

MODERN HISTORY AND POLITICS

Artillery of Fire: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East, by Ussama Makdisi. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008. 262 pages. Illust. \$35.

Reviewed by Heather J. Sharkey

Lucid and elegantly written, Ussama Makdisi's *Artillery of Heaven* accomplishes two big things. First, while examining 19th-century American missionary encounters in the Arab Ottoman territories, it presents a model for a new kind of transnational history that sheds light on American engagement with the world. Second, and at a time when much of the Arab past has been "effectively demarcated ... as a forbidden no-man's land" because of fear of what "divisive narratives" of the past may dredge up (p. 219), it scrutinizes the raw history of the "multi-religious world" in the Ottoman region that is now Lebanon.

The tragic experiences of As'ad Shidiyaq (1798-1830) tie the book together. The first convert from Maronite Catholicism to evangelical Protestantism in Mount Lebanon, As'ad Shidiyaq died in isolation, imprisoned and tortured by Maronite ecclesiastical authorities who feared that his rejection of church tradition (and by implication, of local power hierarchies) threatened the social order. His death testified to the inability of Maronite authorities to tolerate dissent. But his death also illuminated the ignorance of American missionaries, who converted him without having the power to protect him, and who "ignore[d] some of the most basic stipulations of religious discretion" (p. 88) as they meandered through the region. In some ways As'ad Shidiyaq's life anticipated "a more modern Ottoman age that had not yet dawned," an age calling for "a new kind of freedom of conscience" as well as for a new ability to "dissent publicly [and] to privilege individual experience over community or rank" (p. 137).

Makdisi argues that American missionary overtures in Mount Lebanon after 1822

evolved out of very particular American experiences and attitudes that were built on encounters with — and often displacements and massacres of — Native Americans. He argues, too, that missionary efforts in Mount Lebanon constituted "a foundational encounter between Americans and Arabs" that was built on American misunderstandings of Ottoman hierarchies, in which social class and pedigree were often more important, in practice, than religious affiliation. Convinced that Ottoman and Islamic societies were violent, "segregated by religion and race, and unable to modernize of [their] own accord" (p. 170), American missionaries persisted in maintaining that the United States "constituted an unproblematic land of liberty" (p. 178). In reality, for the American evangelicals in Mount Lebanon, "The possibility of changing the world, a theme so evident in postrevolutionary American mission work, emanated from an experience of having imperfectly changed America" (p. 31).

Although the sad figure of As'ad Shidiyaq recurs throughout the book, another more hopeful and inspiring figure emerges near its end. This is Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883), a memoirist of As'ad Shidiyaq who was also a champion of Arab cultural renaissance (*nahda*) and the author of an Arabic encyclopedia. In the 1860s, and without support from American missionaries, Bustani founded a remarkable school in Beirut that welcomed Muslim, Druze, and diverse Christian students, while ensuring that each student received some moderate education in his religion. An evangelical Protestant who did not try to press his religion on others, Bustani believed that "religious diversity, rather than being a threat to be contained and managed, could become a basis for a new kind of liberal coexistence in which church and state could and should be separated" (p. 205). Makdisi calls Bustani an exemplar of a kind of Arab "ecumenical nationalism" (p. 207).

The tragedy of this history is not only the product of As'ad Shidiyaq's lonely suffering. On the American side, tragedy emanates from the "paradox of American mission work." For indeed, like Cotton Mather, who "wanted to save Indians [though] he detested them" (p. 29), many of the Americans in 19th century Mount Lebanon want-

ed to save Ottoman peoples while holding them and their customs in private contempt. On the Ottoman and post-Ottoman side, and particularly *vis-à-vis* Lebanon, tragedy flows from the ascendancy of a local culture of sectarianism, which American missionaries did their part to reify in the region's 19th century political life. Makdisi observes that American missionaries in letters and journals "routinely wrote about 'a Catholic' or 'a Turk' or 'a Greek' or 'a Jew' as if such religious identities were static, but also as if they were more 'real' markers than those of social discrimination between high and low, notables and commoners" (p. 90). Religious markers became ever more politically relevant after the 1860 civil war between Maronites and Druzes, which represented "a contest to consolidate sectarian control over a land that had never been ruled on the basis of sect" (p. 143).

Artillery of Fire does not assign or divert blame in this larger history of Lebanese sectarianism, nor does it vilify American missionaries as cultural imperialists; rather, this powerful book makes a bid to show Americans, Arabs, and others, that, "We are all, in the end, implicated in one another's history" (p. 220).

Dr. Heather J. Sharkey, University of Pennsylvania, is author of American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire (Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, by Steven A. Cook. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. xiii + 148 pages. Notes to p. 182. Index to p. 189. \$55 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Gerald Lofius

It is too easy, when Western representatives meet senior government officials in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, to forget the uniformed elephant in the room. Steven Cook's timely *Ruling But Not Governing* is a scholarly study of the military's central role in politics, and measures the elastic tripwires

that can trigger muscular intervention.

Though not full-fledged "military dictatorships," these countries share authoritarian traditions stemming from the founding role of the army in the ruling political structures. These institutions, writes Cook, "are not necessarily designed for efficiency ... but to preserve the power of the dominant elite and its allies at the expense of society" (p. 6). These "pseudo-democratic" institutions (e.g., ministries, parliaments, and courts) provide the "veneer" for governance. The essence of Cook's analysis is that the military — generally content with allowing these institutions a degree of authority in quotidian matters — asserts a "ruling" veto power if regime existence is endangered.

Dr. Cook recognizes the differences between these countries, but highlights remarkable similarities in the military ruling-governing dynamic. In varying degrees, the regimes' "senior officer corps positioned themselves at the nexus of state and private sectors in order to reap the benefits of both" (p. 80). Cook's genteel formulation refers to often opaque deals that provide militaries with alternate, unbudgeted, sources of income. Along with influential military establishments, these countries share experience dealing with political Islam's resurgence, the book's major sub-theme.

The founding Free Officers of modern Egypt set the stage for a succession of military leaders: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, Anwar Sadat, and Husni Mubarak. Cook, whose extensive reading of the literature is augmented by interviews with Egyptian officers, says the "military's crucial and intimate association with the presidency ensures the continuity of the political system" (p. 73). Faced with the Muslim Brotherhood's incessant drive for political influence, Egypt's authoritarian regime has used all methods, ranging from including them in the panoply of state and civil society institutions, to periodic crackdowns on the movement when it competes too successfully with government provision of basic services, as in earthquake relief in the early 1990s.

In Algeria, where the *Front Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Front, or FIS) party was poised to win national parliamentary elections before the 1992 coup, the ver-