

shapes Merdjanova and Brodeur's second set of recommendation addressing governmental agencies in developing an inclusive awareness in inter-religious knowledge and understanding, including those aimed at media education. The final set of recommendations is that of local-international cooperation. The authors call for joint programs, without overlooking the local as well as regional needs, covering all those relevant groups as well as realms for cooperation, such as at the inter-personal level.

While these recommendations seem to be one of the most promising parts of the book, some of them kept as abstract recommendations raise questions about their appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency. While Merdjanova and Brodeur's references to their field sources might be accepted as anticipated indicators of success, presenting common principles and both qualitative and quantita-

tive assessment tools referring to exemplary cases might better help the reader to assess the underlying theory of change. This would also equip the readers of such a comprehensive analysis, who are practitioners and stakeholders of IDP on the ground in particular, to measure their consistency and impact.

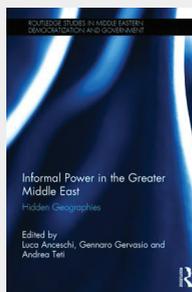
Nonetheless, by presenting a comprehensive set of data identifying key actors in peacebuilding processes, the book addresses a global audience of different disciplines and professions, including religious studies, political science, and international relations as well as the arts. In summary, *Religion as a Conversation Starter* provides a valuable contribution to the fields of peace and conflict studies as well as the literature on post-conflict transformation in the Balkans by outlining potential areas for collaboration of these actors, ranging from inter-personal to transnational dimensions, which aim peacebuilding.

Informal Power in the Greater Middle East Hidden Geographies

Edited by Luca Anceschi, Gennaro Gervasio *and* Andrea Teti
London: Routledge, 2014, 226 pages, \$145, ISBN 9780415624367.

Reviewed by Pascal Abidor

THIS VOLUME examines the relationship between the formal and informal spheres of power and is meant to serve as a corrective to overly "statist" political analyses that focus entirely on formal power institutions. Analyses that focus exclusively on formal political spheres grant them exaggerated strength and denude informal mechanisms and actors of any political relevance or power. The



Arab Spring has made it clear that the formal power of the state in the Middle East is contestable and changeable with the informal playing a significant role. The editors of this volume seek to bring attention to the informal mechanisms that are available for use in authoritarian regimes. The case studies in this collection look into "the political dynamics developing inside, in parallel to, and/or beyond

institutional fora;” what is termed the “hidden geographies of power” (p. 3). The essays in this collection consist of case studies into the dialectical relationship between the formal and informal spheres – how each shapes and is shaped by the other and how the mechanisms of one sphere can be of use to ends pertaining to the other sphere.

The cases are drawn from the “Greater Middle East” whose geographical scope, for the purposes of this book, consists of “the typical” Middle East and North African countries as well as the “five independent republics of post-Soviet Central Asia” (p. 1). Except for a single comparative essay on Egypt and Libya, all but one of the essays examine the formal/informal power dialectic within a specific country in the form of one of three dynamics: 1) the wider political audience that actors engage with as evidenced by the Arab Spring uprisings; 2) the patronage and clientele networks that are used to exchange formal legitimacy (votes) for “informal recognition of localized powers”; and 3) civil society as the arena for the “complex interplay of formal and informal spheres in the production of specific political practices, both democratic and authoritarian” (pp. 4 -5). These dynamics serve as the typologies of relations between the formal and informal that each of the essays addresses. Though the volume is slim, it is comprised of fourteen highly informative essays, including a final chapter that serves as a conclusion and a more thorough elaboration of the theoretical insights behind the volume’s analytical lens.

While the editors are careful to elaborate the need for and theoretical underpinnings of an analysis into the relationship between formal and informal power, this elaboration does not lead to any specificity. The diversity of phenomena under consideration within the volume makes it somewhat difficult to pinpoint

the significance of the formal/informal dyad in general and its relevance to the specific cases. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that, although the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the volume are discussed in the introduction, they are not given fuller clarifications and implications until the final chapter.

Despite the very clear conceptual concern of the volume’s framing, only the first two essays – Sadiki’s on Egypt and Libya and Trombetta’s on Syria – make concerted efforts at framing their analyses in terms of a relationship between the formal and informal. These essays are concerned with the ‘informalization’ of formal power under the authoritarian regimes of Mubarak, Gaddafi, and al-Asad through their increased reliance on informal familial ties over and at the expense of formal institutional links.

Other essays take up topics that are highly relevant to the volume’s focus but only give token references, if any, to its analytical lens. It appears that the viability and visibility of the theoretical and analytical concerns of the volume are taken for granted within many of the individual chapters and their connection to the volume’s purpose is left implicit. Bacik’s essay on proxy leadership in Turkish politics, the *emanetçilik*, is an examination of the fascinating phenomena of proxy leadership as an informal mechanism by which actors who are banned from formal politics can maintain power and relevance until their bans are overturned. Adib-Moghaddam’s chapter on the genealogy of the radical political subject and the emergence of the revolutionary subject in Iran is the most theory-driven case study in the volume. The essay provides a comprehensive sweep of Iranian political history covering events from 1891 through to the Green Movement of 2009 with a view to outlining the role of radical/revolutionary subjectivi-

ties. Though highly informative, the essay's connection to the remainder of the volume is never made explicitly clear. Similarly, an essay on the political uses of the concept of tribe in Sudan, specifically Darfur, is interesting and the formal/informal relationship appears relevant, but it is also not clearly linked with the theoretical concerns of the collection until a brief line in the concluding chapter.

Having read the introduction, the reader will certainly see or feel that the formal and informal are being engaged throughout the volume. In fact, the dynamic, as it is elaborated in this volume, seem applicable to virtually any and all political contexts and not exclusively those of the Middle East. The specific examinations of this dynamic in each chapter are too contingent to provide a more parsimonious conclusion than the fact that the formal and informal coexist and do so in diverse ways. This contingency, coupled with the contem-

porary relevance of some of the subject matter leads the reader feeling in need of further analysis of the formal and informal in light of more recent developments. Specifically, the chapters on Egypt were written before Morsi's election and subsequent ouster at the hands of the Egyptian Military – a sequence of events ripe for analysis along the lines of the formal/informal power dynamic. This is only a minor problem, however, as the scope of topics in the volume indicates that there is value in analyzing this dynamic. The only complaint in regards to the comprehensiveness of the formal/informal problematic is that the editors fail to point out that this dynamic can and should be investigated not merely in the Middle East and authoritarian regimes but in political formations in general. To that end, this volume represents an interesting and sweeping introduction into the types of analyses that a focus on the formal and informal spheres of power can and should lead to.

Egyptian Revolution 2.0

Political Blogging, Civic Engagement, and Citizen Journalism

By Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 252 pages, \$95, ISBN 9781137020918.

Reviewed by Marwa Fikry Abdel Samei

THE WAVE of mass protests that swept through the Arab World in early 2011 highlighted the distinct role of the internet-based media tools and networks. In their book, *Egyptian Revolution 2.0: Political Blogging, Civic Engagement, and Citizen Journalism*, Mohammad El Nawawy and Sahar Khamis show how the new media have become effective mobilization tools. By focusing on the Egyp-



tian blogosphere, the authors shed light on the role played by political blogs in “paving the road for the Egyptian popular revolution of 2011” (p. 2).

Over the six chapters of the book, the authors contend that political blogs provide a venue for exercising and exemplifying acts of resistance and empowerment, and act as catalysts for political