

minister, and numerous other members to ministerial positions. The dichotomy between ruling family and National Assembly has therefore persisted, creating an impasse that shows no sign of being resolved. Michael Herb believes that “Parliamentarism in Kuwait—that is to say, parliamentary appointment of the Council of Ministers—might alleviate the paralysis that currently besets the Kuwaiti political system” (p. 207). A development in this direction would, however, require significant leadership on the part of the amir to limit the impact of rivalries within the ruling family and to provide stability and balance to a “managed democracy” along the lines of Morocco’s.

At the same time it must also be acknowledged that the National Assembly has weakened the legitimacy of its bid for a different equilibrium of powers between itself and the amir by displaying an extraordinary inclination to promote populist policies that favor rent redistribution based on citizenship, rather than entrepreneurship or productivity. If more of the policies advocated by the Assembly, and resisted by the Kuwaiti government, were implemented, the outcome would certainly not be closer to the example of Dubai.

Herb sympathizes with critics of the Dubai (or UAE) model because of the extreme dependence on expatriate labor, but openness to expatriate labor is an essential component of any developmental policy aiming at countering the Dutch disease. One can argue that the pace of transformation in Dubai has been too rapid—although normally the oil-exporting countries are criticized for being too slow in diversifying their economies—but very few UAE nationals would seriously opt for returning to the reality of the backwater villages that made up the country no more than fifty years ago. It is not the case that Kuwait has more successfully managed the trade off between transformation and dependence of expatriate labor than the UAE. Considering the lack of economic diversification in Kuwait, the country’s dependence on expatriate labor is possibly even more troublesome—the only difference being that the bulk of expatriates in Kuwait are personal services providers rather than productive workers.

Herb underlines how the large number of expatriates constitutes a problem for any democratization scenario in the region. He asserts that the readiness of the ruling families to accept such a large number of expatriates is, in a sense, an implicit threat to the national population: remain loyal or you may lose your country altogether. All Gulf rentier states have official policies to promote the employment of nationals and limit the number of expatriates, but in no case have these been very effective. The main motivation for relying on such a large number of expatriates is probably economic, but the role of the amir in mediating between the interests of nationals and the various groups of expatriates has surely been enhanced—a role that no elected institution could play as effectively. In fact, the system of informal consultation (*shūra*), which is characteristic of amiri rule, allows some voice to the expatriate population through mediators informally chosen by the amir, while formal democracy, based on “one person, one vote” for citizens only, would marginalize expatriates entirely. As naturalization in large numbers—even restricted to other Arabs—is essentially unthinkable, there hardly is an alternative to the status quo.

Herb makes many more important points in the book that cannot be taken up here. The debate on the possible paths to democratization of rentier states is bound to continue for decades, and Michael Herb’s book will remain essential reading for all who are interested.

PIERRE RAZOUX, *The Iran–Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliot (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015). Pp. 640. \$39.99 cloth. ISBN: 9780674088634

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The importance of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) cannot be overstated. Two major countries in the Middle East, one of which was in the middle of a revolutionary transformation, engaged

in a bitter war that lasted for nearly eight years. This war had significant ramifications for the internal social and political lives of both countries, transformed their regional and international alliances, contributed to their evolving geopolitical imaginations, and—like any other war—left a landscape of devastation in its wake: lost lives, maimed bodies, dashed hopes, razed villages and cities, destroyed environments, displaced populations, collapsed economies, and lasting memories of horror. The war was a formative phase in the trajectory of each country, helped consolidate particular factions within them, and played a major role in solidifying certain visions of the region's future. It could be linked to the ensuing Gulf Wars that have plagued the region. Given the paucity of studies of this pivotal moment in the history of the modern Middle East, any scholarly addition is surely welcome.

According to Pierre Razoux, the book has been ten years in the making. He has traveled throughout the region (Persian Gulf capitals, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman, and Istanbul) plus major Western capitals (Washington, Rome, and London); interviewed many people; and accessed newly released Iraqi archives, including the now famous Saddam Huseyn audiotapes, to answer a series of interwoven questions: Why the war started; why it lasted so long; how the great powers responded to it; how it related to other violent events in the region, in particular, the kidnapping of Westerners in Lebanon and terrorist attacks in France; and finally, if it had any winners.

The bulk of the book is devoted to a detailed account of the daily conduct of the war. Readers interested in the military aspects of this historic event will find valuable information about major offensives, their planning, aims and outcomes, divisions deployed, kind and number of military equipment involved, and casualties. The book demonstrates how instead of getting one side closer to victory, or both sides closer to ultimate peace, each episode of the war resulted in further escalation of the conflict, transforming it into a total war that left no target off limits—villages and cities, foreign tankers, European civilians—and no means barred, including systematic use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi forces. Each phase brought new players into the mix, resulting in further militarization of the Persian Gulf. This detailed picture is supplemented by an extensive chronology of the war; the military command structure of belligerent parties; foreign military assistance; the international naval presence in the Persian Gulf; war losses; and financial costs.

The book also covers shifting regional and global alliances. The reaction of Gulf Arabs to the war and the formation of Gulf Cooperation Council; the alliance between Revolutionary Iran and Assad's Syria; Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish resistance operations; the consolidation of economic and political ties between Iraq and France; and the US tilt towards Iraq along with its secret dealing with Iran—Iran-Contra affair—are among the topics that are addressed. A lesser known aspect of the war, the terrorist activities in Lebanon and France and their probable connection with the Iranian regime, is also explored at some length. Razoux's knowledge and use of the French sources are particularly helpful in illustrating how French internal politics played into this war, how their security service viewed Iranian activities in France, and how these activities influenced their ongoing negotiations with Iran. All these topics are interesting and well developed, although not entirely new.

In analyzing the internal political dynamics of the two countries, Razoux encounters a serious obstacle: he is not a scholar of the Middle East and does not know Farsi or Arabic, which translates into serious gaps in his sources. Hashemi Rafsanjani appears throughout the book, but no reference is made to his volumes of published diaries, interviews, or speeches that overlap with this period. Nor is there any other reference to thousands of war memoirs, histories, chronicles, and analysis published in Farsi. Of the seventy-one people listed as interviewees, only ten are Iranian, none of whom were directly involved with the war. One would understand that interviewing high-ranking Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders would be extremely difficult for a French researcher, but there are many other people with direct knowledge of the war that could have been accessed. For example, the author could have reached out to President Bani Sadr who has been living in France for over three decades, and Mohsen Sazegara, one of the founders of IRGC now living in the United States, neither of whom has shied away from interviews in the past.

Consequently, the answers given to the main questions—particularly, why the war started, why it lasted eight years, and why it ended when it did—are unconvincing and unsupported by a large body of existing data. The role of Soviet leader in pressuring Iran towards peace is farfetched (pp. 450–51), given the poor state of Iran–Soviet relations at the time. No mention is made to the now famous Rezaee letter to Rafsanjani about the military needs of the IRGC and the army, believed to be the last straw in Iranian war efforts.

The vacuum left by lack of archival material and primary sources is filled with pop psychology. Khomeini is said to have felt “offended” by not being directly addressed by Saddam Huseyn in his telegram and thus attacked him in his speech (p. 64). He later is believed to hold a “fierce grudge” against Brzezinski for not meeting with him (p. 72). Khomeini’s “arrogance” is the reason for giving the United States the cold shoulder (p. 65). Bani Sadr, with his unblemished anti-American record, is said to be eager to take revenge on America for “not believing in him” (p. 68). While in exile, Bani Sadr declines to cooperate with Ghassemloo in order to avoid angering Khomeini and to become a target for assassination (p. 208). Rafsanjani and Khamenei are portrayed as unscrupulous political animals in fierce competition with one another from the early years of the revolution to become the next Supreme Leader (pp. 172, 221, 236). Rafsanjani, who in all indications loved Khomeini dearly, is even waiting for “the seventy-year-old Supreme Leader’s death” to reach the highest position of power and “put his name in history books” (p. 172)!

The book is riddled with factual errors of differing significance. Here are some random examples:

At the time of the Nojeh Coup there were no Iranian Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization members in exile in Iraq to come to the support of conspirators (p. 5).

Contrary to what is indicated in the book, Arvand and Shatt al-Arab are not two different rivers (p. 131). Arvand is the Iranian name for Shatt al-Arab. The river labeled as Arvand Rud in several maps is Bahmanshir.

Chamran was not Minister of Defense at the time of his death and did not die in a plane explosion (p. 171). He was a member of parliament and Khomeini’s representative to the Supreme Council of National Defense and was hit by mortar shells.

Mehdi Bazargan was not “Bani Sadr’s former Prime Minister” (p. 450), but the first Prime Minister of Iran after the revolution and head of the Interim Government.

Ali Akbar Mohtashamipour was not a “secret service official” (p. 461), but a high profile politician and Iran’s minister of interior at the time of the Lockerbie bombing.

The Iranian Tudeh Party was not an insurrectionary force, ready to pick up arms against the regime but a staunch supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini (p. 220).

Ghassemloo was assassinated a year after the war ended in 1989 and not in 1988 (pp. 329 and 544). His assassination did not result in a “definite agreement” between the Islamic Republic and “his successor,” Sadegh Sharafkandi, who was famously assassinated in 1992 in Mykonos Restaurant in Berlin.

The story of “plastic keys” carried by Iranian child soldiers “to open the door to paradise” is repeated with the added flavor that the regime ordered “more than one million keys from toy manufacturers” (p. 346). No such key has ever been seen, or photographed by journalists, or captured by Iraqis. There is no evidence they ever existed outside the Western imagination. Most Iranian volunteers were given a book of prayers, the famous Shi’i *Mafatih ul-Jinan*, or “Keys to Heavens.” If this order to “toy manufacturers” was actually documented in the book, it would have ended an ongoing dispute. This is only one of numerous cases that the reader wishes to have the source of information properly cited.

Like any book, this book could have benefited from a thorough editing. Here are a handful of many examples: Qasem on page 48 turns to President Kassem in the next page. (Abd al-Karim Qasim was in fact prime minister of Iraq.) Colonel Moinpour is recorded as Mujunpur on page

179. Gilan-e Gharb is recorded as Geilan Zarb in several pages and maps. Colonel Zahirnejad is called Colonel Nejad throughout the book; this is as misleading as changing Johnson into Son.

It is a combination of all these considerations that makes this book a less than ideal source for scholars of Iran, Iraq, and the modern Middle East history.

AARON M. FAUST, *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2015). Pp. 296. \$55.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781477305577

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The availability of millions of documents from the Iraqi archives of the Ba'ath Party and its organs, such as the intelligence services and the Presidential *dīwān*, have allowed, and will continue to allow, new research and this scholarship will present readers with different facets of the system that prevailed for thirty-five years under the Ba'ath Party (1968–2003). A number of books have been published on that period dealing with the regime from different angles and perspectives. Aaron Faust's book is the result of vast research in these archives and concentrates on the process of Ba'athification in Iraq by discussing its components and attempts to understand the organization of the system and its methods of what he terms "terror and enticement" (p. 147).

Faust's main thesis is that the Iraq of Saddam Husayn was a totalitarian regime similar to Hitler's Nazi Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union. Faust argues that while the Ba'athification of Iraq began after the party's rise to power in 1968, it was only when Saddam Husayn took over in 1979 as president that Iraq changed "from a Ba'athist oligarchy into a Husseini Ba'athist dictatorship" (p. 18). While it is correct that the Ba'athification process intensified after 1979, particularly in connection with the army, Faust gives the reader the impression that the regime's basic characteristics fundamentally changed only after 1979. The hanging of so-called spies after mock public trials and the relentless purge of communists and leftists in the 1970s did not create the impression for those living under the regime that the first ten years were any less repressive or fundamentally different. This leads to Faust's main argument about totalitarianism, which I believe suffers from a few serious pitfalls.

First, Faust totally ignores the economy in his analysis. This oversight is remarkable given his attempt to trace how the regime became totalitarian, which, by definition, encompasses all facets of life. In fact, apart from one sentence and a footnote (p. 253), there is no reference to how the regime ran the economy during two wars and thirteen years of harsh sanctions. No mention is made of how rationing of food was successful during the 1990s, and Faust time and again wonders why the regime lasted so long and why people supported the system. Second, the comparison with Stalin or Hitler is weak when one takes into consideration how many Iraqis were allowed to leave the country. Although citizens needed to undergo a convoluted and bureaucratic procedure to obtain the necessary papers to leave the country, the fact remains that more than one million Iraqis migrated from Iraq from the end of the Iran–Iraq War in 1988 until the US-led invasion in 2003. Third, religion under Stalin did not function in the same manner as it did in Iraq, and while Faust details how the Shi'a were not allowed to engage in some of their ceremonies, the average Iraqi was allowed to pray at home and in a mosque. It is true that the regime saw in religion a threat, particularly after the war with Iran, and it is correct that the security services kept a watch on religious establishments and mosques, but the Iraqi approach is somewhat different from that pursued by Stalin's totalitarianism. Faust unfortunately does not provide a comparative analysis with other Arab countries and does not engage in comparing the Iraqi regime to say, that of the