BRIEF SYNOPSES OF NEW ARABIC-LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS

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The book – as mentioned in its Introduction – comprises the papers and discussions of the intellectual seminar organized by the Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS) in the coastal city of Al-Hammamat, Tunisia, between 6 and 9 February 2012, in collaboration with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria. Eighty researchers from various Arab countries took part in the seminar. Their papers were divided into two categories: (1) research and analysis on the context of the revolution in Arab countries (preliminaries and contextual factors, social forces in play, and the consequences and repercussions); and (2) research and discussion on the experiences of change in those Arab countries where change had taken place, and the potential repercussions in other surrounding countries. In this second category the goal was also to try to identify a road plan for democratic transfer, in each Arab country concerned, taking into consideration the possible implications of that transfer, the social forces in play and the political programme required.

The papers and discussions of the seminar revolved around five main issues, reflected in the five sections of the book. The first section discusses the Arab revolutions in the context of all contemporary democratic revolutions, touching upon world revolutionary experiences from south and east Europe to Latin America. The second section discusses the popular revolution in the Arab world, dealing with: (1) its political and social driving forces – including corruption, public resources embezzlement, poverty, tyranny, humiliation and abuse of people, and rights; (2) the influence of relative levels of social integration in the revolutionary process (the relative presence or absence of steep vertical divisions dissecting the community and fanaticism – sectarian as well as denominational, tribal and familial); (3) the role of the military in the course of the revolution; and (4) the influence of mass media and social communication tools in the process of change.

In the third section the discussion shifts to identifying what could constitute a road map or plan for democratic change and social reform in individual case studies. Starting with the Tunisian revolution and democratic structure, and the Egyptian revolution and...
democratic structure in a transitional stage, and proceeding through the horizons for democracy in the Libyan and Yemeni revolutions, the analysis finally considers the case of Syria. The case of Morocco is also covered, where reforms have either been introduced or are anticipated to adjust to the conditions of the revolutionary tide in the region.

The fourth section focuses on the ramifications of the revolution for Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Gulf and Iraq, as well as the impact of the revolution on the Palestinian cause and the Arab–Zionist struggle, and touches upon the attitude of Lebanon towards the Arab revolutions, especially the divisions arising from developments in Syria. Some consideration is also given to the impact of the revolution on Jordan and Sudan. The fifth, and last, part surveys the international and regional attitudes towards the Arab revolutions, touching upon the future of the Arab system and regimes.

The following passage from the Introduction reflects what most probably hovers in the mind of every observer of the various tracks of the Arab revolutions – from Tunisia to Syria – since the victory of the Tunisian revolution has opened up many different possibilities, including:

peaceful change through the arms of the people; violent change through the arms of local and foreign forces; the misappropriation of the efforts of the young revolutionaries by partisan forces; the sharp polarised argument around the basics of the political system; the increasing dynamism in the midst of Arab youths; the strengthening of popular pressures on tyranny, corruption, and marginalisation; the growth of popular demands for freedom, democracy, and social justice; the drawing of backward dictatorial regimes in demanding democracy for other (rather than their own) countries; unveiled western intervention in engineering civil wars in our nations in the name of supporting democracy; enabling small states to play much larger roles than the roles of larger powers. … etc all of this opened up by the crescent of the Tunisian, and subsequent, revolutions. Nevertheless, one thing is assuredly beyond doubt: a new will has been freed and unleashed in the society.

The Patterns of the Transfer of Power in the Arab World (from Independence Time to the Beginning of the Spring of Arab Revolutions), by Salah Salem Zarnouqa, Beirut, Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS), 2012, 304 pp., US$14.00, ISBN 9789953825601

There is no doubt that transfer of power from one ruler to another, or the transfer of power between rulers, must proceed by a discernible path. This path may vary from one political system to another, but it depends on a group of legal and procedural arrangements that organize the process of transfer and delineate its methods and how it should be accomplished. Inasmuch as the system succeeds in establishing a mechanism for transfer of power in a clear, smooth and sound manner, it should be able to guarantee for itself – in principle – survival and continuity, bringing the proper or legitimate person to the position of authority, avoiding crises and recourse to violent means. This book is concerned with monitoring and analysing the methods by which power is and maybe transferred, and the ways of changing rulers in Arab countries, starting with the independence of most of these countries in the mid-twentieth century through the beginnings of the uprisings of the ‘Arab Spring’ towards the end of 2010.

The study presupposes that any political system – to be deserving of survival – has to have been able to develop or establish a stable ‘mechanism’ for transfer of power within it, capable of being implemented over a reasonable period of time. Such a mechanism would give the opportunity to predict future contingencies in the case of the
vacancy of the position, especially in the case of a sudden demise of leadership; keeping in mind that this mechanism should be formulated in the form of a body of specified rules and regulations that are supposed to be mandatory for all parties.

In advancing this contention, the author seeks to answer a number of questions about the modalities followed in the transfer of supreme authority in Arab countries, the characteristics of these patterns, the most important factors that formulated them, and about the record achieved in different Arab countries in establishing traditions for the transfer of power. He also looks at whether the progress achieved in the cases considered has made it possible to talk about specific ‘patterns’ for the transfer of power, or for guaranteeing the cause of political succession in some Arab regimes that witnessed a democratic change.

The author surveys the patterns of transfer of power – peaceful as well as violent – and discusses models of transfer of power in hereditary regimes, and in Arab republics successively, with the aim of clarifying their basic characteristics and the factors that can explain the reality of the transfer of power in each Arab country, from the viewpoint of its special distinguishing character.

In comparing the models in force in these countries, the author arrives at a number of conclusions, foremost among which is that hereditary regimes – often assessed negatively – have achieved relative success in the field of transfer of power compared with republican regimes. This finding is borne out in those cases where the transfer of power has been peaceful and smooth, and without violence, avoiding a vacuum in positions of authority, with prior preparation for the succession to the throne, in addition to a reasonable measure of political stability and legitimacy. This relative success is likely to keep these regimes free from the contagion of the Arab Spring in its revolutionary version. This does not mean that the Arab Spring will not come to their doorsteps; rather, they will have their own spring, in the sense that they will have the opportunity to put into effect reforms that the republican regimes failed to implement. In this context, one can talk about the opportunity for hereditary regimes to turn into constitutional monarchies, keeping in mind the fact that there are other factors whose influence should not be overlooked or depreciated in securing stability for Arab regimes in general, and hereditary regimes in particular, most prominent among which are: economic projects and social services that were put in place by hereditary regimes to meet the demands of their citizens, and the foreign intervention designed to safeguard these regimes, so much so that it is often heard in some Arab countries – albeit with some exaggeration – that the transfer of power in these regimes is essentially linked to the agreement of the United States, and probably to some other territorial powers as well.

**Nationalist Parties, Movements, and Organisations in the Arab World**, edited by Muhammad Jamal Barout, Beirut, Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS), 2012, 1152 pp., US$38.00 ISBN 97899953825083

This book provides a comprehensive survey of the modern Arab nationalist movement in the form of the movements and parties that have contributed to the cause of Arab nationalism. It researches the political history of these movements and parties, they being the institutional framework of the modern Arab movement, including discussion of the elements contributing to our understanding of the formation and the evolution of the social, political, economic and geopolitical history of the Arab world.

The book comprises five parts. The first surveys the political and organizational beginnings of nationalist work, which can be labelled the organizational/associational
phase of the movement. The second part discusses the map of the parent Arab nationalist movements on both holistic and detailed levels, surveying the Baath Arab Socialist Party in Syria and Iraq, as well as the organizations attached to the Baath Party in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, the Arabian Gulf and Yemen. It also discusses the Arab Nationalist Movement in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, in addition to Nasserism and its political organizations in Egypt and other countries of the Arab world.

The third part discusses Arab nationalist issues in the thought and practices of nationalist political currents in accordance with the major territorial divisions of the Arab world, throwing light on Arabist and nationalist directions and nationalist movements in the territories of the Fertile Crescent, the Nile Valley, the Arabian Peninsula and the Greater Arab Maghreb.

The fourth part surveys the organizations, unions, and Arab nationalist and popular conferences and congresses, including the Nationalist Arab Conference, the Islamic-Nationalist Conference, and the General Congress of Arab parties.

The fifth part discusses the directions of the nationalist issue in the experiences of the Arab left, touching upon the issue of Arab nationalism in the programmes and practices of the Communist parties, and the directions and position of the nationalist issue in the experience of the New Left in the 1960s.


The work discusses the relationship between the practices and ideology of mass media in producing news materials, and the fear that results from the interaction between reality, people’s feelings and ideas, and the media agent. Starting from the function of mass media in the process of imaging and mediating between the populace and the extant ‘reality’, the book seeks to demonstrate the role of mass media in the stimulation of feelings of fear, anxiety and sectarian motives among the Egyptian populace, and how it steadily engages in misguidance and misrepresentation, burdening them with the responsibility of their crises without serving their causes and without actually touching the people in high authority positions. This thesis is not surprising given that Arab mass media has endeavoured for long decades to strengthen the political and social foundation of closed and dilapidated regimes through various repressive and crooked devices. With the coming of the Arab revolutions, mass media was influential in reinforcing the belief that there are many Egyptian individuals who fear for their own lives and for the future of their children due to the instability and insecurity of circumstances in the country. Although it should be kept in mind that this development was also influenced by a number of variables, foremost among which is the level of the population’s trust in the officials, and their capability to find solutions to the problems and crises experienced by their communities.

The author sees that there is a failing and corrupt political elite, which is not qualified intellectually and politically to undertake the real information role it is supposed to undertake, and which dominates the general scene of the Arab information/media. The author then suggests that the latest political and military events unleashed by the revolutions of the ‘Arab Spring’ have borne this out, as Arab media has failed in shouldering its responsibility in bringing about an essential change within the intellectual and
societal Arab and Islamic structure. The media went even further in misguidance and two-faced pretence, in stimulating enflamed public feelings, and in treating the audience as ignorant; all the while wasting the opportunity to serve the causes of the ‘Arab Spring’.


The book seeks to extract preliminary data emerging from the Arab revolutions, which would serve as a starting point for identifying propositions amenable to more detailed research and generalization. The first of these propositions is that the idea of change has become a vigorous motivator for Arab countries in the current historical ear; implied in this proposition is the fact that it is now very difficult to avert or avoid the demand of change by Arab peoples. This change, moreover, will not conform to a single shape or model; rather, each country would have its own model for change. The second proposition is that the revolutions seek a nationalist structure that goes beyond ancient non-modernist forms of belonging, and that is open to the revolutions’ Arab and human orbit, implying the exclusion of the possibility of going backward or of returning to regimes that were prevalent before these revolutions. The third proposition relates to the endeavour by these revolutions to establish a civil democratic state that would break the historical tie between tyranny and foreign colonial intervention, aiming to preserve the unity of the national domain on the bases of freedom, independence, and progress.

In any case, these remain theoretical propositions attached to the slogans of the Arab revolutions; and it is still too early to talk about them with certainty or to certify their validity, especially taking into consideration the fact that the new Arab governments in most of the countries invaded by the ‘Arab Spring’ are not likely to traverse the transitional phases ahead of them smoothly and easily against the background of the political disturbances and economic difficulties from which they suffer. Some of these difficulties are so chronic that their treatment would not be beneficial without foreign grants and aid, which come with strings and conditions attached and which have their own serious implications.


This report, which comes out this year in its seventh successive edition, monitors the developments of the Palestinian cause, in its different aspects, and seeks to present the latest information and statistics relevant to the Palestinian story up to the end of 2011, in addition to a part of 2012, in the framework of an analytical reading and visions of future contingencies.

The report gives a survey of the internal Palestinian situation, in addition to the Israeli-Palestinian scene with its ramifications, including aspects related to the internal Israeli situation, resistance against Israeli occupation, and the ‘process’ or track in the name of a peaceful settlement. In addition, it touches upon Arab, Islamic and international attitudes towards the Palestinian cause, and the population, together with the economic and educational situation of the Palestinians. It also sheds light on the issue of Jerusalem, the situation of the sanctuaries and the suffering of the Palestinians under occupation.
The report discusses the internal Palestinian scene, which, in 2011, witnessed a movement towards realizing reconciliation and putting an end to internal divisions. A reconciliation agreement was signed between Fatah and Hamas and the other Palestinian organizations in Cairo on 3 May 2011. This movement towards reconciliation came as a result of a number of factors, among the most prominent of which was the change in the attitude of Fatah towards the issue of reconciliation by its acceptance of the observations made by Hamas on the ‘Egyptian paper’, which was the basis of the reconciliation move. There was also a change in the attitude of the Egyptian mediator, who took a position of complete neutrality after the Egyptian revolution, which essentially contributed towards the accomplishment of the agreement. Nevertheless, the steps towards reconciliation still faltered, and there is little hope in the possibility of holding the legislative, presidential and national assembly elections. There are still big obstacles on the road to the re-formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and to the rebuilding of the security services, as the Palestinian Authority insists on security coordination with the Israeli occupation authorities, which poses a real threat to the accomplishment of a real Palestinian reconciliation.

The Israeli occupation authorities, on their side, went ahead, in 2011, with their aggressions against the Gaza Strip, in spite of the unannounced truce on the borders of the Strip, which took the shape of limited rocket firing from the Strip towards Israeli towns and cities. The Israeli authorities also maintained their measures in the West Bank, with incursions, arrests, and maintenance of the settlement and Judaization policies. The purported quest for a political settlement, in 2011, was marked by the continuation of the state of inaction and obstruction, and the lack of interest of the American administration in resuming peace talks, and the weakness of its efforts in this context, against the background of the developments of the Arab revolutions and their reflections in the political and media scene. No progress was forthcoming also because of the continuation of the Israeli rejection of Palestinian demands for a return to the talks, for a freeze on the settlement movement and acceptance of the 1967 borders as a reference point for negotiations about the promised Palestine state.

The report suggests that given population growth rates currently recorded in occupied Palestine, averaged at 2.9% for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, 2.5% for the 1948 Palestinians, and 1.7% for the Jews, the population numbers for Palestinians and Jews will become equal in historic Palestine in 2016: at around 6.4 million for each. The Jewish population will stand at only 48.9% of the general population in the year 2020; as they will reach 6.9 million Jews compared with 7.2 million Palestinians. Observers are unanimous in considering this demographic factor as the most worrying factor for the Israeli officials.