

Madmen at the Helm

Old versus new, democracy versus dictatorship, madness versus sanity...

Ithaca Press is pleased to announce the publication of *Madmen at the Helm: Pathology and the Arab Spring*, by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

Are dictators mad or do they just not know when to quit? Do they know that people hate them, or do they have personality disorders that block this knowledge from their consciousness?

While taking into due consideration the geopolitical manipulations from outside forces, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach takes a unique perspective when she places the events of the Arab Spring in the context of personality disorders such as narcissism, paranoia, delusion, hysteria and sociopathy, considering five Arab leaders (Mubarak, Qaddafi, Ben Ali, Saleh and Assad) in turn.

A watershed in Arab history, the Arab spring gave young protesters the impetus to challenge established and entrenched dictatorial regimes for the first time, and to demand representative government. Mirak-Weissbach examines the public statements, speeches, interviews and courses of actions of the five leaders in response to these challenges, and identifies patterns and similarities of behaviour. She then argues that their responses illustrate their psychological inability to face reality, and their determination to cling fanatically to power in the face of revolt.

A postscript to the book serves to show that this is a universal phenomenon, not a uniquely Arab one, by identifying examples of narcissism and its associated disorders in contemporary American politics; specifically in the behaviour of George W. Bush and Sarah Palin.

This book will have huge appeal to those interested in gaining a deeper insight into the catalyst for and responses to the Arab Spring, and its implications for the future of democracy and power, in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach has worked for thirty years as a political journalist, specialising in economic, political and cultural developments in the Arab and Islamic world. She worked with an international press agency for many years and published hundreds of articles in various political and cultural journals on topics related to development policy, the dialogue between Christianity and Islam, and political events in the Arab and Islamic world.