



## Arab Studies Journal

---

Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration by Michael C. Hudson

Review by: Wendy Pearlman

*The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 7/8, No. 2/1 (Fall 1999/Spring 2000), pp. 129-131

Published by: [Arab Studies Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27933765>

Accessed: 24/11/2011 13:11

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Arab Studies Journal* and *Arab Studies Institute* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Arab Studies Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

***Middle East Dilemma:  
The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration***

Michael C. Hudson, Editor  
New York: Columbia University Press, 1999  
(210 pages, bibliography, index) \$50 (cloth)

***Reviewed by Wendy Pearlman*** \_\_\_\_\_

**I**n *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration*, Michael Hudson and a team of leading scholars explore the question of unity and cooperation in the Arab world through an extensive examination of past trials, current experiments, and future prospects. The volume's fifteen essays, themselves an example of mutually complementary integration, offer insightful analysis of the economic, political, and diplomatic dimensions of Arab cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels. Indeed, *Middle East Dilemma* provides not only a comprehensive survey of the significant place of integration in Arab politics, but also a broad theoretical explication of the concept of integration itself.

The structure of the volume reflects the depth and breadth of its coverage. In his introductory essay, Hudson outlines Karl Deutsch's classification of integrative types based upon the concepts of integration and amalgamation. Surveying the historical trajectory of Arab integration as a political movement and a set of institutions, he shows how Deutsch's typology provides a useful theoretical framework for the study of the Arab world.

The empirical substance of the volume, much of it implicitly employing Deutsch's work as a conceptual lens, is organized into three parts. The first grouping of essays situates the task of Arab integration in a regional context that has been altered by the Second Gulf War and the Arab-Israeli peace process. In addition to these changes in the Middle East environment are transformations in the international setting effected by the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalized markets. These multiple developments have given rise to fresh constraints and opportunities that ensure that the shape of Arab integration in the future will differ from its past form. Bassam Tibi

---

**Wendy Pearlman** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Government at Georgetown University.

forcefully argues that novel instances of integration emanating from other regions, such as the European Union, provide fruitful models for the Arab decision-makers who must confront these new circumstances.

The second group of essays examines various experiments in political integration in the Arab world, ranging from the internal unification of such states as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Republic of Yemen, to the formation of such multinational institutions as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Maghrib Arab Union. These diverse cases tell stories of successes and failures, which offer lessons for future policy-makers. Yet, although Frauke Heard-Bey's profile of the UAE suggests that skillful leadership can make integration happen, William Zartman's observation that "the political is still trumps" in North Africa obtains no less throughout the region. As far as the path towards integration requires the sacrifice of parochial interests, it will remain littered with "mines and potholes" for some time to come.

The third section takes up the economic side of integration. Nemat Shafik's meticulously supported analysis demonstrates that the Middle East is unique insofar as it is the movement of labor and capital, and not the trade in goods, which has linked the economies of the region. In the sphere of economic integration no less than that of political integration, however, narrow interests have often outweighed productivity and efficiency in shaping policy preferences. Although a more effective integration strategy could harness Arab countries' distinct factor endowments for mutual complementarity and hence mutual gain, this potential has gone largely unexploited to date.

The essays of *Middle East Dilemma* support three general conclusions. First, that a staple of elite rhetoric, a profound popular desire, and a dream of intellectuals—Arab unity—which has long been a fundamental current in the region's politics, will likely continue to be present in the Arab political scene in the future. The issue for Arab states and societies is therefore not whether to confront the issue of Arab integration, but rather how to do so. Second, Arab politics since independence has nonetheless manifested as much divisiveness as concord. Hence, the realization of the goal of Arab integration necessarily entails overcoming weighty obstacles—the most formidable of which seems to be narrow political interests. Third, if it is to be a viable project for the future, the shape of Arab integration must evolve in concert with broader developments in the region and the world. Thus, as Roger Owen argues on the future of economic integration, "globalism is here to stay," and any integrative efforts in the Arab world must attend to these changed conditions.

Yet, in spite of *Middle East Dilemma's* keen attention to the pushes and pulls of the new world order, the very premise of this book project suggests an Arabist nostalgia that may resonate more with the ideological inspiration of decades past than with the ideas and hopes of current generations. As stated in the introduction, the book aims to assess the status of integration, and explain why it has remained so elusive a goal. That integration is indeed a goal today; however, it is taken for granted rather than demonstrated with argument or evidence.

Hence, as a book on the future of Arab integration in an evolving world, *Middle East Dilemma* begs a larger question: is integration still a "dream" in Arab society?

Does it continue to represent an ideal for a population of which, as Shafik notes, forty-three percent is under the age of fifteen? Hudson opens the volume with a vivid description of the nationalist enthusiasm that he witnessed in the streets of Damascus in 1958. What does regional integration mean to Arabs who have come of age well after the passing of this zenith of Arabism? If it is valued, does it represent an end in and of itself, or rather a means to other “dreams,” such as employment, education, justice, freedom, and a better standard of living?

While the essays of *Middle East Dilemma* attest to changes in the nature of the regional and global conditions, they devote less attention to alterations in the nature of Arab society itself. The book’s conspicuous oversight of the issue of generational change in the Arab world is troublesome because it misses not only the possibility of attitudinal shifts among the masses, but among the up-and-coming leadership as well. In an era in which even Muammar al-Qadhafi seems to have become an Africanist as much as an Arabist, integration can no longer be taken for granted as a profound “dream” of the Arab people. Correspondingly, *Middle East Dilemma* would have been strengthened by an essay taking stock of the state of integration as a goal, in addition to its essays assessing its standing as a practicality.

Nevertheless, the contribution that this volume makes to the literature on Arab politics should not be underestimated. Its robust treatment of a host of different cases and a wide spectrum of economic and political issues is of both theoretical and empirical value. It stands as an important book that sheds new light upon the subject of integration—in the Arab world and beyond. ♦