Hawwa’s imagination and sensorial awareness are grounded in her experience. It’s as if she never left the homeland. The smell of jasmine is still in her nostrils. And when she is introduced by the fashion designer Jamila, Sitt Qamar, to the world of fabric, Hawwa’s imagination is nurtured. As she smells the aroma, and feels and touches the velvet fabric, she is transported to a world of beauty that bypasses the violence of camp and homelessness. Some may call it resilience or steadfastness. I think Hawwa’s humanness is simply being open to the world!

Although the traumas of Palestinian history are mentioned in passing – the Nakba Catastrophe of 1948, the Naksa Setback of 1967, and Black September of 1970. The narrative does not dwell on Palestinian dispossession, loss, or fragmentation. It’s about their affects, physically, psychologically, and morally. It’s also about the power of the human spirit and the imagination, embodied in Hawwa. Velvet bypasses the nightmare of history and the brutality Palestinian refugees face on a daily basis. The novel is a search for beauty in small objects – natural and man-made. Hawwa, the new Eve, locates a different world through the imaginary, her outpouring emotionality, and compassionate generosity toward others. Habayeb’s third novel is captivating in its linguistic mastery that blends natural beauty with the primordial world of the senses. The result is a beauty that summons “beautiful faces, all places, and all feelings, in bright, glowing, life-like forms” (p. 43). This is an imagination that exudes love and warmth for people and life; evidence of the author’s control of her craft and her faith in humanity. Velvet is a pleasure to read.


Given contemporary concerns about the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the controversy over Iran’s access to them, this updated 3rd edition of *Nuclear Weapons* is timely. The book comprises seven chapters, a preface, a list of illustrations, references, suggested further readings, and an index. The preface tells of the updates to the 3rd edition, reiterating that “the bomb still matters,” and that the hydrogen bomb revolutionized the “entire foundation of human affairs,” as Winston Churchill put it (pp. xvii and xix). This brief review will summarize some of the book’s major findings.

Chapters 1 and 2 are historical in nature. While the first relates the history of the development of nuclear weapons, the second narrates the process of building the bomb. We learn about the structure of the atom, Einstein’s theory of relativity
and the interchangeability of matter and energy, and the tremendous destructive force of uranium-based weapons. Siracusa sheds light on the collaboration between science and politics when he informs us of Einstein’s initiation of the probability of constructing a new bomb by setting up a nuclear chain reaction in a mass of uranium, the information of which was filtered to President Roosevelt. In 1942, the US President approved the secret Manhattan Project. Within two and a half years and $2.2 billion in cost, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended World War II after killing approximately 60 million people. The author does not mention why President Truman decided to go ahead with the bombing in August 1945, knowing fully well that Japan’s surrender was in the works!

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the failing US efforts to counter the proliferation of nuclear armaments in the lead to the arms race during the Cold War. By 1949, the American atomic monopoly was shattered when the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb. Likewise, the possession of the atomic bomb, diplomatic efforts, and the founding of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) failed to deter both superpowers as they expanded their arms stockpiles. Both countries pursued their research into making the hydrogen/thermonuclear bomb though many scientists, including Einstein, thought security would be a “disastrous illusion” (p. 54). And so it was. By the end of the 20th-century, nine countries have nuclear status, including North Korea, which joined the club in 2006.

Possession of nuclear power neither deterred conventional wars, nor brought about peace to the world. These topics are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The effects on foreign policy and strategies were crucial in the ways both superpowers conducted their business. While the US focused on increased militarization, Soviet politicians were occupied with ideology and motivations (p. 64). The US had to contend with domestic policies, congressional partisanship, the military, and the differing policies of the various White House administrations. For example, despite President Ronald Reagan’s moral conviction of the destructive force of nuclear weapons, he launched an intensive effort to build the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), dubbed “Star Wars,” to eliminate the Soviet threat against the US. This complex, multi-layered, and costly project took a decade to design, study, interpret, and approve. Star Wars’ political implications, technical feasibility, and cost proved impractical; the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 rendered SDI unnecessary.

The post-Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was crucial in initiating many negotiations over the next three decades, ultimately concluding with the signing in 1991 of the Limited Test Ban Treaty. The treaty limited the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater. Simultaneously, the US was doing all it could to ensure its military supremacy. And with the rise of the “war on terror” since September 11, 2001, and the fear that terrorists might use weapons of
mass destruction against the US, we are back in square one. The US has been pursuing a national missile defense [sic] system, the cost of which will amount to more than a trillion dollars (pp. 98 and 103).

*Nuclear Weapons* provides the basics about the complex, intricate, and multilayered subject of nuclear weapons. It is written in a clear, accessible language. This short introduction is a good primer for students in war studies, international politics, and the core program of undergraduate courses.


In what capacity has Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to make the Coronavirus vaccine available to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories? When former US President Donald Trump cut off funds to UNRWA, what was he thinking? What are the links between South Africa, Palestine, and the Global South at large? Renowned South African philosopher Achille Mbembe offers some insightful answers to these questions, among others. His complex philosophical essay, titled *Necropolitics*, explicates and critiques the political violence across the Global South in the 20th century, a condition that is continuing into the 21st century. The author traces this violence back to the early modern period of colonialism, during which Europe inflicted multi-violent acts on the New World and the world at large. Empire, the plantation economy, and democracy formed the same historical matrix, the understanding of which is at the heart of the current global violence (p. 23). Mbembe’s essay is grounded within his experience in South Africa’s apartheid, but it extends beyond to engage “all-world.” He rightly proposes that race and racism are at the heart of the violence, acts and attitudes that were carried over from the early modern period of colonization into the late modern of decolonization, postcolonialism, and globalization. So that this brief review does not fall short by oversimplifying the density of the philosophical analysis, I will highlight a few selected notions to clarify their pertinence to the Palestinian situation.

*Necropolitics* comprises six chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction lays out the ordeal of the world, describing how war and race have been established as “history’s two privileged sacraments.” Not only have they prioritized the “taking of lands” and taming of nature, but they have also created a “world of people without bonds” (italics in the original). The purpose of war