Chapter 15: Chapter exercises

The Arab Spring: A product of globalization?

In order to analyse the expansion of the Arab Spring, we should consider that the 'explosion' of protest and socio-political revolutions—as an ideational and moral dynamic—is on display as a consequence of globalization, and can be attributed at least in part to advances in communication and technology. With the shrinkage of physical time and space, disillusion with the prevailing socio-economic order appeared to be increasingly shared across the globe. The 'rebellious' citizens and denizens (in the global 'North') are the kind of individuals that today populate polities marked by disillusionment and contest of power, as can be observed with the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Undoubtedly, the information and high-tech revolution lent a helping hand to the Arab uprisings. But it was the free will and capacity of fearless and leaderless individuals to assume agency—more than the structural dynamic—that featured prominently in the Arab uprisings.

Arab countries seemed to be susceptible to influence by the protests led by youths across a vast geography irrespective of local realities. This is where the Arab Spring impresses: the Arab region remains a cohesive cultural sub-system. It has continuously shared the quest for decolonization and modernization. This very quest is what the Arab region shares with other parts of the world (such as Africa) where merging solidarities as modes of collective protection against marginalization and joblessness have been present.

The Middle Eastern perspective should be informed by the central place that religion occupies. This is not unique to this region. As a radical movement in the context of South America, liberation theology was deployed to bring about social change and justice to the working class. Demands for re-Islamization on behalf of democratic/civic and unruly/violent movements in the Middle East illustrate the point about the relevance of the religious perspective.

Furthermore, violent and non-violent 'resistance' against authoritarianism (Hafez 2003) may intensify interest in alternative perspectives hitherto underrepresented in analytical discourses on global politics—along the lines of Gramscian and other critical theories, and 'revolution' as a driver and explanatory tool of change.

Do you feel that the Arab Spring can be explained as a phenomenon of globalization?

http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/02/was-the-arab-spring-a-regional-response-to-globalisation/
http://www.globalresearch.ca/failure-of-the-globalization-model-the-arab-spring-of-democracy/22828
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-04-03/demystifying-arab-spring
http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/23/arab-spring-five-years-on-writers-look-back

Gerges, Fawaz A. (2014) *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Hafez, Mohammed M., (2003) *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers).

Hinnebusch, R. (2015) 'Globalization, Democratization, and the Arab Uprising: The International Factor in MENA's Failed Democratization' 22(2) *Democratization* 335–57

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS