

French government responded threatened to undermine France's democratic principles. The book ends with "Postscript: The Past, Present and Future of Democratization," in which Kari Palonen concludes with a positive note on the future of democracy.

Although democratization experiences have become one of the key areas of interest in European politics in recent decades, no scholarly analyses had tackled the conceptual problems associated with democratization and the widely-held assumption that the contemporary European experience presents a reference point for democratization experiences elsewhere, in an

in-depth manner found in this study. *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Politics of Democratization in Europe* provides an incisive inquiry into the foundations and evolution of the European democratization experience through a good mixture of specific case studies and conceptual analyses. It promises to be reference reading for scholars and students of political science alike. It also offers valuable insights for practitioners actively involved in the making and re-making of the democratization experience in Europe and elsewhere.

Yaşar Yakış

Member of the Turkish Parliament

Hezbollah: A Short History

By *Augustus Richard Norton*

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. vi + 199 pp., (paperback), ISBN 978-0-691-14107-7.

The purpose of Augustus Richard Norton's book— authored by the co-editor of the "Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics" series—"is to offer a more balanced and nuanced account of this complex organization [Hizbullah]... an honest account of the leading Shi'i political party in Lebanon— Hezbollah" (pp. 8, 198). In spite of that, there seems to be nothing fundamentally new in Norton's book.

It is true some mistakes were corrected in the subsequent reprints, but many mistakes of principle were left unattended. For instance, the map on page one in the "Prologue" is deeply flawed. Norton insists that the Kura district, below Tripoli, is Greek Catholic, when the Kura is represented in

the legislature by three Greek Orthodox members of parliament (MPs), which unequivocally implies that that region is predominantly Greek Orthodox. In fact, the latest figures in light of the June 2009 elections reveal the composition of the Kura population as 60% Greek Orthodox, 17% Maronite, 21% Sunni, and 2% Shi'a. Where did the overwhelming majority of Greek Catholics come from?

The book is composed of six chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one surveys the "Origins and Prehistory of Hezbollah"; chapter two deals with "The Founding of Hezbollah." The parachuted in chapter three entitled "Being a Shi'i Muslim in the Twenty-first Century" seems unrelated to

the main thrust of the argument. It is basically a summary of Norton's 2001 book *Shi'ism and the 'Ashura Ritual in Lebanon*. Undeniably, the chapter is very well written, but it is very detailed, longwinded, and an unnecessary digression in a book aimed at giving a short history of Hizbullah, not Shi'ite rituals. Thus, removing the chapter would not diminish the value of the book. Chapter four discusses the topics of "Resistance, Terrorism, and Violence in Lebanon" and chapter five, "Playing Politics," shows how Hizbullah abandoned its revolutionary fervor and started integrating in the political system through its participation in electoral processes. Finally, chapter six, "From Celebration to War," addresses the July 2006 war and its repercussions.

Norton's book provides a fairly good synopsis of what is known about Hizbullah, even though it does not offer any new startling insights. Nevertheless, Norton's elegantly written compact book has drawbacks in terms of inaccurate facts and information. This applies also to the newly added afterward (pp. 161-172). He asserts, "Although Hezbollaha has tried to downplay the hostility of the Sunni groups, it is noteworthy that the party's attempts to reach a rapprochement with the most powerful Sunni Islamist groups have failed, at least through the summer of 2008 [sic]" (p. 171). Norton seems to be unaware of the August 18, 2008 eight-point understanding between Hizbullah and Salafi movement, where, for instance, article five calls for mutual defense in case of any foreign or domestic aggression.

Based on his lack of knowledge, Norton comes up with a flawed conclusion: "It is a good bet that new parliamentary elec-

tions in May [sic] 2009 will only replicate the divisions and animosities represented in the post-Doha government" (p. 171). By the concession of international observers and election watchdogs, the June 7, 2009 elections were the most successful elections after the end of the civil war in 1990, and were unprecedentedly held on one day without any bloodshed or serious feuds. So reading Norton's statement in light of the 2009 legislative elections reveals just the opposite: the elections were neither an epitome of disorder nor did Hizbullah close the door to compromise with its opponents. On the contrary, one day after the elections, the party's secretary general, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, conceded defeat, called for burying the hatchet and placing skeletons in the closet, congratulated and extended a hand to the victorious March 14 ruling coalition to form a national unity government, and stressed that bygones are bygones. Rapprochement between Nasrallah, the March 14 Druz leader, the seasoned politician Walid Jumblat, and the parliamentary majority leader Sa'd al-Hariri, seemed to be inevitable after the elections. In marathon meetings, after a freeze of almost three years, many misunderstandings and mutual fears were addressed.

So many tensions were defused. In accordance with the dictum of "I'll scratch you back, if you'll scratch mine", Nabih Berri was elected as speaker for a fifth consecutive term since he first assumed that office in 1992. Since he received 90 votes out of 128, when the Hizbullah-led opposition controls only 57 seats, it means that 33 MPs from the March 14 coalition voted for him. This was reciprocated when Sa'd al-Hariri was nominated as incumbent prime minis-

ter by 86 MPs when the March 14 coalition only controlled 71 seats of the legislature, which implies that the 13 members of the Berri parliamentary bloc along with two Armenians from the Hizbullah-led opposition nominated Sa'd al-Hariri. This along with the groundbreaking meetings between Nasrallah, Jumblatt, and al-Hariri serve as indicators of national unity and reconciliation.

In light of the above, Norton's future prospects in the closing paragraph of his book are also far off the mark. He contends that Hizbullah's "recent 'victories' have been costly on every level that matters. The Shi'i party is as much constrained by its successes as its adversaries have been enlivened

by its rise" (p. 172). On the contrary, Hizbullah's reconciliatory discourse and strategy of reaching out to allay the fears of the other after its defeat in the elections were conducive in defusing chronic tensions that had almost succeed earlier in igniting another civil war.

In the fifth reprint of his book, it seems Norton only corrected some embracing mistakes that might tarnish his reputation as an authority "for close to three decades" (Back cover) on the Lebanese Shi'a and Hizbullah, but also committed other factual and analytically short-sighted blunders, which seem to downgrade the overall value of his book and scholarship.

Joseph Alagha, Radboud University