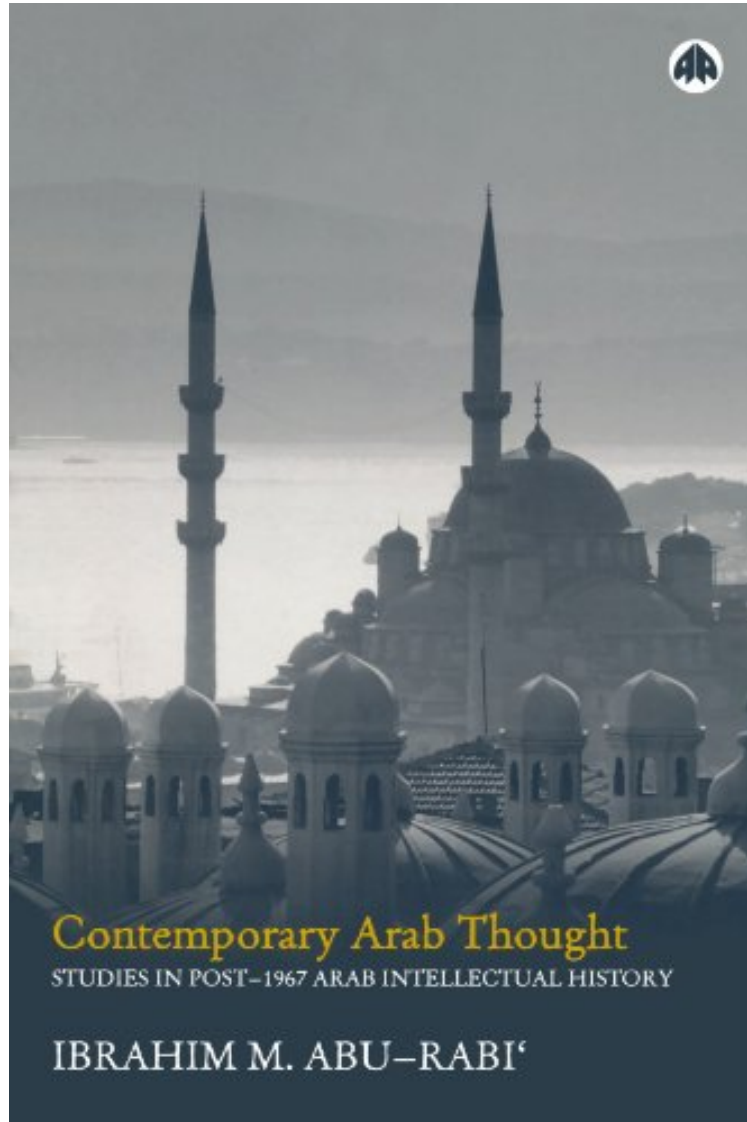


(Free) Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History

Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History

Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi'

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Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' : Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Winfried R. DallmayrExcellent overview of intellectual developments in the Arab world.This is a much-needed antidote to all the media hype about salafistsand

jihadists seen as illiterate fanatics. There is a rich intellectual life in the Arab world today and Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' deserves credit for showing this fact to the rest of the world. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A critical study of the contemporary Arab thoughts by Rizal Halim. According to the author, this book is written as a self-criticism addressed to Arab and Muslim intellectuals, especially those who reside in the West. The Arab intellectuals or Muslims alike, who have received Western education and have decided to live in Western countries in the first half of twentieth century, have actually benefited from their modern secular education. However, the large number of educated Arab people does not always fulfill the promise of transformation of the social conditions of the Arab World. Far from being 'organic intellectuals,' most Arab thinkers in the West as well as the elite in the Arab world have been party to Western capitalist interests that aim to control the Arab World. By no means denigrating the works of Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, Edward Said, Ghada Hashem Talhami, or the feminist Leila Ahmad, to mention some brilliant Arab intellectuals, most Arab thinkers in the West seem to have forgotten the social conditions of the Arab world that have been in acute crisis since the mid nineteenth century or from the time colonialism stepped into the Arab world. Pseudo modernization to say that there has never been any modernization as it emerged from the middle class as in Europe, but was initiated mainly by the elites has kept Arab intellectuals in the West completely in the dark and unable to offer radical solution to the crises of the Arab world. What are the fruits of 'modern' Arab thought since the nineteenth century? It is precisely in answering the question that this book has its significance as self-criticism. After briefly explaining the color of Arab thoughts from the Islamist, the nationalist, the liberalist, and the Marxist as written in the second part of the book, Abu-Rabi', the professor of Islamic Studies at Hartford Seminary, convincingly argues that Arab intellectuals have not yet found a viable formulation of modernism which is based on the social conditions of the Arabs. The author said in his sarcastic words; "the Arab discussion of modernity is guided more by confusion than by anything else" (197). The author also laments that many Arab and Muslim intellectuals "have taken modernity for granted without delving into its violent and cruel beginning" (197). One of the benefits of colonialism and capitalism in the Arab world is the shaken situation where many Arabs realized that they live in a backward condition and all people seem to agree that this crisis needs to be overcome. However, implementing modernity, which is Eurocentric in nature, without considering the social condition of the Arab societies, is not a good choice. The author suggests, "modernization cannot be effective without a modernist consciousness and modernist values" (151). It is in this point that the Arab's liberal and Marxist movements have failed to implement their ideal goals into the Arab people. While modernism in Europe has been the natural process of the society, modernism in the Arab world is absorbed by the Arab bourgeoisies and the intellectual elite. In relation to secularism, the author refers to the work of Sadiq Jall al-'Azm, who argues that secularization in the Arab world has been "slow, informal, pragmatic, and full of half measures" (113). He then adds his own conclusion: "the Arab secularist movement failed to produce hybrid secularism or its own version of independent 'Arab secularism'" (95). In addition to the case of Islam, or more specifically, the power elite who use Islam to legitimize themselves, modernism is often misunderstood as a threat to 'Islam,' which is nothing but fear of the authority being delegitimized by the masses. All these themes become even more complicated after the Arab defeat and the erosion of Nasserism in 1967 marked by American interests as a new hegemonic power in post-colonial era. The need for oil and its derivatives have polarized the Arab world into a 'strange polarization,' as "the old world" and "the new world" (105), "one more or less educated but poor (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon), and the other less educated but richer and more modern" (151). As one who has great concern for the decline of the Arab world, Abu-Rabi' succeeds in putting himself into the main contemporary discussion of Arab intellectuals about the question of secularism, and politic and economic globalization of the United States in the Arab world. It is important to emphasize here that the works of Antonio Gramsci, to mention one of his mentors in critical theory, have a great influence on the way Abu-Rabi' tackles contemporary issues of the Arab intellectuals. To the best of my understanding reading this book, it seems also clear that Abu-Rabi' admires the works of the liberal nationalist Constantine Zurayk and the Arab Islamist Rshid al-Ghannsh, especially on the issue of modernization and the establishment of a democratic system. It is actually hard to find an explicit statement of Abu-Rabi' proving that he admires the works of those thinkers. In this book, Abu-Rabi' elucidates a wide range of Arab intellectuals, not only Constantine Zurayk and Rshid al-Ghannsh, but also other Arab thinkers such as Muhammad al-Ghazl, 'bid al-Jbr, Fu'd Zakariyya, Mahd 'mil and Abdallah Laroui. However, after reading this book carefully, one would agree that both Zurayk and Ghannsh are well appreciated in this book. I would say that Gramsci plays an important role as a critical mentor, while Zurayk and Ghannsh play roles as the spiritual and the intellectual mentors of Abu-Rabi'. This book is necessary not only for Arab or Muslim intellectuals who reside in the West, but is valuable also for students and intellectuals studying in other parts of the Third World: Sub continental or South Asia and Southeast Asia alike. The issues and the critical analysis of the topics in this book may be useful as a grand theory on the study of Islam and the relation between religion and politics in the contemporary era. In my view, students and intellectuals from other the whole Third World have the same problems as the Arabs, especially in the lack of intellectual discourse. Students from Indonesia, Malaysia, and other Third World countries who learn from Arab institutions, which supposedly bring a new consciousness upon their completion of study, unfortunately tend to keep the rusty traditions of Arab institutions and its Islamic thought. At the same time, those who learn in Western institutions tend to be trapped in secular theories

without any effort to be critical of their academic sources. The ideas of the intellectuals who are described in this book, such as `bid al-Jbr, Rshid al-Ghannsh, and Muhammad al-Ghazl, can be good examples of how any effort to find a new vision of modern Islam should always include both Western intellectual advances and the past glory of Islamic civilizations. The disheartening fact is that those intellectuals are not well studied even in the Arab world. Students from the Third worlds, sadly enough, are only familiar with French or German philosophers, American anthropologists, and classical ideas of Muslim thinkers, without trying to look to alternative ideas from contemporary Arab or Muslims intellectuals. I myself argue that appreciation of both American and European advances in thought and contemporary Arab thought would create a new arsenal in the study of religion and political science, and the whole Third World's areas of studies.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. ImpressiveBy vanilla beaniyehA critical examination of Arab leadership and associated agendas, a criticism of culture vs. religion and Arab idealization of all things Western. Not a tough read but an intensive one. The scholarship is impressive. I read most of it for an article on a related topic. A fabulous resource for anyone interested in Islam, Arabs, or the Middle East in general.

This book deals with the major issues facing the Arab world. -- The Middle East One hopes that this rich work will inspire further studies. Certainly the student of Arab political thought should find this comprehensive survey .. useful in identifying and gaining familiarity with some of the most important developments in post-1967 Arab political thought. -- Michaella Browsers, Middle East JournalAbout the AuthorIbrahim M. Abu-Rabi' is the holder of the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities Chair of Islamic Studies at the University of Alberta. His many books include Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World (1996), Islam at the Crossroads (2003), The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought (2006), and Contemporary Arab Thought (Pluto Press, 2005).