

1 **Perspectives on Development in the Middle East**  
2 **and North Africa (MENA) Region**

3 **Series Editor**

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24 Leonid Issaev · Andrey Korotayev  
25 Editors


26 **New Wave of Revolutions**  
27 **in the MENA Region**

28 A Comparative Perspective



29 Springer

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# 1 Foreword

2 Revolutions always bring surprises, turmoil, and disappointments. Surprises, because  
3 not only do revolutions usually occur where they are least expected, their origins  
4 and unfolding often involve new patterns of events. Turmoil, because revolutions  
5 rarely follow a smooth and direct path, instead they generally unleash violence, have  
6 international spillovers, and produce protracted struggles for power. And disappoint-  
7 ments, because revolutions usually begin with grand ambitions to bring freedom, or  
8 democracy, or greater economic equality or other benefits, only to have those benefits  
9 prove illusory, or be monopolized by a few leaders or a particular group, while the  
10 costs of regime change and upheaval are widely distributed.

11 Yet new revolutions also bring new insights, precisely because even if they fit older  
12 patterns, they have novel elements. New revolutions also create new configurations in  
13 the relationships among nations and peoples, thus having potential world-historical  
14 impacts. Explaining those novel elements, and elucidating those new configurations,  
15 is the task that every new wave of revolutions sets before scholars. In this volume, an  
16 outstanding set of scholars addresses these questions for the new wave of revolutions  
17 in the Middle East and North Africa that swept across the region in the late 2010s and  
18 early 2020s. While not as dramatic as the 2010–2012 wave of revolutions that became  
19 known as the “Arab Spring”, these later events are equally interesting, for they show  
20 how the earlier wave did not resolve the problems that brought instability to the  
21 region. Indeed, the Arab Spring not only failed in its hopes to bring democracy and  
22 better economic conditions to the people of the MENA region, but also it unleashed  
23 new tensions and spread the seeds of instability that sprouted in the region a decade  
24 later, in places such as Algeria, Sudan, and Lebanon.

25 The revolutions in this new wave, like those of the 2010–2012 wave, were varied in  
26 their aims and their results. They generally began with nonviolent protests centered in  
27 the cities (e.g., Tunis, Algiers, Beirut, Khartoum). In Sudan and Algeria, the protests  
28 sought, and successfully overturned, longstanding autocratic leaders; but they were  
29 unable to create new democracies as the military seized power to maintain order.  
30 By contrast, in Tunisia, the protests were demanding better governance from the  
31 existing democratic regime; but the growing disorder provided an excuse for a new  
32 autocratic leader to dissolve the Parliament and seize power. In Jordan, Morocco,

33 Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and Iran, the protests did not overturn the regimes. In the first  
 34 four, they were met with varying degrees of concessions and reforms, while in the  
 35 latter two they were met with harsh repression and a stronger security state. The  
 36 new wave of unrest spread even more deeply into the Sahel than the first wave, with  
 37 major regional uprisings leading to a revolutionary coup in Mali in 2020. At the  
 38 same time, just as there were nations that in 2010–2012 seemed to escape the wave  
 39 of revolutionary unrest sweeping across the region, so too there were exceptions in  
 40 2019–2022, such as Kuwait and Bahrain.

41 In sum, as is so often the case, once the MENA region experienced a wave of  
 42 revolutions, it did not then quickly settle into a stable new order. Quite the reverse:  
 43 some leaders who had survived the first wave were toppled in the subsequent wave;  
 44 protests continued and sometimes provoked new state violence or regime change in  
 45 the post-revolutionary regimes; and across the region people continued to advocate  
 46 for themselves and challenge the existing order.

47 This brief summary notes the breadth and importance of these events, but cannot  
 48 begin to offer explanations. For these, one must delve into the strength and composi-  
 49 tion of regimes and state elites, the issues and coalitions that produced the protests,  
 50 and the mechanisms of protest diffusion and state repression both within and across  
 51 states. It is these tasks that are skillfully executed by the authors in this volume.

52 It is unusual to have analysis of this depth and sweep regarding events that have  
 53 only happened recently. This is possible here because the authors bring extraordinary  
 54 expertise in the politics and history of the MENA region to this task. This volume will  
 55 provide a treasure-trove of information and insights to students and scholars seeking  
 56 to understand the course of politics in the MENA region in the decade following  
 57 the Arab Spring. At the same time, the analysis presented here of this new wave  
 58 of revolutions is essential for understanding how the very nature of revolution is  
 59 evolving, and how the latest wave of revolutions (those in the MENA region being  
 60 just part of the global wave of revolutions in 2018–2022) reflects the continued  
 61 transformation of the current world-system.

62 In fact, the World System is being shaken by the conflict between Russia and  
 63 Ukraine even as I write, bringing another major spike in food prices and global  
 64 inflation. If prior patterns hold, that means still more protest and turmoil is likely  
 65 to arise across MENA and other developing regions. The revolutionary wave of the  
 66 late 2010s and early 2020s may therefore be just beginning. Understanding what has  
 67 happened in the MENA region in the last few years is essential for understanding  
 68 what may now unfold. That makes this volume critical reading for anyone seeking  
 69 to understand the challenges to stability and security across the region and around  
 70 the world.

July 2022

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3 many able collaborators. We are all grateful to Springer and to our editors—Almas  
4 Heshmati and Johannes Glaeser—for patience and support in pulling together this  
5 diverse volume.

6 This monograph is the result of the authors' study of the revolutionary processes  
7 in the Middle East and North Africa region over the last ten years. We would like to  
8 express our sincere gratitude to HSE University in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, the  
9 Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Russian Presidential Academy of National  
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11 of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which the editors and some  
12 authors of this volume belong to. Through our academic and educational work at these  
13 institutions, we have had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of the new  
14 wave of revolutions in the MENA region. A great contribution to the preparation of the  
15 publication was made by the materials of field research undertaken by Leonid Issaev,  
16 Andrey Korotayev, Anna Kashina, Alina Khokhlova, Sergey Kostelyanets, Nikolay  
17 Kozhanov, and Anton Mardasov in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria,  
18 Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and other MENA and Sahel  
19 countries in the 2010s and early 2020s.

20 This volume is an output of a research project implemented as part of the Basic  
21 Research Program at HSE University in 2022 with support by the Russian Science  
22 Foundation (Project No. 18-18-00254).

# 1 **About This Book**

2 The late 2010s have seen a new wave of revolutions in the MENA region comparable  
3 in some respect to the Arab Spring events. The scale of these revolutionary protests  
4 approached the one of the Arab Spring; they led to the fall of regimes in Sudan,  
5 Algeria, and Mali, became permanent in Lebanon and Iraq, and were suppressed in  
6 Egypt and Iran at the cost of heavy civilian casualties. This book offers a comparative  
7 perspective on the new wave of revolutions in MENA region. Presenting case studies  
8 on the protests in ten MENA countries, it offers a better understanding of the varied  
9 forms, features, and historical backgrounds of revolutionary and quasi-revolutionary  
10 episodes, as well as their causes. Accordingly, it highlights recent revolutions in their  
11 historical and world-system contexts.

12 The new revolutionary wave in the MENA region coincided with the downswing  
13 phase of the fifth Kondratiev wave, which manifested itself especially clearly in the  
14 form of a slowdown in economic growth and the aggravation of economic problems.  
15 Thus, it was dissatisfaction with the ongoing economic policy that became the root  
16 cause of the protest moods of the late 2010s. However, the economic agenda quickly  
17 gave way to the political one and actualized long-standing unresolved problems in  
18 each of the countries, which, as a rule, were of a systemic nature. The events of the  
19 new revolutionary wave were distinguished by their pronounced orientation “against  
20 everyone”, the political class as a whole, and “All Must Go” (with variations) became  
21 the main slogan. Given its scope, the book will appeal to scholars from various disci-  
22 plines interested in MENA politics, conflict resolution, sociopolitical change, and  
23 revolutionary processes involving both nonviolent campaigns and political violence.



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