

their sense of nationalism rather than feminism; they chose to prioritize unity and equality across all Egyptians, rather than focus on the more divisive question of gender (p. 163). Feminist and nonfeminist women activists alike were hesitant to promote women-specific issues at a time when “the nation” and presenting a “united front” were at stake as twin pillars of the uprisings. Allam starkly illustrates this feature by recounting interviews in which protesters and local pundits distanced themselves from feminism as an ideology and also intimidated feminists’ perceived connection to the Mubarak regime—especially in the chapter titled “*Intu bito Suzanne*” or “You are Suzanne’s Clique.” Here, Allam refers to the popular notion that Egyptian feminists were in league with Suzanne Mubarak and her husband’s disingenuous brand of feminism for international consumption. Many of the interview participants figured that a “citizen” rather than a “feminist” frame was sufficient for their purposes and couched their choice in terms of the sense of equality and solidarity they experienced standing shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in Tahrir Square. However, even the relative freedom of Tahrir Square was heavily circumscribed: the same women activists and protesters reported experiencing harassment outside of the bounds of the square itself from police and male protesters alike (pp. 105–15 discusses the “absence” of sexual harassment). Tellingly, female participants still asserted they “did not want to disrupt unity” (p. 90), while also recognizing that “the national unity talk is sometimes real but also and for sure partly orchestrated, particularly at times of contentions and political struggles” (p. 92). This is nothing new for Egyptian women, who have had their activism highjacked before in the national interest, with Huda Sharawi as the most notable example during the early twentieth century.

Allam’s scholarly analysis unfolds somewhat unevenly from chapters 2–6, with chapter 1 serving as an historical primer on the activism of Egyptian women from the nationalist uprisings of the 1920s through to the Free Officers’ Revolution and up to the Arab Spring. In general, this historical discussion largely documents a more secular variant of feminism, so readers interested in the historical role of Islamist women would be better served to look to other authors for more detail. Chapter 2 builds on this historical discourse by exploring the current media ecosystem in which Egyptian women operate across both the domestic and international press. It touches on how the news media often confine and constrain women’s political agency both deliberately (as in the case of the newspapers *Al Ahram* and *Wafd*) and, at times, inadvertently (the *New York Times*) in terms of how they depict women and delimit actionable behaviors and norms within Egyptian society. Although I applaud the conceit of this chapter, I do wish Allam had made a stronger case for how these news outlets directly affected protester activism. Chapters 3–6

actively marshal Allam’s interview data, and here she uses more of the personal insights and the experiences of the protesters themselves to unpack how they framed their activism—through citizen versus female collective action frames (chapter 3), their lived experiences of the 18-day uprising (chapter 4), and their limited political opportunities in an environment where state feminism dominates the gender discourse, and also where many of them faced rampant sexism and ageism while protesting (chapter 5).

Chapter 6 is the most interesting in the book, introducing the novel idea of the potential power behind the politics of disappointment and how it can serve to keep a repertoire of resistance alive for the “next cycle of contention.” Allam finds activist resilience blossoming through social and artistic initiatives (p. 144), as well as in new spaces created to challenge the dominant security discourse of the state. She finds many activists making a conscious choice to continue to develop skills, both in their public and private lives, that can help sustain the memory of resistance. They do this through a renewed commitment to social work and public service, as well as through art, philanthropy, and other modes of low-key transgression that might not directly attract the attention of the authorities (p. 159).

Overall, Allam makes a strong and compelling case for why Egyptian women protesters deployed nationalist rather than feminist frames during the Egyptian Revolution, she outlines the ultimate cost of that choice for substantively advancing women’s interests. In amplifying women’s voices in this way, she shows them as active participants in what turned out to be an unsuccessful bid for change, but one in which they fully and consciously engaged. Ultimately, Allam extends the discussion of collective action frames to a very dynamic non-Western setting, showcasing the importance of recognizing that robust frames of resistance existed and continue to exist in authoritarian contexts, while also demonstrating the revelatory power of embracing a feminist lens for this type of research. In her closing chapters, she hints that disappointment may not represent an end to contestation, but rather a beginning for new forms of resistance. In doing so Allam makes one final appeal for us to recognize Egyptian women’s agency and resilience in the face of their ongoing struggle for substantive rights.

**Why Bother? Rethinking Participation in Elections and Protests.** By S. Erdem Aytaç and Susan C. Stokes. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 172p. \$99.99 cloth, \$29.99 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592720003321

— Miguel Carreras, *University of California, Riverside*  
carreras@ucr.edu

In recent months, major protests erupted in several cities in the United States against systemic racism and police

brutality. The costs of participating in these protests were high because of the heavy-handed security response and the risk of exposure to COVID-19. In a similar vein, a primary election in Georgia in June 2020 saw a record high turnout despite a series of logistical problems that created additional hurdles for countless voters. The decision to participate in these events is hard to reconcile with mainstream rational choice models of political participation.

In this timely and important book, Erdem Aytaç and Susan Stokes produce a compelling new theory of political participation that can shed light on these recent events and many other well-known paradoxes of political participation. Its central theoretical argument is that abstaining from an election or deciding not to participate in a protest can be costly for those who care about the outcome of the election (or protest). Although citizens still care about the costs of participation in the theoretical model proposed by Aytaç and Stokes, these costs are counterbalanced by the costs of abstention.

In a clear departure from rational choice theories of political participation, Aytaç and Stokes argue that the costs of abstention are mainly intrinsic or psychological. An important contribution of this book is its recognition of the role of emotions in shaping political involvement. Drawing from findings in political psychology, Aytaç and Stokes theorize that emotions such as enthusiasm or anger are mobilizing because they “create more dissonance at the prospect of staying away” (p. 35). In other words, abstaining can be costly and generate psychological discomfort for citizens who care about the outcome of an election (or the consequences of a protest movement).

After carefully reviewing competing perspectives from different disciplines, Aytaç and Stokes marshal an impressive array of evidence—both observational and experimental—in support of their new theory of participation in elections and protests. This evidence comes from the study of political participation in contexts such as the United States, Brazil, Turkey, and Ukraine. The empirical exercise is very ambitious. The authors seek to demonstrate several aspects of their general theory of political participation. The empirical chapters of the book show that people are more likely to participate when they perceive that a lot is at stake in an election or protest, that citizens can feel psychic discomfort when they abstain, and that certain emotions—in particular, anger—can have a positive effect on political participation.

One of the most interesting findings is presented in chapter 6, when the authors analyze the electoral participation of the unemployed. The link between unemployment and turnout has been the subject of a long-standing scholarly debate, with some studies suggesting unemployment depresses turnout and others arguing the opposite. Aytaç and Stokes revisit this question and convincingly demonstrate that unemployed people are more likely to

vote when the level of unemployment is high. Opposition parties tend to blame the incumbent government for economic difficulties when unemployment is high, which generates anger among the unemployed. Anger in turn increases the psychic costs of abstaining. This finding clearly shows how this new theory of political participation can be fruitfully applied to illuminate empirical questions that have puzzled scholars for a long time.

By contrast, other findings presented in the book are more suggestive than definitive. Aytaç and Stokes rely primarily on survey experiments to test different aspects of their theoretical framework. Survey experiments have several important advantages from the perspective of causal inference, such as random assignment to treatment and the possibility of “ruling out” confounding effects, but they can have low external validity because people are asked to react to hypothetical situations. Some of the analyses presented in this book are not immune to this potential problem. For instance, in chapter 3, the authors test the costly abstention theory of turnout by asking people to imagine how they would feel in the hypothetical scenario that they could not vote in a hypothetical gubernatorial election. Although the results are in line with the theory presented in the book—that is, there is higher psychic discomfort when people contemplate abstaining in important and close elections—future research should probe the emotional effects of abstention in less “artificial” settings.

More broadly, the theory of political participation developed in the book is often richer and more fine-grained than the empirics. For example, an important insight of the theory is that repression of early protests generates both costs of participation and costs of abstention. The interplay between these two costs determines whether people who care about the outcome of the protest decide to join it. The results presented in chapter 8 simply show that reminding Turkish citizens of the violent response of the Turkish government to the 2013 Gezi protests makes them more likely to join a future demonstration. More research is necessary to fully understand when the repression of an early wave of protests leads to larger protests and when a heavy-handed security response nips protests in the bud.

The book offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that can be used to rethink many familiar findings in the turnout literature that had received ad-hoc explanations in previous research; for example, lower turnout in midterm elections in the United States and EU elections in Europe and higher turnout in transitional elections, close elections, and referendums. The argument that there are psychic costs to abstaining when people perceive that a lot is at stake is original and important. One wonders, however, why the costs of abstention are only psychological. In contexts where voting is compulsory and enforced, citizens might incur material costs—for

example, financial penalties or an inability to apply to jobs in the public sector—when they stay home on Election Day. In developing democracies, brokers in clientelism networks can observe whether people vote or participate in protests. Abstaining can be costly in those settings because people can lose access to important benefits, such as food or cash. Amending the participation “equation” to incorporate these costs seems feasible and might be advisable.

The theory and the empirical analysis in this important book focus on the individual decisions that people make to participate or abstain in an election or protest. Less attention is paid to contextual factors that can shape those individual perceptions and behaviors studied in the book. In addition to the closeness of the election, institutional characteristics (presidentialism vs. parliamentarism), political conjuncture (rise of an outsider or populist candidate), or economic factors (globalization) can all shape citizens’ evaluations of how much is at stake in a particular election. The theoretical framework developed in this book gives students of political participation new tools to think about how these macrolevel factors influence individual decisions to vote and join protests.

Notwithstanding these minor quibbles with the arguments and the empirics, this book is a tour de force that should be required reading for both theorists of political participation and empirically minded scholars alike. Aytac and Stokes offer a clear multidisciplinary synthesis of previous research, as well as a new unified and compelling theory of political participation that helps us make better sense of well-known paradoxes of political participation. This book will undoubtedly become a classic in the political participation literature.

**Transforming Rural Water Governance: The Road from Resource Management to Political Activism in Nicaragua.** By Sarah T. Romano. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019. 232p. \$60.00 cloth.

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— Alicia Dailey Cooperman , Texas A&M University  
alicia.cooperman@tamu.edu

Water is a political issue throughout the world, and struggles for equity, access, and quality of water reflect and amplify voices across social and political levels, from the grassroots to the international stage. Sarah Romano’s book, *Transforming Rural Water Governance: The Road from Resource Management to Political Activism in Nicaragua*, is an excellent case study of successful collective action and mobilization in the rural water sector, following in the influential traditions of Elinor Ostrom and Judith Tandler. Romano contributes to literatures about common property regimes, social capital, and decentralization, and her research advances our understanding of the role of grassroots organizations in “multiscalar”

political activism that spans communities, sectors, and levels of government.

Romano studies community-based water and sanitation committees (CAPS) in Nicaragua and asks, “What factors explain CAPS’ successful transcommunity mobilization to achieve a national collective presence and, ultimately, legal recognition from the state?” (p. 10). Most of the book builds on extensive fieldwork during 2009 and 2010 to understand why and how CAPS went from being invisible community-based organizations managing more than 5,000 isolated rural water systems to an organized national network that influenced the passage of national legislation—the Special CAPS Law (Law 722) in May 2010. Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of community-based water management (CBWM) and state–society relations in Nicaragua, and chapters 2–4 provide evidence for the three main theoretical arguments. Chapter 5 jumps ahead to 2015 to evaluate the financial, legal, and political implications of Law 722 and the pros and cons of formalizing CBWM organizations; it is especially relevant for policy makers and practitioners.

The research method is a single-country case study with process tracing to explain mobilization at a national scale. Romano uses “careful description” (p. 24) of the dynamic processes and sequencing of events, and she conducts impressive qualitative research and inductive theory-building grounded in participant observation in rural communities, municipal assemblies, departmental network meetings, and National CAPS Network meetings. She analyzed primary and secondary data, such as CAPS and NGO meeting notes and conducted nearly 200 semi-structured interviews with a wide range of key actors from 2004 to 2016.

Romano argues that three interrelated factors explain CAPS’ national mobilization and impact on national legislation: their (1) “organic empowerment” and “legitimate authority” derived from years of acting as local water managers and service providers; (2) multisectoral alliances with professional, urban NGOs and multilateral agencies; and (3) public discourses targeted to national political leadership.

Romano states that the first factor—CAPS’ organic empowerment at the community level—is a “necessary precondition” (p. 10), and she emphasizes that the community, not the state, conferred this authority. Chapter 2 outlines a long list of inductively derived characteristics of successful CAPS and provides a rich description of CAPS and the challenges and successes of CBWM in Nicaragua. Organic empowerment is also an important basis for the other two theoretical factors; it leads to the bonding social capital involved in multisectoral alliances and CAPS’ political discourses.

Romano argues that the second factor of multisectoral alliances supported CAPS’ mobilization in three ways by providing (1) financial support for physical mobility and political visibility at important public events, (2) political