

The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis: The Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East, by Mohammed Zahid. London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., 2010. xiv + 180 pages. Bibl. to p. 199. Index to p. 202. \$85.

Reviewed by Joshua Stacher

The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis tantalizes readers by invoking two of the most popular topics about contemporary Egypt. New information on the Brotherhood or the twilight of Husni Mubarak's reign is sure to entice scholars and policy makers. Mohammed Zahid's main title, however, tells only half the story. The book's subtitle peers backward into earlier questions of political liberalization, and the book often reads as if it is several different projects. While the author makes a valiant effort to cover these subjects, the final product is an expansive mishmash. Regrettably, the book is also riddled with factual errors and grammatical mistakes that further detract from the effort. All told, readers are likely to walk away unsatisfied by this examination of Egypt's Brotherhood and its ruling elites.

Zahid provides an excellent overview by revisiting many of the topics scholars have struggled with for the past two decades. For example, in Chapter Two alone, the author guides readers on a tour that weighs causal mechanisms between economic and political reform, culture and democracy, authoritarianism and democracy, the character of civil society, US foreign policy and its democratizing propensity, and the complex relationship of the military-state-business power elites and persistent autocracy. Presented together, however, and the author loses his voice as well as the book's compass. The fact that the author resists passing judgment on any

side compounds the problem. Hence, the reader rarely glimpses the illuminating insights Zahid may have to share.

When he turns to Egypt, Zahid fails to engage the relevant theoretical debates. While many of the collected charts and statistics are useful, the writing style undermines the analysis as events jump from topic to topic. These leaps make tough reading. For example, Zahid states, "From 1999 to 2002 legislation imposed new restrictions on civil society. The arrest of Saad Eddin Ibrahim sent a clear message to all leading civil society activists, to keep quiet or face the state coercion. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights that had operated in Egyptian since 1985 was in 1998 denied a licence to operate officially, following the arrest of its founder Hafez Abu Saeda" (p. 65). His statements are empirically correct but chronologically jumbled. And there are plain factual gaffs. The author claims that Husni Mubarak became president in 1980 (not 1981) (pp. 64, 107), and the first parliamentary elections under Mubarak were conducted in 1983 (1984) (pp. 97, 98, 126). Individual mistakes can be forgiven, but repetition undermines expertise.

Zahid's sections on the Muslim Brotherhood are cursory and tenuous, resting on a series of popular assumptions. He portrays Egypt's largest mass organization as the General Guide's personal fiefdom, bandying terms like "old guard" and "authoritarian" without tying them to precise meanings. Government leaders get the same treatment as Egypt's "regime" takes on a protean quality, operating without rhyme or reason. Whether making policy, deploying repression, or planning succession, Mubarak and his entourage act haphazardly. They are then pitted by Zahid against the Brotherhood in a nascent battle royale just as simplistic as the image of the contestants. Scholars

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Finally, and most surprising, in the book's title, Zahid cites with government official elites, or Muslim Brotherhood Research conditions in th are notoriously tough, but effort to overcome them se Rather than questioning he sticks to the intelligence at the Al-Ahram think tank activists, and media pundit *The Muslim Brotherhood Succession Crisis* does not surface of Egyptian political field's leading lines of inquiry of contemporary Egypt much incisive treatment of their s

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IRAN

After Khomeini: Iran Uncensored, by Saïd Amir Arjomand. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 216 pages. Notes to p. 24 + 256. Index to p. 268. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Charles Kurzman

Sociologist Saïd Amir Arjomand has written two major books on the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the first, *Turban for the Crown* (1995), he depicts the radical prime minister, Mohammad Javad Larijani, as a key figure in the "stratum" that the Revolution brought to power. This sociologist is highly educated, often in technical fields, and fiercely loyal to the clerical hierarchy of the Revolution, which Arjomand identifies as the first stratum. "The servan

who have spent time in Egypt may look askance at this rudimentary and at points random portrait of power.

Finally, and most surprising given the book's title, Zahid cites no interviews with government officials, ruling party elites, or Muslim Brotherhood members. Research conditions in the Middle East are notoriously tough, but the author's effort to overcome them seems lackluster. Rather than questioning the principals, he sticks to the intelligentsia: specialists at the Al-Ahram think tank, civil society activists, and media pundits. In summary, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis* does not dip below the surface of Egyptian politics or extend the field's leading lines of inquiry. Students of contemporary Egypt must await a more incisive treatment of their subject.

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After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors, by Saïd Amir Arjomand. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. xi + 216 pages. Notes to p. 244. Refs. to p. 256. Index to p. 268. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Charles Kurzman

Sociologist Saïd Amir Arjomand has written two major books on the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the first one, *The Turban for the Crown* (1988), we meet the radical prime minister, Mir Hossein Moussavi, a key figure in the "lay second stratum" that the Revolution of 1979 had brought to power. This social group was highly educated, often in technical fields, and fiercely loyal to the clerical leadership of the Revolution, which Arjomand calls the first stratum. "The servant government

and the officials in charge of the administration of the country will execute the Imam's [Ruhollah Khomeini's] decree as a religiously incumbent duty," Moussavi declared in the 1980s.¹¹ In Arjomand's second book on the Islamic Republic, *After Khomeini* (2009), we meet Moussavi again. This time, he is running for president as a reformist, campaigning alongside his wife on behalf of republicanism and civil society. Loyalty to the clerical leadership is no longer his main priority.

After Khomeini tells the story of this shift. It is not a biography — Moussavi plays only a bit part in both books — but rather a sociological account that focuses on the trajectory of the "second stratum." Following Alexis de Tocqueville's famous analysis of the French Revolution, Arjomand argues that revolutions paradoxically reinforce the power of the states that they intend to destroy. They do so by creating new government institutions, staffed by functionaries whose upward mobility is dependent on the revolutionary political system. That was one of Arjomand's central themes in *The Turban for the Crown*.

Two decades later, Iran's second stratum had splintered in two. One faction, associated primarily with the country's booming university system, became disillusioned with the ruling ideology and developed a theologically sophisticated pluralist interpretation of Islam. The reformists were further motivated by their ham-fisted exclusion from government. Arjomand proposes that "the critical event that marks the onset of rethinking among the Islamic radicals was their massive disqualification by the Guardian Council and its supervisory committees for running in the 1992 Majlis [par-

1. Saïd Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 164.