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Autumn Cockrell-Abdullah Ph.D.
University of North Georgia, autumn.cockrell@ung.edu

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Debating the Iran-Iraq War in Contemporary Iran, edited by Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies Narges Bajoghli and Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature Amir Moosavi, takes a look at the far-reaching legacies of the Iran-Iraq war in contemporary Iran. Bajoghli and Moosavi begin the volume by explaining that, "The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) is a cornerstone of the Islamic Republic of Iran's existence. It entrenched the newly established regime and provided the means for its consolidation of power in the country following the 1979 revolution" (p. i). Today in Iran, debates around the war and its consequences remain salient even though 70 percent of the population is under 35 and does not remember the war (p. 1). Much of the state-sponsored cultural production promotes a wartime narrative while pro-regime cultural producers and intellectuals are advocating for a more dynamic understanding of the war (p. 1).

The essays presented in this volume are based on extensive fieldwork in Iran and seek to push past the narrative of the war that the Islamic Republic has monopolized (p. 1). These essays examine the political, social and cultural ramifications of the war and the wide range of debates that surround it (p. i), particularly as contemporary discussions about the war reflect discussions about the Islamic Republic. Bajoghli and Moosavi present a much-needed interdisciplinary collection of essays that focus on a nuanced consideration of cultural production and the place of culture in conflict.

Kaveh Eshani begins the volume (Chapter 2) with an essay that examines the contemporary legacies of the Iran-Iraq war with an eye towards the discussions that have been silenced. Eshani utilizes Charles Tilly's model for how wars have been used to shape states to understand the contemporary state of Iran. However, Eshani notes some shortcomings of the model when considering the Iranian context. Tilly's model assumes that the "state" is a discreet sphere that can homogenize populations or shape a unitary society. However, post-revolution has not been characterized by unity, but instead, deep fragmentation and lack of consensus (p. 6). In addition, post-revolutionary Iran state institutions have been severely limited in their ability to address and manage the ever-changing social expectations of discontented segments of society (p. 6). What's more, the dominant narrative of the "Sacred Defense" aimed to silence alternative experiences and distinct perspectives, the result being a deeply felt and widespread resentment toward the war and the political establishment that exploits it (p. 6-7). Eshani concludes by stating that, "Reconciliation with this diverse legacy will require considerable commitment and material and institutional resources" (p.7).

Beginning with a nod to Charles Tilly's "war makes states" argument (p. 23), Eric Lob's essay (Chapter 3) examines the legacies of the Jehad-e-Sazandegi (Construction Jehad) in Iran's rural development projects (p. 1) and the intersection of war-making, rural development and popular mobilization in the state formation of the Islamic Republic (p. 23). The essay profiles the Construction Jehad, Construction Mobilization and the Trench Builders association that were instrumental to the process. Lob concludes that rural development was vital to the state formation of the Islamic Republic.

Amir Moosavi follows (Chapter 4) with an examination of the constraints of representing the war through the short stories of Ahmad Dehqan (p. 2). War fiction in Iran generally has adhered to the official narrative of "Sacred Defense." Moosavi finds that although Dehqan has been affiliated with the state, his works like *Journey to Heading 270 Degrees and I Killed Your Son*

do not adhere to the "Sacred Defense" narrative and also attempt to undermine that narrative (p. 43). Moosavi concludes that Dehqan's fiction has attempted to alter the representation of the war, which is significant since Dehqan comes from within the war-writing establishment in Iran, yet the narrative of the "Sacred Defense" still dominated the representation of the war in Dehqan's short stories (p.55).

Through an exploration of "new entertainment," Narges Bajoghli (Chapter 5) critically considers how pro-regime media producers use the framework of the Iran-Iraq war to construct understanding of masculinity and citizenship (p. 2). Bajoghli finds contemporary stories of the Iran-Iraq war are not narratives of the past but, more so, are stories that shape current imaginings of the Islamic Republic (p. 73). In aiming to direct the idea of what it means to be a "proper" man in the Islamic Republic, these stories demarcate the boundaries between those loyal to the Islamic Republic and the misguided youth (p. 73). By conjuring the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, pro-regime filmmaking serves to bring back the values of the revolution and also invoke nationalist feelings against other potential threats.

Finally, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam presents an appraisal of the, " 'Regime of thought' that precipitated and sustained the Iraqi invasion of Iran by 'contextualizing' the empirical facts about the war with a narrative that appreciates the impact of norms, images, institutions, and other invented cultural artifacts on international crisis situations". Adib-Moghaddam shows that the Iran-Iraq war was not inevitable but that there was cultural production that led to the conflict and sustained it (p.94). The author concludes by asserting that, " The war, in short, was not inevitable; it was in many ways imported from the invented political culture of Iraqi-Ba'athism, and perpetuated within anarchic spaces of international society; the war 'happened' and was made to function in that international cultural episteme" (p.94).

Originally published in *Middle East Critique* (2017) and also in *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* (2007), the book retains much of its character from its original publication as a journal. Unfortunately, this means that the book lacks a more complete introduction from the editors that fully sets the stage for the big concepts presented in the work nor for the individual contributions, each essay makes towards supporting and expanding on these concepts. Still, the work is unique and offers interesting and well-written perspectives and insights into cultural production in Iran that have not been fully explored in this way. This work will certainly benefit regional scholarship as well as research in a variety of fields like conflict management and international relations, but clearly also offers contributions, which could easily be applied in the fields of literature and rhetoric, anthropology, sociology and more.

Autumn Cockrell-Abdullah PhD
University of North Georgia
autumn.cockrell@ung.edu