

and the one that would protect all against all. Interestingly, Locke's state of nature argument shows that prior to this consent, men were already dominant in their families. He argued that a wife's subjection to her husband had a foundation in nature. This implies that women were excluded from the status of being "individual" which is basic to consent theory. Arguably, if a wife's subjection to her husband has a "natural" foundation, she cannot at the same time be "naturally" free and equal individual. This means that citizenship is a natural property of man. It is not surprising to see that, prior to 1918 and 1920, women were not allowed to vote in Britain and USA, respectively. Despite the aforementioned gaps and omissions, this book is instructive to understand the workings of democracy. It may be useful to political scientists, activists and policy makers.

**Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)**

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Elections and authoritarianism have been subjects of debate since the third wave of democracy began. There are those who argue that elections are a curse to authoritarianism due to the fact that citizens can remove an authoritarian regime through elections. Arguments have also been advanced that elections legitimize authoritarianism. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt* is indeed a relevant piece on elections and authoritarianism. The book addresses an important aspect of competitive elections in an authoritarian context. This is a distributive function of elections, thereby joining those who see elections as a blessing in an authoritarian regime. The book sets itself to interrogate several issues about elections in Egypt: One, in what ways does an authoritarian regime benefit from holding elections? Two, why do candidates spend scarce resources to run for a seat in a parliament that does not make policy? Three, why do citizens engage in the costly act of voting in such a context? Four, do we observe patterns of economic change surrounding autocratic elections that resemble the trends observed in democracies?

The central argument of the book is that the authoritarian regime in Egypt has endured not despite competitive elections but to some degree because of these elections. The author holds that competitive elections help resolve conflict over distribution of rewards to regime's supporters particularly the rent seeking elites. Other important functions of elections in the Egyptian regime include institutionalization of dominance through formal channels as well as providing important information for the regime regarding the performance of party leaders. This is especially useful because elections reveal information about the competence

and loyalty of bureaucratic officials and party cadres, providing the authoritarian leadership with what is perceived as an even-handed way for the autocrat to decide who should receive party appointments (p. 5). Information also provides the regime an opportunity to punish those who are indifferent to it. Although the book acknowledges the possible dangers related with elections, such as increasing tension in the state- society relationship and specifically the relationship between the state and supporters of Muslim Brotherhood, it nonetheless sees their advantages outweigh their disadvantages. However, the author cautions that although the authoritarian regime is stabilised by elections, the by-products associated with authoritarianism like institutionalised corruption and budget-cycle induced inefficiencies have the possibility to destabilize the regime.

With regards to the second question posed above, the author posits that holding a seat in the parliament gives parliamentarians informal access to power and preferential treatment. One of the important preferences is a high guarantee of parliamentary immunity which protects them from arrest, detention, or charges of criminal activity such as corruption. Citizens engage in a costly act of voting for a variety of reasons. One is the direct benefit poor citizens get from selling their votes to powerful politicians in order to meet their needs. A second is that some Egyptians believe that democracy is a relatively good means of governing themselves, in which case democracy and elections are related. Yet there are those who are ideologically driven, too, especially the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Participating in elections is therefore an important avenue for them to support their candidates.

Methodologically, the book uses a quantitative methodology whereby data was collected across time and space. The quantitative analysis is complimented by a great deal of interviews with variety of actors such as politicians, activists, journalists, academics, and government officials. The book has also relied on "highly informative Egyptian press" (p. 22).

The author has to a large extent managed to achieve what was intended. The book explains the distributional function of elections in authoritarian regime in Egypt that goes beyond the conventional wisdom of elections being only a means of legitimacy. The book is well organised, readable and with a clear argument. The author indeed makes a significant contribution to both the theory and practice of elections in the authoritarian regime in Egypt and beyond. What made this book a success in its objectives is the use of empirical data both from existing body of literature and information collected in her field work through interviews.

However, this volume is not without shortcomings. First, in her argument the author states in risk of repetition "authoritarian regime in Egypt has endured not despite *competitive* elections but to some degree because of these elections". My problem in this argument is what is meant by competitive elections. In her discussion about

elections and the Muslim brotherhood, the author points the regime's strategies to deal with such a group during elections. These are among others, constant manipulation of the rules of the game, intimidation and electoral irregularities, and repression (pp.161-167). Under such a context it is inconceivable to refer to competitive elections.

A second shortcoming is in the methodological rigor of the book. The author claims to have used "informative Egyptian press" (p. 22). The quoted phrase over-celebrates the press in Egypt. It can be asked: What constitutes a highly informative press? As far as authoritarian regimes are concerned, the authenticity and impartiality of the press and media in general is highly questionable. This is because, in most cases, the regime controls what is or not to be said by both the state media as well as the private media. Third, in the selection of cases, the author chose Egypt because of, among other reasons, its institutional arrangements closely resembling the model of authoritarian regime that exist in the world and that Egypt is described as the perfect model of semi-authoritarianism. This is to my opinion a hasty generalisation.

Taking a single case to be a perfect model in the world is a sweeping analysis. By suggesting Egypt as the perfect model, the author fails to acknowledge specificities that exist in different kinds of such regimes like culture. For example the author reviews existing explanations on the source of stability of the authoritarian regime in Egypt. She cites the role of Islamic culture especially the need for Muslims to obey their rulers. The author proceeds by identifying submissiveness and tolerance to authoritarianism as broad characteristics of Egyptian political culture that is ingrained in the Egyptian consciousness as a result of Egypt's Islamic legacy (p.13). Although this explanation goes unquestioned by the author, it does suffice to demonstrate the uniqueness of authoritarianism in Egypt thereby making it doubtful to be described as symbolic to authoritarian regimes in the world.

The fourth gap is related to the discussion on the relationship between authoritarian regime in Egypt and the world, such as the United States of America and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although the author acknowledges their agenda to be democracy promotion, they also at times support authoritarianism due to their other interests, e.g. the need for oil in Arab countries and gaining markets for their manufactured products. This tendency suggests that these actors pretend to promote democracy thereby having no genuine intention of democratic promotion as they principally claim to advance. The author remains silent on this point.

Despite the aforementioned gaps, the book remains informative as far as Egyptian politics is concerned. It is especially useful to politicians, academics and students of

politics, activists and authoritarian leaders, especially on the adverse dangers of authoritarianism.

**Tatiana Zhurzhenko, *Borderlands into Bordered Lands. Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2010)**

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The border between Russia and Ukraine became a political reality in 1991 with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the creation of two independent states. Since then, Ukraine's Eastern border has turned itself into a perfect laboratory for studying processes of border construction. "Political parties, state bodies and civil societies in both countries; regional elites and politicians in Moscow and Kyiv; experts, local communities and ordinary citizens have been contributing to these processes in various ways" (p. 155), while the "geopolitical status of the border, a proper regime of border crossing and forms of border controls have been constantly contested and re-negotiated on international, national, and regional levels" (ibid.). It is this border that presents itself as a challenge to both Ukraine and Russia, and perhaps even the European Union, which have varying perspectives on its status, as well as symbolic and political meaning.

It is this issue of Ukraine's eastern borders, as well as the process of border construction, that Tatiana Zhurzhenko's book *Borderlands into Bordered Lands. Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* focuses on. It was published as volume 98 of the Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society series, edited by Dr. Andreas Umland. The book is based on the results of the author's research project *The Ukrainian-Russian Border in National Imagination, State Building and Social Experience*, carried out in the years 2002-2004. Although parts of the book have appeared in various languages and in numerous publications in the form of articles or conference papers, the book contains rewritten, reedited and updated information as of 2009. The author herself rightfully points out that the book is not a monograph, but a "collection of texts united by a common subject" (pg. 37). As a result, the chapters can even be read selectively, rather than as a single volume, each finding its own reader as the book manages to combine several methodologies and disciplines. Furthermore, each chapter contains references to the others, helping selective readers navigate through the book. Nevertheless, it is not a book for the general public. A reader with no knowledge of Ukrainian history and/or politics, or at least of Eastern Europe, will have a hard time understanding the author's references to regional specifics.