

BOOK REVIEW

Hatem Mohammed Al-Shamea. *Will-To-Power: a Search in the Shadows of Colonialism*. 24by7 Publishers, 2019, pp.170.

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Dr. Hatem Mohammed Al-Shamea is a Yemeni writer and a critic. He attempts to find an answer for the emerging of violence in the Arab World, particularly Yemen. He has been questioning the Arab culture and regimes trying to approach the roots of violence. In his book titled *Will-To-Power: a Search in the Shadows of Colonialism* 2019, he examines colonialism and its influence on the roots. The first chapter mainly deals with the post-colonial violence and fragmented Arab world, namely in Yemen by expertly shedding the light on the intertwined relations between the colonizer and the colonized countries after the colonization era. Al-Shamea shows how do the political, cultural, economic, and social impacts are interconnected to the concept of the hegemony or neocolonialism based on the concept of the orientalism that argues the relation between the West and the other colonized countries is binary i.e., the superior and inferior countries. The fancy dream of West representing in the so-called "Democracy" has never come true in Yemen, -in spite of lack of freedom to speech in such totalitarian regimes in the Arab world- thanks to some Yemeni intellectuals as al-Ahdal who remarkably participated in maintaining the genuine Yemeni culture through literature as a part of new literary genre in post-colonial literature.

Al-Shamea explains how does the nationalism failed to serve as the safeguard for the nation, and its legacy culture, yet it acted the same role of the colonizer by introducing new mechanisms of exercising the power upon the people such as the theory of outside conspiracy which simply, based on the nation-ness and the outsiders, or by employing the radical ideas or some of wrong interpretation of some Qur'anic verses and author referred to the civil war in Yemen as a self-evident of that fail of the totalitarian regimes. The ill-minded politicians, who in fact, part of the totalitarian regimes, fail to meet the simple and basic livelihood needs of people

nor to keep the dignity of the people, this thing led to dramatic sociopolitical changes in Arab World which it is namely called “Arab Spring.”

The second chapter obviously concerns with the Yemeni Identity between the Dictatorship and Imperialism. The author deeply investigated the Yemeni Identity in sense of the process by which we are formed as persons taking into account the importance of the past as the main source for dramatizing or shaping the unity of the nation-ness without ignoring the present and the future, in doing so, many obstacles should be tackled such as marginalization, dictatorship, and violence whether religious or political. Interestingly, the author mentioned that this work is considered as a severe criticism of the totalitarian countries thus it is unwelcomed particularly, in the Arab World.

Al-Shamea clearly proves the unbreakable relations that exist between the ‘Colonization’ and the ‘Imperialism’ by investigating how the mechanism of distinction based on race, class, ethnicity and religion is employed.

Al-Shamea revealed how the repressive power is shifted from the foreign colonizer to what the author called ‘Native or Internal Colonizer,’ or simply the totalitarian regimes and as a result, the resistance or struggle is shifted to be against these totalitarian regimes. In the same context, the author again discussed the cultural hegemony based on the ideology of orientalism and how the indigenous culture resists the hegemonic cultural culture which is employed by colonization as instrument to impose its dominant culture exploiting the economic crisis, political failure and moral depravity that led to semi- social collapse. The author also examines how the totalitarian regimes maintain their full control over the people in all aspects of life, so as to make the people psychologically despaired and unable to criticize or to revolt against these totalitarian regimes. Al-Shamea reveals that the importance of knowledge is to maintain the unique identity and indigenous culture of Yemeni people as well as to maintain humanity based on ancient civilization such as Sheba Civilization which will be deeply discussed in the third chapter in this book.

In the third chapter, Al-Shamea argues that the great culture should be based on the great civilization, in other words, to connect the past to reshape the present culture. In this chapter, hence the author goes right back to the roots of pre- Islam Yemeni Civilization (Sheba) and

deeply compares it to the ideology of “Islamism” in order to produce a historical, social, and religious understanding which is fully adequate that experience ,furthermore, The author claims that the way of maintaining the genuine Yemeni culture is through detaching the Yemeni culture should be detached from the pan Arab culture. Finally, the author also tries to clarify the misunderstanding of the concept of liberalism which was intentionally distorted by introducing the ideology of “Islamism.”

Al-Shamea argues that many Yemeni writers put the blame mainly on Islam for the State failure in the social and economic fields. Many of Yemenis especially those scholars who got their education in the western universities blindly celebrate the “liberalism” based on the western concept and the ideology they imbibe. They claim that the solution is by turning back to the past civilization that took place till the Abyssinian conquest.

As western colonizers perceive that it is impossible to destroy Islam by imposing the its own culture, they set a self-destruction concept as a new technique through employing the secularism and nationalism concepts so as the religion will be no longer as the main force in the society. Interestingly, the west was the big supporter of Islam in the communist period, yet they introduced the concept of “Islamophobia” and propagated it through the media which has big influence on the western citizens.

Al-Shamea argues that the “radical or extremist movement” was a normal reaction to provoke and unreasonable critiques to Islam. The nationalism tried as hard as possible to politicize the Islam and depict it as a “State,” so the failure of nationalism to maintain the sovereignty or meet the basic live hood needs for their people that led to a miserable collapse in all fields of life is representing the failure of Islam.

Al-Shamea concludes that the distorting the image of Islam as well as the misunderstanding of the fundamental Islamic concepts such as the concept of “Jihad” that- will be deeply discussed in the next chapter - are major causes behind the present situation in Muslim world.

In the fifth chapter, the author has exhaustively examined the concept of “Jihad” and its forms. The author moves on to explain how the concept of “Jihad” has been intentionally taken out of its context and manipulated to serves as a political mechanism for controlling people’s

lives, and as the concept of “Holy War” in the Christian context. Al-Shamea says that, “In fact, *jihad* is an emphasis on the work of the person to make a self-improvement. It is an effort to devote one’s self to be an idealist. Thus, *jihad* is self-discipline not only to religious principles of Islam, but also to one’s morality” (55).

In the sixth chapter, the author principally discusses the influences of myths, legends, and modernity on the Yemeni society. The author moves on to shed light on how the Arab culture was depicted based on the orientalism. Finally, the author notably investigates the imperialist hegemony especially, in terms of economy in light of neo-colonialism.

In the seventh chapter, Al-Shamea effectively delves into the emergence of concept of Islamism and how it was consolidated as an ideology by some of the radicalisms to challenge the concept of modernity which strongly claimed by Arab intellectuals and elites. Finally, the author brought to light some of the double standard policies adopted by Western countries towards Arab homeland such as the invasion of Iraq by US which was obviously violating of the United Nations’ Chart. Al-Shamea says,

When clerics felt that modernity undermines their own power and might cleanse them along with regimes, they instituted movements to radically resist modernity. The resistant movement against modernism began with a quietist political stance combined with gestures of refusal, challenging modernism. Further, the freedom that is quietly given to clerics allows them to establish religious institutions. As the Arab regimes are busy with their political opponents, the uncensored religious institutions produce a new radical generation adopting Islamism and radicalism as its ideology and practice. This consequently gives rise to radicalism that turns the peaceful religion, Islam, into a tool of violence—Islamism and radicalism are an end result. (71-72)

In the eighth chapter, the author comprehensively the philosophy of Quarantine Centre, and the author also delved into the phenomena of sectarian clashes based on the religion which occurred in the Arab world.

In the final chapter, the author has critically examined the key reasons and drivers behind the outbreak of the Arab Spring that have taken place in many Arab countries. The author reveals how the Arab Spring was turned into the Arab Fall due to the unjustifiable interventions of some countries in Arab countries’ affairs to achieve some economic and geopolitical interests. “Yemen, Syria and Iraq have been destroyed in the name of fighting terrorism. The so-called

Arab Spring turns to be the Arab Fall and the hope for democracy and social justice is buried by the international and regional interventions” (Al-Shamea 91).

