politics, anthropology, international relations and sociology with different case studies from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen and Kuwait. The academics include some of the prominent names in Middle East Studies, like the Saudi Madawi Al-Rasheed, (currently at the London School of Economics), Fanar Haddas (National University of Singapore), Ussama Makdisi (Rice University), Yezid Sayigh (Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut), Vali Nasr (John Hopkins University), Stacy Philbrick Yadav, (a Yemeni expert) and Madeleine Wells (an officer at the United States Department of State).

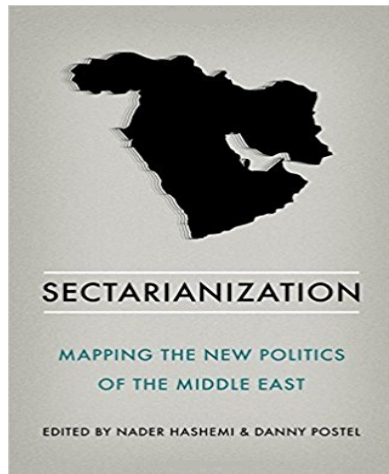
As well as others who are not mentioned, they provide a collection in dealing with the issues of the region starting from the Saudi state and its political system, Islamic martyrdom, sectarianism in Iraq, culture of sectarianism, sectarianism in the Arabian Gulf, Shia revivalism, legitimacy and institutions, political theology and disenchantment in Iran, authoritarianism and democratization in the Arab world, the Palestinian national movement, terror and tolerance as well as state building. These are just the tip of what these experts are interested in and have used to expound upon in the present book.

The role of the state, political elites and rulers are also examined for their use of the “sectarian card”, all over the region with obvious examples provided from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen. Excluding Kuwait, Middle East states are argued to play one sect against the other for different political reasons, from a domestic perspective and as a source of tension in one area and another as well as political control.

Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell, Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan and a Middle East expert, puts it: "The master narrative that everything in the Middle East is explained by religious fanaticism has a long history in the West. Paradoxically, in our own era it has, if anything, become more inescapable than it was in the

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With the Middle East region today in turmoil, experts in the West, the East – like Russia and possibly China – and in the Arab world, have sought “sectarian explanations” for the political, economic and social disorder rocking the Arab regional state-system. The Shia-Sunni divide, ethnicities, identities and primordial forces have become the most obvious explanations for the strife, civil wars and disorder taking place in various places in region.



In the book, *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (Oxford University Press, 2017), eminent Middle East experts in the United States seek to “debunk” the sectarian thesis put forward to explain the different “bloody” phenomena, upheavals and other developments taking place in the region. The editors of this volume say it would be over-simplistic to use sectarianism to explain the violence taking place in the Arab region. But they say sectarianism has become a “catch-all” explanation for the region’s troubles.

Hashemi and Postel point out the book challenges as the “lazy use of ‘sectarianism’ as a magic-bullet explanation” for what is going on today in the Middle East. They point out that such explanations miss out the real complexities that are enthused by different ethnicities and religious sects that have lived alongside each other since the 7th century when Islam was born and hegemonized the region. The editors argue that, while differences may have occurred between them, they nowhere

** Prepared by Dr. Marwan Asmar, a political researcher based in Amman. He has long worked in journalism and has a PhD in Political Science from Leeds University in the UK.*