

“fully evaluated,” which makes study of the present or recent past an inherently risky and analytically imprecise affair. Meanwhile, Kaufman suggests that this type of analysis is overly focused on examples of discontinuous change and does not recognize that the sources of continuity may also be found in historical junctures.

Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies concludes with a chapter by Munck, who makes a passionate case for continuously refining the means scholars use to determine if, when, and how the past has critical legacies. In considering Munck’s sage advice, researchers also may want to consult the four inspired appendices that feature a coded literature review, a glossary, a bibliography, as well as a brief summary of eight classical texts. Altogether, this volume is a milestone in critical juncture analysis that will serve as a major resource for seasoned and early career researchers alike.

Faith in Numbers: Religion, Sectarianism, and Democracy. By Michael Hoffman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 212p. \$110.00 cloth.

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Let me cut to the chase at the outset: this is a good book, and you should read it.

Michael Hoffman has put together a well-conceived and nicely executed study on the connection between democratic attitudes and communal religious practice in the Middle East, a region of the world long seen as both a democratic holdout and unusually religious. Working with public opinion and experimental data, much of the book focuses on contemporary Lebanon, a bracingly complex society that regularly features in studies of communalism and religious politics, along with a complementary foray into Iraqi communal affairs. In addition to its obvious appeal to regional specialists, this book will interest scholars of religious and ethnic politics, as well as of political behavior more generally.

Let me clarify a key point up front: this book is about communalism rather than religion. It makes no pretense to offer a sweeping theory of religious politics, nor does it attempt to review the finer points of doctrine or political theology. Instead, Hoffman examines one discrete element falling under the broad banner of religious politics: communal religious practice. More specifically, he investigates how participation in *group-based* worship—attendance at religious services and communal prayer—influences people’s attitudes toward democracy and its related practices.

The answer he gives is one of context: communal practice within groups that would benefit from democracy nudges its members in a democratic direction, whereas that same form of practice in a group for which democracy seems more costly reduces its members’ support for

democratic politics. Rather than a never-ending doctrinal dispute, communal politics is ultimately a numbers game, and communal worship sensitizes people to their group-based interests. In practical terms then, worship services should push members of large groups left out of power to favor democratic governance and members of small, privileged minorities toward a skepticism of democracy.

Those familiar with contemporary Lebanese and Iraqi politics can perhaps see where this line of reasoning is going. After an introductory chapter and another that develops his argument in much greater detail, Hoffman dedicates the bulk of the book to empirical explorations of his theory in the two societies. The third chapter describes how ordinary Lebanese and Iraqi citizens think about attending religious services and questions of communal solidarity through the medium of open-response questions embedded in mass attitude surveys.

Chapters 4–6 comprise the empirical heart of the book. Chapters 4 and 5 use orthodox survey data, along with a priming experiment, to demonstrate that communal practice in Lebanon pushes members of competing communities in opposite directions on democracy: making Muslims more, and Christians less, favorable toward it in earlier periods; and making Shiites more, and Sunnis less, democratic in later periods when the axis of group conflict shifted. Chapter 6 uses analogous survey data to make an analogous point in Iraq: communal practice makes members of the large and recently empowered Shia community more favorable toward democratic governance but has the opposite effect on Sunni Arabs, a formerly privileged minority that has seen its collective fortunes wane under the majoritarian politics of the more democratic institutions currently in place. The last chapter rounds out the book with a rough test of its central thesis across some 87 societies for which World Values Survey data are available. By and large, these chapters make good use of existing survey data and complement it with original data collection to build an empirical case for Hoffman’s argument.

As I mentioned earlier, this book is really a story about communalism rather than religion qua religion, which makes it a variation on a theme that appeals to scholars of ethnic politics (although Hoffman does take pains to distinguish religious identities from ethnic ones on pp. 31–33). Does the decision to focus on the communal aspects of religion somehow weaken the book? No, it does not. Instead, it is a wise move. Religion is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, even when we ignore questions about institutions, intellectual history, and leadership and restrict ourselves to the beliefs and behaviors of ordinary people. Rather than attempt a sweeping study of all things religious and do a superficial job on all of them, this book focuses on one element to do it well.

Hoffman is forthright that this book is not a one-stop shopping experience for readers who want to learn about

religion and religious politics in all its intricacies. Early in the book, he does provide some feel for the broader phenomenon within which communal practice is embedded, but this broader context recedes into the background as he develops his own theory and especially as he works his way through the empirics. Despite having just praised the book for its focus, I nonetheless have a critique to make on this same point: ultimately, I wanted to see more religion in the story.

Let me clarify why I think this critique is a reasonable one, even though it appears to fault the book for failing to do something it was not trying to do. Put succinctly, I wanted to see more about religion not for its own sake but rather to provide context for the findings on communal religious practice. The rub is that, for the most part, that context *is* in the book: it's just that it is buried out of the way.

I am saying nothing new when I acknowledge that religion is a multidimensional phenomenon; many scholars have adopted the sociological view of religion's three *B*s: beliefs, belonging, and behavior. Hoffman's focus on communal practice overlaps partially with the latter two facets. Yet we also expect these facets to be correlated: people who are observant in their behavior are often, albeit not always, observant in their beliefs as well. To the degree that we wish to separate out the effects of one aspect of religion—as with communal religious practice—we must take care to watch out for common causality, as well as a higher-order construct under which all these facets nest.

I am not trying to make a “you forgot to control for *X*” critique. By and large, Hoffman does include controls in his empirical models for other aspects of religion, such as personal piety, that we might also suspect of being relevant to the attitude stew that is support for democracy. But that is the point: they are treated as *controls* rather than opportunities to distinguish communal religious practice from other aspects of religion. There is a more powerful case in favor of focusing on one discrete element of religion when not all the parts push in the same direction, if they do at all.

As a poignant example, Hoffman's well-executed priming experiment in chapter 5 demonstrates that communal primes affect people as theorized: pushing Lebanese Shiites in favor of democracy and their Sunni counterparts against it. Yet the experiment also includes a personal piety prime that yields null results, a point only mentioned in a single sentence (p. 98). Blink and you miss it. My quibble is that this null is informative, and burying it leaves money on the table: it shows us that not just any old thing about religion affects people's views on democracy but that, consistent with the book's theory, communal considerations do. Ultimately, then, my critique is one of context: to see the effect of communal practice, it helps to see how other facets of religion affect people or fail to do so.

Despite this critique, Hoffman has put together a novel and well-executed study about communal religious practice. It offers new insights for scholars of both religious and ethnic politics and is a laudable addition to our collective efforts to understand the effects of religion on democratic attitudes.

Why Democracies Develop and Decline. Edited by Michael Coppedge, Amanda B. Edgell, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Staffan I. Lindberg. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 350p. \$120.00 cloth.
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In this ambitious new volume edited by Michael Coppedge, Amanda Edgell, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Staffan Lindberg, a collection of top scholars reassess the evidence for some of the most commonly tested hypotheses about democracy's rise and fall using data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. The volume is structured thematically with chapters focusing on geography and demographics, international influences, economic determinants, institutional determinants, and the role of civil society and social movements. Despite its broad focus and myriad of tests, the volume is incredibly cohesive. This cohesion is largely attributable to the final chapter where the editors construct a comprehensive theoretical and empirical framework that integrates the findings from the previous chapters.

The richness of the V-Dem data is on display in chapter 2, where Carl Henrik Knutsen and Svend-Erik Skaaning descriptively examine trends in democracy between 1789 and 2018. Using global levels of V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index (polyarchy), they replicate well-known patterns such as the waves and reverse waves of democratization identified by Samuel Huntington. Yet, they also consider more nuanced patterns in the subcomponents of democracy that can only be assessed with V-Dem data. Although most of these patterns are consistent with the existing literature, the quantitative data provided by V-Dem creates many opportunities for future research.

In chapters 3–7, the contributors follow Jan Teorell's *Determinants of Democratization* (2010) by examining how different categories of explanatory variables influence polyarchy levels, changes, upturns, and downturns. Because of the comprehensive nature of these tests, I limit my discussion to some of the most robust findings. In chapter 3, John Gerring examines the long-run effects of geographic and demographic variables, finding that warmer climates and distance from natural harbors negatively correlate with polyarchy levels. Michael Coppedge et al. examine international influences from exogenous global shocks (international war and GDP growth) and