***Why Alliances Fail: Islamist and Leftist Coalitions in North Africa*. Matt Buehler. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2018. xiv + 288 pp. $75.00 cloth, $33.00 paper.**

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In *When Alliances Fail*, Matt Buehler performs an impressive feat of scholarship which widens our comparative perspectives on the politics of North Africa and the logics of cooptation. Engaging in both cross-national and subnational fieldwork across Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia—logging nearly 200 interviews in Arabic and assembling new quantitative datasets in the process—Buehler considers the puzzle of alliance formation and failure between Islamists and left-leaning political parties in the region. Making use of variations across multiple levels of politics, Buehler highlights the endurance of left-Islamist alliances in Tunisia as well as the short-lived nature of similar alliances in Mauritania and Morocco. In Morocco and Mauritania, left-Islamist alliances fail—and significantly weaken the momentum for democratic reforms in the process—because regime strategies of cooptation pick off either Islamist (in Mauritania) or leftist (in Morocco) elites and voters from the alliance. Buehler explains the success of cooptation as largely dependent on the kinds of social bases that loyalist, leftist or Islamist parties configure for themselves. In what is one of the major contributions of the book, Buehler argues that opposition parties in North Africa, regardless of their specific ideology or history, make themselves vulnerable to cooptation when they compete with regimes for rural social bases. Rural voters and elites are significantly more likely to be mobilized by loyalist party appeals and politics that are structured through clientelistic-like tribal interests as opposed to religious or ideological claims. Left-Islamist alliances, as a result, are more likely to endure in places like Tunisia, where the urban context dominates party mobilization and where regimes pursue more coercive strategies that increase the perception among opposition parties of a common, existential threat.

At the national level, and helped along by the title of the book itself, Buehler's portrait of contemporary North African politics would seem

to confirm the success of competitive authoritarian policies throughout the region in blocking democratic reforms. Regimes who employ divide-and-conquer-through-election strategies, particularly in rural areas, have been more resilient to democratization than more coercive authoritarian regimes who have baldly tried to jail and block opposition efforts in densely populated urban environments.

At the same time, however, beneath this level of cross-national comparison, Buehler spins a different story, one about subnational alliances resisting, surviving, and working together for the common good, and building effective, if local, bases of democratic opposition in the process. These chapters which "toggle down" the level of analysis make for the most compelling reading of the book. In them, Buehler's story-telling gets thicker. He describes the "micro-dynamics of cooptation" that drive the strategic calculations of opposition parties to sometimes work with competitive authoritarian regimes. But he also reveals how opposition parties can successfully resist cooptation in complex and effective ways.

And my only criticism (or, better, wishlist for Buehler's next book) would be to amp up these sections of the analysis. In them, Buehler gives fuller shrift to the agency, ideas, and place of these organizations and movements, seeing them as more than rational actors working within patterns determined by political structures and specific forms of institutional constraint. And in doing so, he raises questions about the deeper meanings of these actors and their actions which the book points towards but does not answer: What is the nature of rural politics in North Africa? Why are rural voters organized the way they are? What explains regime and opposition parties' decisions to develop urban or rural social bases in the first place? And if both letist and Islamist parties are equally vulnerable to cooptation, what explains the relative success of Islamist parties over this period in the region?

This last question would be of particular interest to scholars of religion and politics and the readership of this journal. While the intellectual and religious development of these political parties, in fact, and their visions of politics lay just outside the margins of the book, they seep into the stories in surprising ways, especially at the subnational level. In a remarkable interview with Abdelilah Benkirane, for example, the former Islamist Prime Minister of Morocco who emerges as a sympathetic protagonist in Buehler's account, he describes his party in the following terms, "We are a conservative party with an Islamist ideology but we are progressive reformists, like leftists. We are leftists who want to preserve traditional Islamic values. We're not like traditional conservative notables"

(p. 128). In similar passages on Tunisia, Buehler hints at an ongoing development of a common vision of political liberation—which he does not discard as mere strategic rhetoric—and that enabled oppositional alliances at the local level, in trade unions and city politics, to turn down "short-term gains to secure meaningful reforms" in favor of good governance and democracy (p. 158). These stories of positive politics, which Buehler unearths from the larger themes of cooptation and alliance failure, have important implications for the habits of everyday political life in the region, the transformation of religiously-inspired political movements, and the courses of action all that makes possible for opposition parties facing authoritarian regimes. In other words, while it offers a convincing theory of cooptation, *Why Alliances Fail* also offers new analytical lenses to think about opposition parties beyond these logics alone, and to contemplate the limits of contemporary authoritarianism in North African politics.

Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming. By William Connolly. Duke University Press, 2017

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Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming is William Connolly's eighth monograph, another master class on the intersections of political theory, democratic systems, and the moral challenges of late modernity. Given its tremendous scope and its theoretical density, is difficult to pin down the book's precise topic: it broadly engages "the Anthropocene" as this term provokes questions about established concepts in social and political theory. The Anthropocene is a term used by many scientists and social theorists to indicate that the current geologic period is characterized by the dominance of human beings as the primary drivers of change in the Earth's systems. Attempting to see the planetary crisis from outside the "dominant stories" that typically guide public debates and political institutions, Connolly scrutinizes