Opportunity costs of economic policy, as well as the complex shifts in the political landscape, have played a significant role in shaping the current economic climate. The historical context of these policies has been thoroughly analyzed, highlighting the importance of considering both the short-term and long-term impacts on the economy.


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Criticism can of course be leveled at the author. Some will find the methodology unusual, and would prefer a more conventional study. One could criticize the author’s sample. Why five and not twelve? Why only one woman? Why do all these Armenians have Dashnak sympathies and none is a Communist? Why has Yaghoubian not attempted to include Iranians of non-Armenian background in his social biography?

All of these questions are valid. However, this reviewer is reminded of a point he has often made in the past: that we cannot speculate about the identity of premodern ordinary individuals, because they left no written sources behind. All written material has been bequeathed us by the literate few, and represents their view of the world. If in the case of these five individuals, painstaking research has allowed Yaghoubian to form an even approximate idea of their stance vis-à-vis prevalent discourses of the Iranian nation, then as students of nationalism we must delve into this material and praise the effort.

To conclude, this book should be of interest to students of nationalism in Iran, the history of Armenian Iranians, and of course the highly understudied issue of minorities in the country. It is innovative and original, in addition to being highly informative, and in places even a pleasant read (not a given in this field). While nationalism studies may offer macro theories about the emergence and development of particular forms of nationalism, it very rarely attempts to seriously investigate how nationalism is lived, experienced, personalized, and expressed by individuals at the receiving end of identity formation. This is what Yaghoubian offers: a history from below that gives voice to ordinary individuals, because they left no written sources behind. All written material has been bequeathed us by the literate few, and represents their view of the world. If in the case of these five individuals, painstaking research has allowed Yaghoubian to form an even approximate idea of their stance vis-à-vis prevalent discourses of the Iranian nation, then as students of nationalism we must delve into this material and praise the effort.

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