

ing like a protectorate” also involved an *ethnographic* logic whereby French administrators diligently documented classifications believed to be practiced by locals: Arab versus Berber ethnolinguistic divides, Islamic law versus customary traditions, and differing roles for women on each side. Finally, the French justified indirect rule through a *developmentalist* logic of improvement (*mise en valeur*) in urban centers and agricultural production. Here Wyrzten builds on previous work from anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi, historian Edmund Burke, and sociologist Mounira Charrad. In addition, Wyrzten synthesizes a vast amount of material from primary sources, including French diplomatic accounts, Arabic-language newspapers, and Berber poetry collected in the interwar period.

As Wyrzten paints it, state-based classification processes—a protectorate constructed from above, ethnographic distinctions mapped onto below—interacted with processes of distinction among actors within society. Individuals reworked their own understandings of identity categories, such as when Berber-speaking rebels united against French conquest. Individuals also directly challenged state-based classifications, as when Arabic-speaking intellectuals protested the 1930 French creation of separate Arabo-Islamic and Berber systems of jurisprudence and education. In many instances, however, local actors ended up employing the colonial rules of the game for anticolonial purposes, such as proposals to create a unified legal and educational system under the sultanate, which would assimilate Berberspeakers into the Moroccan nation. Thanks to the preservation of the sultanate by the French and the recognition of the symbolic power of the monarchy by locals as a credible vehicle for independence, the sultan Mohammad V was able not only to rebrand himself as an anticolonial hero but also to centralize power after 1955 within a monarchical state still in existence today.

Given newfound interest by economists and political scientists in the legacies of colonialism for contemporary politics and the unwieldy claims often found in postcolonial studies, *Making Morocco* injects a needed sociological precision into the comparative study of empires and nationalism.

Democracy in Iran: Why It Failed and How It Might Succeed. By Misagh Parsa. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. x+406. \$45.00.

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The quest for democracy in Iran began more than 150 years ago when a reformist prime minister (Amir Kabir), working within the confines of an oriental despot (Nasir al-Din Shah)—or what Max Weber in his typology of power would have called a “Sultanist” regime—first talked of having a constitution for the country. The quest has continued its Sisyphean struggle in the last four decades when the people of the country, sometimes under the

banner of reformist presidents, have worked in the confines of a despotic regime—what some scholars still call Iran’s Sultanist structure—to bring some semblance of modernity, democracy, rule of law, and respect for the private sphere to Iran. Misagh Parsa’s *Democracy in Iran* is a surgically detailed account of this struggle, particularly since the start of the Green Movement in 2009. The occasionally lumbering but always informed narrative is not for the faint of heart but for the more serious students of Iranian society today. Even if one disagrees with the author’s stark prognosis about the future of democracy—evident in the word “failed” in the book’s title and in chapter headings like “The Rise and Demise of the Green Movement” (p. 129) or “Irreconcilable Conflicts and Endless Repression” (p. 265)—one cannot but be impressed with the narrative’s deep delving into aspects of Iran’s political history in the last four decades.

The book’s declared ambitions are twofold: “The first is to examine Iran’s political conflicts and movement spanning near four decades. . . . The second objective is to identify and analyze those factors that determine” whether a country succeeds in “democratizing through reform . . . [or] revolution” (p. 4). The method used in the study is based on what the author calls the comparative study of “structural variables” and “process-related variables” (p. 292). Categories such as “the state structure, state ideology, and state intervention in cultural areas; the level of state intervention in capital accumulation and the characteristics of economic development including levels of inequality and corruption” Parsa calls structural variables (p. 292). Among process-related variables, he includes “repression, mobilization, exit options, convergence of conflicts, the likelihood of coalition formation and the influence of external factors” (p. 292). His data sources are “official and semiofficial reports and documents, national newspapers, publications . . . international sources for data on economic development and distribution of wealth . . . personal interviews, with former political leaders, theologians, former students merchants, labor leaders and political activists” (p. 4). The discussion of these variables in the history of the last 40 years in Iran is invariably detailed, but comparative references to countries like South Korea, Indonesia, and Philippines are often brief and impressionistic.

Based on these discussions, the book’s general conclusion is the notion that “comparative and historical analyses have demonstrated that prolonged repression, exclusion, and polarization tend to marginalize the moderate forces and radicalize increasing portions of the population, preparing conditions for a disruptive, revolutionary route to democracy” (p. 293). When the model is used to explain the democratic trajectory of Iran, the book comes to the surprising conclusion that “it is highly unlikely that Iran’s democratization will proceed through reform due to multiple complex contradictions and irreconcilable conflicts” (p. 296). The conclusion is surprising not only because of the aversion people have shown to violence and revolution but also because of a concentrated effort by democratic forces, “active and passive challenges” (p. 14), to find a gradual transition out of

these “irreconcilable conflicts” and contradictions. As events of the last few years, particularly the presidential elections in May 2017, have shown, these efforts are aided by those within the regime—from one-time presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami and still imprisoned leaders of the opposition, Mousavi, Rahnavard, and Karubi to the recently elected president Rouhani—who have accepted the inevitability of change and seem to recognize that without some democratic concessions, cataclysmic change is unavoidable. Moreover, the critical role played by reformists in the election of Rouhani and their obvious presence in the new cabinet and by the mayor-elect of Tehran show the book’s eulogy for the “demise” of the Green movement was premature.

Ironically, using the author’s own methodology, one can come away with a different conclusion and trajectory for Iran’s democratic movement. All through the rule of the Shah (1941–79)—which ended in what the author calls “one of the great revolutions in the modern world” (p. 4)—the Shah, driven by the Manichean politics of the Cold War and by his fear that the communists posed the greatest threat to his regime, “marginalized the moderate forces.” He assumed that the best antidote to the threat of godless communism would be god-fearing Muslims—an error incidentally that the United States made in Afghanistan even after the 1979 revolution in Iran. The Shah exiled or imprisoned the most radical Muslims (like Khomeini), but religious elements were the only social forces allowed to easily mobilize and organize in virtually every strata of the society. When the Ayatollah Khomeini, the “undisputed leader of the revolution” (p. 4), came to power in 1979, he used this nimble and vast network to brutally seize despotism and eliminate or marginalize the democratic and leftist elements of his victorious coalition. These democratic forces have not died away. Today, they are in number stronger than ever (e.g., almost 5 million college students, and last year for the first time ever, more women were published authors than men). They are shorn of any utopian revolutionary zeal; yet, they are still engaged in democracy’s Sisyphean struggle. Aside from using controlled elections to chip away at the power of clerical despotism, they are at all costs trying to avoid going through a “disruptive revolutionary route to democracy” (p. 293). Through incremental change—from women fighting for their independence to people using social media to expose failings of the system and to organize everything from raves to rallies—the people are opting for reform over revolution, trying in short to change the regime without a regime change.