

Michele Penner Angrist, *Party Building in the Modern Middle East*, Publications on the Near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2006). Pp. viii + 247. \$50.00 cloth.

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In the aftermath of 9/11, increasing number of scholars have contributed to the discussion on democracy and authoritarianism in the Middle East. Michele Angrist participates in this debate with a theoretically well-defined book. She discredits explanations based on Islamic culture and modernization. She also criticizes the rentier state theory. For her, the rentier state can only explain the consolidation of an already established authoritarian state, rather than its origin. Angrist's own approach is institutional. She attaches importance to party systems while explaining authoritarianism in the region.

In addition to be theoretically intriguing, *Party Building in the Modern Middle East* is empirically rich. It explores the cases in three categories. Tunisia, South Yemen, and Algeria are the cases where "immediate authoritarianism" emerged with independence, whereas in Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, a period (11 to 36 years) of multiple parties existed between independence and "delayed authoritarianism." The book mainly focuses on Turkey, the only case of the third category, where there was a temporary period of authoritarianism between the two-party system in the state-building (1923) and the "delayed competitive" regime (1950).

The causal argument about the three groups is based on the colonial legacy and initial party system. In the first category, the colonial rule eliminated the existing socio-political structure, which led the "second generation" to take over the nationalist movement and to found a single, preponderant, and mass-mobilizing party. That resulted in immediate authoritarianism. In the second category, the colonial rule allowed the "traditional elite" to represent the nation in the parliament and to preserve patron-client relations. The division within the elite caused various political fractions during colonization and multiple parties following independence. During the multi-party period, there emerged a polarization between the power holders ("conservatives") and the "challengers." Since the conservatives did not have sufficient mobilization capacity, they did not trust the democratic institutions as means of preserving their status. That radicalized both sides. As a result, neither in cases that conservatives preserved their power, nor in those the challengers defeated them, democracy emerged. Finally, in Turkey, the two-party system based on historical center-periphery relations helped de-polarization. Moreover, since the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP) had mobilization capacity, it allowed the transformation from authoritarianism to the competitive regime.

I have three main reservations on this significant and thought-provoking book. First, the book gives too much credit to the number of political parties as an explanatory variable. That does not deserve to be the central argument because a) the causal relationship between single party system and authoritarian regime is circular since they are almost identical phenomena, and b) there is no deterministic difference between two-party and multiparty systems in terms of leading either polarization or de-polarization. What deserves to be the central argument is, in fact, the colonial legacy. In the first group, the colonizers, France and Britain, did not allow indigenous pre-independence parliaments and stayed longer (76-129 years). The nationalist leaders could immediately establish an authoritarian rule over a country that lost its socio-political complexity due to the colonial cleansing. In the second group, the colonizers allowed pre-independence parliaments and stayed shorter (12-55 years). It took time for authoritarian

leaders to take control of relatively more complex societies following independence. Turkey, on the other hand, was never colonized and largely preserved complex Ottoman socio-political heritage, which eventually led to a competitive regime (p. 24).

Second, the author has a convincing argument about democratic transformation and contingent democrats: “democracy survived in ...interwar European countries where the status-quo parties felt secure in their ability to muster enough electoral support to maintain a parliamentary presence sufficient for defending their interests” (pp. 200-201). Yet the concept of “second generation” the author frequently uses does not contribute much to this argument. Instead, it creates several questions, such as, why were there political divisions within the traditional elite, but not within the second generation? Can the second generation always be politically unified?

My final concern is about the time scale of the book. It examines the formation of three types of founding stable regimes in the 1950s-1960s. By focusing on this historical question, the book avoids criticisms about its explanatory power on contemporary dynamics of authoritarianism. On the other hand, such an historical concentration brings the question of relevancy. If there was a path dependence between founding and current regimes, than the historical analysis would be very important. But the book does not tell us whether there is such a connection. Table 1 argues that in six of nine cases founding regimes still continue (p. 15). Yet Turkey has faced several back and forth between competitive party regimes and military interventions since 1960, while it has kept having multiple parties and political polarization. The execution of Adnan Menderes, the first democratically elected prime minister, showed that such polarization existed even during the two-party era. Similarly, it is not clear when the distinction between the two groups of authoritarian cases was an important analytical factor and when it ceased to be relevant. Today, Syria and Egypt look like more Tunisia and Algeria, than Iran and Jordan, in terms of single party government and military rule.

It is normal to have some criticisms for such a theoretically and empirically ambitious book. *Party Building in the Modern Middle East* is a timely and important contribution to a recently developing research agenda. I recommend it to those who study comparative democratization and Middle East politics. You can disagree with this book, but you cannot ignore it.