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His stated intent is to unravel the tangled skein of contradictory interpretations on the real scope and purpose of the Free Officers’ seizure of power. Did Gamal Abdel Nasser and his companions have any idea of what they proposed to do after having toppled the monarchy in the name of the people? Did the conspirators simply intend to purge the old-style Wafdist and other corrupt politicians, restore the 1923 constitution, and then, having performed their patriotic duty by steering the country back to civilian rule, withdraw to barracks to popular acclaim? Joel Gordon’s shrewd and perceptive analysis proposes some tentative answers to many of these questions. His book covers the immediate sequel to a military putsch masterminded by Nasser, and by Nasser alone, concentrating for the most part on its political and social ramifications until the end of 1954, when Nasser finally succeeded in eliminating all his rivals to emerge as the virtual dictator of Egypt. Gordon shows that the major threat to the officers’ supremacy came not so much from the machinations of the Wafdist and other vestigial remnants of the old regime, nor from the personal ambitions and intrigues of General Muhammad Neguib, that benign pipe-smoking figurehead who was easily cast aside at the opportune moment, but from two competing factions with strong views as to how to rebuild Egypt, both of which ultimately failed to win the military to their side. These were the Muslim Brotherhood, representing the traditional Islamic challenge from the right, and, from the left, a loose and more amorphous coalition of radicals and Marxists brought together under the aegis of the Democratic Movement of National Liberation. Unlike his counterparts in Syria or Iraq, however, Nasser proved to be strong enough to reject any inducement to become the mere instrument of rival ideologies. Nor did he have the slightest intention of promoting the interests of the old liberal intelligentsia, anxious to use the army to implement the much needed land reform before restoring the country to civilian rule.

In the end, the book reaches the quite unremarkable conclusion that it would be a vulgar error to project the impact of Nasserism as a full-blown movement back to the early 1950s. It serves to remind us yet again that the opening gambit in nation-building is often easier than the later play, and that the outcome of July 1952 was much less inevitable, and much more tentative and uncertain, than is usually believed. On this crucial chapter in Egyptian history, Gordon has contributed an intelligent and elegant book, fascinating in the tale it tells and impressive in the breadth of coverage of all the available sources.


REVIEWED BY MEHRAN KAMRAVA, Department of International Studies, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tenn.

The seemingly irrational adventures of Saddam Hussein in the late 1980s and the early 1990s sent interested observers and scholars scrambling to understand the motives and ultimate goals of “the butcher of Baghdad.” In the race to beat competitors and to capitalize on a favorable publishing market, numerous books were hurriedly published, each with a title more eye-catching than the other, and each promising to have the definitive answers concerning Saddam’s territorial and military exploits. Sacrificed in the process were balance and objectivity, scholarly depth, and, often, an accurate understanding of the many political, economic, and diplomatic forces at work both in Iraq and in the larger Middle East. It is to this journalistic, pseudoscholarly genre of literature on the Gulf wars that Miron Rezun’s latest book belongs.

*Saddam Hussein’s Gulf Wars* offers a brief, descriptive account of Iraq’s military ventures in the 1980s and its eventual invasion and occupation of Kuwait, concluding with re-
counting the major events related to the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations. Before discussing the book's main subject, the author begins with a prologue and an introductory chapter in which he tries to introduce to the reader the Arabs, Islam, and the Middle East the way they really are, free of the distortions and the stereotypes portrayed by Hollywood and the popular media. Rezun, himself born in Israel, goes to great pains to point to the basic humanity of Arabs (including the Palestinians), their rich culture, and their many contributions to civilization. But it soon becomes apparent that Rezun has another motive in mind: the Arabs may be decent human beings, but their governments are corrupt, untrustworthy, and void of any legitimacy. Again and again, the author subtly (at times blatantly) echoes familiar charges made by successive Israeli governments against Israel's traditional foes. Regardless of the merits of such assertions, the author fails to draw clear connections between his discussion of the Gulf wars, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fallibility of Arab (and especially Iraqi) governments and the existence of the State of Israel. At times, it is unclear whether the book means to discuss the subject at hand or is seeking to justify Israeli foreign policy.

The next chapters chronicle the political ascent of Saddam Hussein from a thug and a school bully in the village of Takrit through the ranks of the Ba'ath party and, eventually, to the presidency in 1979. Rezun accurately portrays Saddam as a man in search of a mandate, an Arab politician only too aware of the need to fill the gigantic charismatic vacuum left by the late Nasser and the 1970s departure of Egypt from the Arab mold. It was within this mindset, the author argues, that Saddam invaded a weakened and vulnerable Iran in September 1980. Unlike some of the other publications on the Iran–Iraq War written by either Iranian or Arab authors, Rezun's account of the war, though not deep, is for the most part balanced and accurate. He highlights the major and decisive battles of the eight-year war that finally ended in 1988, when Ayatollah Khomeini likened the acceptance of the cease-fire with his old adversary to drinking poison.

The author then turns his attention to Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait and its subsequent defeat at the hands of the U.S.-led international military coalition. Although the linchpins of the book, the chapters discussing the Gulf War are the weakest. Rezun argues that Saddam, heartened by military success against Iran, sought to expand his country by annexing Kuwait, a move that would at once bolster Iraqi oil reserves, rid Iraq of its large debt to Kuwait, and greatly enlarge Iraq's strategic access to the Persian Gulf. Although claiming not to subscribe to conspiracy theories, in chapters 4 and 5 Rezun strongly suggests that the United States intentionally encouraged Iraq to invade Kuwait. By going to war and scoring a certain and quick victory, Rezun claims, the Bush administration hoped to enhance its own domestic and international credibility and stature. In support of this thesis, the author concentrates on the diplomatic moves and maneuvers in which the growing number of international participants in the conflict engaged. Chapters 5 and 6 summarily recount Iraq's military capabilities at the start of the crisis and the course of the conflict, respectively. A brief epilogue decries the tragic predicaments of Iraqi Shi'ites in the south and Kurds in the north.

Throughout, the author offers little in way of evidence and documentation for his many assertions. References and citations are few and far between, their paucity being particularly striking in light of the author's controversial claims concerning a major U.S. government conspiracy. More importantly, the author ignores the political and economic dynamics at work inside Iraq itself at the time of the Kuwaiti invasion. Saddam's bellicose attitude after 1988 may have been rooted in his victory over Iran, if not militarily, at least in stature and willpower. But the Iraqi leader, as Rezun observes, emerged out of the Iran–Iraq War with far more fundamental political and economic difficulties on his hands than he could handle. The Iraqi economy was in shambles, its infrastructure destroyed during the war of the cities. Iraq's large standing army could not possibly be absorbed into the economy without widespread dislocation.
and adjustments. This was a risk the Iraqi regime could ill afford. With an eye toward keeping his high command content after the costly and indecisive war with Iran, Saddam needed a quick and tangible victory. His self-declared, charismatic mantle also needed another rallying cause if it was to survive. Thus came the Kuwaiti invasion.

If there indeed was a conspiracy to lure Iraq into a war with the United States, Rezun, or anyone else for that matter, has yet to offer concrete evidence of it. To the observer not privy to secret intelligence data, the whole conflict appeared more like a series of miscalculations on the part of all of the countries involved. Iraq miscalculated the international resolve to liberate a country it saw as artificial and ruled over by a bunch of corrupt cousins. The United States and its allies, on the other hand, mistook Iraq's determination to hold onto Kuwait, thinking that Saddam would be intimidated at the sight of the overwhelming armada that was beginning to gather in the deserts of Saudi Arabia. But Saddam would not be deterred, for backing off against the United States was tantamount to political suicide, even if it was militarily prudent. "The mother of all battles," which never came, was the final miscalculation.

Despite its shortcomings as a serious work of scholarship, *Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars* does offer a brief and lucid journalistic account of Iraq's two recent wars. By highlighting the dates, events, and personalities involved in both, the book serves as a useful source for quick reference. On page 96, however, the French president, François Mitterand, is mistakenly given the rank of prime minister.


**REVIEWED BY MEHRAN TAMADONFAR, Department of Political Science, University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

In this brief but impressively rich and thought-provoking book the author attempts to explain the current socioeconomic and political conditions of Arab societies and assesses the viable instruments of genuine change. By relying on the history of these societies, he concludes that recent attempts at modernization have not resulted in genuine change; indeed, neopatriarchy is the product of such attempts reinforcing some of the traditional features of Arab societies.

According to the author, neopatriarchy is a modernized form of patriarchy that has its roots in the link between patriarchy and colonial influences of modern Europe. Internal heteronomous economic and political structures and external dependency have resulted in a distorted form of modernization, creating societies that lack both traditionalism and authentic modernity. In this type of society, primordial loyalties prevent the necessary task of nation-building.

Historically, the Arab patriarchal system was based on a patriarchal family structure and foreign-dependent economies. Neopatriarchy gives expression to independence but it is still modeled after and influenced (directly or indirectly) by foreign experiences, largely through Westernized native elites. Furthermore, in the neopatriarchal Arab society, masses have not constituted "a people" with distinct class differentiation and consciousness. In this condition, the petty bourgeoisie has grown in size and importance and, consequently, has dominated the society and has sought change. Regardless of their ideological orientations (conservative or radical), the new leaders have normally declared themselves for independence. In the crucial decades of the 1950s and 1960s, two competing approaches to social change and political organization emerged in the Arab societies: radical and conservative. The radical revolutionary leaders rejected capitalism and advocated a socialist model of development, while the con-