

were conducted with representatives of women's leaders in the Middle East and focus groups on women's issues in the respective countries. Based on this research, the authors analyse specific aspects of women's rights such as non-discrimination and access to justice; autonomy, security, and freedom of the press; economic rights and equal opportunity; political rights and civic voice; and social and cultural rights.

Although the book is aimed at readers involved in women's equality issues and especially at policy makers 'to help to identify priority areas for reform ... and catalyze further actions' (p. 14), some of the recommendations seem to be little more than logical conclusions flowing from the study rather than in-depth recommendations designed to attract the attention of policy makers.

Also, despite the extensive research and sound analytical background to the findings, some of the authors base their findings on reports finalised back in 2003 (see for example p. 87 and p. 244). Given the dynamic nature of change in the region it is highly likely that the findings in these reports are no longer scientifically grounded.

Nonetheless, this book is a noteworthy empirical work and by basing the methodology on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it enables the reader to search easily for specific topics and compare across countries numerically with regard to their progress. The overall framework of the book, its structure, fieldwork, graphs and inclusion of relevant local expertise in the recommendations, combine to provide a welcome addition to the scholarship on women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa.

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Provoking Democracy: Why We Need the Arts by **Caroline Levine**. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 252pp., £50.00, £19.99, ISBN 9781 405159265, ISBN 9781 405159272

'Japan's Supreme Court rules that male genitalia can be art', reads an article in *The Economist* of 23

February 2008 (p. 62), which dealt with the court's decision on whether Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photography is merely obscene or indeed art. Had Caroline Levine not focused on Great Britain and the USA in her most recent monograph, the above case could easily have been included, and it proves the relevance of the book's subject matter: the relationship between the arts and democracy.

The book's title conveys its main thesis as well as its substantiation: Levine claims that democracy needs the arts for their provocative nature, given that artists have regularly tested the limits of freedom of expression, thus being sensitive to threats to democratic liberties. In addition, *avant-garde* art is of value to society as an innovatory force or, as Levine says pointedly, 'the avant-garde neither reflects public taste (as friend) nor offends it (as enemy), but challenges it in order to change it (as friendly enemy)' (p. 49). Accordingly, these artists take up the position of a 'permanent minority' (p. 46) whose endeavours are constantly questioned and, occasionally, blocked. As a sample of 'people vs. the arts', the second chapter recounts the controversy about Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981), originally set in New York, which did not, to put it mildly, meet with unanimous public approval. The opposition grew so strong that it led to the removal of the work.

Yet governments do not always yield to the public's disapproval and have learned to exploit art as 'propaganda for democracy', which is the subject of the third chapter. During the Cold War, Western democracies could portray themselves as liberal by promoting art marginalised by public opinion, promoting those same artists who questioned the Western system. An even more important ally against public opinion became the judiciary, an alliance which Levine sees grounded in the common spirit of the judiciary and the *avant-garde*: both are 'counter-majoritarian institutions with a commitment to dissent, pluralism, and innovation' (p. 190).

The examples presented by Levine can easily be supplemented by controversial cases from around the world, as the decision of Japan's supreme court above shows. Highly readable and

absorbing, *Provoking Democracy* invites the reader to ponder the role of the arts in society and the limits of democracy – not just an invitation to scholars, but to all interested readers.

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Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work–Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States by **Kimberly J. Morgan**. Palo Alto CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. 250pp., £13.50, ISBN 0 8047 5414 4

Kimberly J. Morgan's book focuses on the overlooked relationship between religion and work–family policies. There is limited research on the ways in which mothers' employment and the care of the young in Western societies have been influenced by religion.

Morgan rightly asserts that any investigation of the trajectory of religion and work–family policies should start in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the modern political system was formed. She expands her analysis to the golden age of the welfare state, namely from the Second World War until the 1970s. The economic slowdown and political changes after the 1970s revealed various patterns and a differentiation in state involvement in work–family policies in Western Europe and the United States. This period coincided with an increasing process of secularisation and the privatisation of religion. Having limited political influence, institutionalised religions asserted their positions particularly on issues which mattered most to them, namely on child and family affairs. Issues such as abortion and divorce laws, education and the public care system have been closely connected to societal religiosity. Thus, institutionalised religions have been prime factors in shaping work policies, directly influencing the evolution of morality and economic progress.

The book offers both a theoretical analysis of religion and the welfare state and a comparative study of work–family policies in Sweden, France, the Netherlands and the United States. It

proposes lessons that can be learned for the future on family policies and concludes that childhood education has greater political significance for the United States than European countries. The book is written in a persuasive style and opens new discussions in the field.

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Where Nation States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism by **Philip G. Roeder**. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. 417pp., £17.95, ISBN 978 0 691 13467 3

Until relatively recently, studies of nationalism tended to take the form of either studies of nationalism as an ideology or historical studies of the development since the French Revolution of nationalism in specific societies. Such studies tended to work from the assumption that nationalism is characterised by ethnic groups seeking their own sovereign nation states. Recent studies of nationalism such as those by Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and E. J. Hobsbawm have pointed out that the nationalisms that have successfully created nation states represent only a fraction of the potential nationalisms. Increasingly students of nationalism are turning to the hypothesis that states create nations as much or as often as nations create nation states. In *Where Nation States Come From*, Roeder proposes a segmental institutions thesis which reflects this view that states more often than ethnic groups or nations create nation states.

This segmental institutions thesis, in Roeder's words, 'stresses that it is not ethnic groups that become nation-states; it is segment-states' (p. 290). Roeder's argument is that segment states, defined by a territory, population and government but without sovereignty, are able to pre-empt other potential nationalisms through the pursuit of hegemony over political identity with the instruments of public policy, and to challenge existing states with which they are associated. Drawing on examples from the case studies of the transition period in the Soviet leadership following Lenin's