

cannot gloss over the fact that power and authority resided in the hands of colonialist Britain and Zionist leadership. The newly established Arab nation-states were still in progress and many of them were ruled by imposed autocratic rulers. Finally, to suggest that in the aftermath of the 1948 defeat Palestinians lacked a link to Filastin, when compared with “Judaism historical ties to the land of Israel” (97), does not stand up to scholarly scrutiny. Reliable scholarship has debunked the Zionist claim of the Biblical connection to the idea of the JNH since the 1960s. As James L. Gelvin asserts, the period of the unified reign of the Jewish people under Kings David and Solomon in the tenth century BC was short-lived, amounting to less than 70 years.⁴ That Zionism is a totally political movement along the lines of European national movements of the nineteenth century is a fact as per *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl’s pamphlet of 1896.

Blumi, Isa. *Destroying Yemen: What Chaos in Arabia Tells Us About The World.*

Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. 312 pages. Paperback \$29.95

Destroying Yemen: What Chaos in Arabia Tells Us About The World is an eye opener. It exposes the underlying causes behind the “genocidal war” that was launched in March 2015 against Yemen by the Saudi–Anglo–American coalition forces. This in-depth study documents the deep-rooted intent to integrate the Arabian country into the political global economy, to subdue the Yemeni people by regional and global interventions. Blumi speaks of the devastation that has resulted from the military intervention against the poorest Arab country. According to UN reports, the Yemeni crisis has reached devastating levels in terms of displaced refugees and poverty, starvation and famine, water sanitation and health problems, in addition to security, poor economy, and lack of jobs. He, however, contends that despite the devastation, the Yemeni people continue to resist and demonstrate a resilience that is true to their historic legacy. The goal of the study moves away from conventional parameters of history, geography, and epistemology to identify the complexity of links between people and space as global interests interface with local forces and culture.

Blumi debunks the simplistic media reading of the war for being a civil war between the Zaidi Shi’a Houthi in the North versus the “legitimate” Sunni government of ‘Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in the South, beyond a proxy war between Shi’a Iran and Sunni Saudis. The North–South divide should not be viewed simplistically in religious terms, according to Blumi. His elucidation of the historical context of the present and the past looks forward to the future to offer a complex

but clear picture of the geographical, historical, and geological wealth of Yemen, aspects that have played into the construction of Yemeni identity and sense of history, as well as the current state of the global world.

Yemen is the second largest country in the Arabian Peninsula, with geographical differences between the north and the south parts of the terrain. Yemen makes its textual entry into world history from the Biblical times onward. Blumi sheds light on how the integration of modern Yemen into the global market had begun earlier than the 1800s of the era of high colonialism when Yemeni traders from powerful families and clans had reached South East Asia and established connections, before the arrival of the British into the region. Chapters 1 and 2 clarify British interests in this important cross-road between Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean. With the rise of the British Empire and conflicts with the Ottomans and Italians, Yemen was always at the heart of Empire. To protect its trade route to India, the British East India Company colonized Aden in 1839; and in the twentieth century, the Southern provinces of Yemen became a British Protectorate. Other European countries got into the fray to advance their political and commercial interests in the country by the 1860s. The twentieth century saw a plethora of economic European interventions into Yemeni affairs not only due to the country's strategic location but also because of its rich natural resources, such as agricultural industries, natural gas, oil, gold, and other minerals. Blumi suggests that the international impact on Yemenis, which sometimes veered into violent coups, brought to the fore a resistant, resilient spirit that survived well into World War II (12).

In the last hundred years, the field was open for Yemeni families and merchants who sought alliances and treaties with Europe to consolidate their political and economic power. Some wealthy Yemenis from the South cast their lot with the elite British while others in the North looked to Italy or France. One such Northern leader was Zaydi Imam Yahya, who was able to unite north and middle Yemen into a "coherent and unified entity" (37). He chose to align himself with expansionist Italy, who was already in neighboring Eritrea. This alliance not only secured the territorial independence and lucrative commercial trade routes for Northern Yemen, but it also angered the British, and the situation was exacerbated with the rise of Fascism. As Imam Yahya was then attempting to negotiate an alliance with the French, which would have boosted his power further, the British, with the rising Wahhabi Saudis, intervened to annex segments of Yemeni territory to what would become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Hence the historical roots of KSA's interest in the country. Imam Yahya sought family, tribal, and merchants' alliances in South Yemen to consolidate his power, sometimes successfully and sometimes not.

As the Euro-American capitalist project was bent on exploiting natural resources across the globe, Yemen's integration into the productive world market was sought. This shifted Yemen's historical positionality as the hub for the Indian

Ocean region economically, spiritually, and culturally (28). Blumi contends that the current affairs in Yemen signify a microcosm of what has been taking place the world over since the 1970s and 1980s, that being the implementation of neoliberal globalist policies of Western powers, and their affiliated financial and humanitarian institutions, to “protect global commerce . . . assure the austerity measures demanded by the IMF . . . [and] to keep the country servile to the needs of certain regional and global interests . . .” (4–5). What are the immediate events that led to the current crisis?

The current war in Yemen began in 2011 during what is referred to as the “Arab Spring.” Then the authoritative former president Saleh was forced to hand over power to his deputy Hadi. Taking advantage of a chaotic situation, the Zaidi Shia Houthi took over the Northern province and the capital Sanaa, delegitimizing Hadi’s government. According to Blumi, Hadi’s interim government has been accused by many Yemenis of being “corrupt and incompetent” whereby poverty, unemployment, and confiscation of property have been on the rise. Hadi continued what his former boss had been doing, pushing neoliberal global reforms to integrate Yemen into global capitalism. Blumi summarizes a few specifics that speak to the intersection of globalism and local welfare.

Entitled, “Plundering Yemen and Its Post-Spring Hiatus,” Chapter 6 brings to light the wheeling and dealing of the multiple projects of constructing gated communities, building of gas/oil infrastructure, managing microfinance enterprises and water and mining resources, establishing banks, and privatization of state-owned assets in agriculture, all of which resulted in massive debts for the state (170). President Saleh whose rule lasted for 33 years had aligned himself with Shaykh al-Ahmar and his clan, both of whom accumulated massive wealth with the help of investors from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the West. In the interest of space, I’ll briefly mention the case of manipulating oil revenues.

Since the late nineteenth century when oil was discovered in Yemen, Blumi reveals that oil has been a mighty source of wealth for Yemeni individuals, families, and state ministries. Oil revenues were plundered among the local rich and international corporations who were selling oil cheaply and illegally. Since the 2000s, the collaboration of former President Saleh and Shaykh al-Ahmar was facilitated by the London-based Norwegian firm Arcadia. Crude oil was stolen and sold for US\$1.50 a barrel under market prices, which not only generated millions for the perpetrators but it also undercut competition. Ultimately Arcadia was taken to court by US regulatory bodies.⁵ Blumi tells how the comingling of economics and politics worsened the Yemeni situation especially as the Houthi rebellion intensified and Saudi Arabia intervened, with the blessing of the USA, the United Kingdom, and France. He concludes that by 2011 there were huge shifts of wealth which transformed the political situation: “These shifts, in critical ways

engulfing the entire Middle East, ultimately account for why destroying Yemen was the only option for at least a significant faction within a potentially fragmenting empire” (173).

Destined to become a classic primer about modern Yemen and the flaws of global capitalism, *Destroying Yemen: What Chaos in Arabia Tells Us About The World* provides a wealth of knowledge about the plight of modern Yemen and the contemporary world. The book will be of interest to scholars and students of Political Science, Middle East Studies, and Global Studies.

Notes

1. Rashid Khalidi, *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, 2nd ed., E. L. Rogan and A. Shlaim, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
2. Originally in Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), *Filastini Bila Hawiyya* (Kuwait, n.d.).
3. For a full discussion of the collusion of King Abdullah with Zionist leaders, please see Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
4. See James L. Gelvin, *The Israel–Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
5. For more details, log into <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/21/wikileaks-cables-yemeni-general-smuggling>, accessed December 13, 2018.

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