

perspective on Israel's similarities and differences with other countries in the Middle East.

In conclusion, *Informal Politics in the Middle East* is a significant contribution to the literature on Middle Eastern politics and provides

valuable insights into the complex dynamics that shape the region's political landscape. The interdisciplinary approaches and focus on local actors make this book a must-read for Middle East scholars seeking to understand the region beyond the traditional readings.

The Nation Form in the Global Age: Ethnographic Perspectives

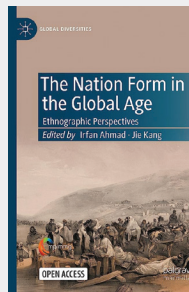
Edited by Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang

Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 386 pages, Open Access Book, ISBN: 9783030855802

Reviewed by Afshan Khan, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University

Produced in the honor of Peter van der Veer, a renowned Dutch anthropologist, *The Nation Form in the Global Age: Ethnographic Perspectives*, edited by Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang, delves into the trinity of religion, modernity, and globalization. The volume shows how nationalism has not only persisted but intensified as a medium of discrimination and marginalization despite the rhetoric of borderless globalization. The editors in the introduction cite the example of the COVID-19 pandemic as evidence to show the persistence of nationalism. They argue that the nation-states nationalized the borderless virus and vaccine science in response to the pandemic. The nationalization of the virus continued from its origin to its spread (p. 7). In many parts of the world, the Chinese and Muslims were blamed for the spread of the deadly virus. The pandemic proved that globalization has not led to what Arjun Appadurai termed 'de-territorialization' but re-territorialization.

In its attempt to unveil the relationship of nationalism with violence and destruction,



the volume highlights literature written by self-claimed Western liberals and the so-called universal scholars and exposes their biases. It brings together critical perspectives of trained anthropologists based on their long-term fieldwork. It is distinct with its focus on the non-Western world, namely, Asia, Africa, China, and the Middle East. As most of the contributors give reference to Peter van der Veer's scholarship on religion and secularism, it becomes essential for the readers to understand the depth of his contribution to the field of anthropology. Irfan Ahmad, therefore, attempts to provide a critical assessment of the diverse writings of Peter van der Veer who is skeptical of nation-states and nationalism.

The editors divide the volume into five parts, which consist of fourteen engrossing chapters. Part one includes the introduction by the editors and the Oeuvre of Peter van der Veer by Irfan Ahmad, part two, three, four, and five are based on the case studies of India, China, South Africa and the Middle East,

Asia, and Europe, respectively. Stefan Binder moots over the marginalization of atheists in the nationalist imaginary of India. He analyzes two Bollywood movies, *OMG* and *PK*. Both films are made on the subject of atheism but end up negating any possibility of atheism in India. Binder argues that it is neither a lack of belief nor an ontological question of the existence of God(s) that determine atheism's impossibility in India but the social discourse on religion (p. 90).

Bob van der Linden shows how the Hindustani music that was professionally dominated by Muslim hereditary musicians since the seventeenth century was dismantled into the twentieth century by the process of Hinduization. Unsurprisingly, Hindu national music reformers incorrectly blamed Muslim musicians for the decline of Hindustani music that led to the marginalization and stigmatization of Muslim *ustads*. Moreover, he highlights the role of anti-Muslim songs in violence against Muslims and Muslim heritage (e.g., Babri mosque), a pre-independence phenomenon that still goes on in India during political rallies and Hindu festivals.

Irfan Ahmad and Peter van der Veer's chapter in the volume analyses Muslim 'bare life' in contemporary India. The chapter shows how the life of Indian Muslims has been reduced to 'bare life' as they have been removed from political agency, particularly after Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India in 2014. However, they contend that it is not entirely true that secularism in India has declined and religious nationalism is on the rise with the rise of the BJP, but Hindu-Muslim violence has been a 'foundational trauma' in Indian politics (p. 138). The essay examines the issue of the lynching of Muslims, the state of democracy and secularism in India, religious violence, and Hindu majoritarianism.

Part three of the book investigates Chinese nationalism in the movie 'The Wandering Earth' (Jeroen de Kloet), Chinese Protestant Christianity and Islamophobia (Jie Kang), digital imaginaries in the Chinese nation-state (Samuel Lengen), nation-making projects and social inequality in China (Xiao He). Even though each chapter has different themes, the common point of arrival is how national imaginaries impact the lives of different social groups. It helps in creating a consensus or common sense in ranking/preferring one group over the other by the litmus test of patriotism, leading to the marginalization of some communities. Jie Kang, for instance, details how the early Christian patriotism in China has been converted into a practice of othering the followers of Islam, converging with the State's attitude and policy towards Muslims.

Part four analyzes the cases of South Africa and the Middle East. Shaheed Tayob astutely depicts the ongoing issue of race with the example of practices of animal sacrifice and how the right over public space is claimed with religious and cultural practices. He seeks to bring our attention to sensory politics. Mahmoud Alinejad demonstrates the rivalry between secular and religious nationalism in Iran. The essay gives an overall picture of the split between two kinds of revolutions and the rival visions of national destiny. Alinejad concludes by arguing, "No 'high culture,' whatever its history, can thrive in a modern society as a basis for an inclusive nationalism through sectarian prejudice." (p. 296)

Part five covers the case studies of a part of Asia and/in Europe. Oskar Verkaaik lays out the roots of the rise of right-wing populism in the Netherlands. He compares the case of the Netherlands with that of the Muhajir Qaumi

Movement (MQM) in Pakistan. He utilizes his ethnographic work in Pakistan and his reading of five Dutch novels to show the similarity and contrast between Dutch populism and the Muhajir movement in Pakistan. Jingyang Yu's contribution looks at the socialization of language and morality at the Chinese Christian Church of Berlin. It focuses on how the ethnic identity of Chinese immigrants is constructed with language and culture to reinstate the feeling of Chinese nationalism and assimilate them into German society as a bonus point. Afterword by Peter van der Veer assists the readers to interweave lengthy yet unique essays discussed within the larger context of nationalism or national 'self'. He justifies why one needs the discipline of an-

thropology to understand the chaotic world we are part of.

In sum, *The Nation Form in the Global Age: Ethnographic Perspectives* propels us to imagine ourselves without nation-states or think beyond them. The volume urges scholars and future works to think of a few questions such as: Can we think of an alternative to nationalism and nation-states? Does religion play a uniform role in forming or obstructing a national identity? Apart from the anthropologists, the book will also enrich the understanding of historians, sociologists, scholars of politics, and anyone interested in reading an alternative account of nationalism, modernity, and non-western experiences of secularism.

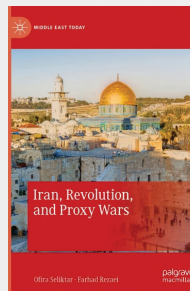
Iran, Revolution, and Proxy Wars

By Ofira Seliktar and Farhad Rezaei

Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 245 pages, £59.99, ISBN: 9783030294182

Reviewed by Ahmet Furkan Özyakar, University of Exeter

Iran's military policy is a contentious subject. Ofira Seliktar and Farhad Rezaei provide a comprehensive look at how Iran has been implementing asymmetrical warfare strategy and proxy war since the establishment of the Islamic Revolution in their book *Iran, Revolution, and Proxy Wars*. Drawing upon comprehensive primary and secondary sources, the authors do due diligence by analyzing, case-by-case, how Iran's proxy war strategies through Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) are multifunctional and target-oriented and to what extent these proxy war tools are correlated with Iran's revolutionary ideology and geopolitical ambitions.



The first chapter provides historical background and elaborates on how Khomeini's Islamic revolution legitimized the requirement of political violence to export the revolution beyond Iran's borders. To carry out this mission, this chapter illustrates how the IRGC has been established and how IRGC-QF is the main responsible structure to embark its proxies through Shiite militias in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. The authors also underline the relationship between Foreign Ministry and IRGC-QF as the Iranian embassies and cultural centers in Muslim countries as "these dual-use proxies garnered political legiti-