

DIPLOMA THESIS REVIEW

Adéla Jiráňková:

The Role of the Civil Society in the Transformation of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia

The wave of civil unrest, revolutions and related events which swept over North Africa and the Middle East since the end of 2010, and became known as the Arab Spring, undoubtedly belongs to the most important recent international events. Though the final results of the process are yet to be determined, and in many places the follow-up to the hope-inspiring initial events has been rather sinister, the revolutions which took place radically challenged the established statue quo in the MENA region and have had serious repercussions beyond it.

The thesis under review dissects the role of civil society in the transformation processes in three North African countries – Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Given the emphasis on the civic aspect of the political changes in the prevailing political and academic discourse, the topic is both timely and relevant. Moreover, the three selected cases, though geographically compact, nicely represent the variety of starting conditions as well as outcomes of the Arab Spring, covering both a successful transformation towards a new, more democratic political compact (Tunisia), a decisive pushback by representatives of the *ancien régime* (Egypt), and an escalation of political opposition to a repressive government into a bloody armed conflict, followed by international intervention. It is not too farfetched to view these different experiences as matrices of sorts against which events in other countries of the region can be assessed.

Analysis of recent, ongoing events is always tricky, given the ever-changing nature of the its subject. The author should thus be commended all the more for basing her research on a rigorous theoretical and methodological framework. The result is an impressive feat of a complex, detailed, superbly researched, clearly structured and thoroughly disciplined analysis. The combination of modernization theories with concepts defining the role of civil society provides an excellent starting point, and its combination with process tracing proves very fruitful indeed. The only critical remark concerning the research design would point out that the author went the relatively easy way of a multiple case study while the research material would surely have allowed a more ambitious (and, of course, more demanding) comparative analysis.

The dissertation's quality is excellent both content-wise and in its formal aspects. Based on an impressive array of primary sources and secondary literature, the author provides an informed insight into the complex empirical realities of the three cases which she neatly weaves into her theoretical and methodological framework. The dissertation is basically flawless in its formal aspects, too; the language feels a bit clumsy but never to the point of hindering understanding information or the author's thoughts. All required components (abstract, keywords, summary, original thesis project) are presented.

Based on the aforementioned assessment, I naturally ***recommend the thesis for oral defence*** and propose to evaluate it as ***excellent***.



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