makers believed (rightly or wrongly) that Iran, having the dubious status of a "vital" U.S. interest, was vulnerable to Soviet aggression. In that environment, the country's petroleum assets were valued not simply as a commercial commodity but more importantly as a strategic resource crucial for rebuilding Western economies and for fighting a possible war with the Soviet Union. Reasonable consideration of this fact would have produced a more well-rounded picture of a complex episode—one that is otherwise described very effectively in this account.

BENOÎT CHALLAND, *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude* (London: Routledge, 2009). Pp. 288. $148.00 cloth, $49.95 paper.

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The evolution of Palestinian civil society has been the focus of several rich and informative studies over the past decade or two, by Rema Hammami, Jamil Hilal, Salim Tamari, Amaney Jamal, Manal Jamal, Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, Sara Roy, and others. Not surprisingly, scholars have highlighted the powerful impact that both international donors and local political actors have had on the process. Benoît Challand's *Palestinian Civil Society* is a further contribution to this literature—and a very valuable one it is too.

Challand begins his examination of the topic by exploring the potentially problematic nature of "civil society" as a concept, both empirically and theoretically. He also stresses the diversity of Palestinian associational life. This is a useful corrective to the common tendency among both scholars and policymakers to focus on the sorts of formal nongovernmental organizations most associated with donor support, while underexamining the activities of Islamist charities, trade unions, local community self-help groups, and other groups. He also discusses the potential biases and historical/cultural specificities embedded in many definitions of civil society, and hence the dangers posed by an uncritical use of the term. Ultimately he proposes an understanding of the concept that emphasizes relative autonomy from the state as a central defining characteristic. While this certainly serves his purposes in the book, it is not an especially marked departure from previous studies. Part of the challenge here is to avoid the temptation to reify civil society as a concrete "thing" with natural and evident boundaries, and instead to recognize that "civil society" is an artificial, socially and analytically constructed category, the utility of which depends on whether it helps us to understand broader social and political processes.

The main section of the book moves on to discuss the ways in which donor funding and priorities have shaped and reshaped the evolution of civil society in Palestine from the 1990s to the present. As donor resources became increasingly important to local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Challand suggests, many of the latter became increasingly disconnected from their supposed local constituencies. This is a convincing argument, and echoes similar findings by others.

The author's research is based in part on a rich array of interviews with donors and NGOs. Unlike many studies, this one is sensitive to variations within the donor community, both between different donors and over time. It would have been useful, however, if it had also made use of the quite extensive data on Palestinian public opinion, including polling by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre, Fafo, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in

Geneva, and others, on patterns of associational membership and activity, attitudes to NGO performance, and popular perceptions of donor assistance. These might have helped to triangulate the role of autonomous associational groups in Palestinian society and provided additional evidence of the disconnect between some of the groups and their claimed social constituencies.

In the penultimate chapter, the author explores the political, sociological, and ideological exclusionary power of "civil society," highlighting the ways in which both donors and NGOs can privilege some groups and voices over others. While useful, this theme would benefit from further development. In addition, the author could have engaged with Amaney Jamal's ground-breaking work on the ways in which participation in civic associations can, under some circumstances, promote attitudes that help to sustain acquiescence with an authoritarian political order.

Challand's thoughtful study is strongly recommended as worthwhile reading to scholars working on Palestinian politics, civil society, foreign aid, or "democracy promotion" in the Middle East. It also deserves to be read by donor officials. Unfortunately, given the scarce time that such officials have to work their way through a couple of hundred pages of social science prose, its policy impact is likely to be more limited than one might wish.

AMANEY A. JAMAL, *Of Empires and Citizens: Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012). Pp. 296. $75.00 cloth, $27.95 paper.

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Amaney Jamal is one of the pioneers in the production and sophisticated use of public opinion survey data for the study of the politics of the Arab world. So it is no surprise that this book on Arab democracy prospects in a period of American hegemony yields important insights based on careful analysis of public opinion data. Few in the field will dispute her point that the United States, despite its rhetorical turn under the George W. Bush administration, has not been a supporter of democracy in the Arab world. But she challenges conventional wisdom on the mechanisms through which the United States bolsters authoritarianism: these are not limited to security commitments and economic aid.

Jamal posits what we might call the rational Arab voter, who sees her economic interests tied up with the increasing integration of her country into the American-led world economy, and who sees the stability provided by American military hegemony as absolutely essential for international investment and economic development. That voter likes democracy (Jamal's own data and that of other surveys overwhelmingly find that Arabs support democracy), but worries that elections will bring to power anti-American groups, particularly Islamists, who will put her country's relationship with the United States at risk. As a rational actor, she privileges her economic interests and supports the authoritarian status quo. Given this rational Arab voter, the United States, in Jamal's view, appears to support authoritarianism not only from the top down. Rather, the system it leads, and largely created, offers rational incentives for some citizens to support authoritarianism from the bottom up. It is not only state–society relations that determine the prospects for democratization and political change, but also the position of a state in the international economic and security hierarchy.