

policy background, past political posts, and education can all explain appointment, meaning that many individuals are potentially *ministrable*. Given that experiential criteria are fungible, “we cannot be confident that experiential criteria are actual grounds of appointment” (p. 130). Instead, selectors (and the media) use experiential criteria retrospectively, to frame and even justify selection after the fact. This crucial insight challenges conventional principal-agent understandings of cabinet formation, which assume that selectors choose the objectively best person for the job.

Second, permissive rules about ministers’ affiliation and prescriptive rules about representation actually govern cabinet formation. Few formal rules constrain prime ministers or presidents in cabinet selection. Selectors use this wide latitude to appoint ministers based on affiliation, drawing from their personal networks, like university drinking clubs. Permissive norms about affiliation overwhelmingly favor men, but run up against prescriptive norms that cabinets should reflect the country’s political and social cleavages. For example, Canada and Germany have strong, informal rules that cabinet members should represent demographics such as race/ethnicity, region, language, and religion, making gender an easy criterion to add. Women have made the most inroads in cabinet in these two countries, as well as in Chile and Spain, where legacies of dictatorship raised the value of representation based on gender. Valdini’s inclusion calculation resonates here as well. Where rules about representation are informal but institutionalized, women ministers are not incongruous, and men selectors reap benefits from including them—and experience costs when they do not.

Third, *Cabinets, Ministers, and Gender* illuminates that rules matter above and beyond institutions and ideology, because different concrete floors cannot be mapped onto presidential versus parliamentary systems or left versus right governments. Nor do women selectors necessarily choose more women ministers. For example, Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet explain that Australia’s Julia Gillard received less deference as the first woman prime minister, which constrained her ability to act on feminist principles and appoint women. By contrast, Justin Trudeau enjoyed significant discretion: as an empowered male selector in a context with strong representational criteria, he could reap significant benefits for making and keeping his parity cabinet promise. Once again, women’s inclusion depends on men’s calculated gains.

Both Valdini and Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet achieve the impressive feat of drawing out men selectors’ strategies without ignoring women’s political agency. The authors all highlight how women politicians and activists work to impose costs on men selectors who overlook talented women aspirants. Together, their work invites scholars to consider how women’s inclusion on men’s terms matters for long-term change. Just as the first woman in cabinet eventually led to the second or third,

women legislators succeeded in making weak quota laws stronger. Men elites do not selflessly dismantle the patriarchy, but they may miscalculate their ability to retain control. For understanding how men elites preserve but also transform the gendered distribution of political power, *The Inclusion Calculation* and *Cabinets, Ministers, and Gender* are excellent, timely, and required reads.

Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment, and Mourning in Syria. By Lisa Wedeen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 272p. \$82.50 cloth, \$27.50 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592720003138

doi:10.1017/S1537592720003138

— Lama Mourad , Carleton University
lama.mourad@carleton.ca

Building on her decades of research on Syria, Lisa Wedeen’s most recent book, *Authoritarian Apprehensions*, tackles one of the most challenging types of research: the non-occurrence of a phenomenon. In this case, Wedeen asks why so many Syrians, specifically the large mass of the population who did not directly or materially benefit from the regime, resisted the temptation to rise up against Bashar al-Asad and his regime, even as protests spread throughout the country starting in 2011.

As Wedeen demonstrated so adeptly in her first book on Syria, *Ambiguities of Domination* (1999), the regime of Hafiz al-Asad (which Bashar inherited at his father’s passing in 2000) was sustained in large part through practices of performative obedience. The public dissimulation she identified, which became widely known as the politics of “*as if*,” pushed our understandings of authoritarian resilience beyond apparatuses of state violence, for which the Syrian regime was also infamous. *Authoritarian Apprehensions*, too, pushes readers to think beyond materialist explanations to understand how the regime of the junior al-Asad secured the quiescence, if not the outright support, of so many of its citizens during this critical period. Here she argues that the regime has maintained its power through “ideological interpellation” (drawing on Althusser)—when a subject is hailed through moments of ritual affirmation that they simultaneously recognize and are produced by (as subjects)—of large swathes of its population that succeeded in making the status quo, and ambivalence, more appealing than possibilities of change. This focus on the “ambivalent middle” distinguishes Wedeen’s work in important ways from the main thrust of research on challenges to authoritarianism, which generally either focuses on outright opposition or core loyalists.

One of the notable aspects of this book is the way in which it masterfully weaves together and advances a wide range of literatures across subfields and disciplines—from debates in comparative politics on authoritarian resilience, and ethnic and contentious politics more broadly, to contributions in political theory and sociology on the

power of ideology and political judgment. Temporally, the book begins with Bashar al-Asad's rise to power and the development of what Wedeen terms "neoliberal autocracy" (chapter 1)—characterized by a turn toward some elements of market liberalism while, importantly, "cultivating desires for commodities, fostering new ambitions of upward mobility, and producing individual philanthropic programs envisioning citizens' empowerment in ways that presume their limitations" (p. 32). This set of ideological productions and practices—epitomized by images of the first family and especially First Lady Asma al-Asad as sophisticated, urban, and even cosmopolitan—were particularly effective in reinforcing desires for order and calls for gradualism, rather than revolution, among the upper and middle classes in Damascus and Aleppo in the first year of the uprising. Each of the following chapters takes on a separate set of ideological forms that, for different groups and over time, come together to shape the response of the "ambivalent middle" (what came to be referred to as the "gray people" or *al-ramadiyyin*). Chapter 2 spotlights the role of humor, primarily in television serials but also in online series; chapter 3 turns to the oversaturation of news and informational media sources; and chapters 4 and 5 situate the functions of mourning and fear, respectively. As she did in her first book on Syria, Wedeen demonstrates how the examination of sites of cultural production reveals critical insights about the formation of complex attitudes and norms held by people whose political preferences and behavior can seem indiscernible to outsiders.

Although one can find a great deal to engage with in each of this book's chapters, I want to focus on a few main contributions that are particularly potent for our time. First, Wedeen's analysis of the foreclosure of the conditions of political judgment in Syria is instructive for other contexts where polarization is increasingly characteristic of politics. Rather than relying on the denial or censoring of information, Syria provides a cautionary tale of how "an excess of information and accelerated conditions of dissemination [are] exploited for authoritarian political gain" (p. 81). In addition to the more widely established mechanisms through which information overload and the dissemination of counterclaims can produce what Wedeen refers to as "silenced publics," with people seeking out information that reaffirms their priors, her analysis draws attention to an overlooked and arguably more challenging consequence: "conditions of generalized uncertainty make it easy for people to find alibis for *avoiding commitment to judgment at all*" (p. 79; emphasis added). This process fundamentally privileges the status quo, even in contexts where "action might otherwise have seemed morally incumbent" (p. 80).

Second, Wedeen's analysis of the seductive power of neoliberal ambitions of the "good life" in sustaining support for the status quo, particularly among the urban middle and upper classes, begs the question of the interplay of material and ideational factors. As Wedeen shows,

purely economic and class-based arguments fail to capture the varied choices of many segments of Syrian society. Arguably, the economic openings ushered in by Al-Asad in the early 2000s likely had demonstrable effects on people's assessments of their own potential. However, as the conflict wore on, these images receded in favor of other potent ideological forms, though never truly disappearing. As the economic situation in Syria deteriorates rapidly at the time of this writing, despite the reduction in hostilities, the "good life" may be as elusive as ever. Will alternative ideological forms be developed to maintain the politics of disavowal—reflected in the recurrent phrase in the book of "I know very well yet nevertheless..."—as international sanctions, rapid inflation, and internal fractures within the regime pose growing challenges to the potential for order? These questions are ever more important within Syria as well as beyond, as the world faces one of its most turbulent periods under the strain of a global pandemic—and potential challenge to the neoliberal order—in the modern era.

The book not only provides an analysis of the ideologies that sustain the position of "the ambivalent middle" (as well as certain elements of the opposition and loyalists) but also points to alternative spaces for discourse that "embrace the ambiguity of the situation ... without giving up on judgment and political intervention as such" (p. 104). One notable example taken up in the book is the Syrian art collective Abounaddara, which posts weekly short videos online of complex, multidimensional, and nonsensational moments of Syria and Syrians. The question remains, however, whether and how these liminal spaces (which "interpellate" a limited set of audiences) can serve as incubators of profound challenge to the dominant ideological forms.

Finally, at a time when scholarship on Syria is rapidly growing in political science, even as the country itself remains inaccessible to most researchers, this book demonstrates the richness that can be achieved with deep contextual knowledge and ethnographic insights that go beyond the country's most recent history. The research for this book also took Wedeen beyond Syria's geographic boundaries, as she followed the paths of many of its citizens. As such, it provides an exemplar of sustained multisited ethnography and discourse analysis. The book is an invaluable contribution that will undoubtedly shape debates moving forward.

Organizing against Democracy: The Local Organizational Development of Far Right Parties in Greece and Europe. By Antonis A. Ellinas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 294p. \$99.99 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592720002947

— Trevor J. Allen , Central Connecticut State University
allenjtj@ccsu.edu

In *Organizing against Democracy*, Antonis Ellinas meticulously profiles the Greek Golden Dawn, while providing supplemental analysis of German and Slovakian extreme