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In Memoriam

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Cover: Muhammad Ali mosque, Cairo, June 1987 (Photo by A. Lesch)
in the small space he devotes to the post-Kennedy years. It might have

His story of Musaddiq’s fall is, nevertheless, a good read. It would have
en in even more enlightening if he had explained in greater depth how and why
coup succeeded. And I wished he had speculated about what might have
opened in Iran, Britain, and the Middle East if there had been no coup. Few
servers would now approve of the action by the Eisenhower administration.
t were those officials, lacking our present perspectives, so terribly wrong to
the CIA as a means of resolving an endless crisis that seemed highly danger-

HENRY PRECHT
Bethesda, Maryland

i'ism in the Twentieth Century and the Islamic Revolution of Iran, by
SANG ONAT. 65 pages, endnotes, bibliography. Ankara: Research Foundation
Public Services, 1996. ISBN 975-95782-2-0

is interesting polemic denies that the Islamic Revolution in Iran is anything
more than a sectarian Iranian phenomenon. Hasan Onat provides an overview of
the history of Middle Eastern history, Islam, and various Shi'i sects, followed by an
account of religion and politics in modern Iran. He concludes that "to identify
the [Iranian] Revolution and the subsequent developments with Islam is a highly
ious mistake. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the universality of Islam"
(51).

Onat undervalues the clergy in recent Iranian history. Discussing the con-
mittance of religion and state during the Pahlavi era, he says "there were hardly
serious incidents during the reign of Reza Shah" (p. 42). This ignores the
‘aliv between Reza and Hasan Modarres, which led the Shah’s agents to murder
chief political cleric. Similarly Onat makes no reference to clergy-led riots
Mashad at the time Reza Shah forbade Iranian women to wear the chador.
at is also inaccurate when he says "the earliest confrontation of the [younger
hlavi] Shah and the ulama took place in 1959" (p. 42). In 1949 a religious
ivist shot the Shah in the face. Moreover, Ayatollah Kashan’s opposition to
Shah in the Majlis was an important part of the early success of the National
ont, which brought Mossadegh to power as Prime Minister in 1951. Kashan’s
sequent break with Mossadegh played an important part in the vulnerability
Front to the August 1953 Anglo-American-inspired coup d’état. Had Onat
ferred to the work of Shahrough Akhavi, James Bill, Richard Costam, Mark
isiorowski, Homa Katouzian, Vanessa Martin, and Roy Mottahedeh, he might
have given a more coherent account of 20 century Iran.

Most sources Onat cites are Turkish, including some that were first published
English by Hamid Algar, Fred Halliday, Henry Munson, Daniel Pipes, and
eda Skocpol. No Iranian sources have been cited, although Onat does mention
he travelled in post-revolutionary Iran. He omits many important studies. f
example, in discussing the revival of Shi‘ism in Lebanon, he does not cite
uad Ajami’s The Vanished Imam. In his brief discussion of the Tobacco

Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian
ation, by ANNABELLE SREBERNY-MOHAMMADI and ALI MOHAMMADI. 225
pages, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Minneapolis, MN: University of

"This book is not only an analytic account of the role of the media in the Iranian
volution, but also the story of our—the authors’—lives" (p. xi) is how this
fascinating account of the Iranian revolution begins. Annabelle Sreberny-Moham-
and Ali Mohammadi participated in the revolution and then had to leave
in 1980. Their voices are subdued in the thorough communications analysis
of the revolution, which includes a theoretical overview of the role of the media
in the events, an analysis of the political economy of media in Iran, and a discus-
sion of the culture and weapons of the secular and religious oppositions that
ultimately caused the revolution. They conclude by identifying the divide between educated elites and poor masses and the
potency of oral communication that religion often employs as the two factors that
ignite revolutionary change.

In the last sentence, the Mohammadis bring back their voice as they reflect on the
impact of the revolution on their own lives: "[F]or us, the wandering Jew, the
Iranian exile, we two grow old and sometimes wear the bottoms of our trousers
rolled, and echoes along with so many participants of the revolution, "No, this
is not it at all; that is not what we meant at all" (p. 193).

The Mohammadis’ main argument is that the Shah’s regime hindered political
development by repressing modern, secular, ideological, competitive
communication; what emerged was a pluralistic culture that pitted the traditional monarchical
despotism against the new mass media against traditional religious authority and
religiously based political unity. While economic, political, and social upheaval
led briefly to a movement of solidarity against the Shah, secular groups lacked
mass appeal and lost out to a populous radicalism that ultimately was coopted by the emerging Islamic state.

In developing their argument, the Mohammadies make excellent use of the literature on the Iranian revolution; they also provide a beautifully documented account of the oral and written knowledge in interviews, reports, pamphlets, cassettes, and rumor that started to shape the revolution. The setting of the stage for the revolution, namely the development of the secular and religious narratives, is probably the strongest part of Small Media, Big Revolution. The ensuing discussion of the revolutionary process whereby communications become Islamized is interesting but much briefer and not as analytically vibrant. As a result, the Mohammadies illuminate more what happened (a terrific accomplishment in itself) than what to do with what exists in Iran today: although they point to the growth of an unofficial culture and passive resistance, I hope they will develop this new emerging narrative more fully in another book, one that would also weave more thoroughly into the text their own experiences and positionality.

FATMA MÜGE GÖÇEK
University of Michigan

Arab-Israeli Conflict


In The Lebanon War, A. J. Abraham treats us to a selective chronology of events that transpired during the Lebanese ordeal, mainly from 1975 to 1982. His thesis is that the civil war was instigated and financed by outside forces and that the Lebanese were and remain peaceful people interested only in enjoying the nightlife, restaurants, and idyllic beauty that is Lebanon. Obviously, such an interpretation of a tragic period in the country’s life smacks of revisionism and drives one to think that, unfortunately, history’s lessons are sometimes too difficult to learn. Anyone who knows anything about the Lebanese civil war can attest that it was, first and foremost, an internal struggle shaped by internal contradictions and socio-economic disparities. External events and forces only made the struggle more complicated.

Abraham’s work is based on a one-sided reading of events; that of the Lebanese Christian right, especially the Phalange. To him, the civil war was a series of leftist and Palestinian conspiracies, provocations, and attacks designed to destroy Lebanon. Pierre Jemayyil, the Phalangist leader, was an Arab nationalist (no less!) and his and his sons’ militia was always on the defensive. He does not mention that the Phalangists prepared for war well before 1975; that they were the first to use ID cards to kill Muslims, thus helping to turn the war into a religious conflict; that Bashir Jemayyil was responsible for the burning of downtown Beirut; and that the Christian militias were sworn to cleanse their areas of any non-Christian Lebanese populace so that they could establish a Christian state.

The rightists’ encouragement to Syria to intervene militarily on their side in 1976, He directs his wrath at Libya and the Soviet Union for arming the leftist and Palestinians (ignoring the rightists’ suppliers) and laments the Americans’ supposed ambivalence to the Christians’ plight in Lebanon.

Methodologically, Abraham is on disastrously shaky grounds. The book is poorly documented. He either inaccurately cites Kamal Salibi (1976), Tabitha Petran (1987), B.J. Odle (1985), David Gilmour (1984), and Walid Khaldi (1978), among others, or misinterprets their analyses. References and citations are conveniently missing at important junctures. For example, this is the first time I read that Kamal Junblat, leader of the Druze and of the Leftist National Movement, was the first to discuss with Israel the possibility of a Druze state in Lebanon (p. 7) or that he proposed the establishment of a "Leftist Arab Peoples Republic in Lebanon" (p. 54).

This is no scholarly work. Its readers will clearly be those who, like Abraham, think that the Christians of Lebanon have been unfairly vilified and have not been properly heard in the West. Nothing sustains the book but a commitment to clear the name of Pierre Jemayyil and his sons of the crime of starting the war. It has no analytical, informational, or intellectual value to recommend it to the scholar, the college student, or the general reader. This is a painful reading to sit through.

IMAD HARB
University of Utah


Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom is an invitation to social scientists, Middle East studies scholars, and Israel studies specialists to consider Israel in an international perspective, in contrast to the "conventional wisdom" that Israel is sui generis, unparalleled by any other state.

Israel’s marginal status in Middle Eastern studies is driven by political and sociological considerations. Although there is a large Arab minority in Israel and although many Jewish Israelis have immigrated from Arab lands, Israel is not included in sociological studies of the Middle East. This reluctance to study Israel has originated not only among Arab historians who have argued that Israel represents an alien remnant of Western imperialism but also among Israeli scholars and partisans who claim that Israel has less in common with its Arab neighbors than it does with the West. In his introduction, Michael N. Barnett points out the historical reasons that separated these scholars. And yet there is much that Israel shares with her Arab neighbors: high levels of militarization, high debt ratios, and highly militarized economies.

Israel in Comparative Perspective considers both international and domestic issues. In "Israeli Foreign Policy: A Realist Ideal-Type or a Breed of Its Own?"