

whereas Jews and Armenians reside in greater numbers in exile. This issue needs further examination in the future.

The book's five sections focus on Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and the Kurdish diaspora. The reformative Goran party is discussed in detail, including the protests in Iraqi Kurdistan, which are most similar to an Arab Spring condition among the Kurds. The book fails to account for the grievances of smaller ethnic and religious minorities residing in Kurdish controlled territories (particularly the KRG), such as the Assyrians and Yazidis, who alongside ethnic Kurds, have criticized KRG governmental policies. A discussion of such non-Kurdish communities under Kurdish governance would have been useful. The debate about the PKK in Turkey is of primary importance, and the inclusion of the pillar of the movement, Leyla Zana, is vital. This section gives her work the attention it deserves. Likewise, the two chapters on Syria highlight the autonomy movement in the Jezirah region, in contrast with the civil war that has plagued the country. Reforms and Kurdish enlistment in the Green Movement, as well as shifting politics and intra-Kurdish political divisions in Iran, are clarified. Apart from the material on Austria and the Kurdish diaspora networks, further examples from the Kurdish diaspora are needed, especially in reference to Germany. In addition, more information on the United States as a key ally of the Kurds in recent years would be welcome.

Although the book engages in a thought-provoking discussion of the geopolitical position of the Kurds in the Middle East, it has limitations, as discussed above, as well as some formatting and editing problems. The ethnic and religious terminology used, such as Arabs and Christians, is confusing, as these identities are not monolithic (198–199). Furthermore, bibliographies and works cited pages for the individual chapters would have been beneficial. ✂

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Sargon Donabed  
Roger Williams University

**MICHELE PENNER ANGRIST, ED.** *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013. ix + 550 pages, tables and figures, acknowledgements, references, contributors, index. Paper US\$35.00 ISBN 978-1-58826-908-9. E-Book US\$35.00 ISBN 978-1-62637-207-8.

**Editor Michele Penner Angrist's** *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East* dexterously unfurls the intricate layers of Middle East politics. She places

selected countries and the region as a whole in historical, cultural, global, and societal context. Its scope and depth make this volume a significant contribution to a better understanding of Middle East politics.

This accessible and well-structured survey is divided into three parts. The seven chapters in part one, “Contemporary Dynamics,” are written by noted experts. Each reflects a different dimension of Middle East politics within its social context: governments and oppositions, the impact of international politics, political economy, civil society, religion and politics, identity and politics, and gender and politics. Part two, a compendium of case studies written by another set of experts, revisits these seven dimensions with examples drawn from eleven out of twenty of the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries. In the third and final part of the book, “Conclusion: Trends and Prospects,” Angrist ties all the threads together and speculates on future trends.

The contributing authors paint a picture of a region rich in history and culture, with intricate private and public spaces, vibrant civil societies, socioreligious and political conflict, and on top of it all, oil riches in rentier states. The decades-long impact of petroleum wealth on the political economy of the region is addressed, as is the discourse on the evolution of the “question of women” and “issues of human rights” (175), which adds depth and texture to the analysis of gender oppression and gender politics.

In this volume, the Middle East is portrayed as a collection of highly diverse societies in which public and private domains are considered separate yet connected. Countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, which share several of the same ethnic groups, have found that diversity is at times unifying and at times a source of conflict. Above all, the people of the Middle East are portrayed as agents of social and political change—not victims—despite the authoritarian regimes that rule most of them. Indeed, among the most compelling reasons to read the book are the case studies’ portrayals of dynamic civil societies and the people’s civic engagement.

The shape of civil society, described as “a classic social science construct, broadly defined as an associational space situated between governments and households, and also between the public state sector and the commercial economy” (99), differs and operates differently across the region. Each shares, however, the common function of bringing citizens together for socializing, planning community improvements, helping the impoverished, searching for and implementing short-term and long-term solutions to these issues, and on occasion, challenging authoritarian and oppressive regimes. Deeply ingrained cultural norms such as “the common good” (*masleheh, maslehat, maslahah*) or a “community welfare society” (*khayriyyah*;

101) may be invisible to Western eyes because they are usually informal and often run by community or religious groups. However, in private spaces, such as gatherings in people's home (*majalis*, 424; *diwaniyyat*, 385), opinions are voiced, sociopolitical problems are discussed, and networks are built. Transnational networks and cyberspace are important elements in the virtual dynamics of today's civil society, and the ways in which they are formed are quite interesting. For example, Kuwaiti family and kinship organizations use modern technology to maintain communication and build common identity by developing their own websites (359).

While most Middle East regimes are authoritarian, "dictatorship takes more than one form in the area" (7). These regimes seem to be keeping democracy and social justice out of reach, but even so, most of the countries are not exclusively authoritarian. For example, Egypt has "a highly centralized, authoritarian, and slightly liberalized system" (220). Iran is governed by "one of the growing number of 'hybrid regimes' that combine democracy and authoritarianism, in which the state "is not accountable to its citizens, although it can be responsive" (262).

The book is ideal for upper level undergraduate and graduate courses in the social sciences and humanities or for individuals interested in understanding the complex intersection of politics and society in the Middle East. It would also be an invaluable resource for readers seeking a more comprehensive and contextualized elucidation of current political events and uprisings in the Middle East. It is one of the most lucidly written, highly objective surveys on the politics of the Middle East that is available today. ✨

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Elhum Haghghat

*Lehman College, City University of New York*

**FREDERICK F. ANSCOMBE.** *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xix + 323 pages, acknowledgments, maps, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$85.00 ISBN 978-1-107-04216-2; Paper US\$30.99 ISBN 978-1-107-61523-6.

This important book bridges a geographical divide by comparatively analyzing the nexus between political and religious history for the three chief parts of the Ottoman Empire (Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Arab lands), while also transcending the historiographical boundary between Ottoman and post-Ottoman history. The work broadly concentrates on the role of religion in forming political legitimacy with regard to "the practice of