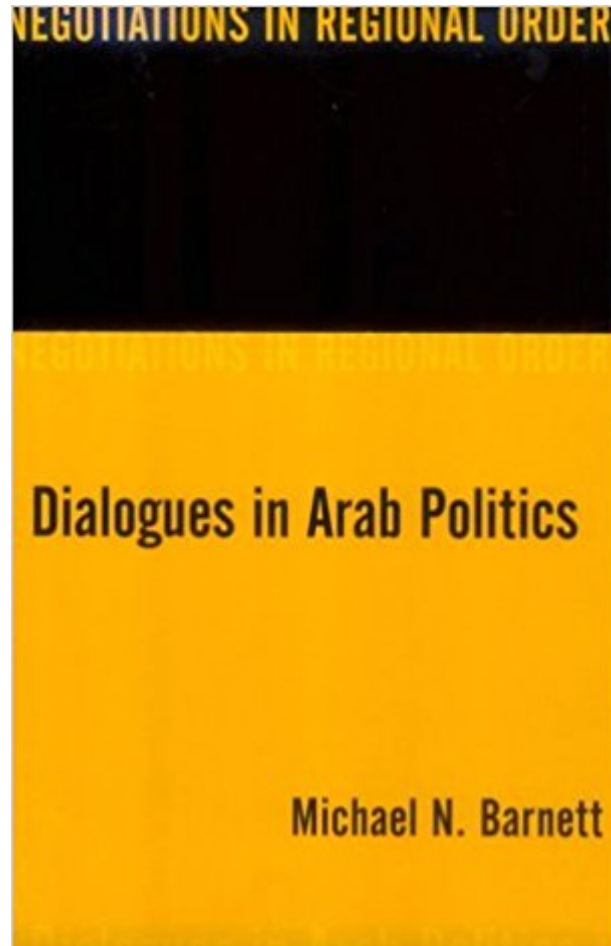




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# Dialogues In Arab Politics



## Synopsis

For decades, Arab states and societies have been involved in an ongoing conflict over the goals and norms of Arabism. In this comprehensive study, Michael Barnett explores the relationships between Arab identity, the meaning of Arabism, and desired regional order in the Middle East from 1920 to the present, focusing on Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Barnett examines the state system in four distinct time frames: the mandate period to the establishment of the League of Arab States in 1945; 1945 through the Baghdad Pact of 1955; the Suez War through the 1967 war; and 1967 through the Gulf War. Within each of these time frames, the Arab states' relationship to unification, the West, and confrontation with Zionism are addressed. Does Arab unity depend on excluding Western influences? Can an Arab state be at once Islamic and democratic? Why can't the Arab states agree on a common government? Barnett argues that the Arab states' symbolic and strategic interactions were responsible for the alterations in the norms of Arabism, and ultimately, the fragmentation that currently defines the region.

## Book Information

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"This is an interesting and valuable contribution to the debate about the nature of Arab politics." -- A.M. Ansari, CMEIS, University of Durham, "Journal of Islamic Studies" -- A.M. Ansari, CMEIS, University of Durham, "Journal of Islamic Studies" -- A.M. Ansari, CMEIS, University of Durham, "Journal of Islamic Studies"

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Dialogues in Arab Politics has a lot on the importance of norms and social structure in international relations. Michael N. Barnett analyzes the norms and social structure at a regional context. Like Stephen M. Walt's *The Origins of Alliances* Barnett takes his case from the Middle East. He examines three quarter centuries of the Arab politics from the constructivist perspective; hence he re-conceptualizes the history of Arab politics. In so doing, he insists on norms and symbols of Arab politics, normative fragmentation among Arabs, symbolic exchanges and social processes. He puts norms and identities as the critical variables in shaping state interests by examining the Arab politics in that process. He defines dialogues as the times the Arab states begin to discuss about the desired regional order. The discussion is circumscribed by norms of Arabism and sovereignty. Barnett defines Arabism as source of both Arab identity and interests. He also deems norm of Arabism as expression of their interests. Norms of Arabism have been also used as an instrument by one state in order to manipulate and/control the foreign policies of other Arab states. In this respect, norms can be both constraining as well as instrumental factors. Norms and identities have also greatly influenced the Arabs in their unification goal as well as their relations with the West and Israel. Pan-Arabism was relevant from the Baghdad Pact to the 1967 War and it declined its force after the 1967 war and it disappeared from the agenda by the end of the Gulf War. Then the norm of Arabism was replaced by norm of sovereignty in Arab politics. The normative shift eventually changed the foreign policies of the Arab states that they begun to focus on state interests not on Arab interests. Overall, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* makes a great contribution to the growing constructivist literature in recent years.

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