

as the book is designed as a report, it primarily mentioned potential scenarios about the future of energy politics in the MENA region and its effect on the EU. Although this attempt is valuable in providing a prudential perspective, the book could have also given a more detailed analysis of the underlying factors that may drive these scenarios, such as economic trends, or technological advancements. This additional layer of analysis would have offered readers a more comprehensive understanding of the forces shaping the future of energy policies in the region, as well

as potential avenues for collaboration among the involved countries.

Overall, *Energy Politics in the MENA Region: From Hydrocarbons to Renewables?* could be a good resource for scholars, students, and even politicians interested in understanding the possible effects on the EU of MENA's energy sources. The book is well-organized and academically rigorous, and it provides relevant insights into the problems and potential of energy diversification, as well as the implications for the EU's energy security.

Informal Politics in the Middle East

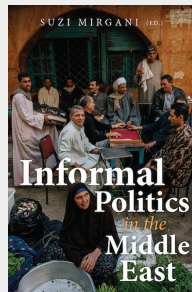
Edited by Suzi Mirgani

London: C Hurst & Co Publishers, 2021, 336 pages, £21.99, ISBN: 9781787384829

Reviewed by Mustafa Fatih Yavuz, TRT World

In her latest work, *Informal Politics in the Middle East*, Suzi Mirgani, and the other writers who contributed to the book, delve deep into the complex and often misunderstood world of informal politics in the region. Covering a wide range of political actors, from women associations to tribal leaders, Mirgani's edited study is a fascinating and highly informative account of the forces that shape the Middle East's political landscape.

The book is organized into ten well-researched and highly engaging chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of informal politics. Through a combination of historical analysis, case studies, and interviews, writers paint a vivid picture of the intricate web of relationships and power dynamics that exist within the region's informal political sphere.



Chapter 1, “Defining Informal Politics,” sets the stage for the rest of the book by providing a comprehensive definition of informal politics and exploring the factors that contribute to its prevalence in the Middle East. Mirgani goes into two types of classification in the book and the study's organization. In the first classification, informal structures in the Middle East work in harmony with the dominant element, the state or regime. Informal structures resolve the conflict with the formal structure or structures, which are the state and its extensions, through mediation with mostly traditional ways. She calls this classification or model as “converging formal and informal politics.” In the second classification, which Mirgani prefers to call “diverging formal and informal politics,” writers present examples of states in which formal and informal politics

are in conflict and informal politics elements such as NGOs in Egypt, Iran, and Algeria are struggling to survive for recognition by the formal state and its institutions.

In chapter 2, “Weighing the Tribal Factor in Yemen’s Informal Politics,” Charles Schmitz delves into the complex world of tribal politics in Yemen, exploring how tribes and tribal identities continue to shape political outcomes in the country. Schmitz argues that after the state intervened in the intra-tribal dynamics, tribalism changed its violence-reducing nature and ended the idea of tribalism by damaging the intra-tribal dynamics. He also opens a new horizon by claiming that the war that entered the peace process in Yemen at the time of writing this review has changed tribal relations and brought a new level of violence, especially in the tribes in the North of Yemen.

The role of local leaders in informal politics and particularly during elections in Türkiye is the focus of chapter 3, “Çay Politics: Informal Politics in Turkey and Vote Mobilization in İstanbul and Şanlıurfa.” Michelangelo Guida examines local elections in İstanbul’s Üsküdar district and presents a quantitative analysis regarding voting behavior there. His work illustrates well how İstanbul residents cast their votes based on the places from which their families immigrated. Also, Guida examines the political parties’ approach to tribal leaders in the Southern part of Türkiye to receive their support during elections. In Guida’s work, readers can find bottom-up political mobility in Üsküdar and top-down political activity in Şanlıurfa.

Chapter 4, “Dissecting the Spatial Relevance of the *Diwaniyya* in Kuwait: An Inquiry into its Publicness” offers a fascinating look at *Diwaniyya*’s spatial transformation of the traditional role in informal politics in Kuwait. Cle-

mens Chay explains well how *Diwaniyya*, as a space where social expression of people is allowed, is still relevant to the Kuwaiti population despite challenges created by post-oil urbanization, modernization, and social media as a platform enabling expression of thought.

In chapter 5, “Shi’a-State Relations in Qatar: The Negotiation of Coexistence,” Robles and Cozzi, explain well, within the context of informal politics, how Qatar and its Shia population interact well despite Qatar’s official view of Wahabbisim and the Shia populations’ unwritten, contract-like harmony with the regime by prioritizing stability of their status over identity.

Chapter 6, “Threatening Urban Informality in the Middle East,” Deen Sharp reveals how urban planning is used as a weapon to destroy informal structures in urban areas. The author has explained urban informality well in its historical flow and international perspective. The reader understands urbanization well from an economic standpoint considering regional and global developments.

Chapter 7, “Voluntary Associations as Social Micromovements: The Case for Gradual Sociopolitical Change in Algeria,” Nejm Benesaiah claims that change can come from political parties or formally established organized protest movements and from voluntary organizations that can provide gradual, inclusive sociopolitical change with an informal sense versus formal politics. By opposing the view that sees civil society as an apparatus that strengthens authoritarian regimes, working in Algeria’s central Ghardia as a case study, the writer sheds light on voluntary organizations creating a new political subjectivity and social imagination on how society is organized and how the environment is managed, even if not in a political society but in general society.

In chapter 8, “Perilous Adventures: Women and Civil Society Participation,” written by Shahla Haeri, who is also an anthropologist and former director of the Women’s Studies Program at Boston University, readers will explore the legal and social positions of women and the status of them seen by the Iranian governments, from the Shah Era to the Islamic Republic, and how Iranian women have challenged against this positioning through participation in civil society.

In chapter 9, “Post-2013 Egypt: Declining Formal Politics and Resilient Social Activism,” Amr Hamzawy focuses on the struggle for rights in Egypt after 2013, which enjoyed being able to exist informally in the Arab Spring despite the pressures of formal structures. The author explains that despite an oppressive regime in Egypt, there is also resilient and adaptive social activism. The author reveals the struggle between formal and informal structures by telling the stories of civil society engaged in single-cause activism.

In her conclusive remarks in chapter 10, Suzi Mirgani offers a forward-looking analysis of the potential trajectories of informal politics in the region. She highlights several trends that are likely to shape the future of informal politics, such as poverty. Mirgani predicts that informal politics will intensify at a time when official livelihood structures crumble. Mirgani also forecasts that it is only a matter of time before public anger again spills over in the region while the people are living under heavy control; fear and poverty are becoming more intolerable.

Throughout *Informal Politics in the Middle East*, writers demonstrate an impressive command of the subject matter and an ability to synthesize a vast array of information into a coherent and compelling narrative. The ar-

ticle collections offer stimulating content and take the reader through the capillaries of the region rather than macro readings of the Middle East. As an elite work, the book appeals to people working in the Middle East rather than the general reader due to its micro-orientations and perspectives. Furthermore, case studies and interviews in the work bring a human dimension to analysis, allowing readers to better understand the motivations and experiences of the individuals involved in the region’s informal politics.

One of the book’s major strengths is its interdisciplinary approach, which draws on insights from history, sociology, anthropology, and political science to provide a comprehensive understanding of informal politics in the Middle East. Although this approach adopts a different disciplinary perspective and methodology in each case, at the end of the book, the reader becomes aware of different parts of the puzzle of the macro scale of informal politics in the Middle East.

Another strength of the book is its emphasis on the agency of local actors, who are often overlooked in discussions of Middle Eastern politics. By highlighting the ways in which individuals and groups navigate the complex political landscape of the region, writers create alternative readings to the notion that the Middle East is solely shaped by external forces or deterministic cultural factors.

The book’s weak point is that it does not give an example of informal politics in Israel. Due to Israel’s Jewish character, addressing the identity differences of Israel from the countries in the region within the framework of informal politics and powerful unionism and workers’ rights groups and the country’s responses to challenges coming from these organizations could offer the reader a critical

perspective on Israel's similarities and differences with other countries in the Middle East.

In conclusion, *Informal Politics in the Middle East* is a significant contribution to the literature on Middle Eastern politics and provides

valuable insights into the complex dynamics that shape the region's political landscape. The interdisciplinary approaches and focus on local actors make this book a must-read for Middle East scholars seeking to understand the region beyond the traditional readings.

The Nation Form in the Global Age: Ethnographic Perspectives

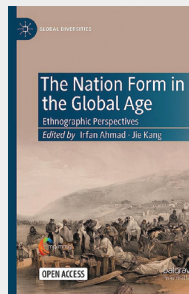
Edited by Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang

Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 386 pages, Open Access Book, ISBN: 9783030855802

Reviewed by Afshan Khan, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University

Produced in the honor of Peter van der Veer, a renowned Dutch anthropologist, *The Nation Form in the Global Age: Ethnographic Perspectives*, edited by Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang, delves into the trinity of religion, modernity, and globalization. The volume shows how nationalism has not only persisted but intensified as a medium of discrimination and marginalization despite the rhetoric of borderless globalization. The editors in the introduction cite the example of the COVID-19 pandemic as evidence to show the persistence of nationalism. They argue that the nation-states nationalized the borderless virus and vaccine science in response to the pandemic. The nationalization of the virus continued from its origin to its spread (p. 7). In many parts of the world, the Chinese and Muslims were blamed for the spread of the deadly virus. The pandemic proved that globalization has not led to what Arjun Appadurai termed 'de-territorialization' but re-territorialization.

In its attempt to unveil the relationship of nationalism with violence and destruction,



the volume highlights literature written by self-claimed Western liberals and the so-called universal scholars and exposes their biases. It brings together critical perspectives of trained anthropologists based on their long-term fieldwork. It is distinct with its focus on the non-Western world, namely, Asia, Africa, China, and the Middle East. As most of the contributors give reference to Peter van der Veer's scholarship on religion and secularism, it becomes essential for the readers to understand the depth of his contribution to the field of anthropology. Irfan Ahmad, therefore, attempts to provide a critical assessment of the diverse writings of Peter van der Veer who is skeptical of nation-states and nationalism.

The editors divide the volume into five parts, which consist of fourteen engrossing chapters. Part one includes the introduction by the editors and the Oeuvre of Peter van der Veer by Irfan Ahmad, part two, three, four, and five are based on the case studies of India, China, South Africa and the Middle East,