

details about the context of revelation, is also emphasised. The author argues that a sufficient mastery of these tools by the exegete is imperative for a clear understanding of some *āyāt*. In addition, he examines the abrogating and abrogated *āyāt*, Qur'ānic parables and similitude, and Makkan and Madīnan revelations the knowledge of which is *sine qua non* for a scholar to be able to venture into Qur'ānic exegesis.

The author concludes in chapter nine by recapitulating what he has already discussed in the previous chapters with a view to refreshing the readers' minds. As he aptly remarks, "the present work on the school of Qur'ānic exegesis is an informative contribution to the scholarship of this vital discipline of Qur'anic studies" (p. 242). It should, however, be noted that the use of "claim" by the author especially where he states, "Qur'an is claimed to have explained itself" is suggestive of deliberate distortion. This claim is contestable as al-Zarakashī in his *al-Burhān* and al-Suyūfī in his *al-Itiqān* had previously made informative contributions to the science of exegesis. It is clearly evident in this work that the author relies more on the works of the orientalists whose views and positions on some issues are echoed. The author in his odyssey in the field of Qur'ānic studies cannot say that there are no aspects of the Qur'ān that explain each other. Furthermore, when the new edition of the book is printed, spelling mistakes such as "inseption" (instead of "inception") on p. 1 should be avoided.

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**Politics and power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from independence to the Arab Spring. By Michael J. Willis. London: Hurst & Co., 2012), pp. vii+410. ISBN: 978-184904-2-000.**

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Throughout history, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has remained a region of deep interest and concern. Whereas there have been innumerable publications dealing with the history and politics of the Arab world, the *Maghreb* (North Africa) has received scanty attention from scholars. Moreover, most of these are on individual states. The

book under review by Michael J. Willis - Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford University - is a remarkable contribution that not only fills this vacuum but also attempts to address various issues of the *Maghreb* in a lucid and comparative way.

Consisting of nine chapters, and an Introduction, in which the author highlights the necessity of "a broad comparative text addressing the politics of the Maghreb" (p. 2), the book discusses the socio-political and economic transformations in the region chronologically and historically. Chapter one (The Imprint of History, pp. 9-36) examines the major political transformations in the region. In this chapter, the author runs through the history of the Berbers, Phoenicians, Romans and Arabs in a very concise fashion. The chapter mainly highlights the political developments that the region witnessed following the establishment of Islam there.

Chapter two (Post-Independence State-Building, 37-79) explores the emergence of various political establishments in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco following the colonial period and their role thereof. The chapter discusses in an eloquent way, the role of individuals and the formation and development of political parties in the *Maghreb*. The chapter also focuses on the formation of state structures in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. The author's discussion in this chapter makes the very valid observation that "by the early 1970s all the three states, despite their distinctive differences, had settled into fairly similar political patterns. ... Power was maintained by their respective leaders through manipulation of the elite and through the construction of formal political structures that gave nearly all political power to the leader" (p. 78).

Chapter three (The Military, pp. 81-119) analyses the role of this key institution of the state in shaping the political environment of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. The author observes that very often army commanders seized power from the civilian regimes mainly "to further their own particular interests or to prevent the country from sliding into civil conflict" (p. 81). The author's analysis in this chapter makes it clear that the role of the military in developing and re-structuring the political environment of the three states ranged from marginal in Tunisia, central in Algeria, to somewhere in between the two in Morocco.

Focusing on the role and impact of political parties, chapter four (pp. 121-153) examines in a comparative way, the establishment of

“single party system” in Algeria and Tunisia. The author’s discussion in this chapter highlights the role of the “single party system” in using the natural resources of those countries to take them on the path of development, progress, and modernization. A detailed account of the political developments in Morocco, which was an exception to the general pattern of “single party system” of the region, is also discussed. In this chapter, the author highlights the reasons for shifting from a single-party to a multi-party system in Tunisia and Algeria. Investigating the very effective role of the Islamists in all the three countries, chapter five (Islamist Movements, pp. 155-201) discusses the reasons for the birth of the Islamic movements— *al-Nahḍah* of Tunisia, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of Algeria, and Party of Justice and Development (PJD) of Morocco. The author examines the challenges these movements posed to the ruling regimes, and discusses their active role in transforming the political environments in the respective countries. The chapter also traces the origins of these Islamic movements and explains the responses of the states toward them. In addition, the chapter contains a section on “Islamism and the Arab Spring of 2011” (pp. 195-198), wherein the author explores the impact of these movements especially of *al-Nahḍah* on the post-‘Arab Spring’ developments.

Chapter six (The Berber Question (pp. 203-229) deals with issues related to ethnicity and its impact on politics of the region, while focusing on the post-colonial era. It points out that Morocco is the most influenced state by the Berber identity, followed by Algeria, and Tunisia. The chapter concludes with the remarks that “the linkage made by the Berberist activists between democratisation and a greater space being given to the Berber identity” after Arab Spring “was likely to advance the objectives of the movement and further raise the profile of the issue of Berber identity” (p. 229). Chapter seven (Politics and Economics, pp. 231-264) discusses comprehensively the relation between politics and economics in all three countries. The chapter explains the reforms carried out in the economies of the three countries and attempts to analyse the monetary policies pursued by their respective governments. The chapter focuses on the commonalities and differences between the economic policies of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

Chapters eight and nine focus on, as their titles themselves suggest, “Regional” and “International Relations” respectively. Discussing the foreign relations of the three regional countries, the author aptly points

out those have oscillated wildly between conflict and cooperation. Chapter nine focuses on the interaction and relation of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco with the wider world— especially with the United States, Europe, and other Arab countries. The book ends with a precise five-page conclusion (pp. 335-339) on the following main points: (1) the political power established after independence in the whole region; (2) the “Tunisian Revolution” and the collapse of Ben Ali; (3) the impact of the “Tunisian Revolution” in the Arab world; and (4) the implication of the so-called “Arab Spring” for Morocco and Algeria which had not experienced the similar types of upheavals as witnessed by other countries in the region.

Keeping in view the fall of President Morsi in Egypt in July 2013, the on-going turmoil in Syria, and other such events in the MENA, one may fully disagree with his presumption that there is a possibility of another wave of “Arab Spring”, starting from Morocco and Algeria in the future. Overall, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb* offers a comprehensive analysis of the first fifty years of socio-economic and political transformations in the *Maghreb* after independence in a comparative fashion. The book covers a wide range of subjects ranging from politics, economics, military institution, ethnicity, to intra and inter relations of these respective countries. The book is a highly commendable endeavour and worth praise. The author deserves a special admiration for producing such a scholarly and research-oriented work on a region neglected by many. The book will be highly beneficial for students, scholars, and the political commentators interested in the *Maghreb*.

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