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Democracy and the Arab Spring. The effects of the revolutions in the Arab world

Abstract

The main objective of the article is to examine the Arab revolutions in the early 2010s in a context of establishing democracy, in order to determine what lessons can be learned from the experiences. It starts with an overview of the revolutionary movement – the Arab Spring, that swelled across the MENA region, overthrowing some long-standing authoritarian regimes. Next, it analyzes the uprisings to indicate political, economic and social successes and failures in parts of the region. Finally, in the summary of the study, based on the conducted examination, the author discusses the results of the analysis and explains why these findings are important and thought-provoking.

Keywords: the Arab Spring, democracy, political system, terrorism, MENA

A historical perceptive of establishing democracy in the Arab World

It is difficult to disagree with the statement that, as a rule, historical anniversaries encourage scientists to evaluate. It is especially justified when they concern important events such as revolutions or political upheavals that took place in the past and caused significant changes of a political and economic nature. Today, more than a decade after the Arab Spring, many are trying to answer the question – why *the installation of democracy in the Arab world*¹ did not happen, as many Arabs hoped. Moreover, the public wonders why as of today, the political, economic and social situation in most countries participating in the Arab Spring seems much worse than it was before its outbreak. Considering the fact that even

¹ H. Khashan, *The Arab Spring And Democratisation In The Middle East*, „World Affairs. The Journal of International Issues” 2012, vol. 16, no. 4, p. 144.

world class scientific researchers who specialize in Middle East politics, such as Marc Lynch² or Amaney A. Jamal³ have tried to answer this question and have not found an unequivocal answer, it might be worth going back not a decade, but more than half a century into the past and noticing some important facts about the topic of democracy in Arab states. After all, it is agreed that *historical perspective is a simple but crucial tool in understanding the present context of social research*⁴, and therefore can produce additional explanation to the dilemma. Yet at the beginning of the examination, it is essential to define what developments must occur for democracy to take place.

The main analytical tool for the study is historical analysis, and the author will primarily rely on the secondary sources in the research, such as articles and books on the subject. It is an intention of the author to uncover historical information about a topic of democracy in the Arab World and broaden the understanding of the idea by exposing it to others' perspectives and interpretations. Consequently, historical perspective is the author's methodological approach.

According to Samuel Huntington *democratic regimes have usually been introduced in independent countries through one or some combination of two processes*⁵, replacement and/or transformation. The author specifies: „*Replacement*” occurs when an authoritarian regime collapses or is over-thrown as a result of military defeat, economic disaster, or the withdrawal of support from it by substantial groups in the population. Its leaders are killed, imprisoned, flee the country, or withdraw from politics⁶. Transformation on the other hand, takes place when the elites within an authoritarian system conclude that, for some reason or another, that system which they have led and presumably benefited from no longer meets their needs or those of their society. They hence take the lead in modifying the existing political system and transforming it into a democratic one⁷. Did any of the processes that Huntington defines take place in the Arab world after the countries gained independence?

Since the Second World War the MENA region has experienced many social, economic and political developments. First, the world witnessed Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, generally linked to Egypt and its charismatic

² M. Lynch, *The Arab Uprisings Never Ended*, „Foreign Affairs” [January/February] 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-12-08/arab-uprisings-never-ended> (15 VII 2022).

³ A.A. Jamal, M. Robbins, *Why Democracy Stalled in the Middle East, Economic Despair and the Triumph of the China Model*, „Foreign Policy” [March/April] 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2022-02-22/why-democracy-stalled-middle-east> (16 VII 2022).

⁴ B.S. Lawrence, *Historical Perspective: Using the Past to Study the Present*, „Academy of Management Review” 1984, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 311.

⁵ S.P. Huntington, *Will More Countries Become Democratic?*, „Political Science Quarterly” 1984, vol. 99, no. 2, pp. 212-213.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

president Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following that period, Islamic fundamentalism took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Fundamentalist have overthrown the Shah in Iran; caused a civil war in Algeria; triggered a near-civil war in Egypt, and produced the downfall of the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Finally, economic and political liberalization since the late 1980s, represented among others by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's „Perestroika”⁸. In the Arab world the process of transformation that Huntington identifies began *when a cohort of democratic reformers appeared as agents of change during the third wave of liberalization and later spearheaded the Arab Spring by promoting democratic values and encouraging protesters to continue to struggle for regime change*⁹. For example, in Tunisia newly elected President Ben Ali amended the constitution, „freed” the press, and limited the presidential term. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak enabled more political parties to participate in general elections. In Libya, however, Muammar al-Kaddafi was against sharing the political power with any of his political opponents.

It is believed that in the second phase, *the democratic transformation process would take further steps when democratic reformers replaced standpatters in the authoritarian regime and succeeded in maintaining greater control over the process of decision-making and regime change*¹⁰, yet none of these transformations occurred in the Arab world as the rulers did not allow the changes to take place. In Tunisia and in Egypt, neither Ali nor Mubarak were willing to continue the process of democratization with the necessary, considerable measures. Similarly, the failure of liberalization, which Huntington calls as the third phase of transformation, also did not take place in the Arab world, but the forth phase – backward legitimacy *whereby democratic reformers attempt to neutralize the internal opposition of the regime's standpatters by weakening, reassuring, and coercing some of them to change sides*¹¹ has occurred in Egypt – the army collaborated with the democratic activists in order to overthrow Mubarak. Concluding, as one can see, despite certain shift from authoritarianism to democracy that has occurred in the Arab world after the World War II, the changes that took place in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya or Yemen did not produce democracy. The question remains – why democracy did not happen?

It is believed that the preconditions for democratization can be clustered into four comprehensive categories: economic, social, external, and cultural. Accordingly, in the opinion of Samuel Huntington, the rise of democracy in a society is aided by a number of factors: (...) *higher levels of economic well-being; the absence*

⁸ D. Vandewalle, Qadhafi's „Perestroika”: *Economic and Political Liberalization in Libya*, „Middle East Journal” 1991, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 216-231.

⁹ A.I. Abushouk, *The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?*, „Digest of Middle East Studies” 2016, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 62.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

of extreme inequalities in wealth and income; greater social pluralism, including particularly a strong and autonomous bourgeoisie; a more market-oriented economy; greater influence vis-a-vis the society of existing democratic states; and a culture that is less monistic and more tolerant of diversity and compromise¹². Other scientists, such as Hans Stockton, Uk Heo & Kwang H. Ro support Huntington's reasoning, yet clarify that based on their findings, *only economic prosperity helps successful democratic installation... economic and social development may occur simultaneously, although economic development rather than social development accounts more for democratic installation*¹³. It is hard not to agree with the researchers; after all Seymour Lipset, as early as 1959 underlined that people democratize as they modernize, and he emphasized in his work a strong connection between the rise of per capita income and representative government¹⁴. However, based on the results of the studies conducted on the obstacles to democracy in the Arab Countries before the Arab Spring began, the economic determinant should be combined with the cultural¹⁵. According to Brigitte Weiffen, in the Arab world exists the cultural-economic syndrome which well explains the Middle East long resistance to democratization. The syndrome is closely related to *the oil wealth and the elites who govern it*. The scientist clarifies her way of reasoning by dividing the Arab world into three categories: Muslim states without oil wealth, oil-wealthy states without Islamic influence, and countries where oil wealth and Islamic cultural tradition are at work. Weiffen explains that *In Muslim states without oil wealth, economic modernization usually takes place sooner or later, and its effects, complemented by globalization and the diffusion of liberal and democratic ideas associated with it place democratic reforms on the political agenda*¹⁶. On the other hand, *In oil-wealthy states without Islamic influence... no mechanism able to replace governmental resource distribution with religious welfare organizations and material well-being with spiritual fulfillment and self-affirmation is at work, so that in times of crisis there is no alternative to finding a genuinely political solution*¹⁷. Finally, in Arab countries where oil prosperity and Islamic cultural tradition are at work, *religious doctrine, political authoritarianism and wealth generated by external rents mutually reinforce each other in blocking the democratic option: People are neither free nor in need to pursue political representation*¹⁸. Therefore,

¹² S.P. Huntington, *Will More Countries...*, p. 214.

¹³ H. Stockton, U. Heo, K.H. Ro, *Factors Affecting Democratic Installation in Developing Countries: An Empirical Analysis*, „Asian Perspective” 1998, pp. 207-222.

¹⁴ S. Lipset, *Some Social Prerequisites for Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy*, „American Political Science Review” 1959, vol. 53, pp. 69-105.

¹⁵ B. Weiffen, *The Cultural-Economic Syndrome: Impediments to Democracy in the Middle East*, „Comparative Sociology” 2004, vol. 3, no. 3-4, pp. 353-375.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 371.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 371.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 372.

returning to the main question – why democracy did not happen in the Arab countries after they gained independence, some as Weiffen believe it is because of the *cultural-economic syndrome*. Simply put, Arab people were satisfied with their lives and consequently felt no need for political participation. Until *the social contract broke*¹⁹ and the Arab Spring began.

The social contract represented the „unwritten pact” between the government and its people in the Arab world. For many years, governments of the Arab countries *provided jobs, free education and Health care, and subsidized food and fuel, in return for the subdued voice of the population*²⁰. Starting in 2000s, especially the Arab middle class began to be frustrated. The anger was related to the falling standards of living, the deficiency of formal-sector jobs, dissatisfaction with the quality of public services, and progressive corruption²¹. What has worked for a long time – ended, and the social contract was broken. Consequently, it is believed that *The Arab Spring and its aftermath indicates the need for a new social contract, one where government promotes private-sector jobs and accountability in service delivery, and citizens are active participants in the economy and society*²². If the reasoning is correct, then Mohamed Bouazizi, who certainly did not represent the Arab middle class, but the poorest, by setting himself on fire in protest for the wrongdoing triggered the Arab Spring, happened to be not the cause of what turned out to be a massive rebellion movement, but „the ignition” of it.

The Arab Spring: the genesis of the revolutionary movement

Over a decade ago, a very poor street vendor – Mohamed Bouazizi, who made living by selling fruits and vegetables from a cart on the streets of a city Side Bouzid, Tunisia, and that way supported his whole family, was routinely checked by market inspectors for the permit. The control showed that on that day Mohamed Bouazizi did not have the necessary document. In response the officials confiscated some of the vendor’s goods, depriving him of the only way to make a living. Moreover, some witnessed that during the confrontation the seller was publicly humiliated by a female police officer who even slapped the humble men, which has been an obvious humiliation to Mohamed Bouazizi. Angry, Bouazizi went to the local governor’s office to protest but was denied a hearing with the

¹⁹ D. Shantayanan, E. Ianchovichina, *A Broken Social Contract, Not High Inequality, Led to the Arab Spring*, „Review of Income and Wealth” 2018, no. 64, pp. S5-S25.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. S5.

²¹ E. Arampatzi et al., *Unhappy Development: Dissatisfaction with Life on the Eve of the Arab Spring*, „World Bank Policy Research Working Paper” 2015, no. 7488.

²² D. Shantayanan, E. Ianchovichina, *op.cit.*, p. S5.

official. Later the same day, Mohamed Bouazizi conducted the horrifying act of self-immolation by setting himself on fire outside the governor's office. Sustaining major injuries to his body, Mohamed Bouazizi died a few days later.

Bouazizi's act of desperation, automatically triggered massive protests demonstrations in Tunisia. People opposed very high unemployment, inflation, corruption and a lack of freedom of speech. In result, police and security forces reacted and caused the death of 338 people while over two thousand injured. However, this did not stop the demonstrators from the fight that eventually led to the ousting of longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The success of Tunisians inspired similar actions throughout the Arab world. The rallies extended to other Arab countries: Libya, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Bahrain. Long time rulers such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Muammar Gaddafi, Hosni Mubarak, and Ali Abdullah Saleh were overthrown. More countries joined the Arab Spring. Major demonstrations took place in Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Oman, Iranian Khuzestan, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and Sudan. There were also some form of protests in Palestine and Saudi Arabia among others.

Up to date, there have been conducted numerous studies of the uprisings to indicate political, economic and social gains and failures in parts of the region. While some think tanks' analysts such as those associated with Council on Foreign Relations indicate *that the lives of people in Arab Spring countries have improved in certain aspects but worsened in others*²³, other researchers tend to rather highlight the negatives aspects of the uprising over the positive ones, particularly when it comes to establishing *better governance and improved economic performance*²⁴ in the countries where the protests have taken place.

Political, economic and social successes and failures of the Arab Spring

The studies indicate that *In every country, more than half of all respondents placed the need for „improving economic conditions” among the trio of main causes of the demonstrations*²⁵. To illustrate the point, for example *In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Tunisia, the figure clustered around 70 percent*. What troubles the most is the very high unemployment rate among young Arab people. Studies show that the youth

²³ K. Robinson, W. Mellow, *The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings*, „Council on Foreign Relations”, 3 XII 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings> (18 VII 2022).

²⁴ M. Robbins, *After the Arab Spring: People Still Want Democracy*, „Journal of Democracy” 2015, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 87.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

unemployment rate is even as high as 80% in some areas²⁶. Economic freedom does not exist in the Arab countries. The government policies make it very hard to start a formal business because they entail many tough to pass administrative steps. In addition, the state fails in providing the education and training necessary to prosper in a wide variety of industries²⁷. In result, *Frustration among the youth population because of lack of jobs and other economic opportunities make them prone to protests*²⁸.

As for better governance, in eight of the nine countries more than half of the respondents called anger at „state corruption” one of the three main causes of the Arab Spring²⁹. The large-scale corruption has developed predominately during the privatization of the public sector, and in turn dramatically weekend the rulers' accountability regarding fundamental economic activities. *The industrial, commercial and financial leaders become an intrinsic part of the government elite or, worse, members of the government elite become the industrial, commercial and financial leaders without thought to their qualification and suitability*³⁰. Studies indicate that *Around 90% of the Arab Transformations Survey respondents think there is strong corruption in state agencies and institutions (Libya is a little lower, at 73%), and between a third and 45% think the state is doing little or nothing to eradicate it*³¹. Bribery is present not only in the business sector but also in other places such as free health care services, and allocation of jobs agencies. Surveys confirm that *35% of Egyptians said they had paid a bribe at least once, and 36% of Moroccans*³². Moreover, researchers point out that *Bribery in some societies turns to be a way of life as, due to abysmal economic performance and institutions, it becomes the only way to access public services. Even in most societies where bribery is condemned and unacceptable, it is meant to be invisible, and its victims are not easily identifiable*³³. The result of the massive corruption in the Arab countries is that there is virtually no public trust in the Government, Parliament, local

²⁶ R. Khan, A. Mahmood, A. Salim, *Arab Spring Failure: A Case Study of Egypt and Syria*, „Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal” 2020, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 45.

²⁷ M. Mulderig, M. Chloe, *An Uncertain Future: Youth Frustration and the Arab Spring*, „The Pardee Papers” 2013, no. 16, p. 8, <https://www.bu.edu/pardee/files/2013/04/Pardee-Paper-16.pdf> (18 VII 2022).

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

²⁹ M. Robbins, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

³⁰ R. Sapsford et al, *Corruption, Trust, Inclusion and Cohesion in North Africa and the Middle East*, „Applied Research in Quality of Life” 2019, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 1-21.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³³ A. Hany, H. Elgohari, A. Mohamed, *Corruption, Political Instability and Growth: Evidence from the Arab Spring*, „SSRN Electronic Journal” 2018, <https://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa51895/Download/0051895-13092019173000.pdf> (19 VII 2022).

government, the police and the legal system³⁴. Replacing the old regimes with the new administration in countries such as Egypt did not end the corruption, but strengthen it. The only exception is Tunisia, a country in which the uprising has helped with the establishment of constitutional democratic power. In the country where the Arab Spring started, *over 95% said they have never been offered an incentive*³⁵.

As for social policy development in the Arab world after the Arab Spring, the MENA countries vary substantially. At one end there are countries like Yemen which has underdeveloped social infrastructure, while at the other end there are oil rich countries such as Kuwait with advanced social structure. The low education level characterizes the poor parts of the Arab world with countries such as Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine. The reports from those nations identify *the lack of resources, gender disparity, rural-urban/regional inequalities, and below-par teaching standards as common barriers to attaining good quality universal primary education*³⁶. It is reported that in countries such as Egypt and Morocco the basic public services such as the right of use to education and health-care is distributed favoring the elite groups rather than seeing them as the rights of every citizen³⁷. Research on adult literacy and expected years of schooling warns that although the MENA region has made massive improvements since the 1980s, more than one in ten adults in countries such as Yemen, Egypt and Morocco has not received any education³⁸. The elites, which remain the deciding force in constructing and implementing the social policy, profit themselves – not the ones who need the services most. In addition to the corrupt dominant players, it is the lack of political stability that prevents the proper development of adequate social policy in the analyzed region. One of the reasons why the Arab world after the Arab Spring lacks a solid and secure governance is the existence of various terrorist organizations headed by the Islamic State – ISIS, which are present in the region and terrorize the societies.

Researchers emphasize that *The instability brought about by the Arab Spring created a unique opening for ISIS to capture territory, establish recruitment networks, and fund its organization on a scale never seen before by a modern terrorist organization*³⁹. Fledgling democracies in countries such as Tunisia do not have strong enough bureaucracies to support governance in the fight against the ter-

³⁴ R. Sapsford, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

³⁶ M. Karshenas, V.M. Moghadam, R. Alami, *Social Policy after the Arab Spring: States and Social Rights in the MENA Region*, „World Development” 2014, no. 64, p. 730.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 731.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ M.J. Schumacher, *Critical Junctures in Terrorism Studies: the Arab Spring and the New Twenty-First Century Security Environment*, „Critical Studies on Terrorism” 2021, vol. 14, no. 4, p. 471.

rorists who destabilize the region and have a very negative impact in the countries' economies. The numbers speak for themselves; *Between 2007 and 2021, the largest number of deaths from terrorism was recorded in the MENA region, at more than 49,000 deaths*⁴⁰. Terrorist groups were particularly active in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. One of the consequences of their activity is the decline in tourism, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, countries well-known in the industry and eagerly visited by tourists. To illustrate the point, after the terrorist attacks which took place in 2015 and in 2016 (an attack on a Russian airliner, the explosion at the hotel in Al-Arisz, an attack on a tour, an attack in Bella-Vista hotel in Hurghada) the number of tourists visiting Egypt in 2016 decreased by almost 50% in comparison to 2015⁴¹. In Tunisia terrorist attacks that took place have also catastrophically weakened tourism. In March 2015 two terrorists killed at the Bardo National Museum twenty four tourists from Japan, Poland, Tunisia, Spain, Colombia, Belgium, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy; and two months later two attackers opened fire and killed thirty eight European tourists on the hotel beach in Sousse – one of the most stylish Tunisian resorts, *the number of tourists from Germany decreased by 44% and by 85% from the United Kingdom*⁴². As of today, even though the number of tourists visiting countries where terrorist attacks took place in the past increases, conducted surveys indicate that the Arab countries still *suffer a drop in the number of arrivals of foreign tourists, reduction in the income generated by tourism, decline in employment in tourism and the general slowdown in the development of tourism*⁴³.

As for political successes of the Arab Spring, there are three main facts that have to be pointed out. First, the dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya were forced out. Second, in Tunisia transition to democracy took place. And third, the Arab Spring surely has overseen a transition from an old-school authoritarianism to a reformed version of authoritarianism without losing its robustness. Out of the three political accomplishments of the Arab Spring, the Tunisian case is heavily discussed recently due to the society's disillusionment. The reports reveal that even though as some say *Tunisia has emerged as the one success story of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings*⁴⁴, the country's transition is still weak. Studies indicate that in 2013 over 70 percent of Tunisians were for democracy, yet

⁴⁰ *Global Terrorism Index*, Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web.pdf> (20 VII 2022).

⁴¹ J.A. Wendt, *Comparison of the Impact of the Arab Spring and Terrorist Attacks on the Decline in Tourism in Egypt and Tunisia (2010-2015)*, „Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites” 2019, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 1367-1376.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 1374.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 1375.

⁴⁴ S. Grewal, *Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads*, „Brookings Institution. Democracy & Disorder” 2019, pp. 1-13, [https://admin.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/Tunisian democracy at a crossroads.pdf](https://admin.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/Tunisian%20democracy%20at%20a%20crossroads.pdf) (4 VIII 2022).

in 2019 just 46 percent approved⁴⁵. In 2022 the figure has dropped to 41 percent⁴⁶. Moreover, it is worrying that an increasing part of the Tunisian society is even beginning to miss authoritarian rule. If that is true, and the number of those who wish the transition to democracy would have never happened continue to rise, the fairly young democracy might break down. While military coup in Tunisia is rather doubtful, primarily because the Tunisian military possesses both, political influence and substantial financial resources, *the election of a strongman who dismantles democracy from within*⁴⁷ is more probable. The current political situation in the country is alarming. President Kais Saied's political moves such as the introduction of the emergency law under article 80 of the constitution, making the president eligible to rule by decree, might indicate the beginning of a return to the state of authoritarianism⁴⁸. It is believed that *The road followed by Kais Saied might lead to the legitimization of a new authority based on a strong personal leadership, a new ra'īs or za'īm, who is the personification of the stereotype of the Arab society where the charismatic „big man” reduces politics to his personality and inclinations*⁴⁹. If President Saied does follow the path of authoritarianism, the Tunisian dictatorship may return.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, there are some thought-provoking observations that can be made from a decade of the Arab world's experiences after the Arab Spring happened. The first lesson is that the road to democracy is rough and that it takes time. The Arab countries might require to go through what Samuel Huntington calls a two-turnover test⁵⁰. In his view, a true democratic country must have experienced two peaceful transitions of power. The scientist indicates five phases in a typical transition: 1) the rise of reformers, 2) the coming of reformers into positions of power, 3) the fiasco of early reformers, 4) the subduing of displaced supporters of the authoritarian regime, and 5) and the inclusion of new sectors⁵¹. Following

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Tunisia Country Report 2022*, <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TUN> (4 VIII 2022).

⁴⁷ S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ M. Radeck, *Tunisia's Deadlocked Situation: President Saied Takes the Authoritarian Exit*, „Horizon Insights” 2022, p. 22, https://behorizon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Horizon-Insights_2022_V5-I1.pdf#page=26 (5 VIII 2022).

⁴⁹ F. Tamburini, *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Autocracy: Kais Saied's „Constitutional Self-Coup” in Tunisia*, „Journal of Asian and African Studies” 2022, pp. 1-18.

⁵⁰ S.P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman 1991, pp. 12-34.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

Huntington's reasoning and assuming that the Arab Spring is a process, then we must wait for another transition to take place in other countries where the autocrats were overthrown: Egypt, Yemen and Libia. Hopefully when the process carries over, the nations will fully transition to democracy.

The second remark discovered is that the Arab Spring uprisings have astonished both the Arab world and the West. Social scientists and political analysts indicate that *we were all taken by surprise*⁵² and in result the West was not prepared for the events that started in 2011 in Tunisia⁵³. The Arab Spring was very hard to predict for two reasons. First, the uprisings were difficult to foresee because of what Timur Kuran calls a *preference falsification*, which does not mean that people do not reveal their private preferences but rather whether *an individual who opposes a regime would join some kind of movement against it if a certain number of others did so as well*⁵⁴. History showed that while some joined the revolutionary undertaking, others did not. At the end, the Arab Spring did not spread to Jordan, Algeria or Saudi Arabia. The fact indicates *that the distribution of revolutionary thresholds in those countries was simply not conducive to mass uprisings – although, again, no one could have foreseen just where and how far the Arab Spring would travel*⁵⁵. Second, the revolutions were hard to forecast because many including the academics and even the activists believed that the region's rulers were competent of overcoming any probable threat⁵⁶. As we know today, that was not the case – the dictators were overthrown.

Finally, the third lesson of the Arab Spring is *to give due attention not so much to transition to democracy as to the resilience of authoritarianism under the nexus of the internal and the global politico-economic realities*⁵⁷. The examples of powerful states such as Russia, Turkey and China prove that democracy and authoritarianism are not mutually limited categories⁵⁸. The observation can be applied to the Arab world countries as well. It is believed that before the Arab Spring began, countries such as Egypt, Syria, Tunisia or Libya were not solely authoritarian, but represented rather a „authoritarian–democratic hybrid”⁵⁹. Today, in 2022, eleven years after the uprisings took place, one can still observe the presence of both – democracy and authoritarianism in those nations. Even in Tunisia, the only Arab country that has been able transition to democracy, the political developments

⁵² J. Goodwin, *Why we Were Surprised (Again) by the Arab Spring*, „Swiss Political Science Review” 2011, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 452-456.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 452.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 453.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 453.

⁵⁶ M. Lynch, *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ H.H. Khondker, *The Impact of the Arab Spring on Democracy and Development in the MENA Region*, „Sociology Compass” 2019, vol. 13, no. 9, pp. 1-9.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

that take place under President Kais Saied suggest that the country is a good example of the „hybrid”.

The question is: has the Arabs fight for democracy been lost? Looking back over a decade ago, the answer is yes, but as some imply „this defeat is temporary”⁶⁰. Despite the existence of various political, economic and social failures in the region, raging from corruption and poor economic conditions, to the abuse of human laws and acts of terrorism, *the establishment of a democratic regime, however flailing and imperfect, has given an unforgettable taste for freedom to the younger generations and influential sections of society such as journalists, lawyers, NGO activists, and so on*⁶¹. During the Arab Spring a lot of young people took to the streets in order to show their frustration with the rulers. The international community must support them in the fight for democracy, because their future existence depends on it. People should be able to control their own lives, and decide for themselves. As of today, ten years after the uprisings of the Arab Spring shook the world, the people who stoop up to oppose the regimes, continue the fight for their basic democratic rights.

Abstrakt

Andrzej Demczuk

Demokracja i Arabska Wiosna. Skutki rewolucji w świecie arabskim

Głównym celem artykułu jest zbadanie arabskich rewolucji na początku 2010 r. w kontekście ustanowienia demokracji, w celu ustalenia jakie wnioski można wyciągnąć z tych doświadczeń. Praca rozpoczyna się od przeglądu ruchu rewolucyjnego – Arabskiej Wiosny, która rozrosła się w regionie MENA, obalając niektóre wieloletnie reżimy autorytarne. Następnie analizuje wystąpienia, aby wskazać sukcesy i porażki polityczne, gospodarcze i społeczne w niektórych częściach regionu. Wreszcie w podsumowaniu, na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań, autor omawia wyniki analizy i wyjaśnia, dlaczego wyniki te są ważne i skłaniają do refleksji.

Słowa kluczowe: Arabska Wiosna, demokracja, system polityczny, terroryzm, MENA

⁶⁰ M. Marzouki, *Is Democracy Lost?*, „Journal of Democracy” 2022, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 5-11.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

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