

Among Sassoon's eight authoritarian republics only Tunisia gets somewhat of a passing mark in terms of its democratic transition, although many of the prerevolutionary personalities embedded in the two previous regimes of Habib Bourguiba (Burqiba) and Zayn al-'Abidin bin 'Ali are today very much in positions of power and authority, beginning with the president himself, B'éji Caïd Essebsi (Baji Qa'id al-Sibsi).

While Sassoon's study does not generate new theories on Arab authoritarianism, it does provide the kind of rich and detailed account, supported by firsthand experiences, on how the architecture of despotism is conceived, constructed, and commanded across a range of putatively different regime types that all share the same goal of holding on to power at all cost. The book reads less as cogent political analysis than as sharp-eyed storytelling communicated in lively and jargon-free prose. One cannot help but be impressed by the scope, depth, and variety of primary and secondary sources in multiple languages that the author consulted.

Probably the broader intellectual and policy take away from Sassoon's study is the degree to which political authoritarianism has endured or revived not only in the Arab republics and monarchies but throughout the world. Although autocratic power has evolved into different institutional forms and has employed diverse cooptive strategies of control, whether as competitive authoritarianism, pure despotism, one party dictatorship, illiberal democracy, or totalitarian democracy, it remains in its essence the greatest threat to liberal democracy from which no regime or political system is completely immune, whether in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, or the United States.

KRISTIAN COATES ULRICHSEN, *Qatar and the Arab Spring* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Pp. 256. \$54.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780190210977

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The curious rise to prominence of Qatar has remained unexplained and misunderstood for a number of years. The scholarship of the Persian Gulf tends to focus on the role of empire in the region's evolution, on the two regional hegemon (Iran and Saudi Arabia), or on discrete "nonpolitical" topics such as energy or Islam. This lacuna has been relieved by several works on Qatar (and, indeed, on the other smaller Arab Gulf states) in recent years, but none are more fluid and readable than Kristian Coates Ulrichsen's *Qatar and the Arab Spring*.

First and foremost, it is gratifying to see that Ulrichsen has not attempted to shoehorn Qatar and its politics into a generic model of some description or otherwise contort its fascinatingly personalized politics into a theoretical straitjacket. Instead, one gets the impression that he has adopted a country-first approach, looking to Qatar to assess the roots of its policies and the rationales underpinning them. Subsequently, he underpins his conclusions using rigorous but appropriate theoretical tools—the state branding and soft power literatures complement a framework based on the conception of managed multidependency—that lends the book academic heft.

Given the vibrancy and flexibility of Qatar's foreign policy, it is a testament to Ulrichsen and his scholarship that his book remains relevant two years since its publication. The epilogue leaves the reader in spring 2014, which allows Ulrichsen to include two key events: the succession of Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in June 2013 and the withdrawal of the Saudi, Bahraini, and Emirati ambassadors from Doha in March 2014. The cornerstone of the book's ability to remain relevant is its savvy grasp of the nature of policy-making in Qatar.

Ulrichsen argues that "a pragmatic acknowledgement of the changing policy-making arena" reveals that the small state enjoys an "absence of stronger countervailing political or public

opposition to government authority (as in Kuwait or Bahrain) or sub-national intra-regional complexities (as in Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates)” (p. 34). Added to this mix were two leaders with singular visions and forceful personalities: Hamad bin Khalifah al-Thani (emir from 1995 to 2013) and his right-hand man Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani (foreign minister from 1992 to 2013 and prime minister from 2007 to 2013). These men enjoyed a surprising latitude with which to make policy. Hamad bin Jassim was also Qatar’s key businessman and the former chief of the Qatar Investment Authority in addition to his political roles. Ulrichsen’s characterization of him as an “archetypal ‘state capitalist’” is apt and informative (p. 81).

Ulrichsen acknowledges that for a small state, in particular, decisions are not made in a regional or international vacuum but are crucially enabled (or not) by the external milieu. Placing Qatar’s foreign policy in the lead up to the Arab Spring in this context highlights just how fortuitous many regional and international occurrences were that facilitated the state’s rise to prominence. For example, under the two Hamads, Qatar held leadership roles in the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (2002–03); the Gulf Cooperation Council (2002); and the G77 nations plus China grouping at the United Nations (2004). It also held the leadership of the Arab League for “an unprecedented second term” in 2011–12 (p. 135), and the state secured a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations from 2006 to 2007. Even considering Qatar’s concerted policy thrust to obtain such positions, it remains fortuitous that the state did not face stiffer competition to obtain these leadership roles. Ulrichsen notes time and again that Qatar often benefitted, until the Arab Spring, from a pliant international atmosphere that facilitated its actions.

Even domestically, through no discernible active plan of its own, Qatar’s modern historical record of hosting an array of exiled Islamists proved to be highly fortuitous. This “gave Qatar two forms of leverage in states undergoing the Arab Spring unrest: individual connections through Doha-based exiles... and institutional influence as the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a powerful player in the political transitions” (p. 103). The downside of having a foreign ministry and foreign policy so dominated by Hamad bin Jassim was that the institution itself sorely lacked the necessary capacities and level of professionalization to conduct Qatar’s complex foreign policy during the Arab Spring (pp. 79–80, 92–94). This overly privileged the roles of Qatar-based exiles who became crucial links and conduits for Qatari support to Islamists throughout key Arab Spring countries (Chapter 5).

This overarching conceptualization of Qatar’s foreign policy as the result of elite-driven preferences reliant on ad hoc local and international contacts filtered through an initially fortuitously pliant international sphere is thus able to account not only for Qatar’s failures during the Arab Spring, but also for its subsequent foreign policy. A foreign policy directed by but a few individuals dependent upon a motley array of exiles was never going to be able to deal with the Gordian complexities of fraying societal bonds and rising tensions that erupted during the Arab Spring. Nor would Qatar—a small state (albeit a rich one) with a sporadically powerful soft power punch in the form of Al Jazeera—be permitted to simply wade into more and more conflicts as their *modus operandi* and its resultant failures became increasingly apparent during the Arab Spring. A rich, dilettante of a state seeking to financially induce mediation around the Middle East during the 2000s is one thing. But Qatar’s reputation quickly shifted during the Arab Spring to that of an autocratic state sanctimoniously seeking to inject ousted Islamists back into societies throughout the Middle East under the rubric of supporting “what the people want,” an altogether less palatable, more divisive prospect.

Reflecting on *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, Ulrichsen has ably delineated the mechanics and logical motivations underscoring Qatar’s rationales for involving itself so deeply in the regional tumult. But there is a sense that some of the more irrational motivating factors remain elusive. Without interviews with the protagonists, we can only speculate as to the influence of Hamad bin Khalifah’s pan-Arabist tendencies as a young man and how they shaped his reaction to another mass movement that spread across the Arab world. Until we can read Hamad bin Khalifah’s or

Hamad bin Jassim's memoirs (and perhaps not even then), *Qatar and the Arab Spring* provides, overall, as compelling an answer as we are likely to find uncovering the core motivations for Qatar's activism during the Arab Spring.

F. MICHAEL WUTHRICH, *National Elections in Turkey: People, Politics, and the Party System* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015). Pp. 376. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780815634126

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The center–periphery dichotomy as articulated by Şerif Mardin has been one of the most popular lenses through which to read political struggles in modern Turkey. According to this perspective, sociocultural cleavages pitting a secular-modernist camp against a religious-populist camp has been the most persistent source of conflict in the country since the late Ottoman period. Michael Wuthrich's *National Elections in Turkey* offers an emphatic critique of this dichotomy. In his study of electoral campaigns and results since the 1950 elections, Wuthrich aims to show how identity-based considerations have often been secondary to economic and contextual factors in shaping voter behavior and party strategies. He presents a chronological approach to Turkish elections that is more attentive to historical contingencies than generalizations based on the center–periphery dichotomy. At the same time, his alternative explanatory framework highlighting the importance of factors other than political identities in shaping the dynamics and outcome of electoral contests is rudimentary and underdeveloped. In particular, he does not provide much insight about the increasing ideological polarization in Turkey especially since the 2011 elections.

In his attack on the center–periphery dichotomy, Wuthrich pursues several strategies. First, he questions the stability of left–right positioning in Turkish politics and suggests that the criteria of this positioning has evolved considerably over time. In his view, the Turkish electorate and parties are less ideological than typically assumed. Next, he downplays the importance of religion in shaping both voter behavior and electoral campaigning. Third, he goes back to the foundational texts of Edward Shils, Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, and Şerif Mardin that conceptualize the center–periphery dichotomy. In an engaging, albeit occasionally redundant discussion, he shows how these conceptualizations cannot be directly applied to Turkish politics. Finally, and less compellingly, he argues that the Turkish electorate has a strong national orientation transcending cultural differences.

The main empirical analysis is presented in the second part of the book on Turkish electoral history in five eras: 1950–65, 1965–80, 1983–91, 1995–2007, and post-2011. In each of these periods, different issues are politically salient with distinctive characteristics in electoral competition. While the ways in which Wuthrich separates these periods are rather subjective, his periodization is an effective antidote to scholarly approaches that seek to explain Turkish politics according to predetermined and persistent ideological cleavages. He also rightly points out that mundane and local considerations such as expectations of tangible benefits have been more important for the voting behavior of many Turkish citizens than ideological commitments. Starting with the early 1990s, success in municipal administrations and access to and control of media have tremendous influence over electoral outcomes. Nonetheless, his narrative mostly overlooks the role of the military and high judiciary in restricting electoral competition especially between 1980 and 2007.

While Wuthrich's critique of the center–periphery dichotomy as a master narrative of Turkish politics is convincing, his own empirical analysis lacks rigor and appears outdated in terms of methodological sophistication. The main empirical sources are province-level electoral results and