

The volume also would be strengthened by engaging the relevant scholarly literature. The author notes in the Introduction that his approach differs from conventional analyses, but only refers to – and dismisses – the literature in passing in the Introduction. Identifying and noting the shortcomings of extant studies on Indonesia's political development would strengthen the author's argument and better contribute to the relevant debate, including of terms of the prospects for continuing political reform in Indonesia.

All in all, *Unfinished Nation* is a valuable study of political development in Indonesia. It is empirically rich and addresses matters that are important to a broad community of people interested in this issue.

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Benjamin MacQueen, Kylie Baxter and Rebecca Barlow (eds), *Islam and the Question of Reform: Critical Voices from Within Muslim Communities* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), x + 118 pp., \$39.99, ISBN 9780522856118

In the post-9/11 period, Western discourse on Islam and Muslims has been divided into two opposing, at times competitive, viewpoints. The dominant Huntingtonesque narrative has seemingly sidelined its alternative and more optimistic opponent. There are several themes over which the two groups spar; compatibility/incompatibility; democratic prospects; critical Islamic voices; extremism; and Muslim homogeneity. Moreover, both narratives are generally Arab-centric and pre-occupied with Islamic revivalism. This book is a valuable contribution to the literature because it draws on non-Arab case studies, pays attention to non-extremist examples and gives space to critical Muslim perspectives.

MacQueen identifies the main purpose as '... unpack[ing] what those within and outside Muslim communities mean by reform' (p. 102). The aim is not new but the approach is. Reform has usually been addressed by asking how Muslims can remake their communities, polities and states in Western form, usually through de-Islamisation. The importance and value of this book lies in the emphasis on Islamic pathways to reform. The authors argue that rather than wholesale secularisation or disengagement of the socio-political from Islam, reform requires a '... re-engagement with Islam's 'universal values'' (p. 102), drawing on the enlightened thinking of early Muslim scholars, modernist thinkers and principles and practices from the early Islamic period, such as *ijtihad*, compatible with the democratic ethos. Indeed, there is an underlying insistence throughout that the corrupting force in the Muslim world is human not religious. Barlow's chapter on Iran and Ropi's on Indonesia clearly demonstrate that power, ambition and conservatism are the real obstacles to reform.

The book offers a sensible prescription: that reform from within Islam and the Muslim world might be more palatable and sustainable than externally imposed models. This is clearly articulated by both Schottman and Baxter. Schottman posits Malaysia as a potential model for democratisation in the Muslim world, arguing that it is there that '... the changing face of political Islam becomes relevant for Western policy makers as well, as autochthonous democratisation discourses may stand a greater chance of establishing concepts of good governance in predominantly Muslim countries than externally enforced attempts or ideas with little reference to a Muslim world view' (p. 68). The seemingly successful transition to democracy from within stands in stark contrast to Middle Eastern states where the consistent imposition of secularism, from the post-colonial period to the present, has served as the impetus toward revivalism and extremism as '... an alternative to the region's dominant secular political doctrines ...' (p. 95).

Western demand for critical Muslim voices has privileged the hyper-critical – think Ayan Hirsi Ali – decrying all that is wrong with Islam through a comparison with Western liberal democracy.

MacQueen and Baxters' chapters, on Abdullah an-Na'im and Tariq Ramadan, respectively, highlight alternative critical Muslim perspectives: these emphasise reform of the socio-political sphere, and challenges to the conservative stranglehold over it, as seen in the examples and opinions from the early and modernist Islamic periods. Secondly, by choosing scholars and case studies that are neither Arab nor extremist, each author serves to break the centrism of existing scholarship, whilst at the same time drawing attention to the diversity of the Muslim world thus deconstructing assumptions of it as monolithic.

This book is an invaluable resource. The clear and concise explanations of Islamic history, philosophy, principles and practices that are so essential to understanding the workings of Muslim politics make this a highly accessible text suitable to new scholars and policy makers. At the same time the authors maintain a high degree of intellectual rigour. All of this combined makes the text suitable to a wide-ranging audience.

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Jeff Madrick, *The Case for Big Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 205 pp., \$37.95, ISBN 97800691123318 (hbk)

Jeff Madrick has written a book uniquely consonant with its times. In a world that is looking more positively at regulation of the finance and banking industries and in which the USA has elected a president who is deeply sceptical of free market panaceas, Madrick's book has a powerful message. Yet, paradoxically, it was written almost entirely before the global finance crisis, which is referred to briefly in its early stages as 'the credit crisis of 2008'.

Madrick's overall argument is that the case against 'big government' is empirically false. Nations ruled by so-called big government and high taxation do not grow more slowly than nations with smaller government spending and lower tax. Given the sweeping assertions of the critics of big government, their case should be easy to prove and the supporting research should be very strong. Yet, on inspection, this is not so. In Madrick's view active and sizable government has been essential to growth and prosperity in the USA and elsewhere. While not denying that government programs can be managed poorly and that high tax can sometimes be deleterious, Madrick argues that there are plenty of examples of high taxing and high spending nations that are very productive and that provide their citizens with living standards as good or better than the USA.

The main comparison is obviously with European countries, a number of which Madrick uses to make his point. In the case of Sweden, some market-oriented changes were made and some taxes lowered, the free market economists trumpeted. The economy improved but Sweden's welfare state and tax levels are still far more advanced than the USA, while its living standards, growth and productivity are close to the USA. Similar cases with different details can be made out when comparing France, Germany and other European countries to the USA. The real 'advantage' that gives the USA its high per-capita GDP is that a higher proportion of both men and women work and Americans work longer hours than their counterparts. The USA provides more jobs than other countries but this is probably because it pays lower wages, argues Madrick.

As well as international comparisons, Madrick grounds his case by historical illustration. Clean water and efficient sewerage in cities, established just prior to World War One in the US, was expensive but was ultimately a source of wealth and innovation as well as being socially progressive, eliminating typhoid among other things.

The real problem, one is tempted to say, is the grip of the myth of 'small government' on the minds of the public. This is both a genuine political problem for progressives and also an excuse for social democrats to shrink from persuading the public of genuine reform. In the case of the USA, President Bill Clinton's 1996 statement that 'the era of big government is over' is a classic