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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* by Daniel Brumberg

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constitutionalism and the actual roles of parliaments, but he does not draw the useful links and contexts in which constitutions are drafted and parliaments are created. What we are left with is an anthology of detailed constitutional references and citations that seem to be offered in a political vacuum.

There are few references, if any, to regional or international developments and their impact on Arab constitutional politics. For example, the state of war with Israel has allowed several Arab governments to suspend constitutional and parliamentary life all in the name of the battle for Palestine. Furthermore, the author makes no references to Arab public opinion and Arab popular aspirations. In fact, the Arab people are missing from a book dealing with political life and struggles, as if the public does not make demands on governments even when those governments are not necessarily responsive or accountable.

In addition, if the validity of the study of constitutions is even questionable in Western democracy where actual politics often deviate from constitutional designs, it is even more questionable when constitutions descend from above often for purposes of political legitimation (a concept that should have been pursued by Brown). In fact, the creation of constitutions and bodies of ostensible political representation serves as a measure of regimes' estimation of popular opinions and aspirations. Regimes often respond to popular demands for political openness and liberalization by creating the facade of an accountable political system. Of course, the Arab peoples are not naive and often realize the emptiness of governmental gestures, which explains the limited political legitimacy that is possessed by most Arab governments.

One may also strongly disagree with Brown's contention that Arab constitutions are "rarely blatantly violated" (p. 7). It is easy to document, and human rights organizations have done just that, the extent to which Arab constitutions and political promises are routinely and blatantly violated. The Iraqi constitution, for example, states in Article 2 that "the people are the source of authority and its legitimacy," while Article 19 guarantees the equality of all before the law. And the Libyan constitution states in Article 10 that "the creation of honorary titles and civilian ranks is prohibited," while Article 25 of the Syrian constitution maintains that "freedom is a sacred right. The state protects the personal freedom of the citizens and safeguards their dignity and security." Obviously, the citizens of those countries would dismiss Brown's contention in this regard. Constitutions are only adhered to insofar as they provide political rationalizations and justifications for actions and policies of the government, and they also provide an ideological sourcebook for the political legitimacy of regimes.

In talking about the Egyptian constitutional council of the nineteenth century, Brown states that "democracy was hardly an issue: the Council, though elected, was essentially a way to ensure representation primarily of the provincial notability" (p. 29). This is certainly not unique to Egypt, and may in fact apply to the founders of the U.S. Constitution. But it is customary to attribute lofty ideals and motives to founders of Western democratic institutions, while Easterners are seen as always devoid of principles and ideals besides self-interest. He also observes that independence "occasioned the writing of a constitution" (p. 61), again as if this is unique to the Arab world. His disregard of regional and international factors is most evident when he refers to the Syrian military coup of Husni Az-Za'im that ended civilian rule (p. 69) without informing the reader that it was engineered by the CIA, as we now know. The choice of the case studies is often curious: The author includes Iran (a non-Arab country), while he largely ignores Lebanon, which has had the most effective and independent parliament in the entire Arab world. It was only in Lebanon where a government was voted out of office

altogether and where the top post of government is open to contestation.

The second part of the book is more analytical and interesting, although some redundancies occur. The author is most knowledgeable about Egypt, and he offers interesting remarks about the role of the judiciary in Egyptian political life. But the weakest section of the book deals with Islamic constitutionalism where he traces constitutional evolution to the nineteenth century without even a passing reference to ideas of governance in Islamic political thought. The author should have considered the limitations set on political authority in Islamic political treaties (see p. 178). Further, many political thinkers sanction the overthrow of a tyrannical ruler. Islamic philosophers also justify the necessity of governance on rational grounds, and not merely on grounds of prophetic revelation as the theologians have done.

In sum, the book is a disappointment and fails to provide its own *raison d'être*.

**Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran.** By Daniel Brumberg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 306p. \$55.00 cloth, \$21.00 paper.

Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Syracuse University*

This is a book about a man who may be considered "the twentieth century's last example of a 'pure' charismatic leader" (p. 5). With these words, Daniel Brumberg begins to analyze the thoughts and legacy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–89), who came to power in Iran in February 1979. In his introduction, the author maintains that his study provides "an accurate, objective, yet sociologically empathetic evaluation of the very complex process of ideological change in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (p. 8).

By examining a wide variety of cultural, political, psychological, and social forces operating within the Iranian political milieu, Brumberg offers an insightful account of the multifaceted nature of revolutionary charisma. Dissatisfied with both the symbolic and instrumentalist theories of charismatic rule, he maintains that "the images of authority that political actors bring to social and political conflicts are not mere rationalizations of material interests; nor are they reflections of some cultural essence" (p. 6). To capture the complex nuances and the chaotic and nonlinear traits of competing authority systems, the author adopts a historical institutionalist perspective heavily supplemented by insights from the literature on political culture.

Brumberg introduces four analytical concepts to capture the nuances of charismatic authority in Iran: multiple biographies, multiple shared imaginations, dissonant institutionalization, and complex routinization. "Multiple biographies" denotes a leader's absorption of contending concepts of authority, while "multiple shared imaginations" refers to the existence of an assortment of political visions in a given society. "Dissonant institutionalization" is the dynamic process whereby contending visions of political authority are reproduced within various state and social institutions, as well as in the political lexicon of the ruling elite. Finally, "complex routinization" applies to the prolonged, chaotic, and indeterminate process through which political struggles either obstruct or advance the transformation of revolutionary organizations and ideology.

Brumberg considers dissonant institutionalization the "defining feature of the Islamic Republic" (p. 35), and asserts that thanks to its nature and effect, the system of contending authorities in Iran will endure for the foreseeable future (p. 246). The author also regards the "most enduring trait" of Iran's revolution as the "twin valorization of a zealous

quest for utopia alongside the pragmatic struggle for political order" (p. 13).

According to Brumberg, Khomeini was the embodiment par excellence of this twin valorization. Here was a magnetic leader capable of combining charismatic, traditional, and utilitarian visions of political authority (p. 80), yet one who did not have a coherent, consistent, or straightforward blueprint for revolutionary action (p. ix); a man with a stoic character who believed in the vanguard theory of revolution (p. 89), yet was concerned about the paradoxical consequences of clerical rule (p. 117); a cleric whose versatile understanding of Islam "was conditioned by notions of power, expediency, and interest" (p. 84), yet whose predilection for Islamic mysticism would often lead to contradictory pronouncements and an erratic praxis.

While *Reinventing Khomeini* is a thought-provoking account of modern Iran's political development, it is not without its shortcomings. This reviewer believes that Brumberg's penchant for the charismatic theory of political authority and psychological explanations leads him to overemphasize the significance of Khomeini's personal deprivations of youth (losing both parents) and to exaggerate the extent and weight of his charismatic prowess. Did he really manage to exude mystical charisma as early as the 1930s when he was just entering the third decade of his own life? Is it not true that in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, he had to live in the shadow of more prominent religious leaders of the time, such as Ayatollah Ha'eri-Yazdi, Ayatollah Kashani, and Ayatollah Borujerdi? If we were to discount the hero worship style of historiography prevalent in the postrevolutionary era, we would have to answer the former question negatively and the latter affirmatively. Sure enough, Khomeini was respected within the confine of religious seminaries for being a learned teacher, virtuous cleric, and courageous man, yet the fact remains that he was not the highest religious authority in the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s, nor is there much evidence that he enjoyed a great deal of mass following during these decades.

In this regard, some of Brumberg's omissions are rather troubling. For example, he maintains that Ayatollah Khomeini became more political in his outlook during the 1940s and 1950s. However, the author does not provide any explanation as to why this charismatic cleric was conspicuously absent from politics during the tumultuous events of 1951–53 when the Iranian attempt to nationalize oil was rewarded with a CIA-inspired coup. Should one hypothesize that this is a deliberate omission since its acknowledgment could have cast a shadow of doubt over the author's narrative?

Furthermore, Brumberg ends his book with a rather controversial—and in my view erroneous—conclusion. He maintains that Iranians have a deeply imbedded and intrinsic attraction to charismatic leaders, and that modernity in Iran needs to be accommodated to the quest for a spiritual life (p. 247). As proof, he refers to how Iranian "leaders," regardless of their position on the political spectrum, do not wish to let go of Khomeini's legacy. Does the latter argument, however, solidly support the former? Why should the incessant opportunistic appropriations and perennial bickering about Khomeini's legacy among the "political elite" be interpreted as a sign of the whole society's penchant for charismatic leaders or spiritual life? Have not the existing criticisms of the political elite literature convinced us to avoid equating without question the preferences of the ruling elite with that of the masses? Are not the widening rifts within the clerical establishment, criticisms of the cult of personality, the rampant debates about democracy and civil society, and so on—all of which Brumberg himself refers to in the closing chapters of his book—enough evidence that Iranian society is moving toward greater democracy, modernity, and secular-

ization? Moreover, if we were to accept that Iranians do have an intrinsic attraction to charismatic leaders and spiritual life, does not that somehow contradict—or at least diminish—the centrality Brumberg had earlier assigned to dissonant institutionalization as the defining feature of political life in contemporary Iran?

Finally, mention should be made of the fact that the scarcity of primary sources used in the book and the absence of a bibliography, coupled with typographical errors—I counted some 20 examples—have somewhat blemished the value of a book that offers much food for thought. Despite these shortcomings, *Reinventing Khomeini* is a rewarding read for students of Third World ideologies in general and those interested in political Islam in particular.

**Tearing the Social Fabric: Neoliberalism, Deindustrialization and the Crisis of Governance in Zimbabwe.** By Padraig Carmody. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001. 240p. \$67.95.

**African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999.** By Nicolas Van De Walle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 304p. \$59.95 cloth, \$19.95, paper.

Michael F. Lofchie, *UCLA*

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to underperform the world's developing regions, remaining a region of pronounced economic stagnation at correspondingly frightful human and social costs. Exactly why this is so has been the subject of extensive debate both among academics and within the policy community. Since most sub-Saharan African countries have been implementing neoliberal economic reforms, there has been particularly heated discussion about whether or not these policies have helped to improve the economic environment.

Much of the literature on this topic has been ideological. There is a highly visible left-right spectrum that divides those who favor market-friendly economic reforms from those who oppose them. The former believe that, at the very worst, structural adjustment has helped arrest and even turn around a process of precipitous economic decline. Advocates of this view argue that even 2% economic growth is a dramatic improvement over –3%. On the other side are those who see liberal economic reforms as worsening an already bad situation. Those on this side of the ideological divide believe that neoliberal economic measures have contributed to deindustrialization and, thereby, worsened the continent's pandemic political and social crises.

It is unlikely that either of the two groups will be able to persuade the other, but of the two books reviewed here, Nicolas Van De Walle's deserves to be read by all scholars interested in serious discussion of the issue. For although his work could be roughly categorized as center-right in its orientation, that is, pro-reform, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis* shows a careful scholar's painstaking and thoughtful reflection about all sides of this issue, including the deeply perplexing question of why liberal economic measures have fallen so far short of early hopes and expectations. Padraig Carmody's book on Zimbabwe occupies the ideological left, making a straightforward argument that Zimbabwe's efforts at neoliberal reform are the root cause of its economic woes, including deindustrialization and a badly torn social fabric. The viewpoint is not original, nor will his presentation of it appeal to those who would seek a more nuanced treatment.

Africa can test the mettle of even the most resolute social scientists, for the region's socioeconomic data is fundamentally untrustworthy, woefully incomplete, and frequently