

a grassroots coexistence that is often pragmatic, adaptive, and constrained. Rabia Harmansah, Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir, and Robert M. Hayden defy the editors' claim that political power can shape sacred space at will by showcasing the failure of Turkish efforts at the "museumification" of heterodox Muslim shrines. Through a fascinating exploration of rites in all their minutiae, the authors demonstrate how believers resist state efforts at "secularizing the unsecularizable" (p. 339).

Yitzhak Reiter beautifully describes the tensions among interest groups, with crosscutting religious and political interests, over the misguided construction of a Museum of Tolerance on an old Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem. The result of this interplay among architects, religious leaders, the courts (secular and religious alike), scholars, business entrepreneurs, and local community members is best described as a tragedy: None of these parties seek conflict, none benefit from it, yet the religious, legal, and political implications of their actions in this sacred site produce a waxing and waning friction. This chapter and others like it offer the most authentic tribute to the concept of choreography that underpins this significant collection.

**Expect Us: Online Communities and Political**

**Mobilization.** By Jessica L. Beyer. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 192p. \$99.00 cloth, \$27.95 paper.  
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— Seva Gunitsky, *University of Toronto*

For scholars of social behavior, the internet has remained a vast and largely unexplored continent—full of unusual and isolated tribes with their own languages, customs, and rituals. Jessica Beyer's *Expect Us* is a voyage into this strange land, with the author acting as a sort of online anthropologist—exploring the true meaning of "lulz," decamping on dragon raids with *World of Warcraft* guilds, and deciphering profanity-laden, barely-intelligible message boards like ancient hieroglyphics. (It is certainly refreshing to read a book that explicates "The Internet Fuckwad Theory" in its opening pages.)

Like any good ethnographer, Beyer wants to explain what motivates these groups. The book examines four popular online communities, seeking to explain why two of them (Anonymous and The Pirate Bay) became real-world political actors, while two others (*World of Warcraft* and IGN.com) remained politically aloof despite their potential for mass mobilization. Member anonymity, she argues, was the main factor in shaping the level of political engagement. Namely, the ability to remain anonymous increased political mobilization by promoting openness, collaboration, and creativity. Having a persistent online identity, on the other hand, creates interpersonal relationships and social hierarchies, which "thwart political organizing in online spaces" (p. 9).

Two factors shape the level of anonymity—the number of formal rules for participation, and the availability of

small-group interaction. Communities bound by formal rules are less anonymous and more constrained in their ability to mobilize politically. Similarly, online spaces that foster small-scale interaction decrease anonymity and thus discourage political involvement. When online communities cannot fragment into smaller groups, the result is a more cohesive overall group identity, which encourages political engagement.

Unfortunately, the central argument is not especially persuasive. According to the book, anonymity and the absence of rules promotes political participation. But if so, we would expect sites like Facebook or Twitter—where participation is rarely anonymous—to perform poorly at political engagement. In fact, these two platforms have been a focal point of political mobilization over the previous few years. And precisely those features that Beyer sees as inimical to political organization—the ability to form small tightly-knit groups, and to develop reputations linked to real-life identities—have been crucial in making them into successful political actors. In fact, there are good reasons to suspect that personal relationships and social hierarchies are integral for mass political engagement. (The conscious lack of such hierarchies in the Occupy movement, for example, has been posited as one cause of its demise). Likewise, it's not clear that anonymous interaction aids collaboration. The lack of small-group interaction is said to produce group cohesion by preventing fragmentation—yet as Beyer herself shows, Anonymous was far from a cohesive group, splitting into factions that fiercely debated both the group's goals and the methods used to achieve them.

Moreover, the characterization of anonymity within these groups seems at odds with the author's own conceptual framework. Beyer (rightly) laments that anonymity is too often portrayed as a binary concept, when there are in fact shades of anonymity, defined by factors such as the presence of IP tracking or a website's requirement to use static names. Sites like Facebook, which require participants to use their legal names, have a low level of anonymity. Sites like Reddit or IGN.com have a medium level of anonymity—users don't have to use their real names but they do register a persistent handle, allowing them to develop a reputation in the site's community. Sites like 4chan, on the other hand, consciously opt for a high level of anonymity—users are not tracked and do not have a static nickname. It is, strange, therefore, that her two non-mobilizing cases—*World of Warcraft* and IGN.com—are classified as having a "low" level of anonymity, since they do not require legal real-world names, and thus fall squarely into the "medium" category. This is a minor mistake, but it's symptomatic of the book's general lack of conceptual clarity.

The book's parsimonious conceptual framework—emphasizing anonymity, rule-making, and small-scale interaction—quickly grows more complicated in the case studies. In the case of Anonymous, other important factors for its politicization seem to be media coverage

and “the ability to draw on past patterns as templates” for political action (p. 50). In the case of The Pirate Bay, the “central role” (p. 65) of the site’s leadership—the highly publicized actions of its founders and administrators—seem to be more important than the actions of regular members. Instead of The Pirate Bay being a catalyst of political action, it seems more likely that its prominence was part of a larger global political movement—embodied by various Pirate Parties—which challenged copyright laws on the basis of both privacy concerns and ethical principles about the freedom of information.

The politicization of a site like The Pirate Bay is hardly surprising—as Beyer notes, illegally downloading copyrighted material is an inherently political act. Choosing your elf race is not. There is, therefore, a much simpler explanation lurking in the background that the book utterly fails to engage. Both of the non-mobilizers—IGN.com and *World of Warcraft*—are sites designed for gaming. The latter is a massive online game and the former a discussion site about games, game reviews, and game strategies. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that neither online community seems particularly interested in political action. (IGN.com, for example, lacks even a message board for political discussions). The people who visit these sites are there for a specific reason—to find the optimal strategy for dealing with the Lich King, or to level up their character by looting another dungeon. For many of them, real-life political engagement is likely to be an alien intrusion rather than an added benefit of being part of a social community. The book focuses on the structure of online communities, defined by site regulation and fragmentation of group interaction, as the driver of political outcomes. Yet it seems to be the *purpose* of the online communities, rather than their structure, that shapes the level of political engagement. Beyer alludes to this factor by noting that participating in Anonymous or The Pirate Bay creates tensions between online behavior and real-world legal norms, whereas playing *World of Warcraft* or posting on IGN.com creates no such conflict. But she does not fully explore this alternative argument, instead focusing on factors that ultimately seem secondary or extraneous to the outcomes being examined.

In the end, the book provides a fairly breezy (140 pages excluding supplementary materials) and sometimes-entertaining ethnography of the digital natives. It might have benefited from a more detailed exploration of their rituals. Instead, it builds a theoretical edifice that seems to rest on shaky foundations.

**Power Politics in Zimbabwe.** By Michael Bratton. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2014. 281p. \$68.00.  
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How have Robert Mugabe and his ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front

(ZANU-PF), managed to remain in power for so long? Since the beginning of Zimbabwe’s dismal descent in early 2000, a veritable cottage industry of personalized accounts of the crisis and authoritarian endurance has dominated discussion to the exclusion of deeper analysis of the country’s politics. Finally, and refreshingly, in this magnificent account, Michael Bratton contends that the answer to Zimbabwe’s condition, including Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s victory in the 2013 elections, lies not in the common “big man” account but in the regime that developed in the country beginning as far back as the colonial period. For Bratton, the root cause of the country’s condition is not a single individual, though that individual is a key actor, but the institutional configuration of power politics.

The elements and features of power politics that Bratton highlights are familiar. Critically, in this form of politics, “might makes right” (p. 7). In this framework, therefore, there is no room for persuasion and ethical considerations, nor are incumbents constrained by law in what they do in pursuit and defense of power. Typically associated with the realist school of international relations, Bratton brings this framework to domestic politics, arguing that it captures, more concretely, the interests and behavior of incumbents in authoritarian contexts like Zimbabwe. Alongside and working in concert with power politics is a patchwork of political settlements, understood as elite bargains that define the balance of power and, in so doing, frame the rules of the game.

By analyzing Zimbabwean politics through the lenses of power politics and political settlements, Bratton is able to show how group interest and an identity forged during the anticolonial movement explain the resilience of authoritarianism in the country. In the somewhat path-dependent story that he tells, the country’s colonial experience under a brutal settler-colonial system and the version of anticolonial struggle that was eventually successful—a liberation war prosecuted by two divided nationalist parties—left an indelible mark on the political elite. According to Bratton, because Zimbabwe’s postcolonial leaders, Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF, were socialized by racial discrimination, arbitrary political detention, and the liberation war, what they learned was that “political power is rooted in military might” (p. 51). As a consequence of this experience and the lessons that it offered, the victors at independence created a militarized electoral authoritarian system, as this is how they understood political power.

This aspect of Bratton’s analysis explains why in the postindependence period incumbents have repeatedly resorted to intimidation, coercion, and violence to retain power and secure the privileges it affords. We also see clearly in the analysis that authoritarianism and power politics in Zimbabwe did not begin with Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Power politics has been a feature of the