

through. The individual chapters are, simply, well-written and interesting, and deliver plenty of provocative thought. They cluster into four sections. The first contains four chapters about social and economic development, authored by Joel Beinin, Ishac Diwan, Laurie Brand, and Kevan Harris. They echo that prospects for regional prosperity are dour. Outside of a few wealthy oil-rentier states, countries face the dual squeeze of demographic growth and shrinking public goods. The losers, of course, are populations: As Brand notes in her chapter, the high expenditures of many Arab states into education compared to the frightening underperformance of their schools suggests that something, structurally, has become broken in how powerholders *see* the task of serving publics and creating markets. More broadly, the authors remind readers that deficits of regional development are inextricably tied to bigger variables that both predate the Arab Spring. Among them are the technocratic transformation of state institutions, neoliberalism imposed by multilateral organs like the International Monetary Fund, unprecedented distortions in global capital flows, and evolving social understandings of income and class status.

The second section presents four chapters from Aoumar Boum, Peter Mandaville, Nathan Brown, and Lindsay Gifford. Their contributions eclectically engage notions of identity, religion, and belonging, and for that reason are the most difficult to pin down. For instance, Boum gives a searing take on the musical lexicon of social resistance in North Africa, embodied by the use of hip-hop by some activists “as effective weapons for galvanizing broader support” against autocratic abuses (p. 95). Meanwhile, Brown opens a matter-of-factly window onto whether Islamist movements truly understand the task of not capturing power in all its glory, but of administering government in the quotidian, boring ways that typify modern bureaucracies. Each chapter is written beautifully, conveying resonant expertise; but each also barely touches upon the volume’s organizing themes. So it goes also for the other richly textured chapters, which should be read as individual essays for fuller appreciation.

The third section consists of four chapters that are country-based case studies outlining the domestic and foreign policy changes that have transpired since the Arab Spring. F. Gregory Gause III deals with the royal politics of Saudi Arabia, Henry Barkey unpacks Turkish foreign policy under Erdoğan, Gelvin provides a striking take on the Syrian civil war, and Harith Hasan tackles (with aplomb) the unenviable task of how sectarianization has sabotaged Iraqi state-building. The impressive, field-based knowledge of the authors is on full display here. They weave in the book’s overarching ideas about eroding state sovereignty and embattled authoritarian legitimacy to explain why elites have shuffled, institutions have evolved, policies have adjusted, and violence has sometimes

erupted. These are snapshots, but impressive snapshots nonetheless that will give even seasoned researchers of these countries pause.

The fourth and final section comprises three chapters by Fred Lawson, Marc Lynch, and Asli Ü. Bâli. They address how new wars have recast regional alliances and international relations in the MENA. They hence squarely take up Gelvin’s opening gambit regarding the complex interplay of domestic and external factors. While each deals with a different topic, these authors do not mince words in evoking how much has changed over the past decades due to the outbreak of multiple, overlapping civil wars. Lawson sees a “profound transformation” in the region’s security complex and construction of state interests (p. 237); Lynch declares a “fundamentally new structure of regional politics,” exemplified by the use of proxy actors by regional and international powers within local conflicts (p. 251); and Bâli notes that the uses and abuses of international law—to both punish and condone costly interventions into civil conflicts—has “transfigured the basic rules of the postwar collective security order” (p. 271).

In sum, this is a rare case of an edited volume where the sum is greater than its parts. It should find enthusiastic readership among not only experienced MENA researchers and scholars but also graduate students embarking upon their dissertations and attempting to capture what has truly altered in the post-Arab Spring era. Much has, indeed, and the authors present an abundance of evidence and stimulating ideas to make that case resoundingly.

**When People Want Punishment: Retributive Justice and the Puzzle of Authoritarian Popularity.** By Lily L. Tsai.

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What explains the popularity of authoritarian leaders? The conventional wisdom is that autocrats earn support by promoting economic growth. In *When People Want Punishment*, Lily Tsai makes a provocative argument: Authoritarian leaders become popular when they punish corrupt officials, criminals, and other wrongdoers. This is effective because citizens care about “*retributive justice*, or the use of punishment to uphold what is fair and right” (p. 6, emphasis in original).

Although the book largely focuses on local leaders in China, Tsai illustrates how authoritarian leaders around the world use the public’s yearning for retribution to build political support. From Rodrigo Duterte’s violent “war on crime” in the Philippines to Xi Jinping’s anticorruption crackdown in China, strongmen around the world exploit a popular desire for punishment to strengthen political support.

Tsai's development of the concept of retributive justice is likely to be agenda-setting. Chapter 2 of the book provides a clear and useful conceptual discussion of retributive justice and explains how it differs from related concepts including distributive justice, procedural justice, and revenge. While the concept of retributive justice is not new, it is ripe for deeper exploration by political scientists, as the many examples in Tsai's book show.

Linking retributive justice to authoritarian popularity helps to move the literature on authoritarian politics beyond the familiar idea that authoritarian popularity rests on economic growth alone. In doing so, it helps to explain puzzling behavior by some autocrats. For example, recent research suggests that Xi Jinping's anticorruption campaign may weaken support for the regime, presumably because it draws attention to the lavish lifestyles of some ruling party officials (see Yuhua Wang and Bruce J. Dickson, "How Corruption Investigations Undermine Regime Support: Evidence From China," *Political Science Research and Methods* 10 [1], 2022). Tsai's theory explains why it is in Xi's personal interest to continue a campaign that burnishes his personal political brand, even if it may undermine support for the regime in general.

Xi Jinping is hardly the first Chinese leader to rely on desire for retributive justice to bolster his personal popularity. In chapter 3, Tsai turns to an absorbing discussion of the historical uses of retributive justice in China. In imperial China, successive emperors established themselves as the guardians of moral order by punishing corrupt officials. In the Mao era, the Communist Party encouraged "struggle sessions" in which the groups targeted local cadres and other victims for public criticism and sometimes violent attack; the sense that these struggle sessions produced justice helped to strengthen the legitimacy of the regime.

However, the empirical core of Tsai's book, presented in chapters 4 and 5, is less concerned with how elite leaders like Mao become popular, and instead focuses on local leaders in China.

To understand the everyday political concerns of people in rural China, Tsai conducted "open-ended, in-depth" (p. 104) interviews with dozens of households, some of which she reinterviewed up to three times. The open-ended interviews guided Tsai toward the notion that retributive justice is important. In the interviews, citizens frequently repeated narratives about the virtues of officials who punish wrongdoers and expressed nostalgia for Mao-era practices of retributive justice. The interview evidence is a model of careful qualitative research design that should be emulated by others and studied in courses on qualitative fieldwork.

To probe the implications of these qualitative findings, Tsai next conducted a series of survey experiments. The experiments use a conjoint design, in which respondents have a choice between two hypothetical candidates for a

local office, such as township party secretary. As with the qualitative evidence, the survey experiments are a model of careful execution: Tsai uses an in-person household survey and takes steps to ensure the design is easily understood by respondents.

The survey experiments show that citizens prefer officials who punish corruption over those who do not. This is not especially surprising: More interesting is *why* this is the case. Do citizens approve of officials who punish corruption because of moral concerns? Or because punishing corruption demonstrates competence? A clever mediation analysis design suggests that respondents focus on moral concerns (although the assumptions needed for the mediation analysis to be valid are quite strong).

To examine whether the patterns found in the qualitative evidence and survey experiments hold more broadly, in chapter 5 Tsai uses observational data from across China—and, remarkably, from an original survey experiment involving respondents in 50 countries around the world. In the surveys in China, Tsai finds that when respondents are aware that local officials have performance contracts with penalties, they are more satisfied with officials' performance, are more willing to contribute to public works, and are more likely to believe that officials share their values. In the cross-national experiment, respondents primed with a reminder about the "investigative and punitive functions of the anti-corruption agency in their respective country" (p. 185) have higher tax morale than those who are not primed with this reminder.

This is a rich and persuasive book that develops an interesting, big idea. The book's admirable brevity also leaves open some avenues for future research. First, the empirical sections of the book mostly focus on how citizens in China perceive local leaders. There is less evidence showing how national leaders like Xi Jinping use the desire for retributive justice to build support. Examining national-level politics is a natural next step in this important research agenda.

In addition, future research on retributive justice might develop new ways to operationalize the core concept and measure it. The quantitative portions wrestle with how to measure key ideas and operationalize them in survey experiments. For example, when citizens are primed to recall the existence of anticorruption agencies or cadre performance contracts, does this play on a desire for retributive justice? Or does it capture something else, like a desire for competent government?

Overall, *When People Want Punishment* is an important work that makes for a fascinating sequel of sorts to Tsai's first book, *Accountability without Democracy*. In both books, Tsai examines how officials build moral authority, but the implications are quite different.

In *Accountability without Democracy*, Tsai examined how officials in rural China build moral authority within their groups by doing good works: by helping to mend

leaky schoolhouse roofs, digging wells with clean water, and paving dirt roads. The book suggested that strong community institutions and a desire for moral authority can encourage officials to behave in ways that benefit the poor, even in the absence of strong formal institutions of accountability.

In *When People Want Punishment*, by contrast, officials build moral authority by satisfying a popular hunger for punishment. The implications about human nature are seemingly darker. As Tsai notes in the book's closing pages, many people "would rather have benevolent dictators that seem to respond to these needs than dirty democrats who seem unaware of them" (p. 215).

**Patronage at Work: Public Jobs and Political Services in Argentina.** By Virginia Oliveros. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 280p. \$110.00 cloth.  
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Our collective understanding of electoral clientelism has advanced considerably over the past decade or two, thanks to an innovative body of research that has explored the mechanisms sustaining clientelist relationships over time and the behavior of the actors who participate in clientelist exchanges. In *Patronage at Work: Public Jobs and Political Services in Argentina*, Virginia Oliveros offers a major contribution to this literature by focusing on *patronage*, defined as the subset of clientelism in which "the good that is exchanged [for political support] is a public sector job" (p. 5). Patronage employees (who she calls "supporters") are an important and understudied piece of the clientelistic political machines found in Argentina and many other countries. As Oliveros demonstrates, supporters engage in a wide range of political activities on behalf of the incumbent politicians to whom they owe their jobs—by campaigning and mobilizing votes during an election, but also by "doing favors" and distributing material benefits, even outside of the campaign season. From Oliveros's careful descriptions, which are based on extensive field research and an innovative survey of public employees, we can get a better sense of the complex ecosystem of brokers, supporters, and personal networks that jointly comprise local political machines.

Oliveros asks fundamental questions about how patronage works. What exactly do supporters do to "earn" their jobs? Why do they do it? And most importantly, how do their patrons (the incumbent politicians) keep them from shirking? To work, the arrangement must overcome a commitment problem (p. 20): Supporters need to commit credibly to work on behalf of the incumbent, and once employed they must live up to that commitment. Common approaches suggest that norms of reciprocity or the

threat of monitoring and punishment can explain why supporters hold up their end of the bargain. But Oliveros finds these explanations wanting on both theoretical and empirical grounds. So, she develops a third explanation: Patronage is "self-enforcing" because the interests of supporters are aligned with those of the politician who hired them. Supporters do not work on behalf of the incumbent because they feel the need to repay a favor, or because they fear being fired by the incumbent if they shirk; they do it because they perceive that their benefit (the job) will probably only last for as long as the incumbent manages to win reelection (chapter 2).

Through four central empirical chapters (3–6), Oliveros methodically builds a case for the "self-enforcing" explanation of patronage. These chapters are exemplary: They are clearly written, present empirical evidence supporting each step in the argument in a logical progression, and reinforce quantitative findings with key insights gleaned from fieldwork.

The core findings are primarily derived from a survey of public employees fielded in three Argentine cities. Oliveros describes a carefully designed instrument with embedded list experiments and other features that allow her to elicit information on sensitive topics (although some interview subjects are surprisingly candid about their participation in the patronage system!). The descriptive results alone are worth the price of admission. For example, data from the list experiments allow Oliveros to estimate that 22% of public employees in the field sites participate in election campaigns, 21% attend rallies, 12% serve as polling monitors on election day (all from chapter 4), and 44% "grant favors" (chapter 5). This is an astounding amount of patronage, and the estimates are supported with interview evidence that depicts the quotidian reality of patronage work, as well as its centrality to the operation of political machines. For example, employees talk about politicians bringing in "their people" at the start of their terms, and about the expectation of campaign work in return (pp. 69–72). Others explain that supporters with law degrees are asked to serve as election monitors because the (nonpartisan) poll workers will often defer to them when a question arises (pp. 94–95). Supporters describe the types of favors they are likely to do for people (pp. 106–12). In one notable exchange, a non-Peronist employee who was *not* asked to serve as a monitor for her Peronist boss, perhaps because she was not perceived to be sufficiently trustworthy, contributed to the cause anyway by delivering lunch to her Peronist colleagues who *were* serving as monitors (p. 148). Evidence like this, cited throughout the book, serves to illustrate the routinized, common-knowledge nature of political work.

These chapters offer convincing evidence in support of three propositions derived from Oliveros's theory: (1) patronage jobs are disproportionately distributed to perceived supporters, often through informal personal