

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* by David Stenner

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Source: *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2020), pp. 206-211

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/bustan.11.2.0206>

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scrutiny, which is an integral part of organizing a mega-event, will mean for press freedom in Qatar. Drawing a distinction with Russia and China, recent mega-event hosts, LaMay argues that despite restrictive media and freedom of expression laws, Qataris privately feel uninhibited when discussing public affairs. Similarly, expression is at the core of key pillars of Qatar's development strategy: sports, education, media, and art. Yet, LaMay concludes, based on his interaction with Qatari students at Northwestern University's Qatar campus, the parameters of freedom of expressions will be established as much by the country's culture as by its evolving national identity in which sports constitutes an important building block.

The influence of conservatism is evident in Middle East scholar Charlotte Lysa's discussion of female athletes, and particularly football players, who are caught between a government that encourages women's participation and their families and social mores of society that uphold traditional perceptions of a woman's role. Compromise is often found in the creation of spaces considered by traditionalists as safe for women. Women often have to create those spaces in the absence of publicly accessible venues. Finally, Muslim sportswomen scholar Nida Ahmad highlights how family and culture shape the way women athletes harness social media to brand themselves, exposing the limited opportunities available to them.

All in all, Reiche and Sorek's edited volume is a valuable contribution that no doubt enriches a literature that on the political and societal aspects of sports in the Middle East that is still in its infancy. The book's value is as much in what it offers in new and original research in an as-yet uncharted field as it is guide to the fountain of opportunities for future exploration.

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doi: 10.5325/bustan.11.2.0202

David Stenner
*Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism
and the Postcolonial State*

(Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 319 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-5036-0899-3

The international campaign by Moroccan nationalists, orchestrated throughout three continents in order to gain independence, has been a quite neglected topic of historiography. David Stenner's *Globalizing Morocco* fills the

gap in the field of studies on Moroccan nationalism, investigating how the activists of the Sultanate fighting against French colonialism were able to create a global network of sympathizers to their cause in the aftermath of World War II, when the establishment of the United Nations and the Arab League, brought new hopes for colonized people. From Tangier to Cairo, Paris and New York, for around ten years, they strove to find foreign allies—European, American, and Arab “brokers”—influential enough to help them to advocate for Moroccan independence to the international bodies (such as the Arab League and chiefly the UN) and to gain broad public support.

The hub of the nationalists’ global anticolonial propaganda in Morocco was Tangier (chap. 1), thanks to its “international zone” status. Stenner recreates the exciting atmosphere of the town, which attracted Europeans and Americans—officials, adventures, writers, journalists, businessmen, and spies—that the nationalist movement tried to gain to its cause, so that each could contribute to the global advocacy campaign. Among them, journalists such as Middle East correspondent Margaret Pope and BBC broadcaster Nina Epton made important contributions to the cause by raising awareness and influencing public opinion among English-speaking audiences through newspapers and radio. Other important contributions came from some quaint personalities, like the British novelist Rom Landau and the former not-so-secret American agent Kenneth Pendar who founded the *Compagnie des Boissons Hygiéniques* in Casablanca, which bottled Coca-Cola. Combining the success of his business (hindered by the Residence, the French government in Rabat) with the Moroccan anti-French struggle, Pendar directly supported the nationalist campaign abroad, in Europe, and the United States, becoming the link between the Istiqlal party and the nationalist delegates in Paris, London, and New York.

Margaret Pope, for her part, operated as a liaison agent for the activists in Morocco and their compatriots in Cairo (chap. 2). The Egyptian capital was another key hub of the international campaign for the independence of Morocco, carried out by *Maktab al-Maghrib al-‘Arabi*, founded in 1947, which became the regional headquarters for nationalist North African movements. Activists from both the Spanish and French zones were operating together, holding press conferences, distributing bulletins and booklets depicting Morocco and the deleterious effects of French colonialism. Their main goal was to create strong support within the Arab League that could play a pivotal role in advocating for Moroccan independence at the UN General Assembly. But Arab solidarity was less to be taken for granted than one could expect and, as Stenner points out, search for support happened to be quite hard work.

The Moroccan nationalists were able to gain maximum support during King Faruk's reign in Egypt, but a plane crash led to the deaths of the three most prominent activists of the *Maktab* in December 1949, and the Free Officers coup in 1952 deeply affected their activities. Following the coup, the Egyptian figures who had worked most in support of Moroccan independence, such as the chief diplomat Azzam Pasha and the journalist Mahmud Abu al-Fatah, were purged from the new regime, while the Muslim Brotherhood, which had proved particularly sensitive to the Moroccan question, was banned. The nationalist network of supporters in Egypt was dismantled.

Paradoxically, the campaign that Moroccan nationalists carried out in Paris (chap. 3) through the *Bureau de documentation et information du Parti de l'Istiqlal* was certainly more rewarding. The networks that they established through consistent propaganda blended in with the initiative of leading figures of the French intelligentsia—politicians, writers, journalists, and academics—who were autonomously developing a harsh critique of French colonial policies. Among them were the French pioneer settler in Morocco and war veteran Pierre Parent, academics like Charles-André Julien and Louis Massignon, the Nobel laureate François Mauriac, General Catroux, the lawyer Georges Izard, and politicians such as François Mitterand, who founded the *Comité France-Maghreb*, which sought to “use all legal means so that the human rights principles . . . are applied, without distinction, in North Africa” (109). Despite the common efforts of the Moroccan activists and their French supporters, the French establishment did not reach a consensus on the right of Morocco to independence before 1955, but the nationalist campaign had an important role in bringing the case to the forefront of public attention and debate.

The last important arena for the global Moroccan campaign was New York (chap. 4), where Mehdi Bennouna played a pioneering role in six months from 1947 to 1948, founding the Committee for Liberation of North Africa, and getting in touch with diplomats and journalists. But a permanent delegation was established only in 1951 and the Moroccan Office of Information and Documentation (MOID), which ran the lobbying campaign to influence the discussions of the UN General Assembly, was registered in 1952.

In New York the Moroccan activists (among them Ahmed Balafrej) found new and distinguished supporters to their cause, such as the former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and the AFME (American Friends of Middle East) association, sponsored among others by the oil industry and the CIA; but they could also count on old friends from Tangier and Cairo, like Kenneth Pendar, Azzam Pacha, and Rom Landau. Landau played a prominent role in attracting public interest across the United States through the

press and public lectures (including the Carnegie Foundation), with radio and television interviews as well as through relationships with senators and key politicians on Capitol Hill. He became the “chief adviser” to Moroccan activists in the District. Notwithstanding their efforts, Moroccans failed to win the American government’s support for their demands, but certainly their activities in New York provided international resonance and legitimacy to the nationalist struggle, contributing to pressure on France that forced it to engage with the nationalists.

Stenner follows the strategies of Moroccan nationalists across several continents, contextualizing their struggle for independence during the Cold War, which pushed them toward siding with the United States. Moving in different international contexts, they adapted the message to the audience, and they did not hesitate to court and recruit supporters from across the political spectrum—except for the communists—adopting an “astonishing pragmatism” (122), in the words of Stenner. In Cairo they tried to attract sympathizers among the Muslim Brotherhood (Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna were regular guests of the *Maktab*) as well among the liberal élites, such as the senator from the Wafd Party, Mahmud Abu al-Fath, or the Egyptian delegate to the UN, the journalist Mahmud Azmi. In New York they first got in touch with pro-Palestinian Arab activists, who facilitated their approach to diplomatic circles, but they also courted the pro-Zionist Jews, who were much more influential from a political point of view. In Paris, too, they welcomed the support of the Left as well as more conservative circles, including Catholics.

Stenner points out how “nationalists continued to adapt their anticolonial outreach to the global context in which they operated” (124). The changing political climate and environment were crucial: as noted above, the Moroccan nationalists in Cairo found broad support under Faruk’s reign, but after the coup, Nasser was not as keen to support a pro-American sultanate. Radio Cairo’s signal was received from Antananarivo (where the French government exiled Sultan Muhammad Ben Youssef in 1953) to Rabat, and it regularly promoted the independence of North Africa over its airwaves, and in 1954 Nasser started training and funding the Moroccan Liberation Army. At the same time, Nasser remained far more lukewarm toward the nationalist leadership—especially Allal al-Fassi, a refugee in Cairo, who previously cultivated close relationships with the Muslim Brotherhood. As a consequence, at the diplomatic level, Egypt did not make great efforts to place French decolonization in the foreground and at the UN, while the Arab League was almost always fragmented and concentrated mainly on the Palestinian question. At the Bandung nonaligned movement conference, divisions among Arab leaders prevented strong support of the Moroccan cause as well. As Stenner

points out: “The Moroccan campaign in the Middle East had exposed the limits of Arab anti-colonial solidarity” (84).

Similarly, the campaign orchestrated in New York sought to exploit US strategies in the Middle East in the context of the Cold War. As emerges from Stenner’s investigation, Washington started to look favorably on the departure of the French from a region that was becoming crucial to their interests, but at the same time wanted to maintain good relations with its French ally, so the White House never took a strong position on decolonization, yet also never hindered the nationalists’ campaign—often indirectly backed by the CIA. Even more important, in the Cold War climate, the United States wanted to ensure that communism would not gain ground in North Africa, creating a long-lasting connection with the emerging leadership of Morocco. In this sense, the activities of the American Federation of Labor were not just in support of nationalists in New York, but also in support of the Sultanate—financed by the Marshall Plan and CIA funds—as part of the US strategy to influence the policies of the emerging local labor movement and union (UMT).

Finally, no less interesting are Stenner’s observations on how the post-independence monarchy managed to co-opt this formidable human capital (chap. 5): the Moroccan activists, having dedicated themselves to internationalizing the cause abroad, acquired invaluable experience, and the Europeans and Americans, who contributed most to the effort, were able to use their valuable skills to build the new institutions of the kingdom—from the diplomatic corps to the national security apparatus, from the Moroccan press agency (MAP) to the Muhammad V University. The monarchy’s co-option strengthened the monarchy while weakening the Istiqlal party, which sought to compete with the king for political influence. However, it also signified an unquestionable gesture of gratitude. Foreign supporters in particular received several tokens of appreciation from the monarchy; first was Landau, who in 1968 moved to Marrakesh where he lived until he died in a villa provided to him by Muhammad V, and became the “court historian” of the kingdom and the ‘Alawi family.

The originality of the study, the rigorous methodology developed by social network analysis, and the extensive use of sources in English, French Spanish, and Arabic, most of them traced to an impressive number of archives in Morocco, France, Spain, England, and United States, make Stenner’s book a remarkable work.

Nevertheless, it is impossible not to note some oversights. According to Stenner, “the history of globalization of the Moroccan question through transnational activism . . . begins during the last years of the World War II” (15) because “From a global perspective, it was exactly the right moment to make

their case abroad” (9). Moreover, in the introduction to the book, he dates the formation of the Moroccan nationalist movement to World War II (1), ignoring a decade and a half of the history of the Moroccan anti-French movement and its globalization, except for some cursory glimpses at the review *Maghreb* published in Paris since 1932, the *Association des étudiants musulmans Nord-Africains* (AEMNA) founded in Paris in 1927, and the participation in the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in 1931 (22). But the nationalist movement had taken on an international dimension since its first public appearance in 1930, during the protest against the so-called *Berber dahir*: the Lebanese nationalist Shakib Arslan (who had known Balafrej in Lausanne) immediately reached the activists in Morocco, suggesting a secularist turn to their political confrontation with the Residence. At the same early date, propaganda was organized abroad, especially in Paris and Cairo. It was also following international pressure that France withdrew the controversial decree.

Stenner’s choice of investigating the post-World War II period is certainly legitimated by the nationalist breakthrough for independence after the war, when the international campaign became more strategic. However, this phase cannot be considered a clear break with the strategies previously adopted by the nationalists: they had always considered the international dimension of the anti-French campaign indispensable.

That much said, Stenner’s book makes an important contribution to the existing literature on Moroccan nationalism and the history of decolonization, introducing new and stimulating perspectives and results.

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doi: 10.5325/bustan.11.2.0206

Elad Ben-Dror

Haderech lekaf-tet b’November: Parashat UNSCOP vereshit meoravuto shel ha’um basichsuch ha’Aravi-Israeli (The road to partition: UNSCOP and the beginning of United Nations involvement in the Israel-Arab conflict)

(Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2019), 364 pp.

ISBN: 978-9-65217-433-8

“The Road to Partition” examines the working process and conclusions drawn by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which was established in May 1947 and issued its findings and recommendations in