

The book draws upon the theory of cultural trauma, as well as the literature on collective memory, narrative, and political symbolism. In what has by now evolved into a research paradigm, cultural trauma is applied here in the analysis of official responses to crisis. The performance of authority in such situations as the ones highlighted in American history is shown to be central to the management of crisis and as well as consoling the suffering of the populace. The book is full of insight into the way the past is made present, especially in political rhetoric, while at the same time making a strong case for the usefulness of the notion of collective memory as a living force. In making this case, the author returns to the sociological classics, most particularly Weber and Durkheim, revealing once again their continuing relevance, as well as more contemporary literature. The book will be of interest to historians, for whom the notion of collective memory is even more controversial, political scientists, and sociologists well beyond those specializing in historical and comparative analysis.

Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments, and Martyrs, by **Tamir Sorek**. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. 318 pp. \$90.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780804793926.

RANDA B. SERHAN
American University
serhan@american.edu

Palestinian Commemoration in Israel is a brilliantly researched, yet difficult read. Whether one is sympathetic to the young state or to its Palestinian minority population, this book is a testimony to the intertwined and contested projects for both the Israeli state and its non-Jewish citizens of Palestinian descent. The focus is on Palestinian efforts to create a narrative of their history through "collective memory" in individual accounts and in public representations, yet the Israeli state's responses come under scrutiny, at times explicitly and at others implicitly.

Tamir Sorek takes us on a six-decade in-depth journey of a people's desire to resist erasure, to share a sense of being Palestinian

with a larger community across generations, while vying for equal membership in a state that defines any commemoration as a threat to its existence (p. 116). In page after page, Sorek documents the grueling terrain Palestinian Israeli citizens must navigate to maintain a sense of history without jeopardizing their already precarious position vis-à-vis the state and Jewish citizens. Concomitantly, they try to maintain a shared identity with Palestinians across borders but find it foreboding and in turn are perceived as "less" Palestinian by those in the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora. Palestinian Israelis often, but not always, err on the side of self-censorship and cautious commemoration. There are numerous attempts by groups like the Arab segment within the Communist Party to take on the state directly, or some Islamic groups or the Sons of the Village to insist on a nationalist Palestinian narrative, but their ability to garner widespread Palestinian support is very limited. It took even the Sons of the Village 50 years to declare in a rarefied instance, "Your [Israel] Independence is our Nakba [catastrophe]" in 1998 on the anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel (p. 71).

Sorek argues that cautious commemoration stems from an instrumental desire to avoid reprisal from or gain favor with the Israeli state and public, one that ultimately leads to fragmented, localized, and communal tributes to martyrs and Palestinian identity. Palestinians opt to place any monuments away from the Jewish Israeli public gaze and distance themselves from the Palestinian armed struggle, yet this does not stop Israeli state institutions from intervening or preventing certain endeavors and events. The reader is left with a vivid and rich understanding of what Sorek promises in the introduction, namely a case for proclaiming Palestinian citizens of Israel as the extreme case of both a "'trapped' minority and a colonized people" (p. 13). In fact, he states that this Palestinian population engages in more self-censorship (diminished with time) than Palestinians elsewhere.

Clearly, the author is cognizant of the challenges such a thesis faces conceptually and politically, for he starts his historical analysis in the early twentieth century during the time when the British controlled Mandate Palestine (the territory of modern Israel and the

West Bank and Gaza) and uses multiple theories and modes of data collection and analysis to tell this story. He covers almost one hundred years of history, with a brief gap between 1948 and 1956, through archives, Arabic and Hebrew newspapers, interviews with over 90 Palestinian and Jewish commemoration decision-makers, popular poetry, ethnographic fieldwork, a national survey, and review of numerous Israeli public-opinion polls. Theoretically, he relies upon Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Ernest Gellner, among many others. The work is a culmination of 15 years of research from and within Israel. Each chapter rigorously explores contestations over a historic date, commemoration of local victims, a massacre, language use, or participant lists.

Sorek, with great skill and precision, reveals the complexities of the actors and circumstances involved in the rise and disappearance of certain commemorations. In the absence of a national state-endorsed narrative or mythology and under a blocked educational system, Palestinians in Israel find themselves either “forgetting” important events or ignoring others that the larger Palestinian population deems significant. There seem to be an endless number of potential dates for the political calendar and notable individuals who would fit into the “martyrology” of Palestinians, but a commemoration decision is rarely made at any unified level within Israel, let alone across its borders. Two cases in point are the first martyrs linked to a Palestinian struggle, executed in 1929 by the British authorities (Jamjum, al-Zir, and Hijazi), and the 1948 Nakba, the year over 750,000 Palestinians left or were expelled from Mandate Palestine. For Palestinians outside of Israel, these two historic episodes are significant in defining the beginning of the Palestinian struggle for independence and their dispossession, respectively. In Israel, both are virtually absent. Sorek is careful to point out that there were private remembrances, but public ones were avoided for fear of antagonizing Jewish citizens and the state, which viewed these events as a menacing threat to Israel’s integrity. Some Palestinian officials went further by choosing to celebrate the 1948 War of Independence on the basis that the creation of Israel was an anti-colonial project that

benefited all. Again, Sorek alludes to an instrumentality borne of limited choices.

Over time, Palestinians in Israel developed a compromised political calendar that was fairly spread out across the population, often with the assistance of Israeli citizens or activists. The champion on the Israeli end throughout most of this history was the Communist Party. The Communist Party already belonged to the Knesset and allowed the pre-1948 Palestinian Communist Party to join it. Notwithstanding tensions and a split in the party in the 1980s, the Communist Party was the single actor that opened the greatest space for Palestinian citizens to voice their collective identity and, more importantly, to do it as Israeli citizens vying for their civic rights. It isn’t clear that any commemoration would have occurred without these Jewish Israeli allies.

In the book’s last chapters, we learn how embedded Palestinian identity is in Israeli society (even mourning the death of Yitzhak Rabin), and yet how as of 2014 they are at a juncture where they may lose many of the liberties they had won. Ultimately, Sorek ends with the cautionary and grim projection that with the changes being made to Palestinians’ ability to legally participate under Israeli law, “the forms of struggle of Palestinian Israeli citizens might become more similar to the forms of struggle of other Palestinians” (p. 240).

Palestinian Commemoration in Israel is an important read for scholars and students interested in the construction of collective memory by a people within and against a state. Although the author does a good job of arguing against a comparative study, a few additional comparisons to other disenfranchised minorities and young countries would have illuminated the significance of this case. Similarly, a deeper analysis of how the state incorporates or manages this minority population in its national construction would have enriched the conclusions. For instance, how is the military rule over Palestinian Israelis from 1948 to 1966 explained? And does the banning of Palestinian legal participation not only challenge Palestinian self-representations, but also Israel’s ability to maintain its identity as a modern democracy? Despite the book only alluding to such important issues, the

many merits of this book will position it as an important study in collective memory and as a great contribution to the literature on Palestinian identity in particular.

Guns across America: Reconciling Gun Rules and Rights, by **Robert J. Spitzer**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 277 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780190228583.

SCOTT MELZER
Albion College
smelzer@albion.edu

Armed with newly available data on early American gun laws and a sharp analysis of the intersection of individual gun rights, governmental authority, and the crafting and interpretation of the Constitution, political scientist and constitutional scholar Robert Spitzer challenges what he finds are key myths and misinterpretations offered by gun rights supporters. In *Guns across America: Reconciling Gun Rules and Rights*, Spitzer attempts to wrest from the NRA and its allies the false narratives they extol, substituting in their place empirical evidence documenting a history of American gun control, modest rates of gun ownership, and, until the controversial 2009 D.C. vs. Heller 5-4 Supreme Court decision, virtually no judicial support for an individual-rights interpretation of the Second Amendment.

Spitzer's previous work has often focused on the Second Amendment and the gun debate. *Guns across America* provides new data along with original synthesis and analysis of gun laws, gun rulings, gun culture, and gun politics, past and present. Scholars have previously written about some American myths of gun culture, ownership, and violence, but Spitzer's latest work is a game-changer: it eviscerates the idea that contemporary gun control policies and proposals are anti-American, as gun rights advocates would have us believe.

The book's jacket provides the key argument and contribution: that gun regulations are "as American as apple pie." Spitzer shares new evidence that not only have there been a wide array of gun control laws dating to colonial America, but today's laws are much weaker than many of those established

and enforced in previous centuries. Even gun registration and gun bans were not uncommon—including in sparsely populated states like Montana and Kansas and in the thick of the so-called "Wild West." As part of his thesis that current gun regulations challenge neither citizens' rights nor any kind of American gun culture, Spitzer also argues both that regulating assault weapons poses no threat to gun rights and that expanding self-defense via Stand Your Ground laws perverts our history.

People purchase guns for hunting, sport shooting, fun, and self-defense. Gun rights organizations and their deeply committed supporters also purchase firearms for a more symbolic reason: to send a warning to the federal government that individuals have the right and are willing to fight tyrannical actions. Spitzer leans heavily on John Locke's writings to understand governments' roles in protecting and threatening freedom. He argues that tyranny is best understood as a government violating its contract with the people (e.g., via slavery, violence), and the majority of the people must agree that this is what's occurring. A minority of the people accusing the government of tyranny for lesser reasons falls well short of this definition. Further, it threatens not only the legitimacy of the government, but the freedoms that government helps ensure for its citizens.

Spitzer's summary of political philosophy and American democracy challenges the view that contemporary gun control laws come anywhere close to approaching the definition of tyranny. Citizens in any society relinquish some freedoms as part of the social contract to ensure that most other freedoms are protected. Chief among the freedoms that all governments restrict is the use of force. When societies lose control of the use of force to individuals or non-governmental groups, anarchy, violence, and coups soon follow. Armed rebellions against a representative government are not exercises in freedom, Spitzer argues, but treason. The American Revolution, held up by gun rights groups as Exhibit A of the need for an armed citizenry, bears no resemblance to contemporary American society because the American colonists lacked democratically elected representation.