

and thematic approach informed by the vast literature on Islamist social movements would enable him to address broader questions. For instance, unlike many other Islamist movements elsewhere, the Kurdish Hizbullah has remained under the shadow of the Kurdish nationalist movement and its mass mobilization capacity has remained limited. Kurt seems to suggest that its extreme forms of violence played a role in tarnishing its reputation and curbing its appeal, but he does not address this puzzling situation directly.

Kurdish Hizbullah in Turkey is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on religious nationalism in Turkey. One of its main strengths is its analysis of Hizbullah's ideological and social practices, as narrated by its former and current affiliates. It will remain a point of reference for scholars of Kurdish and Islamist politics in Turkey. ✂

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JAMES MCDUGALL, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 358. \$28.49 paper. ISBN: 9780521617307.

Some of the best recent historiography on modern Algeria consists of sharply focused monographs probing overlooked and occasionally unknown aspects of colonial history. The profusion of memoirs, journals, and similar accounts by participants in the 1954–62 revolution, and the tumultuous decades after, sought to justify or rationalize the actions and choices of their authors, often asking their readers for personal vindication. Rarely did these personal accounts have a *mea culpa* attached. The sweeping breadth of the work under review in *A History of Algeria* rises above the historiographic norm and cements James McDougall's place as the preeminent historian of modern Algeria writing in English. His skillful use of both Arabic and French (as well as other western language sources); his familiarity with the contemporary Algerian literary, journalistic, and cultural scene (both high and popular); and his interviews with the principals about whom he writes create an unrivaled work of Algerian history.

McDougall's stated—and largely accomplished—goal is to understand and convey to his readers how Algerians have understood their own history, for which he offers an empathetic, but scrupulously honest evaluation. In contrast to many other surveys of Algerian history, McDougall avoids recounting a series of clichés and banalities: the unalloyed evil of the colonial period, the romanticized heroism and sacrifice of revolutionary

war, the symbolism of “Third World”-ism, the flawed construction of a social and democratic republic, and the dual horrors of Islamist and state-sponsored violence from the 1990s onward. True, all of these things had resonance in Algeria, but through painstaking research and thoughtful analysis, McDougall crafts an original and reliable account of Algerian realities.

McDougall’s detailed scholarship reveals an unrelenting theme in recent Algerian history. Successive political elites, decade after decade, sought to impose their visions of the state on a fragmented society for their own gain. In doing so, they practically ensured that they could only have a weak hold on power. He shows that historically Algeria’s ambitious political elites failed to draw all citizens or subjects into a centrally controlled entity. Although the post-independence period might suggest an end to Algeria’s fragmented power, McDougall presents irrefutable evidence that it persisted and persists still because of civilian efforts to offset elite fantasies of a state that assures them maneuverable power.

In elucidating and dissecting these relationships, *A History of Algeria* clearly shows that events in Algeria are not, and rarely have ever been, quite as they seem on the surface. There are never clear divisions of conflict and control. McDougall’s short vignettes of political, social, and cultural figures, featured throughout the narrative, are particularly effective in highlighting unanticipated personal or career choices. These insights into the decision making of Algeria’s most famous figures contributes a human depth to his work and serves to underscore his original research.

The structure of the book is straightforward, with a chapter devoted to Ottoman Algeria and another to the parallel development of two “incommensurable” societies of Algerians and Europeans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, neither of which could live with – or without – the other. In his scrutiny of a blossoming Algerian political consciousness and the roots of the revolution, McDougall formulates a rich account of Algerian thinking in the march toward independence. His narrative reconstruction of the war itself and its impact on later events in the 1970s and 1980s is uncluttered by tempting, but not always relevant, tangential forays. McDougall’s greatest contribution are his chapters looking at the period from cancellation of the 1991 elections to the present. By any measure, this is a devilishly difficult era to explain and analyze objectively, but McDougall avoids straying into the deepest weeds of Algerian political rivalries to give a concise account of a tragic time. He indicates the magnitude of blame shared by all parties involved in the turmoil, as uncontrolled violence in pursuit of personal vendettas reshaped the past (and its mythic construction)

into present conflict. This internal conflict often proved more costly and destructive than operations by pan-regional Islamist groups and so-called “jihadists,” although both are critical to in understanding the years around the turn of the twenty-first century.

This skillfully crafted and eminently readable volume will appeal to a wide ranging audience that includes scholars of the Maghrib and the broader Middle East, where Algeria and its neighbors continue, all too often, to be regarded as secondary appendages to the more intensively examined core. It will be especially attractive to those seeking a knowledgeable and professional account that distances itself from the journalistic and politically partisan publications which have come to characterize so many recent studies of Algeria. Happily, this work is also suitable for advanced undergraduate students (and, of course, graduate students seeking to ground themselves in the area and the field. ✂

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FARAH AL-NAKIB, *Kuwait Transformed, A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016). Pp. 296. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804798525.

In *Kuwait Transformed, A History of Oil and Urban Life*, Farah Al-Nakib tracks the urban development and historical transformation of Kuwait Town from its founding in 1716, to its rise as an independent port town engaged in trading, shipping and pearling, to the launching of its oil industry in 1946. With oil revenues, a massive state-led modernization project was initiated to make Kuwait ‘the best planned and most socially progressive city in the Middle East.’ This initiative would span the next four decades and would transform Kuwait in irreversible ways, altering the pre-oil urban landscape and social practices of everyday life in Kuwait. Al-Nakib recounts the history of urban space and how these spaces dictate social behaviors and interpersonal relations in Kuwait. She identifies the patterns and practices of everyday life in the former urban center of Kuwait Town, prior to oil, in the late nineteenth and traces their changes beginning in the early twentieth centuries, to the contemporary ‘modern’ contracted urban planning, suburbanization and privatization of post-independence era Kuwait.

The structure of the book is a well-organized and coherent eight chapters. The first three chapters discuss the pre-oil years and the different social and