

The rise and fall of Arab Jerusalem: Palestinian politics and the city since 1967. By Hillel Cohen. London: Routledge, 2011, pp. xix+162, ISBN: 978-0415598545 (Paperback).

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Jerusalem is considered sacred by all three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and thus has remained the most contentious city in recent history. It is not surprising that many analysts, scholars, politicians, and academics have carried out studies on Jerusalem from various perspectives. The book under review is written by Hillel Cohen, a Research Fellow at the Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The book is mainly based on Cohen's personal interviews with the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. However, the interviews have been very well supported by proper documentation. It goes without saying that the volume is a valuable recent addition to the scholarly works dealing with East Jerusalem. The book attempts to analyse the character of the political, military and social institutions in the city, and the Jerusalemite Palestinians' "dynamic identities, and their relationships with both the Palestinian national movement" and "the Israel experience" (p. ix) since 1967.

At the very beginning of the book, the author rightly introduces its readers to the history of Jerusalem from the Palestinian perspectives over the 1917-1993 period. Cohen sees Jerusalem at the centre of the religious and national identity of the Palestinians. Therefore, the city plays a crucial role in the Palestinian national movement. Cohen dwells with Jerusalem's character as a capital in a number of ways, such as "creation of capital (1917-48)"; "capital in waiting (1917-1948)"; "capital in the making (1948-1967)"; and finally "capital under fire (during first Intifada, 1987-1993)." The author further records that East Jerusalem differs from the other cities of Palestine in a number of ways. Thus, for Cohen, Jerusalem will continue to play a key role as a centre for the Palestinian politics.

Cohen discusses the changes that had taken place in the Palestinian political environment in the post-Oslo Agreement (1993) period. As part of his analysis, he concentrates on the disagreements that erupted

between the various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on the issue of Jerusalem for which negotiation had already taken place with Israel (p. 19). Cohen recounts that the Oslo Agreement earned criticisms from various factions within the Palestinian and Israeli camps. The author is of the opinion that as a reaction to the Oslo Agreement, Hamas cells became active, and carried out violent acts, particularly in East Jerusalem, costing Israeli lives including Israeli police personnel (pp. 20-25). Though the Oslo Agreement led to the setting up of the Palestinian Authority (PA), it gave little relief, if any, to the Palestinians. The author believes that overall the Oslo years (1993-2000) almost brought stagnation to political activities in Jerusalem. Israel failed to appreciate the positive impact of the PA on the nature of politics in Jerusalem. The Israeli authority placed strict restrictions on PA's activities. As a result, Cohen argues, the "general Palestinian-Jerusalemite community was caught in the middle between the harsh Israeli policies and the problematic functioning of the PA" (p. 40).

The author then provides an engaging description of the second Intifada, also referred to as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which broke out in 2000. He discusses the impact of a number of suicide attacks undertaken by Palestinians in Jerusalem on the city itself. The author is of the opinion that the second Intifada caused the Palestinians and Israelis, for the first time since 1948, to engage in large-scale armed struggle. "The Second Intifada and the drastic Israeli reaction", argues Cohen "changed everything" (p. 43). The author further makes the point that the armed struggle against the Israelis has different and more complex results than the classical anti-colonial struggle (p. 42). The author argues that the motivating force of the suicide attacks is not always strong religious belief and nationalist enthusiasm; rather the perpetrators of Palestinian suicide attacks are partly motivated by the promise of financial benefits coupled with strong resentment against Israel, and a bit for the sake of adventure. Such statements made by the author need to be rechecked. How can a person end his life just for the sake of some mundane gain that is of no practical use to him? Undoubtedly, there are strong motivational forces behind people's decision to end their lives by blowing themselves up. However, in spite of such a jaundiced view of suicide attacks in Jerusalem, based on the causality figures and the nature of the attacks in the city, Cohen draws a very interesting inference that "the important

challenge in Jerusalem was not armed struggle but rather the struggle for the Arab identity of the city and the right to remain in Jerusalem and live there honourably” (p. 64).

Cohen recounts the political struggles of Palestinian Jerusalemites, both within the Palestinian society and as part of their continuing struggle against the harsh Israeli regime. He states that the failures of the PA and internal divisions caused people to lose their faith in the PA (p. 66). A full-fledged committee for Jerusalem affairs was constituted by Arafat, but failed to formulate a comprehensive policy regarding the city (p. 70). Although, Arafat, on his part, took some ceremonial steps in order to show his sovereignty over Jerusalem. However, as Cohen points out, Arafat had no influence, neither on Jerusalemites nor on the political atmosphere (ibid). Cohen also records the role of various Islamic movements and organisations in Jerusalem for reawakening a sense of national and religious well-being of the Palestinian-Jerusalemites. Furthermore, Cohen questions the role of various NGO's, mainly funded by external sources for various purposes, in their involvement in the struggle for Jerusalem (pp. 76-82).

The author also analyses the campaigns and results of Palestinian elections held in 2006. He brings forth many interesting inferences from the results of these elections. It should be noted here that in these elections, Hamas emerged as the winner with its slogan of “Change and Reform” (p. 121). Cohen explains that despite Hamas' victory, “the percentage of political participation was still very low” (p. 126). The reasons for low Palestinian voter turnout in the 2006 Jerusalem elections were the lack of faith in PA and Israeli restrictions.

Cohen concludes his book by identifying four principal approaches currently prevailing in the Palestinian-Jerusalemite setup. The first approach, “is the Islamic approach”, which is characterised by religious belief and fervour; for they believe “in the end Islam will prevail” (p. 131). The second approach, according to Cohen, is the “apolitical approach”, which is characterised by a mood of passiveness; driven by a feeling of inability to change the situation and recognition of Israel's power (p. 132). The third approach with very few adherents, Cohen says, is of those who believe in cooperation with Israelis. The fourth approach – the leading one – is nationalism “*a-la Fatah*,” which argues Cohen, is weakened but not weak enough for it to be eulogised (p. 133).

On the other hand, while analysing many unilateral steps taken by Israel in support of their policy toward Palestine, Cohen sees three options available for Israel none of which are easy to adopt: 1) maintaining the status quo—Israeli control in all of ‘greater Jerusalem’; 2) unilateral disengagement from the Arab neighbourhood while strengthening Jewish control on the holy basin, which is against the goal of their “greater Jerusalem”; and 3) joint ‘peaceful’ management of the Old city and its holy places by Israel and Palestine (p. 135).

Apart from having some arguable statements, the book, offers an absorbing, interesting, and informative insight on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The volume is a well-researched study focusing on the political activities of East Jerusalem, and the Palestinian armed struggle. It is a timely must-read for all those concerned with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Domination and contestation: Muslim *Bumiputera* politics in Sarawak. By Faisal S. Hazis. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012. pp. 346. ISBN: 978-981-4311-58-8.

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Two reasons may be advanced for an interest in a book such as the one under review. The first is the submission of a letter of resignation in February, 2014, of Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, the Chief Minister of Sarawak since May, 1981. This signalled an end to a colourful and often controversial chapter in the history of politics not only of Sarawak but perhaps also of other parts of Malaysia. Taib Mahmud, however, remains the President of Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB) and Chairman of the State Barisan Nasional (BN), thus making sure he continues to be at the centre of Sarawak’s political scene. The second reason for an interest in *Domination and contestation: Muslim Bumiputera politics in Sarawak* would perhaps be to appreciate and understand the changing nature of politics in Sabah and Sarawak within the context of federal politics of Malaysia. This book is an