The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East

Marc Lynch (Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, pp. 352.

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Published by Colombia University Press in 2014, this book presents works of the top Middle East political scientists to explain the eruption, dynamics, actors, and future of the Arab uprisings. The chapters explore the waves of the Arab Springs across the Middle East, and each bases on theoretical and comparative perspective.

In his introductory chapter, Marc Lynch explains historical background of the Arab Springs from the causes and actors to the responses and reforms (p.1-2). Lynch gives a short plan and aim of the book, which is summed in three main headlines: (1) reviews the political science literature concerning to factors of regime change and contentious politics; (2) compares the Arab upheavals with those of other regions[3]; (3) explores affects of actors, sectors and structural forces on the politics of the region (p. 3).

The author distinguishes three phases in the uprisings. The first phase is a popular mobilization, which exploded in a high and sophisticated manner. It was a massive, surprising and fast. It was driven by new young protest actors, who sophisticatedly used new communication technologies (p.7). The second phase is the responses of Arab regimes to the uprisings, which varies from a regime to a regime, from an accommodation to a civil war. The third phase is a political outcome, which depends on success of the revolution. In his concluding remarks, Lynch argues that the Arab Spring has not yet completed the revolution. The causes and affects of the uprisings are still uncertain and there is

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3   For further perspectives see Robert Springborg (2011), "Whither the Arab Spring? 1989 or 1848?", *The International Spectator*, 46:3, 5-12, DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2011.609357.

little hope that the spring will lead to democratic transition in the region (p.22).

In chapter 2, Daniel Brumberg asks how a political change, a contestation, and a negotiation in the Arab world are conditioned by local, national, or regional forces" (p. 30). Further, since the emergence of transitions paradigm is closely connected to the modernization theory, he pays attention to the debate between advocates of modernization theory and the advocates of culturalist analysis, and points at how the transition theory transcend between this polarized debates.

In chapter 3, David Patel, Valerie Bunce, and Sharon Wolchik interrogate the sources of the popular protests against the authoritarian rulers in the MENA region.[4] Why and how the popular protests spread across the region? (p. 58). Similar questions and hypothesis are derived from contemporary events of intraregional spread of popular mobilizations against the authoritarian rules.

Why didn't all the authoritarian regimes fall? Chapter 4 analyzes multiple factors that prevented the fall of some Arab authoritarian regimes. According to Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, the diffusion operates both from below and above. After first wave of popular protests in the region, regime elites learned how to respond and suppress popular protests. The countries that witnessed the second wave of protest watched very carefully how the first wave of popular protests started and ended (p. 77).

A recent popularized aphorism "Twitter doesn't cause revolution, but revolution are twittered", (p. 97) describes the issue very well on which the chapter 5 focuses. Marck Lynch in this chapter studies the role of old and new media tolls in the popular mobilizations in the Arab countries. He gives the examples of how these tolls were used by both the protesters and regimes` incumbents during the Arab uprisings.

In chapter 6, Curtis R. Ryan analyzes how the interaction of internal and external dynamics of Arab regional systems affected the Arab uprisings and its outcomes. He explores why some authoritarian rulers depended more on the police forces and intelligent services and weakened the army (p. 111). In this chapter, the author also focuses on changing the balance of power in the Arab regional system and explains how this power shifted from Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus to Riyadh and Doha (p. 117).[5]

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4   For further readings see Hafez Ghanem (2016), Roots of the Arab Spring, In *The Arab Spring Five Years Later: Toward Great Inclusiveness* (pp. 39-64), Brookings Institution Press, Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1657tv8.6.

5   For further perspectives see e.g.,: Philipp O. Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the Unfolding Regional Order in the Middle East: A Strategic Assessment," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2016, doi:10.1080/13530194.2016.1185696.

The nature of Arab states and their intermediary associations are main determinants of pattern of Arab uprisings, states Clement M. Henry. In this chapter 7, the author classifies Arab states into the developed states and less developed states. (p. 127). The chapter gives also the typology of political economy of the Arab states. The author bases its typology on the regime types, credit and commercial banking structures (p. 129). Then the author comes to another typology of the states: the bunker states and bully states. The chapter analyzes why the bully regimes firstly experienced the Arab uprisings.

In chapter 8, Robert Springborg analyzes the role of military establishments in the outcomes of the Arab springs.[6] The author studies the first historical development of civil-military relations in Arab states. Than he focuses on how the political and economic role and stand of Arab militaries vary from the republican to monarchical Arab states. During the Arab spring, monarchial military, according to Springborg, didn't turn on its ruler (p. 148).

Chapter 9 explores the spatial dimensions and its roles in the Arab spring.[7] Jillian Schwedler and Ryan King successfully introduce the questions of space into the analyses of gatherings of bodies during the popular protests. They argue that the space is not a passive container, but an important player in producing data and knowledge about the politics. (p. 161). The chapter explores how power and space interacted and interconnected.

In chapter 10, the role of organized workers in the Arab uprisings is analyzed.[8] Vickie Langohr investigates firstly the nature of trade unions in Arab countries (p. 181). Then he studies whether working class participates and supports anti-regime protests or acts towards them cautiously (p. 183). The role of labor force varies widely across the Arab spring. The author examines the popular protests and tries to find out when and how lobar force participated in the popular demonstrations (p. 186).

In chapter 11, Quinn Mecham studies the stand and reaction of Islamist movements towards the popular demonstration.[9] The scholarship on Islamism

6   For further perspectives see Hillel Frisch (2013), "The Egyptian Army and Egypt's 'Spring'", Journal of Strategic Studies, 36:2, 180-204, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2012.740659.

7   For further readings see Paola Abenante (2014), Tahrir as Heterotopia: Spaces and Aesthetics of the Egyptian Revolution In Fosshagen K. (Ed.), Arab Spring: Uprisings, Powers, Interventions, (pp. 21-32), Berghahn Books. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qchx9.4.

8   For different perspectives see Jamie Allinson (2015), Class Forces, Transition and the Arab Uprisings: A Comparison of Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, Democratization, 22:2, 294-314, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2015.1010812.

9   For further perspectives see Ellen Lust (2011), Missing the Third Wave: Islam,

shows that Islamist movements in the region have a long history of opposition against economic and political injustice in the Arab authoritarian regimes (p. 201). The study sheds light on how Islamist movements mobilized for elections and what were the advantages of these movements against other opposition groups (p. 208). Further, the author analyzes failure of Islamist governments in the post-revolutionary countries such as Tunis and Egypt.

In chapter 12, Ellen Lust studies the effective and multiple roles of elections before and after the Arab springs. The author analyzes deeply how the elections were used by the authoritarian regimes to make their regime to survive, and then how they became meaningless when they didn't lead to any change. The chapter further explores multiple roles of elections about whether they have stabilizing or destabilizing factor in the Arab authoritarian regimes (p. 219).

Do the protesters favor or call for democracy? Should Islam play a role in the political affairs? Do the protestors believe that Islam should be separated from the politics? (p. 249). Chapter 13 tries to find the answers to these questions. The Arab Barometer conducted a public opinion surveys before and after the Arab springs in order to shed light on the political preference of ordinary Arab citizens about these issues.

In chapter 14, Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal analyze the political attitudes of Arab youth who took the streets in opposition to oppressive authoritarian regimes.[10] The main question that the chapter hopes to find answer is why the Arab youth, not their older counterparts, became the leading actors of the Arab spring? What makes the youth more supportive of secular politics, and more opposed to the authoritarian regimes?

The emperor was naked, everybody knew that, but nobody was daring to speak about its nakedness (p. 302). This describes very well the attitude and condition of Arab public before the Arab springs. In chapter 15, Nathan J. Brown explores Arab public`s criticisms of existing regimes before and during the Arab springs.

In conclusion chapter, Marc Lynch briefly elaborates all chapters in the book. Lynch makes inferences that the political science of the Middle East was not surprisingly caught by the Arab spring. On the contrary, the chapters show that the studies and surveys before the Arab Spring revealed the multiple sources of popular discontent with the ongoing political and economic crisis

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Institutions, and Democracy in the Middle East, Published online: 12 April 2011 , St Comp Int Dev (2011), 46:163–190 DOI 10.1007/s12116-011-9086-z.

10 For different perspectives see Mona Christophersen, Jacob Høigilt & Åge A. Tiltnes (2012), *Palestinian Youth and the Arab Spring*. Oslo: Fafo/NOREF. <http://www.peacebuilding.no/eng/Regions/Middle-E-   ast-and-North-Africa/Israel-Palestine/Publications/ Palestinian-youth-and-the-Arab-Spring>

across the Arab world (p. 313). Despite the common language and characteristics of the popular protests across the Arab world, the political outcomes varied due to internal and external factors. Lynch comes to conclusion that the Arab uprisings have not yet achieved a real democratic transition, but the process is still ongoing and it is too early to make a comment about how Arab Spring will be resulted (p. 314-6).