
*Global Jihad* is a much-needed study about the Muslim phenomenon of jihad. Glenn E. Robinson’s well-documented book clarifies the origins of jihad, its development, and the various strands that resulted from the promulgation of Islam in the seventh century. The book comprises four chapters, with an introduction, conclusion, and an epilogue, with helpful notes and a bibliography. The introduction differentiates two meanings of Jihadism, a much-needed clarification. Jihad refers to the personal struggle, the “greater jihad” that involves the individual struggle against temptation, to achieve piety. The “jihad of the sword,” as it has been used by a few contemporary Muslim groups, connotes the violent struggle to defend Islam, Muslims, and their territory. “Jihad of the sword” is not sanctioned by any religious authority, which makes it illegal (1).

When in the nineteenth-century European powers began infiltrating the region, Arab contact with the West was a double-edged sword: tragic and heroic. The former began with France occupying Egypt in 1789, followed by colonial Britain taking over in 1882. By World War I, France and Britain joined hands to divide the spoils of the Ottoman Empire and share the colonization of the territories they created in the Levant (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria). They conquered and subjugated the Indigenous and continued to colonize the region for a number of decades. The colonial powers also built the infrastructure for government institutions and law, and they educated the colonized in the tools of modernity—what historian Albert Hourani terms the heroic aspect. According to Robinson, while some Muslims saw colonialism as a threat to their Faith, others embraced science and Western ideas of progress and culture. Had Robinson mentioned the negative impact of the colonial “training” and “education” on the colonized, the discussion would have been more fully nuanced. One Muslim response against Western intervention was the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood by the Egyptian religious leader Hassan al-Banna, in 1928.

We learn of the emergence of Shia Jihad in the 1960s in Paris. It was advocated by the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini and his philosopher-affiliate Ali Shariati, a Sorbonne graduate. The author rightly reminds us that historically the 15% Shia had been demobilized by the 85% Sunni Muslims since the seventh century, when
their leader Imam Husayn Bin Ali—the Prophet’s grandson—was killed by the Sunni Umayyad leader Yazid. Khomeini and Shariati re-conceptualized the death of Husayn as an injustice against Islam. They targeted the Shah rule in Iran as an anti-Islam corrupt autocracy. Khomeini called for jihad against the Shah to be replaced by an authentic Islamic government (hukumat-i-islami) (19). Thus was born the revolution that gave birth to the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.

Robinson explains that the modern phenomenon of Global Jihad, which arose as a response to Western imperial interventions, became prominent in the Arab Muslim world by the 1980s. The four waves of Global Jihad are explored in four chapters. Chapter 1 relates the Afghan war against the Soviet invasion, the first wave that attracted Arab volunteers to join Afghan fighters (mujahideen). This gave birth to al-qa’ida base whose local and international aim was to rid Muslims of infidel invaders. Saudi citizen Osama Bin Laden ushered in the second wave from Afghanistan, his adopted home. In 1996, he gave a speech declaring war on the United States and the Saudi regime, which launched Global Jihad against the infidels after the First Iraqi War in 1991. With Ayman al-Zawahiri and others, Bin Laden called for war against the apostate regimes whose survival depended on American support. The climax of this second wave was the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the US. A few smaller branches of al-qa’ida emerged in different regions since then, but they fizzled out after the killing of Bin Laden in 2011. Meanwhile, the Yemeni branch, named “al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula,” is the branch that continues to fight the local Yemeni war against the Saudi invasion, with no global agenda.

The third and fourth waves are the subjects of chapters 3 and 4, respectively. The third wave, dubbed the “Caliphate Now”! explores the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that arose after the Iraq War of 2003 and the civil war in Syria. ISIS leaders sought to eradicate the regime apostasy caused by Western corruption, in order to capture territories and establish an Islamic state according to the Shari’a. Their excessive violence, gore, and use of social media attracted many volunteers to their ranks, but they were eventually defeated by a coalition of American and Arab forces, in 2019. Finally, the defeat of the Taliban and the loss of Afghanistan in 2001 resulted in the fourth wave of Global Jihad, which continues in the present. Turning to individualized actions against corrupt westernized individuals, its main visionary leader is a veteran Syrian fighter by the name of Abu Musab al-Suri. Robinson describes this fourth wave as a “leaderless” “wiki-narrative,” to be carried out by radicalized, alienated Muslim individuals who carry out violent acts against civilians to generate public fear in the attempt to save the idea of Global Jihad.

Global Jihad: A Brief History is a highly recommended primer for students in political science, international politics, and Islamic and cultural studies.

*Vehicles of Decolonization* is an in-depth study of public transportation in the West Bank of the Palestinian Occupied Territories (POT). Given the system of control and surveillance by the settler colony of Israel, Maryam S. Griffin fleshes out the context of the public transit system—the vehicles, drivers, routes, and organizers—to reveal the refusal of Palestinians to submit to the (im)mobilization imposed upon them. She argues that Palestinians use public and private transit in three ways to subvert colonization, fragmentation, and collective alienation. For ordinary people, public transit contests the power dynamics of the disabling system of movement; for activists, transit allows them to reach communities to educate them and inform local and international audiences about their condition; and for artists, their productions represent transit as alternatives that inspire hope, all of which comprise self-determined movements across space and time that defy the settler colony. The author taps into the diverse disciplines of Indigenous and Palestine studies, and resistance and mobility studies.

The book comprises five chapters, with an introduction, conclusion, an appendix on methodology, and many figures. It would have been nice if the figures were listed on the Contents page. Griffin collected the data for her study over a period of six trips to the West Bank, between 2012 and 2018, with the bulk of the field work done over ten months, between 2013 and 2014. The field work involved observing buses and vans, including the use of the Israeli public transit system between different cities in Israel proper. The author held informal conversations with 60 passengers and 20 drivers from the Greater Bethlehem area. She conducted interviews, in both English and Arabic, of six Palestinian Authority officials, in the Ministry of Transportation and the Bethlehem Traffic Department. While working with the Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem, she also drafted maps for the Bethlehem Department, and she had drivers draw maps of their routes.

Chapter 1 contextualizes the system of (im)mobility Israel constructed to facilitate the possession and exploitation of the land since the 1967 War that resulted in the Occupation. One of the strategies discussed is “enclosures,” the system that was employed in nineteenth-century England as part of generating capitalism. This Israeli strategy evolved after the Palestinian uprisings to become immobility regimes. Their goals are to control Palestinians and “degrade social, political, and economic life to accomplish land annexation and value extraction,” (17), a system that allowed the expansion of the temporary occupation to becoming permanent settler colonization. The permanent occupation of the POT in turn has become

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part of the global diffusion of borders. Chapter 2 looks at (im)mobility critically from the perspective of border studies. Such a system does not confine its parameters to geopolitical borders, but it extends to contribute to “borderscape,” a term Griffith fails to define. She, however, elaborates on the various creations of structures, such as the Apartheid Wall and settlements; permanent barriers and “flying” checkpoints (ad hoc); permit systems and surveillance; and economic pressures and tax impositions. Palestinian collective mobility, then, is seen as countermeasures to “borderscape” (17).

Chapter 3 tackles the three ways in which Palestinian countermeasures challenge (im)mobilization: the mundane, the spectacular, and the artistic, actions Griffin describes as decolonizing. While chapter 4 tells of using public and private vehicles to resist colonizing actions, chapter 5 analyzes specific art representations of vehicles. Palestinians use three types of vehicles, which are also represented in artistic productions. The author discusses a few artistic samples where the imaginary shows self-determination to mobilize against the constraining reality on the ground, reclaiming Indigenous agency to move and decolonize (18–19). Finally, the author asserts that the Palestinian diverse encounters with public transit shed light on the people’s interrelations, revealing the intentionality or possible effects of state control over people’s power. She cautions that as the settler colony continues to impose changes on the West Bank landscape with annexation and neoliberal policies, the possible effects of which will have to be considered vis-à-vis future collective mobility and decolonization.

*Vehicles of Decolonization* is an original study about the restricted daily life and hardships Palestinians have been experiencing under Israeli occupation since 1967; it is also about the imaginative alternatives they have deployed to assert their rights and agency. This study would be of interest to scholars and students in Middle East history, Palestine and Settler Colonial Studies, and the social sciences.


This short history of Western political thought breaks new ground concerning the field. Richard Whatmore addresses the praxis of global contemporary history and political actions in the twenty-first century. A few pertinent questions are posed regarding the co-relation between political philosophy and political science; clear and concise answers are provided, to illuminate the history and development of the field, and the present crisis it is facing. The book comprises eight chapters, with a list of illustrations, references, further reading, and an index.
Chapters 1 and 2 survey and define the terminology of the modern historical field since the eighteenth century, respectively. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (1762) ushered in the basic concepts of human freedom and called for “protest and rebellion against corruption and tyranny,” views that would inspire the French Revolution in 1789 (4). The accompanying tendency of European nation-states of the nineteenth century to mythologize their founding tapped into the “sacred, tragic, nationalistic, and utopian” to legitimate their states. When the disciplinary field emerged in the 1960s, it was an attempt to challenge the “hero and villain studies” (15). Whatmore adds that since writing history should not be judgmental so that historiography is not aimed at vindicating leaders and institutions, the discipline must be seen against the backdrop of twentieth-century ideologies of Nazism, Fascism, and Stalinism. And contemporary historians of political thought interrogate the canonical notions of the past as being a dialogue with the present regarding universalist notions of “justice, happiness, courage, wisdom, and virtue” (20). Being aware of Eurocentrism, political historians examine former thinkers, philosophers, and other political actors within their historical contexts, including people’s conversations, cultural practices, and non-written artefacts. They also study languages and recover silenced voices, such as that of women and the subaltern, to expand the canon to global perspectives (17–19).

While chapter 3 delves into Marxism and its impact on the history of political thought, chapter 4 offers the liberal thinkers’ reaction to the Soviet Union aggressive policies during the Cold War. Although the Soviet Union was dismantled in 1991, Marxist analysis has given impetus to the popularity of economic history whereby Marx’s economic doctrines have been imbibed by modern neoliberal globalists, an effect that demonstrates a peddling with Marxist narrative, according to Whatmore. From the 1940s through the 1960s and 1970s, especially with the debacle of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, many intellectuals and student activists began deconstructing the many isms that seemed to underpin the policies of Western Democracies.

The “Cambridge School,” the subject of chapter 5, summarizes the thoughts of three influential scholars at the University of Cambridge: John Pocock, Quentin Skinner, and John Dunn whose influence on the field has been substantial. All three political historians, according to Whatmore, engaged the history of liberalism as embodied by Britain, that being secular, constitutional, nationalist, and imperial in nature. Their collaboration, alliance, methodologies, singularity, and inclusivity of the “other” caused a “paradigm shift” regarding the state of the field in the 1960s and 1970s. By opening up the fields of history and political thought beyond national histories, they integrated the study of Africa and the “grotesque
abuses of the Maori people,” to present alternative stories and open up the conversation regarding grievances against the Indigenous (82). Their cumulative critical perspectives anticipate the work of Michel Foucault.

Foucault’s political thought, the subject of chapter 7, contributed to the critique of capitalism, commercialism, governance, and liberty. Written in an accessible, lucid style, this chapter explains Foucault’s ideas coherently. His contributions to philosophy, history, and political thought are so extensive that warrant a review of its own. Suffice to say at this point that Foucault’s re-conceptualization of history as a “genealogy of struggle, of a will to power in Nietzsche’s sense of an irrational motivating force, and with it domination and control,” (98) revolutionized the fabric of the political, social, and cultural truths.

*The History of Political Thought* by Richard Whatmore is a remarkable contribution to understanding political thought in the twenty-first century. Scholars, students, and the curious intellectual would find it beneficial and a pleasure to read.