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POST-UPRISING EXCAVATIONS

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Preface

OMAR IMADY

We are pleased to present VOL 11, NO 2, *Post-Uprising Excavations*. This issue of *Syria Studies* includes three articles: “UN Mediation in the Syrian Crisis: *From Kofi Annan Through Lakhdar Brahimi To Staffan De Mistura*” by I William Zartman; “Palestinians in the Syrian Uprising: *The Situation on the Ground*” by Ashraf Mousa; and “No Temple in Palmyra! *Opposing the Reconstruction of the Temple of Bel*” by Andreas Schmidt-Colinet.

Nine years after the Uprising began in Syria, historians and political analysts are embarking on what might be called ‘excavations,’ or a deeper introspection into the forces at work during these past nine years, and how the current status quo is reflective of the way in which these forces reinforced or cancelled out each other. In this issue of *Syria Studies*, examples of this intricate analytic process are provided by an array of distinguished, and emerging scholars.

In “*From Kofi Annan Through Lakhdar Brahimi To Staffan De Mistura*”, I William Zartman attempts to capture the critical facets of diplomacy that are at work in a mission as complex as the one Annan, Brahimi and De Mistura were involved in. Though he succeeds in identifying subtle areas within which the envoys could have employed a different approach, his central conclusion is that “Syria’s ability to obstruct the whole process and to refuse to accept any role for either Geneva or Astana in the establishment of a constitution was the insurmountable obstacle to any movement...”

In “Palestinians in the Syrian Uprising: *The Situation on the Ground*,” Ashraf Mousa explores an aspect of the Uprising which has not received adequate attention; namely, how segments of the population who were not directly part of the conflict interacted with, and were interacted with by both the regime and the opposition. Mousa attempts to “shed light on how and why Palestinian communities in Syria arrived at the political positions they ultimately did in relation to the conflict.” He finds that contrary to the assumption that the position of groups in a civil war is largely “based upon political alignments that preceded it,” it was, rather, “both contingent and arbitrary events” that were predominantly behind the actual positions that Palestinians ultimately adopted.

In “No Temple in Palmyra! *Opposing the Reconstruction of the Temple of Bel*”, Andreas Schmidt-Colinet argues that the debate over whether or not the Temple of Bel should be reconstructed should be “determined by the building *itself*, by its history, its historical background and context as well as by its cultural significance through scientific and scholarly research.” Andreas argues that within this debate the emphasis should, in fact, be on “the members of the local population who had worked for and with the foreigners and who were essential in the investigation and restoration of Palmyra as a World Heritage Site who require assistance.” After all, it is people of Palmyra who were primarily targeted by the terror of ISIL. Hence, focus should presently be on “the rebuilding of the city of Tadmur” rather than on the Temple or other ancient sites.