



Lebanon	
	<p><i>Political Islam, Citizenship, and Minorities: The Future of Arab Christians in the Islamic Middle East</i>, by Andrea Zaki Stephanous—Stephanous is the General Director of the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services in Cairo, Egypt, and in this volume, has made a major contribution on the interaction between Arab Christians and Islam, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon. Beginning with an excellent historical roadmap of political Islam, Stephanous explores positions and critiques within Islam, and continues by engaging the question of minorities and specifically Christians. In the second half, he examines Coptic and Maronite identity and political participation before concluding with a proposal for dynamic citizenship, which goes beyond political citizenship and involves pluralistic identity. Stephanous’ book is packed with insightful information, theoretical (and theological) discussion, and hope for the future.</p>
	<p><i>The Thirsty Enemy: A Memoir</i>, by Rev. John Markarian—This autobiography is written by the first president of Haigazian University, our partner in Beirut, Lebanon. Markarian spends much time on his experience at Haigazian, with some attention to his time at NEST, and the informal history of both is interesting. The theme of the book is based on Markarian’s living the “If your enemy is thirsty, give him something to drink” teaching of the Proverbs and of Paul, in the context of the Lebanese civil war. Markarian’s story is a series of anecdotes from his life and is reflective and quite entertaining reading.</p>
	<p><i>Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East</i>, by David Hirst—Hirst is a decades-long veteran of Lebanon and the region, reporting for the British newspaper, <i>The Guardian</i>. This book is magisterial in its treatment of the history of Lebanon. It is a clear presentation and analysis of that history, focusing on the various groups and coalitions of Lebanon, and the way that the region, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—and indeed world—has impacted the direction Lebanon has taken. One must pay attention to each sentence, as Hirst writes with complexity, but the benefit is well worth the effort.</p>
	<p><i>Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon</i>, by Robert Fisk—Perhaps the best book available in English documenting the Lebanese civil war, this is a mountain of a book—both in terms of length and demand on the reader, but well worth the investment. Fisk is a correspondent of the British <i>Independent</i> and has been based in Beirut for decades. His account is harrowing.</p>
	<p><i>A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered</i>, by Kamal Salibi—A classic essay on the contradictions and commonalities of Lebanon and the Lebanese, this book is essential in understanding the relationships of the different communities of this nation, and the ways the country has held together despite sectarian conflict. Salibi is eloquent and masterful in his presentation.</p>



	<p><i>House of Stone</i>, by Anthony Shadid—This Lebanese-American journalist writes of his year-long leave from the <i>Washington Post</i> in which he returned to his family home in Marjayoun, Southern Lebanon, to rebuild the house left by previous generations who emigrated to the US. Told with attention to the story of his family, the people in the Lebanese town, and the people with whom he reconstructs the house, Shadid conveys the experience of emigration and the poignancy of recovering history—of family and of a region.</p>
	<p><i>Cursed is the Peacemaker: The American Diplomat versus the Israeli General, Beirut 1982</i>, by John Boykin—A fascinating and very well researched account of the work of Amb. Philip Habib to negotiate peace in Lebanon in the summer of 1982, this book is also a biography of Habib. Most of the 320 pages of the book focus on a period of about 2 months in Lebanon, with inside accounts of the intense negotiations directed by Habib. The efforts to bring about a solution were intense, and heated. The book is extremely helpful if you wish to understand the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in that year, and the players involved. The author is sympathetic to Habib, who personally managed the PLO’s exit from Beirut, and the story is told largely from over Habib’s shoulder.</p> <p>[An excellent history and eyewitness testimonies of the massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut (1982) is online here: http://www.palestine-studies.org/files/pdf/jps/4558.pdf.]</p>
	<p><i>From Beirut to Jerusalem: A Woman Surgeon with the Palestinians</i>, by Dr. Swee Chai Ang—This is a first-hand account of life in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon during the 1980s, when the war was raging. Ang shares her journey to Beirut, which is one of learning about the Palestinians, and of her faith that compelled her to remain with them to provide much-needed medical services and to be in solidarity. Dr. Ang’s account is moving.</p>
	<p><i>Lebanon: Fire and Embers: A History of the Lebanese Civil War</i>, by Dilip Hiro—Perhaps among the most difficult conflicts to understand, Hiro illuminates the factions, actors, and events that comprise the history of the war, which raged from 1975 to 1990. This book is an excellent account and analysis of that period of Lebanon’s history.</p>
	<p><i>Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America</i> by Jamal Krayem Kanj—Brilliantly combining personal family memory and historical socio-political writing, Kanj takes the reader to the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon, where he was born and raised. Kanj conveys the sense of displacement a refugee living in this camp has felt, on many levels. He sheds helpful light on the last 60 years of history of the Lebanese relationship with Palestinian refugees, the Lebanese civil war, and the destruction of the Camp in 2007. His conclusion is poetic and profound.</p>



	<p><i>Besieged: A Doctor's Story of Life and Death in Beirut</i>, by Chris Giannou—This account of life in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut is written by the only surgeon to be there during the late-1985 to early-1988 War of the Camps. This “War” was one of the less-known periods in the history of Shatila, but Giannou’s detailed depiction of life in the camp during this period is immensely valuable in helping the reader understand Palestinian camp politics, the broader set of factions, and the relationship between and among various non-Palestinian actors, such as Lebanese factions (especially Aml) and Syria. The book also gives a graphic picture of life in Shatila.</p>
	<p><i>Killing Mr. Lebanon</i> by Nicholas Blanford is an excellent guide to current Lebanese politics, with the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri as the core for telling the story. If you want to get a grasp of the impact of Hariri’s participation in the Lebanese government and the implications of his assassination, you should read this book.</p>
	<p><i>Inside Lebanon</i>, edited by Noam Chomsky, takes the reader inside the 2006 summer war involving Israel, Lebanon, and Gaza. The included blog entries are frightening, relating the experiences of people living through the war in both Lebanon and Gaza. The essays by Chomsky are typically acute in their critique of US policy in the region.</p>
	<p><i>Hezbollah: A Short History</i>, by Augustus Richard Norton—This short but dense volume is an excellent study of the resistance party’s origins and approach. It is a well-written history and analysis of this important Lebanese—and regional—player.</p>
	<p><i>Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle against Israel</i>, by Nicholas Blanford—In a magisterial effort, Blanford relies on Lebanese and Israeli sources to chronicle and document this conflict. The first hundred pages deal with the background and formation of Hezbollah during the Lebanese civil war, and is detailed history. The remainder of this nearly 500-page volume intersperses personal encounter, analysis of speeches and documents, and tactical description to convey the intensity of the conflict. This book is a fascinating account of Hezbollah’s history, with incomparable access to key people within the movement, and in Israel.</p>



	<p><i>Canceled Memories</i>, by Nazek Saba Yared—This short piece of fiction tells an account of a difficult marriage which suffers additionally in the context of the Lebanese civil war. It is a good contribution to feminist literature as it voices a less-heard perspective.</p>
	<p><i>DeNiro's Game</i>, by Rawi Hage—This novel is set against the early 1980s, leading up to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It is about two Lebanese adolescents who have to make some important decisions about their futures. Bassam and George live in East Beirut and experience the worst of the war. The decisions they make will keep the reader engaged. While crude at times, the narrative elicits aspects of life of two young men. This book requires some knowledge of Lebanese history (especially the time in which the story is set) as it does not provide that. The reader will recognize other literary and artistic references throughout. The denouement is surprising, and comes at the very end.</p>
	<p><i>The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon</i>, by Ussama Makdisi—Focusing on 1840-1860 Lebanon, Makdisi argues that what has been read as sectarianism in the Middle East—by Western powers and missionaries and by the Ottoman empire itself—is actually a fabrication that has endured. Taking the conflict framed as Maronite-Druze in mid-19th century Lebanon, Makdisi examines the pre-history and the development of the conflict, considering many perspectives. He concludes that sectarianism came about, but was not the basic issue. Makdisi argues that sectarianism is an especially modern concept and is often ill-applied. Unfortunately, it has endured, and is equally applied in other conflicts in the region. The partition of Mount Lebanon along sectarian lines did not help the matter, but provided the powers (France, the Sublime Porte, and even the Jesuit and Protestant missionaries) a convenient way to attempt to make sense of tension. Unfortunately, this partition [and later, post-WW I partitions of the Ottoman Empire, and the UN partition of Palestine] was not practicable, and has led to further conflict. This book is dense but fascinating, and well-worth the read.</p>
	<p><i>Hostage Bound; Hostage Free</i>, by Benjamin and Carol Weir—Perhaps the most moving of the accounts of a Lebanon hostage, the Weirs combine narrative and personal experience with theological reflection to document this part of their lives. The aspect that is most interesting is that the Weirs were (Presbyterian) missionaries in Lebanon for the three decades before Ben was captured. They worked closely with the Shi`ite community, and taught at the Near East School of Theology, and Ben speaks fluent Arabic.</p>



	<p><i>One Family's Response to Terrorism: A Daughter's Memoir</i>, by Susan Kerr van de Ven—This book, written by the daughter of late American University in Beirut President Dr. Malcolm Kerr (murdered on campus in January 1984), is a poignant book that offers much insight into coping with such a loss. Van de Ven writes part history of the Middle East and Lebanon, part personal saga and memoir, part ode to her father, and does an excellent job of relating her personal trauma with current events in the region, and preaches on nonviolence and truth and reconciliation.</p>
<p>Syria</p>	
	<p><i>Adaptable Autocrats</i>, by Joshua Stacher—In this comparative study of Egyptian and Syrian politics, Stacher concludes that Egypt's system is more adaptable than Syria's and that led to the types of change that were witnessed in 2011-2012. Egypt's system adapted successfully while Syria has not, thus resulting in a relatively smoother transition in Egypt and more violence in Syria. Situations have changed since the book was written, but the arguments are as applicable as ever. Stacher notes that the two countries, while often compared, do not actually represent a similar trajectory. The volume assumes a certain level of familiarity with each country's modern political history, but the value of analysis and insight is very high, rewarding the reader.</p>
	<p><i>Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire</i>, by Flynt Leverett—This volume is fairly short, but replete with insight and context for the transition from President Asad-<i>père</i> to President Asad-<i>fils</i>. Focusing on domestic politics, regional dynamics, and the relationship of Syria and the US, Leverett provides a useful understanding of Syria. This book is especially helpful to understanding the strife in Syria today.</p>
	<p><i>The Silence and the Roar</i>, by Nihad Sirees—In this novella, Sirees, an exiled Syrian writer, chronicles the day of Fathi, a writer who does not participate in mass rallies in support of the “leader,” the country's ruler. The engagement of the protagonist with several characters humanizes him, and gives a realistic, if troubling, portrayal of life under authoritarian regimes. The book is especially appropriate in the midst of Arab uprisings. Sirees' afterword is a particularly good conclusion and commentary to the text.</p>
	<p><i>Syrian Episodes: Sons, Fathers, and an Anthropologist in Aleppo</i>, by John Borneman—Borneman is an anthropologist and writes of his encounters in Syria. There are hints of Saidian Orientalism in the approach throughout, even though he attempts to write in a different tradition. He gives an inside look at family dynamics and insight into matters of relationships in Syria.</p>



	<p><i>The Bread of Angels</i>, by Stephanie Saldaña—In this memoir of a year spent in Damascus as a Fulbright scholar, Saldaña, offers a personal perspective on her discovery of Syria: people, language, customs, encounter with the Iraqi refugee crisis, and the faith of Christians and Muslims. It is also a narrative of transformation and discovery. Quite intelligent and well written, Saldaña’s book humanizes the people of Syria.</p>
<p>Jordan</p>	
	<p><i>Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril</i>, by King Abdullah II of Jordan—King Abdullah’s book is a memoir and a reflection, easy to read, but serious in scope. While reflecting on Jordanian history, especially during his life, the king also shares his personal story. The main point of the book is to demonstrate that the moment for a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arab (and Islamic) countries is now, and must not be lost. There is urgency, which is Abdullah’s main reason for publishing this book now. While it does not cover the changes in the Middle East that have taken place in 2011, one could conclude that the most important issue for him is Arab-Israeli peace.</p>
	<p><i>Hussein and Abdullah: Inside the Jordanian Royal Family</i>, by Randa Habib—Habib is an eminent Jordanian journalist with incomparable access to the palace. Her short and accessible volume on the later years of King Hussein’s rule is insightful. The true strength of this book is the look at the course of events that led to and followed the designation of Prince Abdullah as Crown Prince in Hussein’s waning weeks. Well documented, that course of events is retold by Habib quite authoritatively.</p>
	<p><i>King’s Counsel: A Memoir of War, Espionage, and Diplomacy in the Middle East</i>, by Jack O’Connell—This former CIA agent and lawyer for King Hussein of Jordan writes a memoir that is insightful and clear in analysis. It looks at the Middle East through a legal lens and offers some conclusions on the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. O’Connell writes in a style that includes many personal anecdotes, which are light and interesting, as well, making this a fast read.</p>