

OTHER AREAS

**UNSETTLING MEMORIES:
narratives of the emergency
in Delhi**
by **Emma Tarlo**

London: C. Hurst and Co. Ltd, 2003. 234,
£16.50, ISBN 1 85065 453 0

Readership: Postgraduates,
academic/research

Rating: **

Reviewer: VERNON HEWITT
(*University of Bristol*)

The premise of this book is that the 'Emergency occupies an unusual place in the Indian past. It has been much mythologized but little studied' (p. 2). It sets out to reclaim this 'collective silence' by utilising an ethnographic approach to explore two key controversies: demolition of slums and the government's sterilisation campaign, which targeted the poor. Tarlo finds her subjects in the Welcome Colony in 1995, one such settlement made notorious by the Emergency. The settlement presents her with material for interrogating the official 'master narratives' (sic) of the Emergency (the first set up by Indira Gandhi between 1975 and 1977) and the counter-narrative set up by the triumphant Janata Party that came to power in 1977.

Tarlo argues that both are equally wrong: mis-representing the role and dynamics of the poor during this turbulent period, exaggerating both coercion and lack of agency, while also (in the Janata Party) exaggerating the 'ability' of the poor to

act suddenly for 'democracy' in rejecting Mrs Gandhi in the 1977 election. Contrasting these with her interviews and file findings in Welcome, she notes that these 'offer ... not so much a politicised discourse of resistance as a detailed account of personal experiences ... as such they not only open up a forgotten episode but also defy the stereotypes through which that episode was previously viewed' (p. 225). Tarlo concludes by proposing 'an ethnography of the state' to highlight the role of the urban poor in ways akin to subaltern studies (with some caveats) and to 'access ... the semi-obscure social and political structures of everyday life in the capital city' (p. 7).

One can take issue with the extent to which the subject – the Emergency – has been 'little studied' or indeed even constitutes a 'collective silence'. In 1997 there were over 400 substantive academic works on the Emergency, stretching from Marxist accounts of the state and political mobilisation in North India, to the sort of limited journalist genre Tarlo reviews in chapter two. As an event the Emergency *continues* to provide a political watershed in party mobilisation that pre-figured the coalitions of the late 1990s and is discussed as such within the Left to this day and even the Congress. None of this is acknowledged or recognised. Tarlo asserts a methodological superiority over a literature she does not consider here. Her own scepticism on subaltern studies – thoughtfully written – should caution her. Ethnography is an addition to the necessity of seeing the state as an institutional format, not a replacement.

**SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL:
the failure of humanity
in Rwanda**

by **Roméo Dallaire**

Toronto: Random House, 2003. 562,
\$35.95, ISBN 0 679 31171 8

Reviewer: A. WALTER DORN
(*Canadian Forces College*)

This book is a play-by-play account of Lieutenant-General (retired) Dallaire's experiences as Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). Dallaire is a keen observer, writing in captivating detail about the situations and people he encountered, from the kind and calm Kofi Annan ('trying to save the UN from itself', p. 50) to the blood-soaked militia (*Interahamwe*) leaders whom he could not consider human because of the unthinkable atrocities they had engineered. Leaving a meeting with the *génocidaires* he felt he had actually 'shaken hands with the devil' (p. 347). Hence the title of the book.

The book is a long read, no doubt, at over 500 pages. At times it is as suspenseful as

a thriller movie, with a dramatic plot line and a mysterious villain, but, being reality, it is a great deal more complex. Like life, it also gets repetitive and even tedious at times. Fortunately, the reader is aided by three maps, a 22-page glossary and a thorough index to help sort the complexity out. The heroes are, undoubtedly, the courageous peacekeepers but unlike fictional heroes they are unable to stop the tragedy, only to mitigate it a bit. Dallaire doesn't paper over his mistakes and failings, though he does not provide the reader with all the objective information needed to pass judgments, especially about the mission mandate and his planned actions that were vetoed by New York.

In the final analysis, any criticisms of Dallaire and his book are minor since he is rightfully a hero of humanity who has, in addition to his service in Rwanda, produced a monumental work about the tragedy of the UN in Rwanda, displaying admirable literary skills, an uncanny memory and great insight. The lessons of Rwanda are invaluable and hopefully they will be learned. This book, at least, makes that a bit more likely.

AFGHANISTAN
by **Amelendu Misra**

Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. 219, £15.99,
ISBN 0 7456 3115 0

**ISLAM, SECTARIANISM AND
POLITICS IN SUDAN SINCE THE
MAHDIYYA**

by **Gabriel Warburg**

London: Hurst and Co, 2003. 252, £19.95,
ISBN 1 85065 590 1

Reviewer: HALEH AFSHAR
(*York University*)

These two volumes are concerned with the impact of colonialism in state formation in Sudan and Afghanistan. Both consider whether Islam is a help or hindrance to the development of political democracies in these two countries and ultimately whether the faith could ever coexist with such a political system. However, their analyses take very different paths.

Diversity of ethnicities and tribal allegiances has been important in Afghanistan. Misra contests that colonialism and particularly the occupation of Afghani-

stan by the USSR created a sense of unity and nationalism. But it did not survive long after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. The fragmentations and inter-tribal wars that followed did little for the people who in the event were not averse to accepting the arrival of a faith-based government by the Taliban. They brought in an informal non-transparent and secretive administration (p. 69) anchored in their strict interpretation of religious orthodoxy and totalitarianism. Brute force was used to bring the Afghan people under control. Misra argues that initially the world decided to turn its eye away from Afghanistan and subsequently its attack after 9/11 was primarily aimed at securing a regime change while concerns for democratisation came well down the list of priorities. What have ensued are of course little governance, and no sanctuary.

In Sudan, Warburg argues that 60 years of Turco-Egyptian rule and the subsequent British rule had failed to undermine the deeply rooted influence of Islam and Sufism amongst the people in the Sudan. Nevertheless the British rule secured a period of peace and prosperity during the First World War during which time the Sudanese were able to serve 'their own interest rather than those of their foreign rulers' (p. 79). But throughout the colonial period religion had been an important mobilising power effectively ousting the Turco-Egyptian rule in 1881 and acting as a unifying force after the First World War against the colonial powers. Warburg appears to contend that Sufism and Islam are at the core of the popular perception of politics in the Sudan. Yet he also argues

that once an Islamic state emerged its determination to enforce an Islamic constitution on the Sudan and its multi-ethnic multi-religious population resulted in prolonged civil wars. The sad conclusion of the book appears to be that Islam and democracy are incompatible and forcing the rule of Islam on the people merely results in political bankruptcy.

Both these volumes seek to address Islam and politics and the tensions between the forms of Islamic rule experienced in Sudan and Afghanistan with democracy. Warburg is of the view that Islam and democracy are incompatible whereas Misra seems to be of the view that it is the newly constructed form of Islamic radicalism as formulated and implemented by Al Qaeda and the Taliban that is incompatible with democracy. Both authors emphasise the commitment to rebellion and war that is embedded in the Islamists call for *Jihad*. Both seem to be of the view that radical Islam attracts total and unquestioning support and poses a threat to democracy in the countries concerned. Whereas Warburg analyses these by using the minutia of history, Misra offers a more broad-brush overview. Both authors note the importance of foreign intervention and its impact on mobilisation of the people behind the banner of Islam. Both authors are reluctant to see any value in Islamic governance. This may well be the case, but then it is difficult to understand why time and again both in Sudan and Afghanistan people choose to align themselves with their faith as a political tool. I felt that neither volume actually dealt with this thorny question in a convincing manner.

MIDDLE EAST ILLUSIONSby **Noam Chomsky**Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers,
2003. 300, £22.95, ISBN 0742526992Reviewer: OLIVER PEARCE
(*London School of
Economics*)

Writing concerning the Middle East, particularly on Israel/Palestine, is more than likely to arouse interest, and perhaps controversy, in the current climate. A book by Chomsky, focussing on this particularly difficult conflict, is almost certain to do both in equal measures. Although the first half of the book is taken up with a reprint of chapters from his 1973 book *Peace in the Middle East? Reflection on Justice and Nationhood*, there is little dissonance, in content and tone, with the second half of the book, composed of chapters written in recent years. For whilst Chomsky admits to modifications in his original analysis, he sees the current conflict as being all too similar to the one he was dissecting thirty years ago, with the distribution of power little changed. Indeed, he believes that 'for Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, the current circumstances may be more painful and ominous ...' (p. ix). He outlines

his alarm with the perception of the USA being an honest broker, and with the unfeasible Israeli demand for a guarantee of security. Through lenses of history, ideology and politics, a grim picture is painted, one that appears unlikely to change as long as there is no 'active pursuit of peace'.

This is a book written in Chomsky's polemical style, closely referenced, but fluid in structure. Both academic and more general readers will find arguments and sources to wrestle with, as the author succeeds in marshalling evidence for his position. Whilst Chomsky's detailed research and overarching argument is clear, his recommendations look increasingly unlikely in the midst of a bloody Intifadah and the unilateral policies adopted by Sharon's government. The sweep of historical events – wars, treaties, 9/11 – enables this book to locate its argument in historical context, but this is perhaps achieved at the expense of acknowledging more local changes. Little is said, for instance, on the deterioration of Palestinian living standards through and beyond the Oslo peace process. Such significant dynamics are lost in the realisation that, in this conflict, there have been relatively small changes in the US-Israeli hegemony in the last generation.

ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: the failure of dialogue in Algeria
by **Frédéric Volpi**

London: Pluto Press, 2003.176, £14.99,
ISBN 0 7453 1976 9

DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: experiences, struggles, challenges
by **Amin Saikal and Albrecht Schnabel (eds)**

Tokyo: United Nations University Press,
20053. 221, \$21.95, ISBN 92 808 1085 5

Reviewer: STEPHEN VERTIGAS
(Robert Gordon University)

Readers of Frédéric Volpi's *Islam and Democracy: The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria* who have chosen the book based upon the sub title should find this an informative, thorough analysis of processes of Algerian democratisation. Volpi explains Algeria's political transition within a well-structured discussion. The key stages like colonial experiences, introduction of democracy, the 1992 *coup d'état* and aftermath are clearly outlined in a refreshingly balanced manner. Other authors have found it difficult to objectively describe the atrocities that took place during the 1990s but Volpi achieves this admirably with his impartial approach.

However readers who selected the book based upon the title may be disappointed. With the exception of a handful of pages that seek to apply the findings to other Muslim governments, the book does not examine the process of democratic reform in other countries. There is therefore inadequate evidence to support the claim that the process of change identified within Algeria allows a better understanding of the prospects of democratisation in other North African and Middle Eastern societies. Nor is this a book about

Islam *per se* and democracy in Algeria. It is much more than that because Volpi provides a focused examination of the complex interrelationship between civil society, ethnic and Islamic groups, political parties, government and the military. This broad focus and degree of detail enables the larger picture to emerge that identifies the cross cutting conflicts between civil society and the state, culture and ideology, Berbers and Arabs and militant Muslims and secularists that have hindered the democratic process. Attention is also placed upon the political economy and the role of international actors. By integrating these different facets, Volpi has written a comprehensive account that helps both to understand and explain democratic processes within Algeria.

A more comprehensive account of democratisation within the region can be found in *Democratization in the Middle East*. The book provides a timely contribution by identifying key issues involved with introducing and solidifying democratisation in the region. Exploring relationships between democracy and peace, conflict, civil society, authoritarianism, religion, secularisation, international actors and globalisation across national and regional experiences leads to the diagnosis of a broad spectrum of challenges to the advancement of democratisation.

The inclusion of case studies at the expense of others is often a source of contention and Saikal and Schnabel's selection is no different. A range of nation-states are discussed informatively including Morocco and Algeria which are also chosen for Tessler's innovative research on attitudes to democracy (although some readers may point out that these are North African rather than Middle Eastern countries). However the selection excludes two of the most influential nation-states in the region, Egypt

and Saudi Arabia. And, beyond a brief discussion of secularisation processes, Turkey is also neglected. This is surprising because Turkey has advanced furthest with democratic processes among Muslim nation-states in the region. These exclusions mean that the case studies are not sufficiently representative of the region. This is not to say that the contributors' findings are inappropriately applied across the Middle East. Instead different valuable assessments are provided, based upon international, national and regional

experiences, of the likelihood of successful transitions to democratisation within nation-states.

Changes in the region have meant that some of the analysis has been overtaken by events, particularly Saikal's discussion of Saddam-governed Iraq, but this does not detract from the validity of the analysis. Indeed *Democratization in the Middle East* should be recommended reading for those responsible for introducing and implementing democracy in Iraq.

Other Areas

New books received

Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (2004) *Contemporary Arab Thought: studies in post-1967 Arab intellectual history*. London: Pluto Press, 485, £25.00, ISBN 0 7453 2169 0

Stephen Philip Cohen (2004) *The Idea of Pakistan*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 382, £21.50, ISBN 0 8157 1502 1

Catherine Cook, Adam Hanieh, Adah Kay (2004) *Stolen Youth: the politics of Israel's detention of Palestinian children*. London: Pluto Press, 197, £12.99, ISBN 07453 2161 5

Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar (2004) *Worlds of Power: religious thought and political practice in Africa*. London: C. Hurst and Co, 263, £16.50, ISBN 1 85065 734 3

Harri England and Francis B Nyamnjoh (eds) (2004) *Rights and Politics of Recognition in Africa*. London: Zed Books, 258, \$25.00, ISBN 1 84277 283 X

Edward L. Gibson (ed.) (2004) *Federalism and Democracy in Latin America*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 377, £14.00, ISBN 0 8018 7424 6

Paul Gifford (2004) *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a globalising African economy*. London: C. Hurst Publishing, 216, £16.50, ISBN 1 85065 719 X

Jonathan Harris (2004) *Gorbachev's Reform of the Party's Apparatus, 1986–1991*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 179, ISBN 0 7425 2678 X

Robert R. Kaufman and Joan M. Nelson (2004) *Crucial Needs, Weak Incentives: social sector reform, democratisation, and globalization in Latin America*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 542, £18.00, ISBN 0 8018 8083 3

Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias (eds) (2004) *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: nation building, economic survival and civic activism*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 357, ISBN 0 8018 7918 3

Dag Macleod (2004) *Downsizing the State: privatization and the limits of neoliberal reform in Mexico*. Philadelphia PA: Penn State University, 306, \$65.00, ISBN 0 271 02365 1

Tatah Mentan (2004) *Dilemmas of Weak States: Africa and transnational terrorism in the twenty-first century*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 396, £47.50, ISBN 0 7546 4200 3

Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov (2004) *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian post-communist political reform*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 365, \$24.95, ISBN 0 87003 206 2

Steven E. Miller and Dmitri Trenin (eds) (2004) *The Russian Military: power and policy*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 239, £16.95, ISBN 0 262 63305

Amelendu Misra (2004) *Identity and Politics: foundations of anti-Islamism in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 262, \$29.00, ISBN 0 7619 3227 5

Rana Mitter and Patrick Major (2004) *Across the Blocs: cold war cultural and social history*. London: Frank Cass, 184, ISBN 0 7146 8464 3

Monoranjan Mohanty (2004) *Readings in Indian Government and Politics: class, state, gender*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 439, \$36.00, ISBN 0 7619 9643 5

Pete W. Moore (2004) *Doing Business in the Middle East: politics and economic crisis in Jordan and Kuwait*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

B. R. Nando (2004) *In Search of Ghandi: essays and reflections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 270, £9.99, ISBN 019567203 8

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh (2004) *Sharing the Land Of Canaan: human rights of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle*. London: Pluto Press, 236, £14.99, ISBN 07453 2248 4

Ali Riaz (2004) *God Willing: the politics of Islamism in Bangladesh*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 210, \$69.00, ISBN 0 7425 3085 X

Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent (2004) *Living in Utopia: New Zealand's intentional community*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 211, £45.00, ISBN 0 7546 4224 0

Ben Ross Schneider (2004) *Business Politics and the State in Twentieth-Century Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 312, £18.99, ISBN 0 521 54500 5

Kenneth C. Shadlen (2004) *Democratization Without Representative: the politics of small industry in Mexico*. Philadelphia PA: Penn State University, 208, \$65.00, ISBN 0 271 02391 0

Strobe Talbot (2004) *Engaging India: diplomacy, democracy and the bomb*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 256, £21.50, ISBN 0 8157 8300 0

Paranjay Guha Thakurta and Shankar Raghuraman (2004) *A Time of Coalitions: divided we stand*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 413, \$20.00, ISBN 0 7619 3237 2

Dmitri V. Trenin and Aleksei V. Malashenko (2004) *Russia's Restless Frontier: the Chechnya factor in post-soviet Russia*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 265, \$24.85, ISBN 0 87003 203 8

Jack Vowles, Peter Aimer, Susan Banducci, Jeffrey Karp and Raymond Miller (eds) (2004) *Voter's Veto: the 2002 election in New Zealand and the consolidation of minority government*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 265, NZ\$49.99, ISBN 1 86940 309 6

Rajendra Vora and Suhas Palshikar (2004) *Indian Democracy: meanings and practices*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 447, ISBN 0 7619 9790 3

Aled De Waal (ed.) (2004) *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*. London: C. Hurst and Co., 279, £16.50, ISBN 1 85065 719 X

Steven I. Wilkinson (2004) *Votes and Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 292, £45.00, ISBN 0 521 82916 X

Kerim Yildiz (2004) *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future*. London: Pluto Press, 238, £14.99, ISBN 0 7453 2228 X

Chitrallekha Zutshi (2004) *Languages of Belonging: Islam, regional identity and the making of Kashmir*. London: Hurst and Company, 359, £16.50, ISBN 1 85065 700 9

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