

While not an international name like the Nobel laureate Ebadi, Abbasgholizadeh is a recognized figure in the Iranian women's rights movement. The last chapter mostly proceeds as a story of Abbasgholizadeh's development as an activist, the many turns of which make for an interesting biographical read. Since a central focus of the book is on transnational networks of activism, however, it would have been helpful to know more about the content, distribution, and reception of Zanantv, which Abbasgholizadeh founded and which the author mentions throughout the chapter. The chapter does address the contentious funding and partners of Zanantv from Abbasgholizadeh's perspective and thus provides an opportunity to mention the impact of "donor-driven agendas" and the "entanglement of such putatively progressive funders with forces that seek more interventions in the Global South" (p. 138). Since Abbasgholizadeh was the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy in 2011 (a fact not mentioned in the chapter), it would have been productive to further probe the pitfalls of "pro-democracy" funding. Overall, however, the chapter does reflect the funding and collaboration dilemmas Iranian activists face.

Given all the domestic and international pressures that Sameh outlines, researching and writing an account of Iranian women's rights activism is almost as fraught as participating in the activism itself. Sameh has managed to skillfully address these difficulties, while also providing a picture of the Iranian women's rights movements that remains hopeful about the future.

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Iran's Reconstruction Jihad: Rural Development and Regime Consolidation after 1979. Eric Lob, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Pp. 406. \$120.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781108766852

Reviewed by Maryam Alemzadeh, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, USA (ma40@princeton.edu)

Parallel state structures and unconventional organizational forms that crowded the Iranian political scenery after the 1979 revolution have made the study of state-building in Iran a complex task. A lot has been written on how elite competition, contours of religious ideology, war contingencies, and the shifting geopolitical landscape have shaped and perpetuated this uneasy structure over the years. Eric Lob brings a crucial yet largely understudied organization to the center of the analysis: Reconstruction Jihad (Jahad-i Sazandigi). Emerging as a grassroots institution in the early post-revolutionary days and quickly rising to the level of a ministry, Reconstruction Jihad was first and foremost an organization dedicated to rural development. *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad* demonstrates that the organization's work in rural development doubled as a non-coercive path to state consolidation, a path just as important as the coercive elimination of rivals in post-revolutionary Iran. Based on 130 interviews with former members, government officials, and rural residents as well as published and archived documents collected during his fieldwork in Iran and Lebanon, Lob revisits the question of state building and state resilience in contemporary Iran through the turbulent institutional history of Reconstruction Jihad. Lob weaves these rich strands of data together to argue that the Islamic Republic "instrumentalized rural development...to consolidate power at home and project influence abroad" (p. 335).

The nucleus of Reconstruction Jihad (RJ), Lob tells us, consisted of grassroots formations led by university students who recruited volunteers in their hometowns or villages. From 11 February to 16 June 1979, when the organization was officially established, RJ existed in the form of these small clusters and relied mostly on the members' and individual patrons' personal funds. At the beginning, the fluid and parastatal nature of the organization appealed to one fraction of the elite—i.e., the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), which consisted of clerics and activists closest to Ayatollah Khomeini. In the early revolutionary years, the IRP was in fierce competition with the technocratic office of the provisional prime

minister (Mehdi Bazargan) and the first elected president (Abolhasan Banisadr). Reconstruction Jihad was not only a leverage for the IRP and Khomeini in this power play, but also a source of influence, Lob argues, that further radicalized Khomeini and the IRP against the rivals. As early as 1983, however, Reconstruction Jihad was in need of state resources, and elite interests converged momentarily to bureaucratize the institution into a government-run ministry. The bureaucratization led to tensions within the RJ as some members still believed in the revolutionary cause of serving deprived populations that previous bureaucracies had failed to serve. The merging of the Ministry of Reconstruction Jihad with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2001 further demobilized the initially revolutionary institution. The revolutionary ethos of the early RJ, which was its winning card in garnering popular support, was pursued in newly established associations and government-organized NGOs thereafter.

Lob demonstrates through diverse examples that through all these phases, RJ assisted the Islamic Republic's state-building project through non-coercive means. Amidst ethnic conflicts of the first few years, for instance, RJ members helped appease rural populations both through services and through ideological education, and identified oppositional Marxist and Mujahidin-i Khalq operators in villages prone to insurgency. During the Iran–Iraq war years RJ took on the crucial role of war engineering and acted as a prominent agent of reconstruction afterwards. Reconstruction Jihad's noncoercive state-building influence went even beyond the country's borders. The book includes one chapter on RJ in Lebanon and one on its presence in Africa, which, to the best of my knowledge, are both first of a kind. The chapter on RJ in Africa explores Iran's international ambitions both from a new angle—that of exporting rural development—and in a lesser-studied timeframe—starting in 1985, when Iran was still entangled in the war with Iraq. The chapter on Lebanon offers original insights on the Islamic Republic's non-military assistance to Hezbollah by establishing Hezbollah's own reconstruction unit (Jihad al-Bina'), and Hezbollah's gradual reappropriation of that unit, diminishing Iran's influence over the years.

Iran's Reconstruction Jihad is not just about noncoercive power, however. The book also offers the view that RJ is a microcosm which, in its institutional history, encapsulates the Islamic Republic's evolution. Reconstruction Jihad mirrors the Islamic Republic in multiple ways, according to Lob: in its preservation of pre-revolutionary trends despite radical changes; in mixed outcomes of centralization and the forces behind it; and—most importantly, in my opinion—in the organizational ambiguity that it entailed. This analysis broadens the book's readership, as it has the potential to offer new insights into the nature of state in Iran and state building at large. Lob is meticulous in illustrating RJ's history with all its contradictory pulls and pushes, which together constitute a microcosm mirroring all the rivalry, juxtaposition of conflicting goals, incessant realignments of the elite, and the interdependence of mobilized social forces and the leadership that characterize the Islamic Republic's 41-year history.

Presented as such, one can say that at the heart of the dynamics defining RJ and, by derivation, the Islamic Republic, is a conflict between bureaucratization and revolutionary ethos. Throughout RJ's trajectory as a revolutionary institution, Lob treats revolutionary ways and bureaucratization as essentially incompatible, and their juxtaposition as contradictory, troublesome, and transitional. He then tries to demonstrate how the RJ played a constructive role *despite* this uneasy combination. Although the revolution–bureaucratization dichotomy is as old as modern social sciences, one may wonder if bracketing it temporarily can lead to a better understanding of statehood in Iran, where the two forces are so relentlessly copresent. The dichotomy is predicated upon the view that the revolutionary character of an entity is limited to ideational elements and the members' reliance on scattered informal resources. What this understanding leaves out is the everyday practical ways members form in order to communicate, organize, accomplish tasks, and stay connected to the political elite. These features can very well continue under bureaucratization, whether individuals keep pursuing their revolutionary dreams or give in to careerism, and whether they work within a government ministry or a voluntary association. *Reconstruction Jihad* makes it easy to find this continuation, even if it is not the main task set for the book.

The fact that Lob has *not* tried to underline one trend of this dichotomy to the detriment of the other might prompt some confusion at first. For instance, why was there such a major shift from RJ's immense influence on the political elite before 1983, to the same elite deciding that it needs to be bureaucratized and successfully doing it? Or how did the Ministry of Jihad operate as a whole if some members were well

integrated into the bureaucracy while others were heavily critical? The book does treat the two forces of revolution and bureaucratization as contradictory for the most part and occasionally implies that bureaucratization is immanent—an analytical intricacy which, as I mentioned before, is not a shortcoming of the book, but inherent to our understanding of revolutionary states at large. However, Lob's unbiased and equally detailed treatment of both centralizing and decentralizing undercurrents of RJ's institutional history provides the grounds for scholars of state in Iran to go beyond the dichotomy. The book rigorously depicts the copresence of revolutionary and transparent bureaucratic ethos in the RJ's development trajectory. This depiction allows the reader to trace the formation of composite organizational practices through time and think through alternative frameworks for understanding the RJ and, through it, the Islamic Republic's organizational dynamics.

Lob's laudably extensive research on Reconstruction Jihad has led to a highly informative volume for experts and general readers alike, and produced the first comprehensive account of the organization in English. His reliance on personal narratives has given him the chance of pursuing individual trajectories, showing how members' dreams and experiences change over time, which he then complements with broader institutional history and quantitative measures of the organization's performance. The diversity of data sources and the wide array of individuals that Lob has interviewed has enabled him to present a comprehensive analysis, avoiding the potential bias of post hoc retrospective narratives. As such, the book is a much-needed addition to the field of Iranian Studies and Middle East Studies, and a valuable resource for students of revolutions and institution building.

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Understanding Israel/Palestine: Race, Nation, and Human Rights in the Conflict (Second Edition). Eve Spangler, (Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2019). Pp. 413. \$42.00 paper. ISBN: 9789004394124

Reviewed by Matthew DeMaio, Department of Anthropology, The George Washington University, Washington DC, USA (mdemaio@gwu.edu)

It is exceedingly difficult, given the breadth of the question of Palestine, to distill a century of history into a single monograph. It is yet more difficult to do so in a way that is both academically rigorous and profoundly approachable to those unfamiliar with this history. In *Understanding Israel/Palestine*, Eve Spangler succeeds in the face of these challenges, producing a remarkable resource that everyone from neophytes to experts will find compelling. Spangler seamlessly weaves detailed historical analysis and theoretical framing with contemporary experiences and observations gained from years of leading student groups on trips through Palestine/Israel. Historical events that may otherwise seem dry or distant are brought vividly into the present day as Spangler narrates the consequences of these events for the daily lives of Palestinians and Israelis. The result is an impressive work that fulfils the calls of Spangler's interlocutors to "tell our story" (p. 5) and, in doing so, relates, in tireless and captivating detail, the story of the wider Palestine question.

While its historical and theoretical foundations make it an engrossing read for those familiar with the topic, the book's primary targets are those who know little about Israel/Palestine. For Spangler, the book is a "call to action" (p. 7)—one that employs a human rights framework and argues that a just peace in Israel/Palestine requires the participation of those beyond Middle East experts. She notes that necessary and challenging conversations about Palestine among nonexperts are often foreclosed by claims that the conflict is simply too complicated for the lay person to understand. However, Spangler does not flatten out the very real complexity of the issue in the service of approachability. Rather, she offers, explains and evaluates various theoretical frames that enable readers to understand and interpret what may seem at first a dizzying array of facts, actors, and events. Furthermore, recognizing that many of these nonexpert