

ALAM SALEH. *Ethnic Identity and the State in Iran*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. ix + 233 pages, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$95.00 ISBN 978-1-137-31086-6.

Alam Saleh explores Iranian state building through the lens of ethnic identities. Drawing heavily from primary interviews, conducted in both Persian and Arabic, of Iranian citizens and exiles from multiple ethnic groups across a broad socioeconomic spectrum, Saleh explores the competing internal dynamics of a nation mostly composed of Azeris, Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen, which are represented in multiple countries across political borders. Furthermore, these groups are rapidly politicizing issues, such as the use of ethnic minority language in the press and mass media, that were formerly solely ethnic. The regime of the Shah Pahlavi promoted Iranian nationalism as a form of social cohesion, whereas the new Islamic Republic relies on religion as the unifying factor in Iranian identity politics. Saleh argues, however, that neither nationalism nor religion have succeeded in overcoming ethnic and territorial identities. As a result, Iranians today are constantly forced to evaluate whether their national or ethnic identity should take precedence in a given context. The Iranian state has historically treated ethnic conflicts as security issues and has responded with repressive policies. However, such actions have resulted in greater ideological and political divisions. In contrast, Saleh calls for an open discussion and attentive approach to ethnocentric politics that acknowledges and addresses ethnic divisions while working on strategies for cohesion, not suppression, for the sake of Iran's national security.

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