

dryly noting: “The introduction of mechanized agriculture into Saudi Arabia is not as recent as popular journalists would have us believe.” Still, the photograph (p. 28) of Ibn Saud playing with a vast model train set at a huge New York banquet table is priceless. This book invites us to meditate on such images and the relationships between political mythmaking and the raw forces of despotism and exploitation.

Favorably priced for pedagogical use, this book is not a basic introduction to the development of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the author hyperbolically concludes the foreword (p. xx) by saying that the book “is not about Saudi Arabia.” But at a minimum, Chapters 7 and 8 are good “stand alone” resources on the reign (1953–64) of King Saud. He was long derided as a profligate and drunk, and his losing struggle against Faisal is well presented. Faisal emerges as the bastion of reactionary cronyism. King Saud made genuine efforts to support reformers, but the efforts collapsed for want of internal support and due to external pressures that had already felled the monarchies in Egypt and Iraq and were threatening to engulf Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The book’s puncturing of the “progressive Faisal myth” is a significant contribution.

Some of Vitalis’s judgments regarding Saudi internal policies are in conflict with other, more perceptive insights. He mocks Ibn Saud’s efforts to extend agriculture into the kingdom (pp. 70–74), and excoriates his preference for a railroad to a highway from Riyadh to Dammam (pp. 74–76). Both sections, in my view, ignore the emphasis Ibn Saud placed on sedentarization of the nomadic tribes, which was critical to making the kingdom “safe for oil.” Roads are 24-hour conduits for roving bands of Bedouin, and small individual cars and trucks are easier prey than a train. Hafuf had been attacked by Bedouin in Ibn Saud’s memory. After conquering the Hejaz, Ibn Saud agreed to let some of the tribes retain some self-governance if their leaders stayed away from the roads. In short, roads were a major headache, and Ibn Saud was right to delay in favor of a railroad. Agriculture, even if feeble, was also crucial, no matter what the cost, because it allowed sedentarization. Ibn Saud could hardly pretend to be a ruler worthy of his oil royalties if itinerant tribes plundered pilgrims in the Hejaz (giving Egypt an excuse to intervene) and roved unchecked among vulnerable oil facilities in the Al Hassa region. As late as 1980, half the population of Saudi Arabia was employed in agriculture (compared to 2% in oil), which received major subsidies in order to break up the tribal zones, move toward more stable property rights, and give the displaced tribes something to do.

Yet Vitalis is dead-on when he observes (p. 171) that the palace building and “waste” of the early regime was a carefully constructed system of patronage. He mentions the early bin Laden family’s connections to building contracts, and keeping crews busy was surely a major purpose. But I suspect that the building program was also

related to establishing property claims in the *mawat* (unused, unclaimed lands) and, in effect, legitimizing the upstart monarch as the authority who could presume to assign other unused tracts (and irrigation) to individuals and clans, and thereby create the modern Saudi state. Subsequently, converting some palaces to hospitals and charities (*awqaf*) was a further link in the patronage chain, which cemented an alliance with the clergy in the system of governance, while no doubt retaining direct and indirect control of the asset. Such expenditures may be “wasteful” from a Western bureaucratic perspective, which assumes secure property, but no one has ever put a price on sedentarization as a path to social peace—and a petroleum bonanza.

America’s Kingdom stands peerless as a history of American corporate racism in Saudi Arabia, and is a very good introduction to racism in the U.S. mining industries in general. We may regret that the book ends in the 1960s and thus fails to explore a different form of racism, that of the *medallah*. Western workers in Saudi Arabia today need to live under the protection of the Saudi state, which harbors them because they are useful, just as Moroccan monarchs once sheltered communities of Jews. Just how and when the racist Aramco enclave became a *medallah* is the natural question that follows from a study such as this, but Vitalis sticks to his available sources and is silent. Pursuit of this question would require a more detailed look at the relationship between Wahabite Islam and the Aramco enclave than this book provides. The book forces the reader to think about racism as a dynamic force in global politics, even when it is silent on important, related issues. Pushing the reader to engage these themes is a sign of the work’s success.

Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism. By Daniel Ziblatt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 288pp. \$42.00. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592708080456

— Jenna Bednar, *University of Michigan*

Federal “solutions” are bandied about by armchair constitutional designers, their purported benefits for Iraq or elsewhere debated on talk shows and in academic conferences. At times, the support for federalism seems based on its apparent middling position between unitary government and partition; it is a compromise. But is federalism *feasible*? Federation is not easy to pull off, and Daniel Ziblatt’s book, written about two cases of state formation in the mid-nineteenth century, should be read by all who advocate federalism in transitioning states today because it provides us with a careful analysis of the potential for fractured states to embrace federal unification.

Anyone who thinks that constitutional drafters can effortlessly implement their vision of an ideal system will be disabused of this naïveté quickly upon reading Ziblatt’s

book, which makes plain that the alternatives available to constitutional drafters are limited by preconditions that they are powerless to alter. In particular, if the designers want federalism, they had better have in place flourishing constitutionalized and commercialized subunits. The author's thesis is developed as an explanation for the different paths taken by German and Italian unification in the mid-nineteenth century. In both, unifiers held a vision of federalism, but only in Germany did that vision become a reality.

Ziblatt takes on not just one ambitious, broad, bottom-of-it-all question, but two: 1) Why do nation-states form? and 2) Why do nation-states take on unitary or federal structures? In his analysis these two questions meld into one: Under what conditions can we expect federalism to be the outcome of the process of state formation? Federalism becomes a question not only of should we do it but also of *can* we do it, a feasibility reality-check giving it a leg up over the optimizing analyses of economists, who prescribe federalism based upon expected benefits rather than institutional fit.

Ziblatt takes the stance that in order to know if federalism is feasible you need to examine its preconditions, a fresh return to the question that William Riker took up in 1964 in *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*. Riker's preconditions focused exclusively on military power and territorial ambition: The initiators of federalism want to expand but are not quite strong enough to take a neighboring state by force; those who acquiesce fear invasion by others and therefore are lacking in military strength. His paired hypotheses have long been demonstrated to be insufficient, and have generally been set aside as a curious product of Cold War thinking. Ziblatt revives the study of preconditions, but rather than looking at military power, he substitutes institutional capacity to get a theory of negotiating capacity that matches his cases better, and may be more broadly applicable today.

In Ziblatt's argument, the determination of a region's support for unification is a function of the region's size and the extent to which it is commercialized. The key insight is that for action (for or against), a regional government needs both means and motive. Commercialization provides the motive, while state size (as an indicator of capacity) provides the means. Large states are the movers; those that are highly commercialized are the initiators of unification, and those that are not commercialized are most likely to strongly resist unification. Small states split in support or dissent based on their degree of commercialization but do not organize movements on either side. The argument is crisply captured in a 2-by-2 table on page 25. The bottom line: Germany had sufficient subnational institutional development, and so therefore federalism was possible. In Italy, there were no significant subnational institutions, and so there was no federalism.

Those who like the transparency of a formally derived argument will not find it here. Also likely to ruffle some feathers is the usual difficulty of coding qualitative data. For example, institutional capacity is to be measured in three ways (p. 13): state rationalization, state institutionalization, and embeddedness of the state in society. But these enticing terms are left essentially undefined in Chapter 1. Instead, Ziblatt substitutes a shorthand: "constitutional, parliamentary, and administratively modernized" determines the capacity to negotiate and govern. These potential criticisms can be set aside because of the way that he chooses to build his case. It is clear that he has spent many long hours with archives, but rather than using them to set the stage for a tale of charisma and derring-do, he carefully assembles evidence of codifiable qualitative or quantitative data to facilitate an honest and compelling comparison between the German and Italian state-formation processes. Methodologically, Ziblatt's work is in the tradition of Robert Putnam: He focuses exclusively on interests and institutions, even when some might want more. The benefit of his focus is a tight argument.

Does he change my thinking? Yes, absolutely, and no. Yes: To understand the national institutions you need to understand the institutional capacity of its components, and rather than thinking of them in isolation, you need to evaluate them within the context of their cohorts. Ziblatt's careful research is compelling on this score. The data are not as sharply bifurcated as the argument, but are they ever? But we must bear in mind the limited focus of his work: He wants to explain the origins of federalism. He does not tackle its sustainability, the other necessary consideration in evaluating a federation's feasibility. Today, Italy and Germany are not as distinct as they were at founding: Germany has grown more centralized while Italy's process of decentralization is starting to feel federal in practice, if not in law. Their evolution raises questions about federalism's sustenance and also the emergence of a federal culture.

An interesting further research program, informed by Ziblatt's work, might examine how these elite ideas and existing institutional forms affect the public perception of their state. Can institutions grow a federal culture, and under what conditions? Public reaction to the institutions affects the institutional performance. People's reactions depend upon what they are used to. Can these public beliefs change, and if so, in response to what? Could this be a way for us to understand the eventual nature of both Italian and German states? With few exceptions, most analyses of institutions focus on the way that preexisting structures affect new structures. The medium in that transition might be public perception. To make better constitutional recommendations, we scholars of federalism and constitutional performance should turn our attention to belief evolution and cultural transformation.