

4-1-2016

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Recommended Citation

Alagha, Joseph Ph.D. (2016) "Israeli, R. From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 7: No. 2, Article 6.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1296

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol7/iss2/6>

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Israeli, R. *From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013.

Raphael Israeli's *From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter*, despite its publication while the "Arab Spring" was still in its nascent phase of unfolding, is a groundbreaking book with sharp insights and deep analyses that have both strategic and geopolitical implications. Although there is no mention in the text of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) by name, Israeli's work aptly predicts the potential for the rise of such a group. *From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter* appeals not only to academics but also to policy makers, journalists, the common public, and lay readers. The book's richness in theory, particularly surrounding the author's prediction of the return to Cold War dynamics in the region, will serve to give this work a long shelf life. Israeli also rightly points out that the political instability resulting from the Arab Spring has led to the rise of violence at the hands of Islamist entities, rendering the aftermath of the Spring far less peaceful than the Spring's demonstrations themselves. With respect to this particular irony, Israeli writes, "This drama is unfolding and producing new surprises everyday, causing more casualties than occurred during the international wars in the era prior to the Spring. It is [therefore] ludicrous when the great powers . . . find ideological justifications to interfere or to refrain from interfering . . . under the banner of [maintaining] stability" (xv).

Although Israeli's definition of the term Arab Spring seems logical enough, he misses the mark slightly when he states that the etymology of the term reflects "...the unfolding of what international politics and media have dubbed the 'Arab Spring,' which connotes renewal, revival, a flourishing of thought and deed" (xi). The term was in fact coined in 2011 by Marc Lynch, in his seminal article, "The Big Think behind the Arab Spring" in *Foreign Policy* 190 (2011, pp. 46-7). In his work, Lynch argues that the region's Islamists have never fundamentally changed and that they are far from relinquishing power. He concedes that Islamists may have altered their strategies and policies, and perhaps their vision, in order to adapt to the winds of change resulting from the popular uprisings,¹ but he asserts, critically, that Islam, as an underpinning of political order, is far from being challenged, a point that Israeli seconds and echoes in his book. Israeli writes, "It appears that Islam has been emerging as the winner from this Spring turbulence, while the other governing alternatives, comprising the democratic, liberal, and secular forces [that] have been cultivated by the West, have been badly beaten and discarded" (xii). In another minor misstep, however, Israeli does not refer to Lynch, claiming that "not much has been written" to examine the impact of the Arab Spring (p. 305); Israeli further asserts that his book represents "one of the first attempts" to unpack the transformation occurring within various Islamic countries in "one coherent account that draws from the same religio-political sources" (p. 305). Despite this less than modest claim, Israeli does draw some astute conclusions regarding the Arab Spring:

[The Arab Spring] was due not only to chronic problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment, hopelessness, corruption, and disparity between the haves and have-nots but also . . . to [the public's] despair, as instead of seeing their leaders legitimately elected to sort out their problems and [being held] accountable for [providing] solutions, [the public was] faced with immutable dedicators who ruled for life and did not have to account for any misdeed or mismanagement. (p. 297)

Nevertheless, the author also asserts that the masses or demonstrators were not without culpability for the subsequent instability, as, he argues, demonstrators "[were] screaming

‘Democracy!’ without understanding what it involves and without ever experiencing what it means” (p. 293).

Israeli is a prolific author who has written over forty books and is an authority in Middle East Politics; however, in certain places, it seems that he is over-utilizing his own works or referring to his own work to substantiate the claims he makes in this text (cf. the six references on pp. 306-7). Nevertheless, he delivers on many of his promises through solid, theoretical conceptualization that corresponds to actual practice despite the dynamic nature of events shaping current power struggles that aim to forge new identity politics. Israeli contextualizes his narrative on five theoretical chapters and five country case studies. As an essential background, the first five chapters offer a well-written, historical, socio-political, and theoretical foundation to the region: tribes and artificial states (chapter 1); Ottoman heritage (chapter 2); authoritarian rule (chapter 3); the Caliphate (chapter 4); and globalization and social networks (chapter 5). On this theoretical fulcrum, Israeli builds his narrative of country case studies on five models: republican (chapter 6); monarchal (chapter 7); tribal (chapter 8); Shi‘ite (chapter 9); and revolutionary (chapter 10). This classification is for analytical purposes, as, for instance, Syria and Yemen could be included in the “Shi‘ite Model”; Iran, in the “Republican Model,” and Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia, in the “Tribal Model.” Furthermore, another taxonomy could be the following: (1) the Arab core countries: Egypt, Tunisia, GCC² countries, Morocco, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, and the Palestinians; (2) the peripheral states: Turkey, Iran, and Israel; and other Muslim countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Mali.

Throughout the book, and especially in chapter four, Israeli adumbrates with systematic ease the doctrinal differences between the Sunnis and the Shi‘as. He portrays their variant views on Sayyid Qutb’s³ seminal distinction between *jahiliya* (the pre-Islamic pagan order) and *hakimiyya* (sovereignty is for Allah), with the latter being followed – to varying degrees – among the Islamists who seek to establish an Islamic State modeled around the “Golden Age” of Islam, (referring to the ten-year rule of Prophet Muhammad himself in Medina, from 622 to 632 CE). This theme is revisited in chapter nine, which Israeli dedicates to the “Shi‘ite Model,” in which he argues that Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989)—political activist and writer⁴ and Iran’s Supreme Leader following the country’s 1979 revolution until the time of his death—appears to have been influenced in his formulation of *wilayat al-faqih* (rule of the jurist) by Qutb’s distinction between *jahiliya* and *hakimiyya*, with Khomeini’s notion of the rule of the jurist later forming the foundation of the theocratic rule of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Khomeini attempted to bridge the gap between the Sunni and Shi‘ite conceptions of an Islamic State by portraying the Iranian Revolution of 1979 as a holistic, “Islamic Revolution” aimed at dissociating Islam from the Cold War dynamics of East and West. Thus, Khomeini’s notion of the revolution as a collective effort against non-Islamic forces (reflected in his motto “No East, no West, only Islam,” *la sharqiyya wa la gharbiyya, innama jumhuriyya Islamiyya*) was based on the Qur’an: “[The spirit of the revolution] is kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor the West. Its oil will almost shine, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon light, Allah guides to His light whomever He pleases...” (24:35). In spite of Khomeini’s direct contribution to the foundational concept of theocratic political rule, however, the interest among the GCC countries in the lessons provided by the Iranian Revolution is minimal compared to the collective interest in the Arab Spring. Maybe this has to do with the 1980 – 1988 Iraq-Iran war, which prevented the “export” of the Revolution to majority Shi‘ite countries. The one exception to this was the major success of the export of the Revolution in Lebanon, where Hizbullah followed the

model of *wilayat al-faqih* closely and Islamized its “society of the resistance” accordingly, though still giving due consideration to Lebanon’s multi-confessional, multi-religious specificities. That was domestically, however. In regional (Arab Spring) and foreign affairs (Global Reach), Israeli argues that Hizbullah is a proxy of Iranian leadership that appears to further the Iranian agenda through the “Iran-Syria-Hizbullah axis”:

Hizbullah would be completely subordinate to Tehran’s leadership and to the Iranian military command and to the Iranian military command, even though it is a Lebanese organization supported by the [country’s] Shi’ite population. (234)

Like any work of such a magnitude, *From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter* includes some overgeneralizations as well as some omissions or missteps. Additionally, the presence of a few typos and inconsistencies slightly weaken the impact of Israeli’s work. For instance, Israeli appears to conflate the “Iraqi Republican Guard” with the “Iranian Republican Guard” [sic]; it should be “Iranian Revolutionary Guard” (234). Additionally, there is an inconsistency in the spelling of Qutb (p. 230) and Qut’b (p. 315). Moreover, a uniform, standard transliteration table would have been handy in order to overcome mistakes in transliteration, which appear to be pervasive (e.g. Shi’ite, Shi’a, *ta’zia*, Ba’ath, etc. instead of Shi’ite, Shi’a, *ta’zia*, Ba’ath, etc.). Finally, the reader would benefit from a glossary and a comprehensive subject and name index, instead of the short, selective name index provided. An elaborate glossary would capture the richness of the work for the non-specialized reader, who may not be sufficiently familiar with the Arabic terms and concepts the author employs throughout his book.

Despite these shortcomings, this is a must read monograph, which endeavors to unravel the complexities of the so-called “Arab Spring” and the processes that resulted from it (pp. 281-304): rogue democratization; authoritarianisms; Islamization; and weak, dysfunctional, collapsing, and failing states, which compromise “regional stability,” threaten “human security,” and pose a “crime and terrorist challenge” (pp. 288-9). Among the flood of books on the subject by academics and laypersons, Israeli’s book stands out as offering an invaluable scholarly contribution grounded in methodological and theoretical articulations that make the transformations in the country case studies easy to follow and understand.

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¹ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/11/28/the-big-think-behind-the-arab-spring/> (Last accessed: 27 December 2015). See also Lynch’s book entitled, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: Public Affairs, 2012.

² Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

³ An Egyptian author and Islamic theorist, Qutb is best known for his commentary on the Qur’an and his work describing the social and political role of Islam.

⁴ Khomeini’s writings and teachings expanded existing notions of the “guardianship” or authority of Muslim clerics and directly contributed to the notion of theocratic political rule by Islamic “jurists” (i.e. those considered experts in Islamic law).