

Inbar, Efraim, ed. 2013. *The Arab Spring, Democracy and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications*. London: Routledge, 184 pp. \$ 42 (Paperback).

Geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has been permanently altered by the series of events known under a common name “the Arab Spring”. “**The Arab Spring, Democracy and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications**” is a study that allows us to view the events and consequences of the Arab Spring through the lenses of Israel, a country directly affected by these events.

Arab Spring is analyzed from two perspectives: the effect it will have on democratization process in MENA and implications it will have for the regional security. On both of these accounts, the common nominator for all eight authors is pessimism. Pessimism is opposed to liberal optimism that believes that Arab nations are moving towards a liberal democracy and that the international affairs of MENA will become more peaceful and conflict-averse. On the contrary, in portraying what they consider to be the most important elements of the Arab Springs, the authors firmly believe that Arab societies are far away from becoming liberal democracies. Simultaneously they point out that the newly established dominance of Islamist actors in politics of the Arab world bring about an age of turmoil and insecurity in MENA, particularly for Israel.

The first chapter tries to evaluate the elements of the democratization process in MENA as well as its outcomes. Author takes into account the role of communications revolution, social networks, social structure, and the extent to which the regional players like Iran, Turkey, and Israel can serve as democratization models for the Arab world. Final conclusion is not made on whether the word Arab Spring or Arab Winter is the adequate term. The study leaves the final judgment to history, but it is being stressed that at this particular moment the term “mobocracy” is more adequate than the word democracy, because there is an awareness that in the Arab world, the street where the mobs gather are still what politically counts and not Facebook, Twitter, ballots or parliament seats.

The second chapter examines how the Arab Spring will affect the regional balance of power and the structure of the regional order. Four trends are identified that will have impact on regional equilibrium: 1) “Muslim Cold War”, strategic rivalry in which the alliance of Egypt, Jordan and Gulf States with tacit participation by Israel and US leadership faces off against Iranian led alliance of Syria and Lebanese Hezbollah; 2) The struggle between two regional blocks to draw Egypt in their ranks; 3) Emergence of non-Arab powers like Iran and Turkey; 4) Possible alliance between Israel and Arab countries in order to check the growing influence of Iran and Turkey and prevent the “Arab exit from history”. Based

on this four trends author stresses that regional order of MENA has experienced a major structural shift in which the alliance between Israel and Arab nations with US support is considered the best future scenario for Israel to feel secure.

The third chapter underlines factors that have affected US policy conduct in the Arab Spring and explains why the US did not have a comprehensive approach to the Arab Spring but rather a country by country approach. The factors that shaped US actions according to the author are: level of violence, evaluation of each regime's ability to survive, evaluation of the nature of opposition forces, levers of influence on the given countries and their political actors, the attitudes of other world and regional powers towards the occurrences in the Arab world, debates inside the administration on policies and actions, like the debate between Robert Gates and Hillary Clinton on whether the US should intervene in Libya for instance. This chapter ends with the warning that in order to remain the dominant power in MENA, US will have to develop a coherent, consistent strategy for the entire region which did not mark the US actions during the Arab Spring. The region has become too complex and turbulent and democracy rhetoric will not amend it.

Fourth chapter analyzes why the Arab Spring did not result in Palestinian uprising challenging along the way the conventional wisdom that the Palestinian issue is at the heart of Middle Eastern politics. Three factors are named as the sources of Palestinian apathy. Firstly, it is the domestic political scene with the curious balance between Palestinian Authorities (PA) and Hamas, where the two are willing for now to put aside their mutual political difference in order to maintain Palestinian unity in a national struggle for statehood. Secondly, the fact that Palestinians enjoy higher economic standard compared to the citizens of Arab countries, due to higher GDP growth rates and strong anti-corruption polices of the PA. Thirdly, unlike the people in the surrounding Arab world, Palestinians are primarily concerned in gaining state of their own before they could advocate for change in leadership within it.

Fifth chapter presents how will the Arab Spring affect the trends regarding terrorism in the region and how will it impact Israel's security. The countries to which the special attention was devoted to in the context of terrorism are: Libya, Yemen and Egypt. Author is skeptical on whether the new regimes of the Arab countries will be effective enough in governing their territories and domestic affairs. Meaning the Arab countries could become a fertile ground from which the local and global terrorist groups will be able to organize and launch attacks against Israel, with Egypt's inability to control Jihadist groups operating in the Sinai Peninsula might be become a particularly acute national security issue for Israel.

Sixth chapter deals with the economic sources and economic consequences of the Arab Spring. The economic background for the Arab Spring is being presented to the reader with a large number of economic indicators and statistics to portray the economic conditions in every country engulfed by the Arab Springs and potential future perspectives. These indicators are being presented in order to argue that without significant improvement in

the income, living standards and quality of life for the Arabs the outburst of crisis will not end with the Arab Spring.

Chapter seven evaluates the interplay between domestic and foreign policy issues in Israel. As a theoretical foundation for analysis James Roseau's concept of linkage politics is used to describe how an issue that emerges in domestic politics can very easily become an international/foreign policy issue and the other way around. The author presents four issues that have that kind of impact in Israel: the Iranian nuclear threat, Palestinian issue, issue of terrorism and Israel-Turkey relations. Author demonstrates that linkage politics is constant part of the equation in MENA and Israel is no exception in that regard. Some international issues, like Iranian nuclear program have become sensitive domestic issues in Israel, while domestic factors like socio-economically motivated protests and public opinion in Israel do affect Israel's policy making.

The central theme of the final chapter is about the implications caused by the Arab Spring for Israel and possible policy recommendations. The implications of the Arab Spring being: weakening of Arab states; the shift in regional balance of power in favor of non-Arab power centers like Iran, Turkey and Israel; and declining US presence in the region. Equally worrisome for Israel are: its increased regional isolation, weakening of ties with US that impacts Israel's deterrent capability, growing security risks like surrounding failed states, terrorist groups, proliferation of weaponry and growingly uncertain security environment in the Eastern Mediterranean. Iranian nuclear program is portrayed as top national security concern for Israel. The international efforts on Iranian nuclear program are considered ineffective, while Obama's policy towards Iran is judged simply by its reluctance to use force. A policy prescription for Israel in responding to the new security environment is also being provided in this study like larger defense budget and insisting in any future peace talks with PA and Syria on defensible borders. Another policy proposition concerns Israeli's alliances. Alliance with the US remains the pillar of Israeli foreign and security policy. A realpolitik anti-Iranian coalition with actors such as Saudi Arabia and Iraqi Sunni is also recommended and strengthening of ties with countries like Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Italy, outside of Israeli periphery.

The study itself is written in a very concise manner with a systematic and clear overview of its main arguments. This piece of scholarship gives a reader a very thorough overview of the Arab Spring to the point that it can be used as a textbook like material. The greatest strength of this study is the fact that it represents an Israeli perspective that gives us a completely different and alternative view to the MENA region considering that as country from the region Israel is directly impacted by the events of the Arab Spring. However, the study's greatest strength is at the same time its greatest weakness. The study bears some of Israeli biases towards the region that can be qualified as questionable by outside observers. For instance regarding the assertion on "Muslim Cold War" from Chapter 2, we are witnessing improvements in the dispute regarding the Iranian nuclear program; Iran and the US are talking on how to combat Al Qaeda affiliated Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Iraq. Tehran will not become a friend of Washington, but there are

enough areas of mutual interest between the two to enable them to operate on the basis of partner/rivals pattern instead of rivals/enemy. The system of alliances in MENA may be more fluid and flexible than the study shows. Israeli fear of Iranian nuclear weaponry is also questionable. At the same time final chapter that views Iran as the ultimate security challenge for Israel does not explain why would Iran instigate a nuclear arms race in which incomparably smaller nation would enjoy nuclear parity with it, instead of relying on its conventional superiority to achieve regional primacy. Will Israel launch a strike against Tehran, now that the US and Iran are slowly establishing a new type of relationship and international nuclear talks are reaching new momentum it remains to be seen.

In the end, one can only conclude that what we have here in front of us is a poised and comprehensive, analytical study of the phenomenon called the Arab Spring. Despite that one may disagree with some of the positions stated by the authors or some of their arguments. This study can be confidently recommended to both the theorist and practitioners of international affairs interested in the Middle East.

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