the vignettes that he deploys to illustrate this corruption are among the book's most compelling chapters. But time and again, he traces these problems back to foreigners' supposed depredations. "Egypt," Amin writes of the post-1967 era, "was not being run in the interest of Egyptians, elections and referendums were constantly rigged, the control of the media continued, freedom of opinion was curtailed, the emergency law was extended again and again on the grounds of combating terrorism, and successive prime ministers were chosen without relying on free elections and without even exploring what people wanted" (p. 46). He thus blames foreigners for Mubarak's police state, writing that foreign companies "have to be confident of 'stability,' and in order to guarantee this stability, phone tapping might be essential" (p. 71). He also blames foreigners for the fact that Egypt does not have "patriotic ministers": "Foreigners may sometimes be interested in reform but in most cases they have a corrupting influence, and so in most cases they choose, or encourage the choice of, people who work against the national interest and do nothing to serve that interest" (p. 147). And he insists that the foreigners' grip is virtually insurmountable—"Egyptians have often risen up and made attempts at national revival, but they have always faced strong reactions from abroad to thwart them" (p. 253).

Even when specific acts can be unambiguously traced back to Egyptian culprits, Amin sees foreign hands at work. His discussion of anti-Christian violence, which exploded following the 2011 uprising, stands out in this regard. Despite some Islamists' incitement against Copts, Amin refuses to blame "religious fanaticism," because "Egyptians, even at their most irrational, do not behave in this manner" (p. 171). And despite the military's use of armored personnel carriers to run over protesters during the horrific October 2011 Maspero massacre, Amin never points fingers at the generals who ruled Egypt for the sixteen months following Mubarak's toppling. Instead, he falls back on a conspiracy theory: "Who benefits?" he asks. He proceeds to list "possible beneficiaries," including Israel, "because one of the things that helps it achieve its objectives is tarnishing the reputation of Islam and Muslims," and the United States, "because it works to serve Israeli objectives and the objectives of Israel's friends in Egypt" (p. 172).

So, whatever happened to the Egyptian revolution? Ultimately, Amin does not answer his own question conclusively. Yet the mix of conspiratorial ideas and monocausal arguments that permeate his book offer an implicit response: there was no revolution. Popular uprisings have catalyzed the ouster of two presidents in three years, but this author still buys the classic defense of dictators, which attributes all domestic problems to foreign enemies.

ADHAM SAOULI, *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (London: Routledge, 2012). Pp. 164. $135.00 cloth, $44.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ABDUL-WAHAB KAYYALI, Department of Political Science, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; e-mail: akayyali@gwu.edu
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In *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation*, Adham Saouli attempts to theorize the emergence and persistence of the Arab state. Thus the main research questions Saouli addresses are why states remain intact during late formation, and how and why they emerge in late formation (p. 2). In order to answer these questions, Saouli adopts a historical sociology approach and necessarily provides a definition of the state. This is not an insignificant exercise—indeed, political (and social) scientists have grappled with it since Max Weber's pioneering definition. As such, Saouli is tackling questions that have perplexed political scientists since the advent of the discipline and utilizing Middle Eastern cases to illuminate these conceptual puzzles. On this account alone, the book merits a close reading.

Saouli considers the state to be a set of institutions that emerge within a social field, "an arena in which social interaction is bounded and takes place" (p. 16). In order to denote a social field, he constructs a pyramid (p. 20): at the bottom is the material structure, or a particular socioeconomic system based on geographic and climate conditions of a given territory. Above the material structure is the cultural structure, or the ethnic/linguistic/religious/sectarian/tribal composition of this territory. On top of that structure is the political structure, or the interests/ideologies/identities of the inhabitants of this territory. At the top of the pyramid are state institutions. Such a set of institutions emerges when social actors succeed in attempts to dominate their competitors—a path-dependent process wherein "events at one stage shape and constrain future developments" (p. 26). This process is of course marred with resistance, and as such state building is usually a bloody and calamitous affair. Saouli narrates the history of these state building attempts in two Arab social fields, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

These social fields emerge due to anarchy in the international political system and what Saouli calls "external neutralisation," or the inability or unwillingness of foreign powers to dictate local outcomes as a result of their rivalry. Anarchy in the international system encourages hyper-competitiveness between states, and leads to the rise of local agents, the aforementioned social actors who attempt to dominate competitors in local politics. Hence, social fields emerge where different social actors compete. This is the prestate period. State building also entails "domestic power monopolization," or attempts by a regime to monopolize coercion, economic resources, and political ideology. According to Saouli, different state formation outcomes depend on different combinations of external neutralization and power monopolization.

The book has many merits. It bridges the divide between comparative politics and international relations to produce research that is broadly relevant to a number of scholarly audiences. For this reviewer, its main contribution is to show how "state formation is not a unilinear process" (p. 12). Saouli's positioning of states on a formation/de-formation continuum is particularly creative (p. 13). Whereas most treatments of state building consider how states move rightward on the continuum, from dispersed power, to centralization, to institutionalization and democratization, Saouli's intervention that "the process can reverse—states can de-form or collapse" is spot on; it is also understated and undertheorized in the state formation literature. This is a theoretical contribution that can be applied to many cases, but is especially pertinent to the Arab context, in which state-building has not moved in a linear direction of progress.

Another critical contribution by Saouli is to show how Arab states are existentially tied to particular regimes because they are in early stages of formation: "When we talk about a state we are in essence referring to a regime . . . that dominates other forces within a social field: not a public organization that is 'above society,' but an organisation driven by a regime with a specific interest in survival amidst resistance by oppositional forces" (p. 13). The relationship between regimes and states has interested political scientists in general, but scholars of Arab politics should take particular interest in the constitutive relationship between Arab regimes and the states they rule. As Saouli narrates, when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 with the stated goal of regime change, its dismantling of regime institutions led the Iraqi state to collapse. Similarly, the current revolution in Syria against Bashar al-Asad's regime has led the Syrian state to collapse. While al-Asad and his troops maintain control of Damascus and other parts of the country (for now), the state has ceased to function in many territories and to perform some of its basic roles (most notably controlling the border crossings with other states such as Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq). Renowned Lebanese writer Elias Khoury has mentioned time and again that Arab authoritarian regimes have tied the fate of their states and societies to their own. To this reviewer's knowledge, this book represents the first scholarly attempt to theorize this phenomenon.

That being said, the book has some significant shortcomings. Its theoretical approach is slightly confusing, and it takes too long—almost half of the book—for Saouli to flesh out his two main variables. Part of the confusion is that there are too many moving parts at the beginning of the book (different components of social fields, the state formation/de-formation discussion, the effect of state weakness on authoritarianism, and interaction with foreign powers). This makes it difficult for the reader to keep track of which variables are the most important, and what is doing the theoretical work. It probably would have been less confusing to introduce the two variables at the very beginning before delving into the conceptual discussion.

In addition, Saouli tells his readers that he will not explain how states develop a stronger state capacity (p. 14), but he does not sufficiently explain or justify this choice. He may have taken this route because, as he later mentions, no Middle Eastern state (with the exception of Israel) can be characterized as a strong state (p. 14). It may also be because other academic treatments focus on this part of the formation continuum. Either way, the reader is left wondering about his reasoning, and whether Arab states will ever move in that direction.

Moreover, while the book's account of state formation is compelling, its account of state survival is not. In other words, Saouli does a very good job of answering his second research question, but not so much his first. The book's conclusion offers an explanation for Arab state survival in about six pages, but it is by no means a comprehensive account. Given that an Arab state—Sudan—has in fact disintegrated in the last few years, state survival cannot be taken for granted. Readers cannot ascertain why international anarchy (Saouli's identified explanation) enables Iraq and Saudi Arabia (and presumably other states) to survive, while allowing Sudan to disintegrate. Sudan may have been a good case to incorporate into Saouli's theory, for it was perhaps variances in external neutralization that allowed it to disintegrate. Either way, Saouli's treatment of state survival is not nearly as compelling or comprehensive as his treatment of state formation.

There are other minor problems with the book, namely its hasty transliteration of Iraqi and Saudi names and the unexplained focus on some historical episodes at the expense of others. Overall, however, this work is a very good start to the conversation on Arab state formation and de-formation, and it has theoretical implications that are pertinent even outside of the Arab context. As such, the book will be of interest not only to those studying Arab politics, but also to scholars interested in state weakness, variation in state capacity, and state collapse. Saouli does well to direct our attention to the de-formation cycle, and his placement of states along a formation/de-formation continuum is particularly inventive. One only hopes that this book will spark a scholarly discussion about the puzzle of Arab state survival—especially given the number of Arab states whose survival is in question.

NADINE NABER, *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*, Nation of Newcomers Series (New York: New York University Press, 2012). Pp. 320. $75.00 cloth, $25.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY MEGHAN DRURY, Department of American Studies, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; e-mail: mdrury@gwmail.gwu.edu
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Nadine Naber's *Arab America* is an intensely personal and reflexive ethnography. The author's own life story of growing up in a Jordanian American family in the San Francisco Bay Area circumscribes the text, and she articulates her own investment in the Arab feminist activism