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NOTES AND COMMENTS

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A REPLY TO BASSEL F. SALLOUKH'S REVIEW OF *ARABS AT THE CROSSROADS: POLITICAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM* (IJMES 36 [2004]: 527–28)

HILAL KHASHAN

In his review of my book *Arabs at the Crossroads: Political Identity and Nationalism*, the neophyte political scientist Bassel F. Salloukh attempts to instruct me on the fundamentals of research methodology. Sadly, however, his review amounts to nothing more than a brazen barrage of protestations and disapprovals. I counted about two dozen complaints and unsubstantiated criticisms in the one-and-a-half-page review, in which he summarily condemns the book for its purported "sweeping indictment of Arab failures." Salloukh unleashes a fiery litany of pseudoacademic indignation because I found the political-culture approach and crises of identity and legitimacy relevant to the study of failed Arab political systems. The reviewer is certainly free to disagree with my approach, but professional integrity necessitates that he adopt a method more academic than screeching sophomoric objections. Rather than develop an analytical case against me, the reviewer instead opts to swing from the hip, falsely attributing to me things that I never said, such as my alleged identification of a "basic foundational dislocation that has doomed everything Arab."

Salloukh seemingly takes issue with every contention, assertion, and article of analysis in the book. He is incensed by my argument that Arabs suffer from a crisis of identity and legitimacy. To lend credence to his disagreement, academic review protocol requires that the reviewer articulate a counterargument. Salloukh was either unaware of this or did not have a counterargument, because the review lacks one. Ever eager to protest, the reviewer finds fault in my self-evident assessment that Arab societies lack a vibrant civil society. Mine is not a novel assertion but a widely accepted, banal fact of existence. Salloukh clearly is out of touch with reality, for all is not well in the Arab world. He falsely attributes to me the sentiment that "everything that transpires in the Arab world is either caused by the 'Arab mind' or has direct impact on it." This egregious misrepresentation of my work casts doubt on Salloukh's academic integrity and aptitude as it can imply only one of two things: either he did not read the book or he did not understand it. Both scenarios do not bode well for his academic future. The "quotes" he ascribes to me are nothing more than a hodgepodge of maliciously culled words that have the sole intention of misleading readers. Thus, with ornery and clichéd arguments as his sole academic tools, he perfidiously asserts that I use the Arab mind as my reductionist variable and unscrupulously concludes that I argue that "the crisis of identity and the Arab mind are also responsible for the failure of post-war developmental projects." This is nothing more than a haphazard, unconscionable attempt to discredit my book. Unfortunately for Salloukh, it reflects more on his abilities than on the book.

Salloukh rehashes concepts he learned—but apparently failed to integrate into his system of knowledge—during his graduate years. Thus, he decides that my "methodological choices . . . are unconvincing and misleading . . . [and are] rather essentialist and reductionist." How can he condemn my methodology if he fails to recognize the objective of my

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book and my clearly stated statement of objective? Drawing on what he apparently learned in his graduate seminar on comparative politics, he proposes "more convincing, and consistent, explanatory variables, such as the process of state formation, neo-patrimonial regime survival and state building strategies, neo-colonialism, and the dynamics of late and penetrated capitalist development." I would be most happy to accommodate Salloukh's recommendations in my methodology should I decide to write an encyclopedia on economic and political development.

Salloukh's review amounts to nothing more than arrogant drivel. I appreciate his desire to carve for himself a niche in the world of academia, yet instead of going through the proper conduits of academic maturity, he decided to shoot without aiming. Unfortunately for Salloukh, he seems to have shot himself in the foot.

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A REPLY TO HILAL KHASHAN

BASSEL F. SALLOUKH

Rather than respond in any meaningful way to the substance of my review of his recent book *Arabs at the Crossroads*, Hilal Khashan instead prefers to launch a series of personal attacks against me cloaked by knavish misrepresentations of my review. It is certainly true, as he repeatedly asserts, that he is older than I—although I am not at all clear about how that is relevant. In any event, it is never too late for anyone to learn the ethics of academic debate and dialogue. As to whether my interpretation of his analysis and methodological assumptions is valid or not, this I leave for readers to judge.

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