

site within which change is inevitably produced. It is also a site of suffering where everyday actions are frequently characterized as “self-defeating” (p. 47) both in terms of their impacts on individuals (e.g., failing to ensure adequate nutrition) or in terms of how these actions operate to maintain the status quo and deliver profoundly undemocratic outcomes. Economic survival for the poor involves forms of accommodation that buttress the power of the privileged and uphold unjust economic and political and economic systems. Certainly, possibilities for change exist within Thawngmung’s account, but they come with a heavy dose of reality regarding the ongoing reproduction of unequal social relations and exploitive economic practices. Thus the “resilience and resourcefulness” of Myanmar’s citizens “may be undermining the potential to advocate for broader and more comprehensive political reform or preventing the emergence of democratic values that could help sustain Myanmar’s transition to a more open political environment” (p. 17).

In addition to these key contributions this book does much more. The first chapter, for example, will be of interest to anyone seeking to understand how the current political economic structures of life in Myanmar have been shaped through a history of British colonialism, military rule, repression, and conflict, as well as the partial nature of the country’s recent economic and political transition. Throughout the book, attention is placed on the importance of the very different ways in which economic survival is experienced by different groups, with particular attention to gender and ethnicity. The book also challenges its readers to avoid the tendency to celebrate dynamic and “resilient” local communities marked by bonds of trust and mutuality. Although “community” frequently offers the poor social support, it is also a source of wider societal pressures, such as spending vital income on weddings and funerals.

As with any book, there were certain issues that reflect my own academic interests that I would have liked to have seen explored. Specifically, the global political economy is almost entirely absent from the analysis, and yet the everyday economic actions examined in this book are shaped not only by the specifics of economic mismanagement and political repression of the Myanmar state but also by global pressures that create new forms of exploitation and adverse incorporation; for example, workers in global supply chains. Similarly, everyday activities such as microfinance lending and accessing international donor aid connect people into the global economy in new ways. Recent work on everyday political economy and/or ethnographies of neoliberal transformation in Southeast Asia do explore these themes, so perhaps this book could be usefully read alongside such studies (Joseph Nevins and Nancy Lee Peluso 2009; Juanita Elias and Lena Rethel 2013).

The book provides invaluable insight into the political, economic, social, and psychological dynamics at play

within the everyday coping strategies employed by the urban and rural poor in Myanmar. Poverty, rising household debt, authoritarianism, and the predatory state all cast long shadows over everyday life in Myanmar. A focus on the coping strategies that have emerged in response to these pressures provides important insights into a range of behaviors that ultimately support forms of authoritarianism and limit the possibilities for wider political change. In undertaking this important task, Thawngmung has further consolidated her reputation as one of the leading scholars working on the contemporary politics of Myanmar.

**Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya.** By Mai Hassan.

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— Ken Ochieng’ Opalo , Georgetown University  
koo6@georgetown.edu

Rulers are powerless without administrative structures that enable them to effectively project their authority, implement their preferred policies, and deter or punish non-compliance. But reliance on bureaucrats within state administrative structures exposes rulers to the risk of agency loss. In other words, as part of the principal-agent relationships that characterize administrative apparatuses, bureaucrats (agents) may use their power to advance their own interests or undermine the authority of the ruler (principal). This means that, to protect their authority and power, rulers must strategically manage administrative bureaucracies with a view to limiting the risk of agency loss. In *Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya*, Mai Hassan brilliantly explores the strategic choices that rulers make to ensure effective social control through bureaucratic administrative structures. Such control enables rulers to stave off both elite-level and popular threats to regime stability. The book challenges existing accounts of how leaders solve principal-agent problems within state administrative structures and makes important contributions to our understanding of the strategic management of state bureaucratic structures under autocracy and electoral democracy, the drivers of subnational variations in state capacity, and, more generally, the politics of state-building and governance in multiethnic societies.

Hassan observes that rulers are seldom able to solve the problem of agency loss by exclusively relying on the selection of “good type” (i.e., loyal) agents. In most contexts, administrative bureaucracies tend to include individuals whose policy preferences and political loyalties may diverge from the ruler. This is because, in the process of co-opting potential elite challengers, rulers typically incorporate their supporters as well into state

bureaucracies. Such supporters often have competing loyalties and pose the highest risk of agency loss. These dynamics are particularly important in countries with geographically concentrated and diverse populations. Under these conditions, rulers' ability to maintain effective administrative control relies on the strategic deployment of bureaucrats across subnational jurisdictions. Such deployments often consider the demographic characteristics, political affiliation, and/or policy preferences of both bureaucrats and resident populations.

With material evidence from Kenya, Hassan argues that, to balance the need for bureaucratic loyalty and the co-optation of fellow elites (and their mass supporters), rulers judiciously post and shuffle administrative bureaucrats conditional on three factors: (1) alignment between the ruler and administrative unit, (2) the loyalty of the bureaucrats, and (3) embeddedness between bureaucratic administrators and the resident populations within an administrative unit. For example, co-ethnicity or significant political support for the ruler may make an administrative unit aligned to the ruler, while a loyal bureaucrat may be a co-ethnic or reliably co-opted non-co-ethnic. In the same vein, embeddedness captures the relationship between bureaucrats and the populations within their jurisdiction. Embeddedness may arise due to duration of tenure at the same posting or co-partisanship/co-ethnicity between the bureaucrat and the administrative unit's resident population. With these factors in mind, leaders post the most loyal administrative bureaucrats to units from which compliance is of absolute necessity and assign embedded bureaucrats to areas they want to co-opt or that are already reliably loyal. Stated differently, when faced with the challenge of balancing co-optation and effective coercive control, rulers do not necessarily have to deploy a uniform national administration but can vary bureaucrats' types and capabilities conditional on the demographic characteristics of administrative units. The end result may be subnational variation in state capacity.

*Regime Threats and State Solutions* is an extremely well-researched book. Hassan marshals an impressive array of data and methodological approaches to support its core arguments. This includes micro-level data on 2,000 bureaucrats and 15,000 postings, more than 100 elite interviews, and impressive archival research carried out over 16 months of fieldwork in Kenya. The core of the empirical analysis focuses on the Provincial Administration—an administrative apparatus responsible for projecting presidential power and authority, law and order, and general coordination of the functions of the national government's ministries and agencies at the subnational level.

In chapters 3 and 4, Hassan outlines the origins and evolution of the Provincial Administration. Founded under colonial rule, the administration's bureaucratic architecture survived decolonization and became the unchallenged backbone of the Kenyan state. At different

levels—provinces, districts, divisions, locations, and sub-locations—Kenyan presidents deployed administrators both to facilitate service provision and enforce social control. Hassan also summarizes the specific elite and mass threats faced by different presidents in Kenya and how they responded to them using the Provincial Administration. By specifying the incentive system motivating the interests and actions of presidents, fellow elites, bureaucratic agents, and the masses, these chapters clarify the ways in which Kenya's ethnic geography influenced different presidents' strategic management of officers of the Provincial Administration.

Chapters 5–8 focus on the successive presidencies of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi, and Mwai Kibaki and the specific ways in which each strategically managed high-level officers of the Provincial Administration. Kenyatta faced threats from co-ethnics over land scarcity and non-co-ethnic defectors from the ruling party. Moi, whose rule spanned both autocratic and competitive multiparty eras, faced threats largely from non-co-ethnics. Finally, Kibaki's biggest threat came from an emboldened opposition and the resulting high-stakes electoral competition. Across the three periods, Hassan presents evidence in support of the claim that the deployment, shuffling, and promotion of officers of the Provincial Administration were driven by concerns over their loyalty, embeddedness with resident populations, and each president's political alignment with subnational administrative units. In aligned jurisdictions, presidents tolerated embeddedness as a means of increasing the effectiveness of policy implementation. Meanwhile, bureaucrats with suspect loyalties (such as co-opted non-co-ethnics) were likely to be deployed in areas where their noncompliance would not pose significant threats to the president's authority. The book also shows instances whereby bureaucrats who veered off the equilibrium path faced presidential sanctions. The fact that Moi's administration spanned both autocratic and democratic eras allows Hassan to examine bureaucratic management strategies across regime types. Overall, the consistency of the evidence presented throughout these chapters strongly supports the core argument of the book. Furthermore, the insights highlighted in each case readily travel to other contexts beyond Kenya, as compellingly described in the book's conclusion.

Hassan has written a book that is bound to ignite debates and more research on bureaucracies, public service provision, and state-building in multiethnic societies. In particular, it raises questions about the relationship between Kenya's administrative bureaucracy and other institutions of state (such as the police and individual line ministries), how democratic consolidation and increased electoral accountability may affect the evolution of the principal-agent relationships within state administrative structures, and the political and policy consequences of persistent legacies of subnational variation in

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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— Buket Oztas , Furman University  
buket.oztas@furman.edu

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 Ghanouchi'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-