administrative capacity. Is there always a trade-off between bureaucratic loyalty and effectiveness? Can electoral incentives under democracy reduce subnational variation in bureaucratic capacity and effectiveness? Is it possible to overcome historical differences in subnational state capacity (e.g., through decentralization)?

In answering these questions, future works will undoubtedly benefit from the solid theoretical and evidentiary foundation built by Hassan. This foundation and the important wider contributions to the study of bureaucratic management, state capacity, and the politics of co-optation and control under autocracy and democracy make Hassan's book a necessary read for students of comparative politics.

Inside Tunisia's al-Nahda: Between Politics and Preaching. By Rory McCarthy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 234p. $99.99 cloth, $29.99 paper.

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How can one explain al-Nahda's transformation from an Islamist movement to a political party that declares its commitment to the democratic rules of the game and even to the principles of Tunisian *laïcité*? Since Rachid Ghannouchi's famous May 2016 declaration that al-Nahda is a group of "Muslim democrats who no longer call for political Islam" (p. 1), this question has loomed large in the literature. For some, this process resembled the moderation of Christian Democratic parties in Europe: because of their inclusion in politics, al-Nahda leaders realized that their religious rhetoric offered very little to solve the day-to-day problems of Tunisian citizens and reevaluated the organization's policies and priorities, eventually deemphasizing its religious roots and accepting the importance of the median voter. For others, this transformation had more to do with the lessons al-Nahda drew from its experiences under repressive authoritarian regimes: its decades-long exclusion from political processes and fear of isolation and marginalization led al-Nahda members to embrace a nonconfrontational approach vis-à-vis the state, aiming to avoid future repression and maintain its organizational existence. Finally, for the rest, this new political identity was a result of the organization's interactions with other political actors: al-Nahda's desire to differentiate itself from violent Islamic groups, combined with its decision to form coalition governments with secular parties, increased its tolerance and encouraged its members to promote a pluralist political agenda instead of an exclusively religious one.

Based on his extensive fieldwork in the Tunisian city of Sousse, Rory McCarthy offers an alternative hypothesis: al-Nahda's controversial decision to separate its religious mission, *da'wa*, from its political activities was actually "a product of long, strategic, and intellectual debate" (p. 1) that its members have engaged in since the early days of the movement. Through a detailed analysis of "insider meanings and perspectives" (p. 12), McCarthy traces this ideological and behavioral transformation from a preaching circle to an organized Islamist movement (*Harakat al-Ittijah al-Islami*; MTI) and, later, to a political movement (*Harakat al-Nahda*) consisting of "Muslim democrats." Avoiding idiosyncratic explanations, McCarthy examines the tension between the religious and political ambitions of the organization and demonstrates the importance of local-level politics for its survival and resilience, especially in the absence of a social service network to fall back on. While doing so, he discusses al-Nahda's ability to adapt to the changing political opportunity structures in the country and challenges some of the most common assumptions regarding Islamist radicalization and moderation processes along the way.

McCarthy starts his analysis by noting that the scholarly works that focus only on al-Nahda's upper echelons or official statements tend to overlook the organization's ideological struggles, deep structural and intellectual crises, and differences of opinion, even though it is "as heterogeneous as other social movements," if not more fragmented (p. 124). That is why he turns his attention to the rank-and-file members of the movement, interviewing 85 former and current Nahdawis about their involvement in the organization and their ideological motivations; he supplements these interviews with the accounts of "dozens of other non-Islamist politicians, human rights activists, and academics" (p. 10). By analyzing the lived experiences of Islamist activists and situating al-Nahda within the broad context of Tunisian politics, McCarthy first explores the origins, organizational structures, and mobilization strategies of "the Islamic Group" (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*), which was based on "faith, morality," and an "imagined solidarity of shared values" (p. 155). This core, he argues, remained intact even when the splits and conflicts over the politicization of the movement created additional pressures for the movement and its members throughout the 1980s. It also proved to be a durable and valuable source of motivation and resilience when the movement's clash with the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes culminated in two decades of repression, as well as exile and lengthy prison sentences for the Nahdawis themselves. Nevertheless, although this subculture preserved the movement during the years of repression, it also widened the gap between individual members, who wanted to "transform daily practices and understandings of faith" through "good behavior and morals" (p. 127), and al-Nahda leaders, who sought legitimacy and security through political participation. That is why the movement's ambiguous, utopian, and doctrinally flexible "comprehensive conception of Islam" turned out to be a double-

edged sword. It drew a wide range of supporters from different backgrounds, brought them together, and allowed Nahdawis with different priorities to "coexist within one organization" (p. 167); at the same time, however, it fragmented the organization and demobilized a large group of supporters, especially after the party elites' prioritized their political work over their *da'wa* outreach so as to adapt to the demands of Tunisia's democratic transition.

McCarthy's sample is understandably limited—the difficulty of establishing trust and gaining access to the community necessitated the author's reliance on snowball sampling of the Nahdawis in Sousse. Perhaps for this reason, the narratives of Islamists who radicalized over time (or abandoned al-Nahda's project for more extremist alternatives) do not appear in his otherwise comprehensive study. Similarly, the perspectives of Islamist women (either as political agents or as victims of repressive policies) do not constitute an essential part of his analysis. Nonetheless, McCarthy addresses these issues to some extent by gathering "multiple, overlapping accounts from different perspectives" (p. 11) and cross-referencing their narratives with official party documents and written sources. To deal with a potential social desirability bias, he also spends a lot of time with his interviewees and makes it hard for them to give statements intended to hide the "true" intentions of the movement or offer some retrospective rationalizations of their actions.

In the end, McCarthy's chronologically organized chapters not only explain "how" the inherent tensions within al-Nahda's Islamist project affected the group's political trajectory, but also demonstrate "why" its strategic adaptation preceded an intellectual revision during the most recent critical juncture. Avoiding the false dichotomies of "hardliners versus moderates" and "veterans versus young generations," the author skillfully shows that the rational responses to opportunities can cost the organization its unity and coherence. In that regard, the book resembles Robert Hefner's *Civil Islam* (2000), which examines the evolution of Muslim modernist movements in Indonesia. Unlike Hefner, however, McCarthy gives much more causal weight to everyday experiences, informal institutions, and th sense of belonging that al-Nahda provides for its members, even though the ideas and strategies of Rachid Ghannouchi, as well as the movement's clearly delineated procedures and decision-making processes, seem to have played a big role as well.

McCarthy's highly informative and engaging book is a welcome addition to the growing body of research on Islamism/post-Islamism, providing a thick description and significantly advancing our understanding of religious movements, Islamist parties, and the relationship between religion and politics. His ethnographic research does not generalize based on the experiences of this specific group of Islamist activists (nor does it aim to), but it still provides a solid foundation for future research on diverse and changing Islamisms in Tunisia and elsewhere. Scholars interested in the validity of "one size fits all" theories of moderation can draw important lessons from the book, examine the patterns of behavior in different political contexts, and investigate whether McCarthy's arguments travel beyond this specific case in Tunisia.

Asymmetrical Neighbors: Borderland State Building between China and Southeast Asia. By Enze Han. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 256p. $99.00 cloth, $29.95 paper.

State Formation in China and Taiwan: Bureaucracy, Campaign, and Performance. By Julia C. Strauss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 292p. $84.99 cloth, $25.99 paper.

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The past decade has been a productive and innovative one for the scholarship on state-building. In contrast to the now classic, so-called bellicist approach to state-building developed in the Western European context, recent contributions have emerged from experiences outside of Europe. Enze Han's *Asymmetrical Neighbors* and Julia Strauss's *State Formation in China and Taiwan* are representative of this new and welcome trend not just in their empirical focus on East and Southeast Asia but also in their exploration of causal factors that have received insufficient attention in the Eurocentric literature. Going beyond commonly examined domestic causes of state strength and weakness, Han analyzes how interstate conflict and cross-border ethnic relations in the borderlands of China, Myanmar, and Thailand affected these states' ability to exercise control at the subnational level. Strauss, in her comparative study of China's Sunan region and Taiwan in the post-1949 period, redirects our attention away from the question of *why* strong states developed in some places but not others to that of *how*. In particular, she examines how state-builders in both territories employed political performances to authenticate and legitimate the new political order in the face of skeptical and even hostile populations.

Han begins his investigation with a critique of the state-building literature: with the state as a whole often constituting the unit of analysis, much of our theoretical understanding of state-building has focused on causal processes and outcomes at the national level. This is especially so in the bellicist approach, where the need to mobilize resources for warfare is identified as the key impetus for innovations in national-level administrative and political institutions that led to the development of the modern (Weberian) state. This perspective may have indeed been appropriate for analyzing state formation in Europe, given