

consolidation” (p. 258). Strong state capacity is a double-edged sword for new democracies. A well-developed administrative bureaucracy, when deeply embedded in society, can stabilize the early days of democratic transition, as the Kuomintang’s institutional legacy did for election management and party development in Taiwan (Chapter 4). But when a strong state remains largely disconnected from society, as was the case in South Korea’s authoritarian developmental state or Thailand’s monarchical state, it becomes an attractive object of capture for particularistic networks (p. 6). These are political factions both internal and external to the state apparatus that are committed to political power rather than democracy. The result is hyper-personalistic parties and a militant civil society in South Korea (Chapter 3), which impede democratic deepening, and an unstable democracy in Thailand that remains in the grasp of the “parallel state” controlled by the monarchy-military alliance (Chapter 5).

If states do not always make democracy, can democracy make states? The reverse of the sequentialist argument, dubbed the “nexian” approach in the book, finds limited support in East Asia. As chapters on the Philippines and Indonesia show (Chapters 7 and 8), when the introduction of democratic elections is not buttressed by parallel development in horizontal accountability or favorable socio-economic conditions, democracies get stuck in a “predatory state” trap (p. 258). Popular elections merely serve as routinized pathways to power for particularistic networks that then use that power not to invest in the state, but to weaponize it for their own interests. This is best exemplified by the widespread human rights violations under Duterte’s popularly elected incumbency in the Philippines. Hence, minimalist electoral democracies, which describes many Third Wave cases, rank high in electoral institutionalization but suffer from weakening civil liberties, a pattern recently characterized as “democratic decoupling” (Dan Slater and Iza Ding, “Democratic Decoupling,” *Democratization* 28[1], 2021).

For scholars of comparative democratization, the book is left wanting on prescriptive takeaways. For how well the book dismantles the sequentialist approach and nuances the state-democracy nexus, it falls short of offering a clear alternative framework. The distribution of particularistic networks emerges as a key variable, but what does it represent? Should we see it as a moderator to the sequentialist argument or as a return to a more dynamic, agency-based model of democratic transition (see Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 2[3], 1970), away from statist accounts? Crucially, why were some modern states in East Asia able to co-opt such networks into the political apparatus, whereas in others, such networks remained divorced from the state and eventually became a liability?

The answer seems to lie not so much in weak or strong state capacity, but as several contributors in the book

suggest, path-dependent legacies from *why* the modern state was developed in the first place. In many Third Wave cases, modern states were inherited from colonial predecessors. Colonizers were motivated by a variety of reasons: some were there purely for resource extraction, some for imperial conquest and the creation of national subjects, and others a mix of both.

Different colonial goals led to fundamentally different strategies of state-building. Some colonial states needed to be deeply embedded in society to monitor and re-socialize the population, whereas others focused on top-down extractive capacity with little social embedding. After independence, these state structures interacted with domestic factions competing for power to shape state *capacity* as it features in both the sequentialist and nexian approaches. Certain inheritances and domestic cleavages were more favorable to the rise of particularistic factions in that process. Colonial legacy, by defining the relevant players and rules for contestation in the state-democracy nexus, emerges as an integral part of the path-dependence story. But it remains curiously in the background in the book’s theoretical discussions.

Explicitly theorizing why post-colonial states vary in their vulnerability to particularistic networks can better dialogue the democratic lessons from East Asia with other regions. For instance, the book shares strong theoretical kinship with Sebastián Mazzuca and Gerardo Munck’s *A Middle-Quality Institutional Trap* (2021), which examines why the state-democracy nexus in Latin America became trapped in a suboptimal equilibrium. Although focused on different regions, both books see the current deficiencies of many Third Wave democracies as cyclical in nature and rooted in structural conditions at the onset of or even predating democratization. At a time when democracy’s prospects appear tenuous and surrounded by alarmist narratives of breakdown, *Stateness and Democracy in East Asia* contributes to the important research agenda of explicating what path-dependent state legacies hinder, but also help, successful democratic consolidation.

The Comparative Politics of Immigration: Policy Choices in Germany, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States. By Antje Ellermann. Cambridge, UK, 2021.

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Antje Ellermann’s *The Comparative Politics of Immigration: Policy Choices in Germany, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States* is a consolidative, cross-national study with two main objectives: to develop a theoretical framework to investigate comparatively the politics of immigration policy making; and to offer a nuanced understanding of the political dynamics that influence the direction of immigration policy over time. In pursuit of these goals, it

raises two questions that have engaged scholars of immigration policy making since Tomas Hammar's edited volume, *European Immigration Policy: A Comparative Study*, appeared in 1985. First, why do liberal states confronting similar political and practical immigration-related challenges adopt dissimilar policy solutions? Second, why does state immigration policy suddenly change course at some junctures while remaining relatively constant during others?

The Comparative Politics of Immigration pursues answers to these questions by scrutinizing the post-1950s immigrant admission policies of four major receiving countries. Its selection of cases is driven by two criteria: reputed migration regime type and institutional variation. Testing the conventional scholarly wisdom that the ideational and political contours of contemporary immigration policy are significantly influenced, if not determined, by a country's early experience with immigration, Germany and Switzerland represent the category of states that adopted guest-worker immigration regimes, while Canada and United States are often identified by immigration scholars as classic settler colonial states. A second criterion selects upon the observed variation of governmental systems among liberal states, with Canada an example of a Westminster parliamentary, Germany a coalition parliamentary, the United States a presidential, and Switzerland a semi-presidential system. Ellermann argues that both types of comparison are necessary to understand the dynamics driving policy choice across countries and over time.

The central insight of *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* is that the direction (restrictive or expansive) and magnitude (incremental or paradigmatic) of policy change will vary depending on the degree to which domestic policy makers are politically insulated from the preferences and demands of the unorganized public, organized interest groups, and foreign states. Moreover, their degree of insulation from these pressure sources is predicated on whether the politics of immigration is dominated by either the executive, legislative, electoral, or judicial arena. According to Ellermann's theoretical framework, the executive arena permits policy makers the greatest political insulation from popular and interest group pressures, the legislative arena an intermediate measure of insulation from these two sources, and the electoral arena the least insulation from popular pressure. Whether the judicial arena is pertinent for policy making depends on the prevailing constitutional arrangements of judicial review. In systems where "judges adjudicate cases brought by claimants adversely affected by the implementation of a statute" interest groups can influence the judicial agenda and the substance of court rulings (p. 22). Conversely, where politicians can refer legislation to courts directly, parliamentary opposition political parties and, often, subnational governments have access to a policy veto point. This framework assumes that publics within the receiving countries are reflexively hostile to more immigration, while organized interest groups

and the immigration-sending states are invested in, and thus lobby for, expansive immigration policy outcomes.

If Ellermann's framework, which expands upon Ellen Immergut's work ("Institutions, Veto Points and Policy Results: A Comparative Analysis of Health Care," *Journal of Public Policy* 10[4] 1990), seems complex, it is because it is. It is also highly original, thought-provoking, and elegant. Although *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* is informed by numerous good works about its subject—including, among others, Martin A. Schain's *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain, and the United States* (2012) and Daniel Tichenor's *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Interest Control in America* (2002)—it is nevertheless more empirically rich and analytically sophisticated. Indeed, Ellermann's claim that "despite the proliferation of migration scholarship ... we have yet to understand the diversity of policy choices adopted by governments across the Global North" (p. 4), is a valid one. Consequently, this perceived lacuna motivates her comparative investigation of immigration policy making across space and time.

That *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* exceeds the scope of previously published scholarship on its subject is indisputable. No book on the politics of immigration policy making hitherto has been more theory driven. The book's exhaustive attention to historical detail favorably compares with all previously published volumes. Moreover, on both scores *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* successfully acts upon Gary P. Freeman's exhortation ("Immigrant Incorporation in Western Democracies," *International Migration Review* 38[3] 2004) to political scientists that they should generalize and identify unifying trends in investigating the politics of immigration without neglecting individual case specificity and idiosyncrasy.

This said, *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* is not above criticism. As elegant as it is, Ellermann's theoretical framework will undoubtedly be judged by many experienced scholars of immigration as excessively deterministic as well as ill-fitting for some country cases. For example, the extreme zig zagging of UK immigration policy since the early 2000s—a country not included among Ellermann's cases—does not neatly conform to the framework's expectations. In this instance, intra-political party politics, an underprivileged variable in *The Comparative Politics of Immigration*, have played an outsized role in determining the medium term direction of state immigration policy.

A second problem concerns the book's assumptions about the motivations and preferences of the main actors involved in immigration policy making. Although the comparative empirical evidence in this and other studies generally (but not always) supports the view that organized groups and foreign states prefer expansive immigration policies, it does not validate Ellermann's supposition that the public consistently prefers restrictive immigration outcomes. Rather, even a cursory dive into the opinion survey record in the United States and other liberal democracies

reveals that the public is often relaxed about the prospect of new immigration. Longitudinal survey data gathered by Gallup, for example, reveal that in only one month between April 2006 and July 2022 did most Americans prefer that migration to the United States *decrease*. Indeed, according to several measures across different surveys, public opinion is currently more favorable than not to new immigration in a number of democracies, despite the recent rise in the electoral fortunes of anti-immigration parties and politicians.

A related problem is the book's rigid assumption that public opinion exclusively acts as an independent variable, that is, as a source of political pressure circumscribing elite decision making. While it is undoubtedly true that elites cannot indefinitely ignore the policy preferences of most of the electorate, it is nevertheless the case that, following the work of John Zaller (*The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, 1992) and other public opinion scholars, the latter is largely influenced by its exposure to elite discourse via the media. Indeed, my own comparative research concludes that political elite discourse, media attention, and public opinion are dynamically linked in a reinforcing feedback loop, thus suggesting that public opinion simultaneously acts as both an independent and a dependent variable regarding immigration policy making.

These minor criticisms aside, *The Comparative Politics of Immigration* is the best book published on the politics of immigration across the liberal democracies since the research stream to which it directly contributes began to flow during the 1970s. Moreover, it is a seminal work about the politics of policy making more broadly.

Crafting Consensus: Why Central Bankers Change Their Speech and How Speech Changes the Economy.

By Nicole Baerg. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 224p. \$82.00 cloth.

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After centuries operating under veils of secrecy, central banks around the world have recently evolved into transparent and communicative institutions. Traditionally, central banks let their interest rate changes speak for themselves, but today most central banks release policy statements justifying their policy decisions to the public. Few scholars have scrutinized this revolution in central banking practice, much less analyzed its impacts. Nicole Baerg's innovative *Crafting Consensus* fills this lacuna by theorizing how the composition of monetary policy committees (MPCs) influences the level of vagueness in central bank policy statements, and how precise central bank communications stabilize and lower societal inflation expectations.

Baerg analyzes central bankers as “wordsmiths . . . actors who carefully construct and deploy policy communications

to guide the economy” (p. 6). *Crafting Consensus* is the first book to explore whether central bank policy statements can influence household-level inflation forecasts. This is an important question because variance in individual inflation expectations can lead to higher inflation levels. If central banks can stabilize expectations by issuing information-rich policy statements, they can lower inflation through the power of their words.

Scholars have traditionally analyzed central bankers as policy makers, seeking to explain their preferences for restrictive or expansionary monetary policies. Central bankers are often arrayed along a single dimension with inflation “doves” on the left and “hawks” on the right. Doves tolerate higher inflation rates and prefer expansionary policies to reduce unemployment. Hawks prefer higher interest rates to keep inflation low even at the cost of slower economic growth.

Crafting Consensus develops two central claims, each contributing to the literature. First, Baerg argues that MPCs that divide power internally among hawks and doves write more precise policy statements than those controlled by a single faction. Second, policy statements that provide precise information contribute to a healthy economy by stabilizing societal inflation expectations and lowering inflation levels, while vague policy communications forego these benefits.

The argument that central bank communications can shape individual-level expectations speaks to the time-inconsistency literature in economics. This tradition assumes that government-controlled central banks in democracies are incapable of durably restraining inflation. In the run up to elections, incumbent politicians have incentives to demand expansionary policies to engineer short-lived booms that accelerate inflation. Kenneth Rogoff (“The Optimal Degree of Commitment to an Intermediate Monetary Target,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 100 [4], 1985) famously argued that governments can escape this dilemma by delegating monetary policy control to a conservative central banker. In Rogoff's model, societal inflation expectations are anchored by widespread knowledge that an inflation hawk controls the central bank and will not indulge political demands for cheap money. Baerg argues that this same beneficial outcome can be achieved by delegating monetary policy to an MPC that divides power between hawks and doves. A heterogeneous MPC also provides the added benefit of disseminating higher quality information.

Crafting Consensus is a touchstone in an emerging political science literature that challenges the common view that independent central banks are neutral technocracies (e.g., see Christopher Adolph, *Bankers, Bureaucrats, and Central Bank Politics: The Myth of Neutrality*, 2013). Baerg views central bankers not as “dispassionate experts” but “strategic actors with policy preferences and natural allies and foes” (p. 11). Because policy statements are drafted collectively by MPCs rather than by individual central bankers, the writing process is conditioned by similar institutional constraints and political dynamics