

blurring leads to voter uncertainty over party positioning, and that “voters reduce their consideration of an issue ... in their vote choice as political parties blur their positions” (p. 54). Second, blurring is issue specific. In line with past works, blurring occurs with issues on which the parties are seen as less competent, and where their supporters are divided. Originally, the book shows that blurring is more likely to occur on issues that are nonetheless systemically salient. This is an important finding, infusing the study of ambiguity with much-needed consideration of broader political context. Third, blurring blinds. Focusing on radical right and social democratic parties demonstrates that blurring removes the core electorates’ consideration of party-voter distance on blurred issues. Manual workers and small shop owners are thus willing to support radical right parties despite their incongruence on economic issues, while other manual workers support social democratic parties despite their disagreement over immigration policy.

The virtue of *Rationality of Irrationality* lies in its successful theoretical synthesis, and in its systematic and convincing empirical demonstrations of how and when blurring works. The innovation of the book is its insistence on the contextual nature of blurring, which is most common in situations where parties cannot shy away from engaging political issues due to their preeminence in public debate. The book is also rich with diverse examples of specific tactical choices of concrete political actors, which brings the acts of positional blurring to life.

Given its quantitative methodological approach, and its reliance on previously existing data, the book cannot engage several important questions about strategic blurring that stand out. First is the question of how voters actually perceive blurred party positions. The book, like past works, suggests that blurring can take on different forms, such as vague statements on the issue, multiple inconsistent statements on the issue, statements that combine similar issues in atypical ways. The book assumes, again with much of the literature, that “if voters do not possess enough information on an issue, they rely more on other issues or nonpolicy features” (p. 24). This is likely the case, but it may also be that some voters engage in wishful thinking and project (their) positions onto the party, perhaps with certainty. The duplicitous economic statements of many radical right parties aim to shift voter attention towards immigration only partly. Calls for economic support for native young families combined with calls for cutting taxes, for example, also hope to instill in voters a certainty that radical right parties would support young families and cut taxes. A young parent may thus be as confident about the party’s (left-leaning) views on family allocations, as a small shopkeeper may be about the party’s (right-leaning) tax policy. Creative use of survey experiments may be able to assess how exactly diverse types of ambiguity influence the positional perceptions and subsequent political calculus of voters.

Second, the book references other works contending that there is deliberate and strategic use of blurring on the part of political actors. Yet it remains unclear how exactly political elites go about building ambiguous profiles. Do they explicitly plan it in smoky backrooms? Or is it rather a political hunch that leads them to express different positions to different audiences? Ethnographic work and interviews with (retired) politicians may provide a useful glance into the making of ambiguity.

Finally, *Rationality of Irrationality* takes a normative position, arguing that blurring is deplorable as it severs the linkages between the people and their representatives (p. 12, pp. 169-70). The findings of the book itself undermine this view and throw into question the *irrationality* of positional ambiguity. Following the multidimensional approach to political competition, the book, in line with past work, argues that blurring is primarily a mechanism of deflecting attention to advantageous issues; no party thus blurs everything. Radical right parties are unambiguous champions of national sovereignty and restrained immigration, while socialist parties are clear defenders of generous welfare systems. And voters dominantly support them because of these stances. Blurring some issues thus does not remove policy considerations altogether and does not dissolve parties of their representative responsibilities in general. Perhaps we should not disparage political elites for rationally employing rhetorical and strategic tactics that work. Indeed, decrying blurring on the part of politicians may be as futile as decrying flying on the part of birds.

Overall, the *Rationality of Irrationality* is an important contribution to our understanding of the strategies of political parties seeking to navigate the complexities of diverse electorates—a must-read for all students of political competition.

**Alternatives in Mobilization: Ethnicity, Religion, and Political Conflict.** By Jóhanna Kristín Birnir and Nil Seda Şatana.

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— Risa J. Toha , Wake Forest University  
risa.toha@wfu.edu

Why do groups mobilize along one identity cleavage as opposed to another? In *Alternatives in Mobilization: Ethnicity, Religion, and Political Conflict*, Jóhanna Birnir and Nil Şatana argue that “minority group size relative to the majority and the configuration of identity cleavage sharing and segmentation incentivize minority leaders’ choice of identity mobilization and strategy” (pp. 12-13). Rather than accepting an existing coalition that excludes them, large ethnic minority groups who share an alternative identity with the majority will mobilize that shared identity to form an alternative winning coalition, which Birnir and Şatana aptly label as the challengers’ winning coalition

(CWC, hereafter). In the same way that ethnic majorities mobilize an identity to form a minimum winning coalition (MWC, hereafter), “leaders of minorities who are targeted in majority outbidding or that do not gain access via the MWC will subsequently (or simultaneously) seek ways to re-define the relevant identity for political competition in ways that stave off targeting and afford access” (p. 12).’ This theory can apply to various identity-based cleavages, but the authors focus on religion and ethnicity.

The book contains seven chapters and extensive appendices. Following an introductory chapter that sets forth the book’s main argument, scope, assumptions, methodological approach, and chapter summaries, the authors present a global picture of ethnic and religious groups’ segmentation and cross-cuttingness in Chapter 2. In contrast to the literature’s usual portrayal of ethnic groups as religious monoliths, this chapter shows that many ethnic groups are split into multiple religious families, and that the balance of groups within countries varies considerably.

Chapter 3 formalizes the book’s theory and outlines its implications. Depending on whether groups are balanced or imbalanced in size, and whether their identities are segmented or shared, the theory implies either cooperation, competition and accommodation, majority outbidding, or the CWC. When groups are imbalanced and are segmented, the theory implies that majority outbidding would occur. When groups are segmented and roughly balanced, the minority group would initiate competition and the majority group would accommodate. When groups share an alternative identity and are imbalanced in size, the theory implies majority accommodation and minority cooperation. But when groups share an identity and are relatively balanced, then the theory anticipates a CWC to emerge.

Chapters 4 through 6 test these implications. In Chapter 4, using the new A-Religion cross-national dataset that reports ethnic groups’ religious and sect affiliations and the Religion and Armed Conflict Data (RELAC) dataset on religious claims-making by groups in civil wars, the authors show that, consistent with their theory, more balanced ethnic minorities that share a religion with the ethnic majority tend to make religious claims more so than other ethnic minorities. Their results are robust to various model specifications, outliers, and measures.

Chapter 5 interrogates the internal validity of the book’s argument with in-depth case studies of group mobilizations in four countries engaged in civil wars. Tracing the mobilization of religion (or the lack thereof) in Pakistan, Turkey, Uganda, and Nepal, the authors show that large ethnic minorities articulate grievances involving religion to form an alternative coalition that can challenge the majority. In Pakistan, the Pashtuns push for a more radical Islamic government to appeal to other Muslims and resist a historically secular state. In Uganda, the Acholis-led Holy Spirit Movement and Lord’s Resistance Army mobilize

religion to rally other groups against Yoweri Museveni’s government. In Nepal, the Maoist People’s Movement mobilizes against the Hindu state and forms a multiethnic coalition to demand the erasure of the role of religion in the state. In Turkey, the Kurds did not make a claim of religious incompatibility in civil war, but the authors’ account demonstrates that they have mobilized religion in electoral contexts and supported political parties based on their shared religious identity in more recent years.

In Chapter 6, the authors examine group mobilization in Indonesia. With careful attention to the demographic configurations across administrative units at different levels, they show that CWCs emerge in provincial and municipal elections with local ethnic minorities whose size is large enough and whose identity portfolio allows them to rally an alternative cleavage to appeal to other groups. The 2004 gubernatorial election in Kepulauan Riau province and the 2010 mayoral election in Medan, North Sumatra province, illustrate how aspiring candidates appeal to other Muslims to build a multiethnic coalition within their administrative units. The book’s conclusion highlights its contributions and suggestions for future research.

There is a lot to like about this book. First, meticulously researched and carefully written, the book offers a detailed picture of the varieties of demographic configurations and identity intersections that influence minorities’ mobilizational choices. Second, although the head-counting logic of CWC resonates with existing theories on MWCs (e.g., Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*, 2005), the mobilizational work in Birnir and Şatana’s theory is done by the ethnic minorities, not by the majorities. By theorizing and systematically examining minorities’ mobilizational choices, the book decenters majority groups and ruling elites, which have been the focus in the literature. Third, the authors view MWCs as “reasonable starting points” (p. 12), but they do not expect most MWCs to last. Instead, they show how the game may continue and CWCs may emerge. Fourth, their theory also implies that crosscutting identities can either stabilize or destabilize politics, depending on the circumstances. This contradicts the expectations of the crosscutting literature, which has generally considered intersections of identity to be conducive to peace and stability (e.g., Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, 1977).

This book also leaves questions for future research. While the authors paint a convincing picture of how minorities may strategize and mobilize a shared identity to form an oversized coalition that can challenge the state, they say less about what will likely happen once this CWC emerges and creates new losers. If the CWC is a response to an initial MWC, will there be an alternative reaction to the CWC? The theory’s implications, outlined in Chapter 3, suggest that mobilizational choices are ultimately conditioned by existing demographic configurations and

crosscutting identities, but where these limits lie empirically needs to be further clarified. In addition, readers of this book will likely wonder how much exclusion prompts a response from large ethnic minorities to form a CWC. Both the Pashtuns and the Acholis enjoy some measure of representation in the civil service and the military (pp. 141, 222) and, for the authors, their intermittent inclusion means that minority leaders may “perceive the group as stronger than its numbers would suggest” (p. 141). But compared to other ethnic groups who enjoy even less representation, some may claim that the Pashtuns and Acholis at least have a foot in the door and may not need to form an alternative winning coalition.

Overall, this is an impressive book that broadens our understanding of identity-based mobilization. As Birnir and Şatana show, identity mobilization is a tool not only for majorities and rulers. Minorities also have an array of identity-based mobilizational choices at their disposal, and they use them to forge a path to a winning coalition.

**Twisting in the Wind: The Politics of Tepid Transitions to Renewable Energy.** By Oksan Bayulgen. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. 310p. \$80.00 cloth.

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— Michaël Aklin , University of Pittsburgh  
aklin@pitt.edu

The study of renewable energy, long confined to engineering schools, became a topic of interest to political scientists in the early 2000s. This was probably driven by two factors: (1) renewable energy technology was on a path to becoming cost competitive, and (2) the Bush administration’s decision in 2001 not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol meant that technological innovations, such as clean energy, became even more important, given the weak prospects for international climate cooperation.

The first wave of research on the politics of renewable energy engaged in considerable effort to figure out how to break what Gregory Unruh (“Understanding Carbon Lock-In,” *Energy Policy* 28, no 12, 2000) famously called the “carbon lock-in.” Researchers paid particularly close attention to the role of domestic audiences and interest groups. This focus was unsurprising: voters’ preferences and lobbies appeared to be critical players in climate politics, especially given what people saw as the key factors behind George W. Bush’s decision to withdraw from Kyoto. It was thus plausible that the same would hold true in (renewable) energy politics.

Yet this focus on audiences and interest groups was (and still is) not entirely satisfactory when studying renewable energy politics cross-nationally. For one, it applies more naturally to settings in which these actors have an institutionalized and regulated access to power, such as in typical

liberal democracies. Although policy makers are responsive to societal demands in autocracies and hybrid regimes as well, the mechanisms through which these interactions take place often differ considerably. Furthermore, bottom-up approaches tend to erase the agency of political elites. Understanding elites’ priorities becomes important precisely in cases in which we cannot substitute their preferences with those of voters or lobbies. In sum, our models may fit Denmark and Germany quite well, but they do not necessarily travel very far beyond them.

This, I believe, is one way to read Oksan Bayulgen’s excellent book on the “tepid” clean energy transition in Turkey. The book is organized around six chapters. After an introduction that summarizes the book and its contributions, chapter 2 discusses renewable energy policy and its history. It starts with a useful review of the design and types of policies needed for renewable energy infrastructure to emerge. It also offers a careful historical account of energy policy making in Turkey (pp. 48ff), helping set the stage for later chapters and familiarizing readers who might not yet be familiar with it.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical model underpinning the book. Bayulgen begins by reviewing conventional models of energy politics that, by and large, focus on bottom-up, societal demands for (or against) green public goods. She then expresses doubts regarding the relevance of such models outside the set of wealthy, pluralistic Western democracies to which they are typically applied. A battle of interests and voters is helpful in understanding the path of Germany and the United States but will have limited explanatory power outside similar cases (pp. 75–76). Here is where Bayulgen makes her theoretical contribution: she suggests an alternative approach based on a state-led model of opportunistic political elites (pp. 77ff). This model takes elite agency seriously while acknowledging constraints imposed by institutions, such as the degree of concentration of power and the presence of veto players (pp. 90ff). The model is resolutely centered around ruling elites’ own preferences; nonstate actors matter insofar as they can contribute to the elite’s plans.

Chapters 4 and 5 build the empirical case in support of the book’s theory. Chapter 4 focuses on the first part of Turkey’s flirtation with renewable energy, a period that lasted from about 2001 to 2008. In the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis, the newly installed AKP government undertook a series of reforms that included the promotion of renewable energy. Bayulgen makes a compelling case that societal demands were not the key driver of these policies: “for the governing AKP elites the promotion of renewable energy was never the ultimate goal” (p. 107). Instead, the AKP’s desire and (institutionally enabled) ability to launch a pro-growth program to consolidate its power were key. Renewables were, one could say, a lucky side effect of this program.