

Afghani was, of course, a ‘political’ thinker and often tailored his views to his audience and context. His Arab disciples see him almost exclusively as a Muslim thinker, ignoring the incongruities of his career, such as his membership with the Freemasons. His Iranian followers, meanwhile, see Afghani as a “philosopher,” a descriptor that positions him firmly on the Enlightenment side of the debate against the orthodox dogma of religion. Similarly, Banai’s heavily truncated reference to Afghani’s diatribe against the Qajar monarchy—“The Reign of Terror in Persia”—as an example of his unequivocal anti-imperialism omits the more interesting section of the text, which interrogates why Britain did not intervene in support of Iranian rights. Collectively, these examples point towards a much more nuanced engagement with “liberal” ideas than many writers recognize. Banai, to be certain, has made a useful contribution to a neglected field, but much more work remains to be done.

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Teachers as State-Builders: Education and the Making of the Modern Middle East

Hilary Falb Kalisman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022). Pp. 288. \$90.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780691234250

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In *Teachers as State-Builders*, Hilary Falb Kalisman considers teachers as a social group with shifting status and changing relationships to the powers that be. With a focus on Palestine, Iraq, and Jordan, she examines the role of teachers during a time of tremendous political change, from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Mandate period to independence, or, in the case of Palestinians, dispossession or relegation to the status of second-class citizens with the creation of the State of Israel.

One of Kalisman’s major aims is to complicate the assumed links between nationalism and the spread of public education. She pursues this task by extending her analysis both into the past, examining Ottoman educational policies aimed at spreading public education, and into the future, exploring state-building and contemporary teacher labor organizing. Much of the literature on the politics of education in the post-World War I period has focused on the central role of teachers in the emergence of anti-colonial and nationalists movements. Taking the reader through multiple phases of educational expansion, Kalisman shows how the status and role of teachers changed with shifting political realities, yielding, at times, unexpected implications for their role in shaping political landscapes.

Chapter 1 examines the “imperial legacies” of educational policies, namely, the production of a relatively elite network of teachers Kalisman calls “roving teacher-politicians,” capturing both their physical as well as professional mobilities (p. 2). She argues that the high demand for teachers, as well as the varied and, at times, piecemeal fashion in which a public education program unfolded after the passage of the Ottoman Regulation of Public Education of 1869, afforded these early educators great flexibility and negotiating power vis-à-vis the Ottoman authorities. It was this foundation that led to the expansion of transnational networks of teachers that we encounter in the following chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the interwar period and the educational policies of the British Mandate. In these chapters, Kalisman addresses several key themes, including the making of an elite cadre of teachers and the dispositions that came with their status, the growing demand for education and the gendered



inequalities produced by Mandate policies, and the rural biases built into the unfolding educational system, which were most pronounced in the discrepancies between teacher-training colleges for the urban elite and those training “village teachers.” Indeed, one of the strengths of the book is the consistent attention to the hierarchies of gender and geography, which is threaded throughout the author’s analysis. While Kalisman tells a story about teachers as a social group, she reminds her reader that this group was not an equal one. Differentiation was central to processes of building an educational system from the start.

In these first few chapters, Kalisman builds her key argument about the politics of education, or, more aptly, educators’ politics. She offers three key interventions. First, Kalisman emphasizes the transnational nature of teaching in this era of nationalism. Not only did educators freely move across the mandates, where demand for them remained high, but so did textbooks and ideologies, including nationalisms that were transnational in nature, alongside the nationalisms of emerging states and anti-colonial movements. At the same time, Kalisman argues, by virtue of their employ, teachers contributed to the building of state bureaucracies, which would eventually lead to limiting their movement and political agency as teachers. Finally, Kalisman contends that being beholden to the powers that be, both colonial and local, tempered teachers’ political participation or the type of protest in which they engaged. According to the author, teachers had too much at stake in the evolving state system, in part, because in this earlier period they rarely stayed teachers for long, often taking up other positions in the civil service. Quite a few educators became high-level government officials. Thus, Kalisman argues, teachers did not typically put their lives on the line in nationalist struggles or other struggles for power, even if they supported these movements in other ways. They tended to play the role of intellectuals, writing and speaking, but were too beholden to the system, and too elite, to take up the struggle in more radical ways. Kalisman presents some evidence for this reality in Palestine, drawing on the example of the Arab revolt of the 1930s to show that teachers were not typically involved in armed struggle. She provides less evidence for this argument in Jordan and Iraq. While the argument about the ambiguous position of teachers is a strong one, the political work in which educators did engage was critical to this period. Although Kalisman acknowledges the importance of their contributions throughout the book, in putting forth this argument about their compromised positions, she sometimes minimizes these contributions.

With the end of the Mandate period and the processes of state-building and consolidation of power, teaching as a profession changed and education became increasingly standardized, controlled, and monitored. This did not happen overnight, and Kalisman maps these processes of increased centralization of curriculum, credentialing of teachers, and monitoring and inspection in Chapter 5. As teachers became more plentiful, teaching became more of a career, albeit a lower status one, with teachers staying in the profession for the duration of their working lives. As a result of this professionalization, Kalisman shows that teachers began to pursue their interests as a group through unions, which were often co-opted and repressed by government officials. Kalisman does an outstanding job of charting this shift in educators’ status and the shifting political realities that governed their work. The case of Palestine, notably, diverges significantly from that of her other two examples because of the settler-colonial nature of its state-building project. From the start, the new Israeli government created an educational system that was separate and unequal for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Palestinian teachers had a separate union and teacher appointments were made by the Israeli secret service, who also monitored the activities of teachers.

Another significant contribution is the treatment of teachers and their histories as a group. Kalisman “combines microhistories of individual educators with a collective biography of educators as a social group” to strong effect (p. 19). The reader sees the shifts in teacher status, networks, and organizing clearly through the story that is told here. I found it fitting that Kalisman should end the book with a brief epilogue that addresses the contemporary struggles of teachers and their unions in Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine. It is a reminder that, while the dynamic politics of pre-state educational institutions may be


no more, the labor conditions of teachers is a new kind of politics that continues to be central to understanding education and the state.

Kalisman draws heavily on the extensive secondary literature on education and nationalist politics in these historical periods, as well diverse archives, memoirs, syllabi, textbooks, and oral history interviews. The book also benefits from photographs that bring to life some of the actors and phenomena described by the author, as well as several tables that serve to quantify the scale of what Kalisman describes (e.g. teachers hired, budgets, teacher-student ratios). Clearly written and structured, *Teachers as State-Builders* is accessible to a diverse set of readers, including researchers and students. Anyone interested in the history of modern education will find this book illuminating, as will scholars interested in teachers and teaching as both labor and political work.

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The Art of Defiance: Dissident Culture and Militant Resistance in 1970s Iran

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Peyman Vahabzadeh's *The Art of Defiance: Dissident Culture and Militant Resistance in 1970s Iran* complements much of the work in his monumental 2010 sociological study of the People's Fada'i Guerrilla (PFG) movement, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fada'i Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971-1979*. In the current book, Vahabzadeh focuses on cultural production, examining how the arts imagined the possibility of the Iranian guerrilla movement before it occurred and mythologized the guerrillas' actions after the armed struggle had begun. *Art of Defiance* argues that revolutionary art at its core shares the same conviction with revolutionary politics that a better world is possible and, as such, revolutionary movements like Iran's in the 1970s cannot be properly understood without considering the convergence of the two. It is not a book about events in 1979, but rather about the dialectical relationship between cultural production and the militant resistance of the PFG, especially at the organization's height between 1971 and 1976. There are many ways to laud the book. One would be to say that anyone who *felt* the significance of Shervin Hajipour's 2022 song "Barayeh" before knowing how to articulate such significance will appreciate Vahabzadeh's central proposition that rebellious artworks capture the feeling, borrowing from Bob Dylan, that we "know something is happening here" well before we know "what it is" and, in doing so, they can actually *make* something happen, as was the case with the militant resistance in 1970s Iran.

The Art of Defiance is divided into five chapters, according to artistic forms. Poetry, song, fiction, and film each receives its own chapter (2 through 5, respectively), while Chapter 1 establishes a conceptual framework through which to consider how these arts shaped the PFG movement, the history of which Vahabzadeh examined in *A Guerrilla Odyssey*. The first chapter's theoretical rigor is one of *The Art of Defiance's* notable strengths. Any history of armed struggle in 1970s Iran will cite the attack by a group of guerrillas on a gendarmerie outpost in the village of Siahkhal in 1971 as a foundational event for the movement. What Vahabzadeh argues in the first chapter, however, is that concepts like "myth," "event,"