


association with Zionism in the context of the broader Iranian consciousness. In his conclusion, Sternfeld posits, “It is rare in history that the interests of global superpowers, local political elites, and minority groups converge to serve all three communities equally. When one attempts to describe the moment of the Allied armies’ invasion in August 1941, however, this convergence of interests is the explanation that fits best” (122). This statement captures the significance of Sternfeld’s study and the urgency of reading 2,700 years of Jewish history alongside oral traditions, autobiographies, and “microhistories”—one of the strongest qualities of this book. As Sternfeld claims, reading these personal accounts and “microhistories” provides us with a new narrative that refuses to package history into a linear and fabricated record. In the postscript, Sternfeld aptly states, “And so, since the mid-twentieth century, the Iranian Jewish diaspora has formed communities in Los Angeles, New York, London, Tel Aviv, and other major cities. And still, ... the largest Jewish community in the Middle East outside Israel is in Iran. They choose to be there, and they choose to stay there, because Iran is their Homeland and Zion is their direction of prayers” (130). Overall I posit that, as the Jewish community has chosen Iran as their homeland for many centuries, it is about time that ethnic-religious minorities are incorporated as full citizens into the Iranian nation.

Between Iran and Zion is a welcome and much needed addition to the field of Iranian studies, particularly the study of Iranian nationalism and its minorities. It can be easily adopted in Middle East and Iranian studies syllabi, specifically in Jewish studies courses. It will be equally beneficial in history or cultural studies classes that cover various regions and countries in the world. Since the book also examines the networks of exchanges in the context of diaspora studies, immigration, minority studies, and transnationalism, it will be most beneficial in comparative diaspora courses.

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Call to Arms: Iran’s Marxist Revolutionaries; Formation and Evolution of the Fada’is, 1964–1976. Ali Rahnema (London: OneWorld Academic, 2021). Pp. 528. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781786079855

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Call to Arms is a definitive history of the Iranian People’s Fada’i Guerrillas. Theoretical frameworks are interwoven with historical narrative, and riveting anecdotes are tempered by conceptual discussions. In one volume, Ali Rahnema has compiled a comprehensive guide to understanding the ideology, activities, and legacy of the Fada’is. The experience is like reading an annotated book, guided by useful headings and context. Not intended for the casual bibliophile, it is truly an expert’s sourcebook on the Fada’is, meant for those who are studying the Iranian guerrilla movement, the evolution of Iranian Marxism, and how armed struggle took root in Iranian political discourse.

In around 500 pages, Rahnema examines the Fada’is from every angle, escorting the reader through their ideological and political histories: starting with the early stirrings of rebellion and struggle, covering their violent and non-violent actions against the Shah’s regime, and ending with their impact on the students’ movement of the 1970s. Divided into a whopping 29 chapters, the book not only presents the group’s activities and struggles;

it details the backgrounds of the key members. Rahnema humanizes the experience of the Iranian revolutionary, understanding that each member possessed different strengths and faced ethical and practical dilemmas. It is easy to become absorbed in the lives of these men—they are almost exclusively men. The few women members, such as Sheyda Nabavi and Nastaran Al-e Aqa, are not treated with the same level of detail, which speaks of the frustration of accessible information on female Marxist activists.

Chapters 1 to 16 focus on the party's ideological development, the conceptual debates surrounding armed struggle, the Fada'is' position within the Iranian Left, and the party's structural formation. Chapters 17 and 18 are devoted to the Siahkal operation, from its planning to its aftermath. Chapters 19 through 26 explain the changes in the movement's approach, its grappling with armed struggle, and how it breaks down, and is broken down, during their brutal suppression in the 1970s. The final chapters, from 27 to 29, examine the party's contribution to radical politics in Iran and its influence on student opposition to the Shah. Rahnema uses an array of sources to delineate the Fada'is' history, pointing to a close personal relationship with the movement and its members. The group's writings, memoirs, and newspaper clippings appear alongside archival documents, shedding light on new material that provides more details of their journey toward revolutionary struggle. The author's interviews with former members and their friends and associates provide an intimate layer to the sources at his disposal and give the narrative a tangible voice. Using research conducted over a decade, Rahnema's detective-like dedication makes this book an invaluable source of the Fada'is' account of their own history, revealing secret informers and hidden obstacles during the early years of their activities. When he is unable to provide background, Rahnema provides reconstructions of missions, drawing the reader in with rich embellishment. The level of detail renders the absence of visuals insignificant. Details of the planning for a bank robbery include a getaway car that is a light blue Peykan; colorful anecdotes reconstruct the mountain group's movements.

Based on its sources alone, *Call to Arms* is a significant contribution to our understanding of the lives and work of Iranian Marxists. With its depth and detail, it is an important counterpart to other major studies of the Fada'is, namely by Peyman Vahabzadeh.¹ Rahnema adds to our knowledge of the inner workings of the armed component of the Iranian Left, joining Ervand Abrahamian's studies on the Tudeh Party and the Mojahedin.² However, in an echo of Afshin Matin-Asgari's review of Vahabzadeh's of *A Guerrilla Odyssey*, *Call to Arms* presents some challenges.³ Both Vahabzadeh and Rahnema have opted to present the history of the Fada'is thematically, making it harder to seek out a straightforward narrative. Although a timeline is provided at the end of the book, Rahnema's use of Vahabzadeh's structure suggests that a history of the Fada'is cannot be written in any other way, with no clear beginning or end to their story.⁴ The raw history is presented, and the reader has the unique experience of witnessing the sources speak for themselves. This is how Rahnema approaches his work, "to avoid making judgments and passing verdicts" (452). However, this leaves the book without a defined argument or narrative, and the reader is left alone to navigate what information is unique and what challenges our understanding of the Fada'is. Rahnema joins Vahabzadeh in emphasizing how the meaning of armed struggle changed for the Fada'is, pointing to the dynamism of the movement but also the doubts

¹ Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fada'i Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

² Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

³ Afshin Matin-Asgari, review of *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fada'i Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979*, by Peyman Vahabzadeh, *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2015): 132–38.

⁴ Maziar Behrooz, "The Iranian Revolution and the Legacy of the Guerrilla Movement," in *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2004); Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

that existed on their path. Where Vahabzadeh limited his focus to Bijan Jazan and Mas'oud Ahmadzadeh, Rahnema includes the intellectual contributions of others, including Hamid Ashraf, Hasan Zia-Zarifi, and Amir-Parviz Pouyan. By devoting significant attention to other ideologues—never done in such detail before—he constructs the philosophical journey of the Fada'is toward armed struggle and the nuances between the different styles and visions of Pouyan and Ahmadzadeh. Despite the questioning and re-strategising, the conviction towards Marxist armed struggle appears consistent for Rahnema, which further contributes to the myth and romanticisation surrounding guerrilla fighting.

This attention to the theoretical aspect of the movement is sustained throughout. The reader is taken quickly from reconnaissance missions up mountains to an elaboration of theoretical dilemmas. Calling the trend for armed struggle counterrevolutionary adventurism, Rahnema situates this path to revolution within the discourse of the wider Left. Over the course of four chapters (6–9), he deftly situates the debate regarding armed struggle not only within the thought processes of Iranian Left-wing parties but also within orthodox Marxist doctrine. He concludes that “conflicting passages and references were quoted ad infinitum from the Marxist–Leninist pantheon, supporting opposite sides of the use and timing of armed struggle” (95). Drawing from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, Rahnema makes an important point about the difficulty of basing the Iranian Left's arguments for or against armed struggle on orthodoxy, but eventually shows ample evidence that violence was, in fact, permissible. In doing so, he challenges Abrahamian's assertion of how the Fada'is deviated from Marxism–Leninism and supports Matin-Asgari's argument that Marxism was an essential political paradigm, wide enough to accommodate different methods of resistance.⁵ Rahnema effectively demonstrates that the Fada'is learned from Asian and Latin American practices of armed struggle, placing their writings and plans side by side with the experiences of Che Guevara, Carlos Marghiella, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Zedong. He departs from presenting the Fada'is as a solely Iranian enterprise, noting that “discussions, debates and writings in Iranian revolutionary circles often echoed the experiences and ideas of international Marxist revolutionaries” (112). Echoing Stephanie Cronin's recent revisiting of the Red 1970s, Rahnema portrays the transnational character of armed struggle and how the Fada'i leaders and coordinators, from Jazani to Ashraf, drew inspiration from beyond Iran. In doing so, Rahnema, while he does not explicitly say so, continues to perpetuate the global narrative and anti-imperial stance of Marxist revolutionary struggle.

There is a sense of restoring the Fada'is' reputation throughout the book. Indeed, Rahnema concludes by declaring that the movement “popularised a national culture of contestation, defiance, and resistance, which gradually permeated Iranian urban society” (452). To this end, he presents a strong case for the Fada'is' political and cultural impact. Referencing Samad Behrangi's *Little Black Fish* throughout the book, Rahnema convincingly presents the Fada'is' literary credentials and close relationship to Tehran's literary circles.⁶ His description of the Fada'is' influence on opposition to the Shah is more generous and optimistic than Vahabzadeh's, citing Siahkal as a pivotal moment in galvanizing students against the regime. Although the Fada'is certainly had an effect, the Confederation of Iranian Students was influenced by many other factors and was drawn to other political organizations as well, from the Tudeh to the National Front.⁷

While his book is filled with new information and plenty of fresh details, Rahnema draws familiar conclusions: first, that armed struggle failed in Iran, despite the Fada'is' best efforts and intentions; and second, that it nonetheless influenced international opposition to the shah. However, Rahnema leaves us with an optimistic and revisionist approach in his

⁵ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 487; Afshin Matin-Asgari, “Marxism, Historiography and Historical Consciousness in Modern Iran: A Preliminary Study,” in *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

⁶ Kaveh Bassiri, “Whatever happened to The Little Black Fish?,” *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 5 (2018).

⁷ Afshin Matin-Asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2002).

presentation of the Fada'is as a movement of "hope and liberation" (452). He has masterfully told the Fada'is' story, including their writings, their successes, and their failures, leaving readers with the impression of the Fada'is as serious, brave, influential, and ideologically driven patriots. *Call to Arms* restores their story.

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From the Kur to the Aras: A Military History of Russia's Move into the South Caucasus and the First Russo-Iranian War, 1801–1813. George A. Bournoutian (Brill, 2021), ISBN: 978-90-04-44515-4.

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Despite their horrendous human and material costs, wars have failed to attract enough academic interest. Wars created or disrupted the world order and played a crucial role in generating new polities, relations and treaties. For example, the First Russo-Iranian War, which is the topic of George Bournoutian's *From the Kur to the Aras*, not only led to new types of relations and treaties, but also a new balance of power in Qajar Iran.

In the style of a traditional military historiography, Bournoutian's captivating story describes in extensive and vivid detail the battles that led to the Golestan Treaty (1813), providing a blow-by-blow account across eight chapters, five appendices, and 28 maps. Benefitting from Russian and Iranian primary sources and archival material, the book deconstructs the popular belief that Fath-ʿAli Shah and the Qajar dynasty were careless, fearful and weak in both their fight against Russia and their attempt to maintain Iranian territories in the South Caucasus. The war was not an easy win for Russia, nor was it a total defeat for Iran; in fact, during the entire war period, neither had the power to decisively defeat the other. Although Crown Prince ʿAbbas Mirza was in charge of the Iranian army, the shah himself directly participated in breaking the Russian siege of Yerevan in 1804 and supervised the repel of a Russian attack through the Caspian Sea in 1805, which intended to capture Rasht. However, the shah's reign was still not firmly established when war with Russia broke out, and thus he was unable to stay at the front for long due to internal problems. Nevertheless, even if he could not directly participate in the battles, he always attempted to camp near the border of the Caucasus with his special forces. In the war's final stages, the shah ordered his two elder sons, Dowlatshah and Adelshah, to assist ʿAbbas Mirza.

While there is no doubt of the Russian military's superiority in terms of tactics and equipment, the Iranians' fierce resistance, the Caucasian tribes' almost permanent uprisings (such as those of the Lezgis) and the Caucasian khanates' desire for autonomy and frequent, fear-driven shifts in allegiance left the war's fate undecided until the last moment. Iranian gains were meager but crucial to ensuring their hold on Yerevan and posing a constant threat to Georgia. The Qajars, however, both failed to embark on a joint expedition with the Ottomans, who were also at war with the Russians, and were unable to benefit from Napoleon's successive defeats of Russia in Europe.

Bournoutian's book begins with a background of Iran-Russia conflicts and disputes over the Kingdom of Georgia from the Safavid period, and discusses how Georgia plunged into uncertainty after the fall of the Safavids (1722) and deaths of Nader Shah (1747) and Agha