


anxiety, and insecurity have been the cause of social engineering policies and how much they have been merely tools to justify these policies and mobilize support for them. If it is the latter, it is not clear why people buy into this emotional narrative. The emotions analysis also does not shed light on why the Kemalists made Westernization of the society a key component of their social engineering project, whereas the Erdoğanists have been averse to it even as they share with Kemalists similar negative emotions toward the West. The author also does not take alternative arguments into account. The similarities between the Kemalist and Erdoğanist regimes could have something to do with the institutional structure of Turkey. One can argue that establishing effective control over state institutions gave these regimes the opportunity to pursue ambitious social engineering policies. Rather than an underlying emotional dynamic as cause, the reason both Kemalists and Erdoğanists have tried to transform their society may be simply because they can push for it to consolidate authoritarian control.

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## **Polarized and Demobilized: Legacies of Authoritarianism in Palestine. Dana El Kurd (London: Hurst, 2019). Pp. 240. £45.00 hardback. ISBN: 9781787382138**

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Dana El Kurd devotes the introductory chapter of her very valuable and important book to a focused historical summary of the circumstances of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. But by the next chapter, Chapter 1, it becomes clear that El Kurd's careful multimethod study is intended not only for those interested in Palestinian politics, but also for political and social scientists with a theoretical interest in international involvement, repression, and mobilization.

The overview in El Kurd's introductory chapter begins in 1967, the year in which Israel's victory in the June War brought its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. She traces events forward with a particular interest in comparing the situation before and after the Oslo Accords, hereafter Oslo, which Israel and the PLO signed in September 1993.

Recent years before the accords were marked by the Palestinian intifada, a spontaneous and sustained grassroots and essentially nonviolent uprising, led and carried forward not by Yasir Arafat and other PLO leaders headquartered in Tunis but by men and women on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories. Accordingly, El Kurd reports, Palestinians at this time were highly politicized and organized, with a robust civil society, and this despite a sustained loss of land and military occupation.

The situation after Oslo was very different. The accords led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (hereafter the PA), an executive that was to govern areas from which Israel would withdraw. Over time, however, the PA grew more authoritarian and began to erode the democratic and mobilized underpinnings of Palestinian society. Equally important, and perhaps more so, was the deep involvement of the United States in the years after Oslo. American involvement was constant and often antagonistic, El Kurd tells readers. The United States and its allies threatened to cut off aid whenever Arafat proceeded in a direction they disagreed with, and Arafat often had little room to maneuver.

This, then, is the variance that El Kurd seeks to explain: why and how did West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, a previously mobilized population, become demobilized and polarized in the years following the Oslo Accords?



Chapter 1 situates this question in the disciplinary political science literature on international involvement, repression, and mobilization. Toward this end, but also to assess what is taking place in Palestine, El Kurd formulates a series of hypotheses: international involvement causes the preferences of the Palestinian elite and the Palestinian public to diverge; the public's preference for democracy is not shared by the elite; the strategies of an undemocratic elite, such as co-optation and repression, will generate polarization; and where international influence has created a polarizing regime, political mobilization will decline. Taken together, these propositions tell the causal story that, in El Kurd's view, accounts for and explains the variance in the circumstances of Palestinians before Oslo and after Oslo. She describes the process this story tells as "autocratizing international involvement."

Although El Kurd does not pursue the connection, her analysis has much in common with dependency theory and world systems analysis. This theoretical paradigm is less influential among political scientists today than it was a disciplinary generation or two ago. Nevertheless, the unequal international and domestic power relationships to which dependency theory and world systems analysis call attention are very definitely still with us; and the paradigm itself, as El Kurd's study of the Palestinian experience shows, continues to offer important explanatory insights.

With El Kurd's theoretical argument now formalized, she turns in Chapter 2 and those that follow to the empirical implications of her causal story and to testing her hypotheses. She employs an impressive array of methodologies, sometimes involving the creation of original data sets. Semi-structured elite interviews are one of these methodologies. Among the many individuals she interviewed were decision makers within the PA and members of the PLO Executive Committee. El Kurd also designed and carried out an original public opinion survey, with a sample of 1,270 Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, she embedded an innovative experiment in the survey, randomly dividing respondents into a control group and two treatment groups. The treatments primed respondents with short statements about, respectively, autocratizing and democratizing international involvement. El Kurd's analysis also included a case study of Islamist opposition groups from 1994 until the completion of the study.

Chapter 2 tests El Kurd's hypothesis that international involvement causes the preferences of the elite and the public to diverge. Her analysis finds support for this hypothesis. Thus, at least in the Palestinian case, international involvement impacts, or distorts, the relationship between a population and its leaders. Further, she finds that a portion of the public shares the opinion of the elite, further deepening the polarization.

Chapter 3, entitled "The Legacy of Repression," considers El Kurd's other hypotheses and carries her causal story forward. Having demonstrated the growing divide between Palestinian elites and ordinary citizens, a divide that owes much to international involvement, she now notes the PA's increasing authoritarianism and considers how this is impacting the Palestinian public. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews with Palestinian activists from across the political spectrum, her case study of Islamist opposition groups, and another experiment conducted at Birzeit University, she provides evidence in support of a two-stage theory of authoritarian outcomes: PA authoritarianism has increased polarization, and this polarization has subsequently affected social cohesion and the public's capacity for collective action.

Chapter 4, entitled "Demobilizing a Mobilized Society," digs deeper into the pattern of the dynamic relationships that El Kurd has advanced and demonstrated, and particularly into the impact of PA authoritarianism on political mobilization. Here she uses another original data set, this one recording daily protests at the neighborhood and village level. We see in this chapter the significant difference between Palestinian society before and after the Oslo Accords that El Kurd discussed in the introductory chapter and that, apparently, motivated her study. She finds, *inter alia*, that mobilization has declined significantly in places where the PA has more direct control, even though Palestinians in those areas are more densely populated and have greater access to resources. Consistent with findings reported earlier,

the chapter offers further evidence that the authoritarian strategies of the PA have undermined social cohesion and the capacity for mobilization.

A final chapter asks whether findings based on the Palestinian case might apply elsewhere. Consistent with her effort in Chapter 1 to formulate and test propositions that will be of broader interest to political scientists, she asks about scope conditions and devotes Chapter 5 to a brief, but insightful, assessment of the applicability of findings from Palestine to the cases of Bahrain and Iraqi Kurdistan.

In sum, this is an impressive study in all respects: the sophistication and originality of the causal story it develops; its coupling of relevance to disciplinary political science to new understandings of the Palestinian experience; the rigor and innovation of its analysis; and its complex and truly multimethod character.

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