

Jews. Whether this indicates, as Tolts suggests, “a strengthening of their Jewishness” (p. 221) remains to be demonstrated.

As is often the case with published conference proceedings, the essays in this volume are of uneven quality. Problems of translation and editorial lapses often frustrate attempts at comprehension and may cause some readers to direct their attention elsewhere. In some essays, the further one moves away from contemporary events, the less reliable is the analysis. Despite these shortcomings, the volume succeeds in emphasizing the diversity of Caucasia and in making a strong case for the importance of understanding local contexts in making sense of events in the region. If there is a single lesson to be drawn from the volume, it is that when secular nationalist projects fail in the region, Islam has proven to be an attractive alternative for an array of state and nonstate political entrepreneurs.

ABDULKADER H. SINNO, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008). Pp. 352. \$39.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

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Over the past three decades Afghanistan has endured almost nonstop political violence; interventions by two superpowers; seemingly endless competition between an ever-changing array of militarized groups motivated variously by ideology, ethnicity, religion, and personalistic leadership; and a persistent inability of central governments to exert effective control over any significant part of the territory. Abdulkader Sinno’s book, employing a combination of organizational models and typologies with an extensive analysis of the strategies and circumstances of many of these actors, is an ambitious and innovative effort to make sense of these dynamics. The work is important for its depth of research and for demonstrating that many aspects of Afghanistan’s apparently chaotic situation can be understood using general principles of organizational theory.

The core of the analysis—about two-thirds of the book—uses an organizational model influenced by the older approaches of Herbert Simon, James March, Alfred Sloan, Mancur Olson, and others. Sinno convincingly shows that this theoretical approach—which typically focuses on corporate bureaucracies—can inform our understanding of the behavior of bands of opium-growing Kalashnikov-carrying bandits. This is not because corporations are necessarily like bandits but rather because successful bandits—as well as more complex and sophisticated militarized actors—face many of the same leadership, resource, and information constraints as corporations. The analysis is also clearly influenced by the eclectic application of organizational theory pioneered by the Indiana University “workshop” group of Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom, which takes what might first appear to be a very exotic and unique case and then shows it can be studied using a set of familiar analytical tools. Culture and history are important in determining the values of the parameters that influence behavior—and Sinno provides considerable detail in this regard—but behavior can still be understood according to general principles.

Three institutional characteristics dominate the analysis. The first is the level of centralization of the organization, whether highly centralized (the organizations of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and the Soviet, Taliban, and U.S. invaders), highly decentralized (almost everyone else), or at the intermediate level of patron–client relationships, which are ubiquitous in the region, and of village, clan, and tribal structures that have characterized

Afghanistan for millennia. These institutional characteristics interact with a variety of organizational requirements—for example, the need to coordinate activities, maintain control and discipline, and generate and preserve knowledge—to determine the capability, limitations, and sheer likelihood of survival associated with various strategies. Finally, Sinno finds that a core political/environmental variable, the availability of a safe haven, is a critical intermediary factor that affects many of the remaining characteristics.

The core organizational dilemma for insurgents, which had been noted as early as Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli, is that decentralized political opposition is highly resilient and difficult to suppress but limited in the overall resources it can coordinate. Greater centralization provides the potential for greater resources and control but carries the risk of rapid defeat. Groups in Afghanistan have employed a wide variety of organizational strategies, and although these are too numerous to assess exhaustively, Sinno discusses a broad set of cases from the period between the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the Taliban victory in the mid-1990s.

Individuals primarily interested in Afghanistan from the perspective of substate conflict will find much of relevance here. Through a thorough and well-informed analysis, Sinno generalizes the Afghan experience with respect to the major 20th-century theorists of insurgency, notably, Mao, Giap, Lenin, and Guevara, and to a number of canonical insurgency cases, including Algeria, Vietnam, the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, and the British counterinsurgencies in Malaysia and Kenya. Sinno also provides a series of counterarguments to simple explanations that attribute the dynamics of the Afghan conflicts primarily to external factors, whether Soviet political and strategic weaknesses or the U.S. *deus ex machina* of Stinger antiaircraft missiles.

The final three chapters of the book, although informed by the organizational analysis, do not apply the model in detail. The chapter on the success of the Taliban from 1995 to 2001 provides the first analysis of what is likely to be an important theoretical problem in insurgency studies for years to come: the relatively rapid and thorough Taliban victory in an environment where success had eluded the Soviets, their successors, and numerous internal contenders, followed by the group's even more rapid defeat by a low-cost and relatively ad hoc U.S. intervention in 2001. Simplistic explanations abound, often invoking nefarious schemes of Pakistan, al-Qa'ida, and possibly Saudi Arabia. Sinno systematically provides multiple lines of evidence against such explanations, sometimes by noting the contested nature of the underlying evidence or, more commonly, observing that similar approaches failed when employed earlier. Sinno's explanation of the Taliban puzzle, however, is not as theoretically complete as his earlier application of the organizational model, and more work could be done here.

The final qualitative chapter deals with the treacherous ground of the ongoing U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. There is no definitive date mentioned for when the manuscript was completed (this would have been a useful and costless addition to the preface), but it appears to be in late 2006. As such, the analysis—which is generally pessimistic—has held up quite well. Since that time, the United States has introduced some tweaks to its approach, mainly efforts to duplicate the largely successful U.S. stabilization of Iraq, as well as increased use of aerial drone attacks to assassinate insurgent leadership despite a very high cost in civilian casualties. However, Sinno's analysis would suggest that the U.S. effort has yet to truly adapt to the complexities of Afghanistan.

The final chapter—more of an appendix—is a quantitative, large total number analysis using logistic regression to study the survival and conflict outcomes for 111 organizations participating in 42 conflicts. Although I appreciate multimethod analyses, this probably would have been better left as a journal article, though it does at least weakly support the earlier model. However, there is an increasing consensus in the quantitative-methods community that in problems with highly diverse cases and strongly interrelated variables, the most commonly

used statistical methods provide only limited useful information, and this is probably a data set that awaits some more appropriate statistical or computational framework.

In summary, this book is both true to its original intent of providing a generalizable organizational approach to the past thirty years of war in Afghanistan and a very readable guide to the complexities of that conflict. Militarized political instability in Afghanistan has not gone away but simply moved around, as the dominant military power on the ground has shifted from the Soviets to the Taliban to the United States, and the local effects of that power are, as often as not, tenuous. As the United States approaches a full decade of having ground forces in Afghanistan with marginal progress at best, both the qualitative information and the organizational analytical framework should be of considerable interest.

MICHAEL R. FISCHBACH, *Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Pp. 376. \$45.00 cloth.

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The no-frills title of Michael Fischbach's impressive book aptly captures its content. Fischbach investigates the large-scale displacement of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa in the twenty years after the Israeli War of Independence, as well as more recent developments, to learn the fate of their individual and communal property. His central question is why international Jewish organizations and the State of Israel, which absorbed the majority of these Mizrahi/Sephardi Jews, have done little to press Jewish property claims against Arab states. The answer, Fischbach argues, is the Israeli policy of "linkage." Specifically, Israel has portrayed the flight of Jews from the Arab world and Palestinians from their former homes as part of an irreversible population transfer that occurred during and after the 1948 war. Israel's strategy has been to reserve the debt owed to Jews who were displaced from the Arab world for the negotiation of a final peace settlement with the Palestinians. At this time, Israel would argue that Jewish claims should be subtracted from damages owed to Palestinians or that the two cases of dispossession should cancel each other entirely. For their part, international Jewish organizations have generally respected and aided Israel's policy of linkage, rather than undertaking efforts to secure compensation from Arab states for their former Jewish residents.

Although Fischbach generally writes in an engaging style, he occasionally becomes repetitive and employs ineffective literary techniques (including lengthy paragraphs composed exclusively of questions). In his admirable quest for thoroughness, Fischbach sometimes incorporates material he would be well advised to omit. For example, extensive excerpts from letters consisting of arguments between Jewish leaders in Cairo and the New York-based Historical Society of Jews from Egypt over the fate of Jewish communal objects in Egypt draw the reader's attention away from matters of substance and toward petty (if amusing) personality conflicts. In addition, the organization of the book leaves something to be desired. Aside from a short introduction and conclusion, this substantial work consists of three lengthy chapters, which would more effectively present the author's argument if divided into shorter, more manageable units. *Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries* is likely to be of interest mostly to scholars of the Arab-Israeli conflict, because the book does not address broader theoretical debates that might attract a wider audience.

The dispersion of Jews from Arab lands was, as Fischbach notes, "a catastrophic denouement for the existence of Jews in the region where they had existed longer than anywhere else on earth" (p. 3). He begins his inquiry into the matter of Jewish property losses by examining