

EDITOR'S NOTE

Despite almost 9 years passing since its eruption, the effects of the Arab Spring still reverberate throughout the region. These range from the domestic impact on state-society relations and institutional development/decay to rapid and dizzying changes to the power balance in the region. One of the less studied effects of the Arab Spring has been its ramifications on the rule of law and constitutions of Arab Countries. We tackle this issue head on with two studies that examine the connection between the rule of law, transitional justice and corruption in Tunisia and Libya after the Arab Spring.

In the first paper, titled “Fighting Corruption within the Framework of Transitional Justice: The Impact on Democratic Transition in Tunisia”, Adnen Nouioua links transitional justice with anti-corruption in Tunisia and examines the impact of this relationship on the process of democratic transition. He focuses in particular on the legal and practical difficulties that have impeded the transitional justice process, especially after the promulgation of Law 53 in 2013 on the establishment and organization of transitional justice. The paper finds that combating corruption in Tunisia requires the state and all parties concerned to accept a range of solutions relative and proportionate to the logic of transitional justice that differs from traditional justice.

In the second paper, “A Law of Diminishing Returns: Transitional Justice in Post-Revolutionary Libya”, Mahmoud Hamad focuses on transitional justice in Libya since the fall of Colonel Gaddafi. He is surprised to find that numerous relevant constitutional declarations, laws and decrees have been promulgated in Libya. Yet the process has also faced serious obstacles, most notably the absence of legislative planning and strategy, the lack of effective dialogue between the parties involved in the legislative process, and the low quality of drafting.

Moving on from the Arab Spring, in the paper “Arabic Origins of the Foundational Myth of Western Identity: Between Histories of the Conquest of America and the Conquest of Andalusia,” Mohamed Abdelrahman Hassan puts forth a comparative analysis of Spanish historians on the conquest of America in the sixteenth century CE and Arab texts concerning the conquest of Andalusia written in the 9th and 10th centuries AH. He shows that modern Western historical knowledge is linked much more closely to Arab knowledge than it is to a pure Greco-Roman origin, given that the narrative of the conquest of America mirrors that of the Andalusia conquest narrative, reclaimed by the Spanish at the beginning of the modern era.

Next follows a study of “The Limits of Rational Choice in the Sociology of Social Movements: The 20 February Movement and the Rif Movement in Morocco”, by Mohamed Naimi. The paper critically assesses

rational choice theory in the sociology of social movements using Moroccan protest movements as a case study. It finds that despite the ability of rational choice theory to interpret some aspects of social movements, it falls short when it comes to explaining symbolically motivated movements. These movements stress self-assertion and immaterial values such as freedom and dignity, as in the case of the 20 February and the Rif movements. As an alternative, this study proposes extending the boundaries of this theory to include the cognitive field through the application of axiological rationality instead of rational choice theory.

The next article, “Prosopography: An Approach to Studying Elites and Social Groups,” by Rajae Ankoud, examines an auxiliary approach to historical study. This approach, Prosopography, focuses on researching the common characteristics of historical actors belonging to a specific group, as well as studying their external characteristics, similar and different, and the trajectories of their lives, gathering data from phenomena touching any individual’s life to common aspects of the lives of these individuals. Social historians have adopted prosopography, an approach once geared towards the study of ancient history, to studying social groups in eras of medieval, modern, and contemporary history. This has resulted in the emergence of new findings that are distinct from those derived from other studies, especially when data are scarce and written sources are unavailable, or the archive is sparse or missing.

The section on the Arab Opinion Index features an article by Dana El Kurd, titled “US Policy in Arab Gulf Opinion: Data from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.” The article analyzes how Gulf Arab citizens view US policy since President Donald Trump took office. It finds that Kuwaiti respondents – who enjoy more freedom of expression than their Saudi counterparts – report the highest level of disapproval of the US in the past 5 years. Saudi Arabian respondents – limited by their ability to express their preferences more freely – have a high rate of non-response, indicating they do not feel comfortable addressing the US considering Saudi policy.

Finally, the book review section features a review of Dana El-Kurd’s important new work *Polarized and Demobilized: Legacies of Authoritarianism in Palestine*, described as “A rigorous and impressively researched work, and a valuable and thought-provoking read for students of authoritarianism and Arab politics.” El-Kurd’s book is the ACRPS’s first full-length English publication, and forms part of a new ACRPS series by Hurst/Oxford University Press.

Last but not least, we would be remiss if we didn't mention the invaluable assistance of Yara Nassar, who was this issue's volunteer editorial secretary.