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Economic Development and Political Action in the Arab World

M. A. Mohamed Salih



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Previous analysis of North African revolt against authoritarianism, known as the 'Arab Spring', embraced reductionist explanations such as the social media, youth unemployment and citizens' protest to regain dignity in societies humiliated by oppressive regimes. This book illustrates that reductionist approaches can only elucidate some symptoms of a social problem, while leaving unexplained the economic and political structures that contributed to it. Some notable outcomes of quiescence, resource-based ethnic and sectarian conflicts and a faulty development paradigm are deepened inequality and a wedge between winners and losers, or affluence, wealth and power vis-à-vis poverty and hunger among humiliated jobless and hope-less masses. The book blends theories of development and transition to explain the complex factors that contributed to North Africans' revolt against authoritarianism and its long-term consequences for political development in the Arab World.

This timely book is of great interest to researchers and students in Development Studies, Economics and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as policy makers and democracy, human rights and social justice activists in the Arab World.

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Abbreviations

AAAID	Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development
ABC	Abyei Boundary Commission
AFAO	Arab Food and Agriculture Organization
AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
AGFUND	Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations
AIG	Armed Islamic Group
AIM	Armed Islamic Movement
AM	Authoritarian Monarchs
AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Muslim Maghreb
ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CNPC	Chinese National Petroleum Corporation
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Sudan–South Sudan)
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EED	European Endowment for Democracy
EMP	European-Mediterranean Partnership
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFD	Front of Democratic Forces (French Acronym)
FIG	Fighting Islamic Group
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front (French Acronym)
FIS	Front for Islamic Salvation (French Acronym)
GCCs	Gulf Cooperation Countries
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HPI	Human Poverty Index
ICM	Islamic Constitutional Movement
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IICO	International Islamic Charitable Organization

IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
IIROSA	International Islamic Relief Organization Saudi Arabia
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITA	Iraqi Transitional Administration
KMB	Kuwait Muslim Brotherhood
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MNP	People National Movement (French Acronym)
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MWL	Muslim World League
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	National Congress Party
NFA	National Forces Alliance
NFL	National Liberation Front (French Acronym)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIF	National Islamic Front
NTC	National Transitional Council
OIR	Organization of Islamic Revolution
ONGC	India's Oil and National Gas Corp
PCP	People's Congress Party
PD	Paris Declaration
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
PJD	Justice and Development Party (French Acronym)
PSD	Social Democratic Party (French Acronym)
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RCD	Rally for Constitutional Democracy
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
Saudi Aramco	Saudi Arabian Oil Company
SC	Security Council
SDP	Socialist Destorian Party
SGCC	Salafi Group for Call and Combat
SNESUP	National Union for Higher Education
SPLA/M	Sudan People Liberation Army/Movement
SSLF	South Sudan Liberation Front
UEA	United Arab Emirates
UGTT	Tunisian Trade Union Federation (French Acronym)
UMT	Moroccan Labour Union (French Acronym)
UNODOC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USD	Union of Democratic Syndicate (French Acronym)
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
WC	Washington Consensus
WFP	World Food Programme
WICS	World Islamic Call Society
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

Contrary to the view that, ‘more rarely, the Arab world is incorporated into mainstream debates or textbooks, but is presented as the antithesis of whatever outcome or pattern is under investigation’,¹ the Arab Spring has drawn much attention to the Arab World. Demonstrably, however, the attention accorded to the Arab World has not negated Lawson’s contention that it is still presented as the antithesis of whatever outcome or pattern is under investigation.² The dramatic and unrelenting revolts that swept away the leaders of four of the Arab World’s authoritarian regimes (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Muhammad Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen) or shook the foundations of regimes that were never thought to be amenable to political change (Bahrain, Syria and Jordan) have been incorporated into mainstream discourse and textbooks. This has been accompanied by a shift of the debate from the Middle East to the Arab World. This is not merely a terminological shift, given the failure of Middle East scholarship to conceptualize the possibility of an Arab revolt. Within less than three years of the rediscovery of the Arab World, an unprecedented proliferation of publications has taken place, attempting to elucidate one aspect or other of the Arab Spring puzzle.³

Most conspicuous among the explanations of the puzzle is the role of youth as an agent of the recent struggle for freedom. An allied explication is that social media is a powerful political instrument, which is used by a savvy networking youth to topple dictators considered by the best analysts to be unassailable. Social media and current information technologies allow the youth to mobilize the public to agitate for political change both within the Arab World and globally.⁴ Political actions in the Arab World, such as labour strikes, resource conflicts, quiescence, and faulty development priorities and policies, have been treated largely in isolation from economic, social and political sites of historical struggle against authoritarianism. To complement prevalent explanations of the Arab Spring as a youth revolt aided by social media in a globally networked society, this book offers unemployment, poverty and food insecurity as major factors contributing to the Arab revolt. From a broader perspective, the literature on the politics and economics of the Arab Spring began to surface in reports published by international and regional (pro-)democracy activist institutions⁵—scholarly publications devoted wholly to explaining the Arab revolt against the

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backdrop of unemployment, poverty and food security.⁶ It must, however, be equally recognized that youth and social media explanations are accentuated by factors such as poverty, unemployment, exclusion and a range of other social upheavals. While recognizing youth and social media as important catalysts of the revolt against multiple social, economic and political deficits, an all-encompassing explanation must rest with the Arab World's recurrent patterns of economic development volatility.

It is imperative to situate youth and social media explanations of the Arab Spring within factors linking economic development and political action, whereby economic development has conveniently meant an increase in real gross domestic product (GDP) and improved income and standards of living over time. The most cherished path to economic development is enhanced by accumulated technical and managerial skills, specialization of both the production and provision of goods and services, the capacity to harness natural resources through investments in human capital and the integration of such resources into other sectors of the economy.⁷ This seemingly technical understanding of economic development is actually political to the core, with politics being the central factor determining the flow of development opportunities expressed in terms of better health, nutrition, education, clean drinking water, roads and market access and employment. Politics is an essential factor in determining losers and gainers and improved and deteriorating income and standards of living in the process of economic development.⁸ Such is the influence of economic development on politics, and vice versa, that linking the two has become almost common wisdom in dominant academic and policy debates, although others who argue that this relationship is not causal and context specific, have rejected it.⁹

Increasingly, economic development is presented as a factor facilitating political reform, which is most narrowly defined as a process whose desired outcome is to transform authoritarian rule to a democratic form of government. It is also proposed that economic and democratic transitions should ideally be mutually reinforcing.¹⁰ As a result, a widely held view portends that growth and improved standards of living are important factors in promoting democratic politics and creating efficient institutions capable of propelling economic development. This broad and rather overstretched understanding of the relationship between economic development and political development is treated not only as an interdisciplinary engagement of two disciplines (economics and politics), respectively, but also as praxis or theories of practice informing competing development paradigms and ideologies.¹¹

The Arab World offered an antithesis of the doctrine linking economic development and democratic politics as it became apparent that despite relative improvements in the standards of living in the Arab World, the revolt commenced in Tunisia, which was praised for its 'un-Arab-like' economic growth.¹² The old contention that development and democracy go hand in hand should be questioned not least because what is important is not development as such, but the quality of development and whether it is inclusive or exclusionary or benefiting some, while leaving many behind.

Rather than using reductionist explanations of economic and political reforms in general, or the Arab revolt in particular, with reference to social media and angry youth, this book explores the structural factors that contributed to recurrent economic and political deficits, and their cumulative contributions to political change.

Below, I introduce political action as the main concept informing the content of this book: that is, economic development and political action, exploring the mutual influences of government, economic and political action and societies' counteractions to them. In addition to the well-trodden theme of youth and media, the literature on the Arab Spring has also contemplated at least three more theoretical explanations.

First, a political economy approach that explains the Arab Spring as a result of state-controlled economies that are inept at encouraging private-sector development, and lack of property rights as well as physical security (Springborg 2011). In the first instance, state-controlled economies hamper industrialization, which is considered as a precondition for the kind of development that not only creates jobs, but also enhances labour and middle-class democratic rights in the workplace and the freedom to criticize or oppose unfavourable government policy. In the second instance, property rights and physical security encourage local as well as foreign investors to invest in the economy and create employment. The absence of these two important requisites of development have hampered the institutionalization of democracy and created a situation ripe for rebellion. In fact, according to Springborg:

Political spring came to the Arab world when its economies were unlikely to provide strong support for the development or institutionalization of democracy. But these political springs do offer the prospect of reversing the vicious cycle, whereby authoritarianism prevents good governance that in turn impedes industrialization, into a virtuous one in which at least the beginnings of democratization pave the way for substantial improvements in governance, hence much more rapid, thoroughgoing industrialization.¹³

An important implication of this explanation is that an Arab Political Spring, without radically reforming the structural impediments of economic development, will be ill-suited to deliver on industrialization, private-sector development and property rights security because the region's political economy has hardly changed. An immediate consequence of political liberalization without structural economic change will be to keep intact the political economy that propelled the Arab Political Spring – a political economy of rentier states that uses their monopoly over the economy to ensure political hegemony.

Second, another trait of political economy explains the Arab Spring in terms of the unravelling of the social contract between states and citizens. According to Amin *et al.* (2012: 17):

The origins of the uprisings in part stem from a dual failure, one political and one economic. For too long authoritarian regimes relied on economic

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and political institutions to preserve the status quo, creating unsustainable tradeoffs between economic and political freedoms, especially for young people. There was economic growth, but it was not widely shared; there was redistribution but growing corruption. In the end, decades of slow and piecemeal reforms could not prevent the eventual unravelling of the Arab social contract and unmaking of the Arab polity.¹⁴

With the ensuing global economic crisis since 2007, this state of affairs in the Arab Spring countries has created a mismatch between citizens' aspirations and the states' capacity to meet these aspirations by maintaining some of the generous social protection packages the poor were accustomed to in the past. The shrinking of the political space, despite the existence of a democratic façade in some countries and the complete absence of democracy in others, was sufficient to trigger the Arab political revolt against their governments.¹⁵ The widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' created an underclass that has been excluded from the region's riches. This exclusion from the benefits of economic growth was particularly apparent among the first countries in which the Arab Spring took place (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya). A typical dependency theory analysis by the Arab thinker Samir Amin suggests that an explanation for the Arab Spring resides within the Arab economies, which have been shaped by market forces and distortions originating in advanced industrialized states and neoliberal policies. Policies such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), privatization, trade liberalization and deindustrialization have played a critical role in the eruption of the Arab revolt. According to Samir Amin, it is because of these contradictions and distortions that the gap between the economies of the Arab states (the periphery) and advanced capitalist economies (the centre) has increased, leading to an increase in the income gap between the middle and poor classes and the rich, thus fuelling grievances and anger against the ruling classes. The interplay between economic and political malice as contributing factors to the Arab Spring phenomenon could not have been made clearer.

Third, the historical institutional strand explains the Arab Spring with reference to what is tantamount to path dependence or the notion that 'history matters' or that 'the past influences the future'.¹⁶ This line of thought suggests that there is something anti-democratic in countries conquered by the Arabs. Democratic deficit has persisted in these countries and has continued to be non-democratic since the 1960s. Eric Chaney (2012) advances the institutional persistence hypothesis¹⁷ to argue that the Arab League's democratic deficit on the eve of the Arab Spring has deep historical roots. These results cast doubt on claims that Muslim theology, Arab culture, the Arab-Israeli conflict or oil wealth, are systematic obstacles to democratic change. Instead, the available evidence suggests that the region's democratic deficit is a product of the long-running influence of control structures developed under Islamic empires in the pre-modern era.¹⁸

Most importantly, Chaney attributes the Arab Spring to the weakening of historical institutions (through education, secularization and external influences).

Such weakening is a consequence of the democratic deficit and, perhaps, Arab citizens' muted resistance to authoritarianism. The Arab Spring puzzle in the context of historical institutional deficit is therefore explained against factors external to the Arab World and involves a rupture of the historical factors that maintained the Arab democratic deficit for decades.

Samir Amin mounts a neo-Marxist counter-critique of the conventional analysis of the Arab Spring, arguing that:

The Arab regimes could not do more in terms of further development because of the onslaught of neo-liberal globalization. . . . The ruling circles, in order to remain in office, have chosen to retreat and submit to the demands of neoliberal globalization. The result was a rapid degradation of the social conditions; all that had been achieved in the era of the National Popular State to the benefit of the popular and middle classes were lost in a few years, poverty and mass unemployment being the normal result of the neoliberal policies pursued. This created the objective conditions for the revolts.¹⁹

Thus, for Samir Amin, the Arab revolt is a predictable outcome of decades of the negative social impacts of neoliberal globalization, which created an underclass of those hitherto excluded and widened the gap between rich and poor. As the consciousness of the poor, the unemployed and excluded middle class had reached maturity, the revolution against the ruling classes was the ultimate outcome. In a sense, Samir Amin returns the discussion to the historical sites of class struggle, thus invoking his classic analysis of mal-development and its consequences.²⁰

Single or mono-explanatory factors can hardly capture the complexity of the Arab revolt as a phenomenon that has been very intensive in some Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain) and rather moderate to weak in the rest. Although there are some unifying factors explaining the Arab Spring, there are also marked divergences, ranging from poverty, unemployment and inadequate health, education and other social amenities, to sectarian-based exclusion in regimes that depend on sheer brute force and coercion to silence their opponents.

More than offering an eclectic synthesis of the factors that contributed to the Arab Spring, this book attempts to revisit the debate on the relationship between economic development and political action. Current advances in the study of human development, human security and well-being are not useful in explaining the Arab Spring phenomenon, not only because they have not been conceived as explanatory models for rebellion and revolution, but also because of their inability to address issues of power and struggle over resources. At best, these functionalist advances in the study of development meant to depoliticize development due to their focus on how to distribute development outcomes rather than on how to generate or make development happen. This book returns to the main factors of economic development and their presence or absence as an

explanatory factor of the political actions that contributed to the Arab revolt. To be sure, underdevelopment will be treated as an underside of a particular pattern of economic development, resulting in negative socio-economic manifestations (poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, malnutrition and lack of health, as well as education and the socio-economic conditions available to people) that contributed to the Arab revolt.

Political action

Collingwood defines political action as ‘a specific type of action taken by state or citizens with the aim of realizing a particular type of public good’.²¹ This means that political action takes place in the realm of the state as well as the realm of citizens with rights and obligations. For Hannah Arendt (1959: 244) ‘political action is man’s way of facing up to the unpredictability and contingency inherent in the political world characterized by novelty, indeterminacy, public quality, and collective and individual action for those involved’. However, because political action is a specific type of action, it is regulated through the constitutions of nations, which, according to Thomson, are developed to ensure that the power and inclusiveness of political institutions grows out of the conviction that checks and balances are desirable means of controlling human behaviour.²² Therefore, there is a need for the exercise of power to maintain order, while refraining from infringing on citizens’ rights to undertake political action in order to safeguard public interest and ensure the functioning of inclusive polity. Political action is a means of agitating for political change; it is the essence of politics. As Arendt reminds us, the *raison d’être* of politics, ‘is freedom, and its field of experience is action’;²³ and political freedom requires action as its medium. The context of political action must be a public context, in which action is initiated by the public in the public realm.²⁴ In this sense, political action is specifically political, and therefore I think it is similar to, but differs from, collective action in that the latter may encompass actions that are not strictly political in nature, unless politics is meant to refer to all human actions.

From the state perspective, political action is essentially about regulation, control, the imposition of order and the application of regularity frameworks upon citizens. Likewise, political action is taken by citizens to change regulation, protest against control, resist the imposition of unjust or arbitrary order or reject discriminatory and exclusionary laws and policies.²⁵ Political action could be committed to counteract an economic action by the state, particularly if that action privileges one or more interest groups, while forsaking the interests of others; for example, infringing on the rights or interests of the poor and disenfranchised. Political action can also be against state policies that, directly or indirectly, contribute to uneven development between regions and social groups, leading to the inequitable distribution of resources and public amenities.

Therefore, political action is by no means the monopoly of government or state institutions. Citizens, whether represented in civil society or in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, trade unions,

social movements or political parties, also resort to political action upon realizing that their state abuses power, is unable to protect life and property, fails to act as a trusted arbiter between competing claims or is inept in upholding the rule of law or maintaining peace and order. Institutionalized political action takes place in the form of voting, boycotts, strikes, rallies, advocacy and lobbying by individuals or entities. Unconvinced of the efficacy of institutional politics, some social movements, rebel groups or liberation movements resort to extra-constitutional political action. This action includes armed resistance and the use of political violence by the state or by citizens, against governments whose political legitimacy is questionable.

Beyond the overstated question of whether economic development and democracy are inherently linked, this book attempts to explore how certain patterns of economic development result in particular types of political action by states and citizens. In other words, long-term cumulative economic development actions undertaken by the Arab states have sustained underdevelopment and are responsible for counter-political actions undertaken by citizens and vice versa. Uprisings, strikes, unprecedented demonstrations and challenges to the state by workers, peasants and unemployed men and women among the youth and adult population are expressions of frustration with underdevelopment. Such frustration has made some countries ripe for rebellion, while others are waiting to erupt because different countries are at different resource base levels of development and have different capacities to maintain acquiescence and national cohesion and to contain social conflicts.

The underlying argument in this analysis is that the Arab Spring might bring about short-lived synthetic democratic regimes, but, given the persistence of the economic structures that fuelled it in the first place, it will bring about neither political stability nor economic development in the short run. The Arab Spring has prepared the Arab masses to rebel, but it has not alleviated the structural factors that precipitated it.

Structure of the book

This volume analyses and explains the relationship between economic development and political action (or inaction where it is due to such factors as economic and political reform), focusing on the Arab World's sluggish development performance relative to its perceived oil wealth, a situation in which hope is pinned on generating development in oil-exporting and non-oil-exporting countries alike. Although the book emphasizes economic development in the conventional sense, it draws on the current literature on human development to illustrate where the Arab states' patterns of development have failed both the highly criticized concept of non-inclusive growth as well as fancier conceptions of development, such as human development. Development follies are treated with regard to specific political actions undertaken by state and society, particularly in those sectors or factors of development affecting society. Chapter 1 offers a bird's-eye view of economic development and political action in the Arab World during the

period 1990 to 2012. This period is divided into three phases: First, the period 1990 to 2000, which marked initial attempts at economic and political liberalization. This period coincided with the introduction of the SAPs and their far-reaching social consequences of economic decline, increased poverty, unemployment, social unrest and food riots. Political actions by citizens are direct responses to the governments' economically motivated, externally prescribed (by the World Bank and the IMF) policies. These policies have produced counter-political actions by citizens that heralded an initial period of meagre political reforms (Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). The second period, after September 11 up until 2009, was characterized by externally sponsored, Western projects aimed at expanding political space in the Middle East. The failure of Saddam Hussein's regime and the 'war on terror', have produced a new impetus for economic and political reform. This period also coincided with the financial crisis that began in 2007 and arguably affected the Arab countries, which adopted a neoliberal, export-oriented growth that neglected the agricultural sector and small- and medium-size enterprises, on which the majority of the population ekes out a living. The dawning of the Arab Spring should come as no surprise in light of the events that led up to it. The third period is the post-2010 Arab Spring to the time of writing of this book. Because the determinants of development in the Arab World have not changed, the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the democratic opening that these countries have experienced have unleashed political voices and social forces that were kept silent by the ousted authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria.

Chapter 2 explores an historical context of state-building, blurred by the rise of Arab nationalism and its continued negative influence on current political development trajectories in almost all Arab countries. By illuminating this perspective, it is hoped that the chapter will explain how Arab revolutionary nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s shaped the very character of prevalent political regimes and state-society relations in post-independence Arab states, using the cases of Tunisia, Morocco and Iraq. Pan-Arabism has come to contrast sharply with the realities of the Arab World, which comprises an amalgam of Arab and non-Arab peoples as well as religions other than Islam. An insistence on Arab nationalism has ignited counter-nationalist sentiments by non-Arabs, which has resulted in conflicts cynically used by Arab leaders to justify oppression as an instrument for maintaining unity and national integrity.

Chapters 3 and 4 are linked, and both deal with the limits that human and natural resources impose on economic development in the Arab World. The Arab World's relatively high (but slowly declining) population growth has been treated in relation to its dependence on Law-based manufacturing, tourism, and oil and minerals, which do not provide sufficient employment opportunities for the educated, let alone the section of the population with low skills. Water and fertile cultivable lands are also limitations, but where water and cultivable lands are found, the policy response has been either slow or inadequate, which is rather baffling for a region awash with probably the largest per capita pool of foreign experts and consultants in the world. Another aspect of population-induced

underutilization of resources is the low participation of youth and women in the workforce; such participation is considered among the worst in the world. Conflicts over resources are hindering development, and this aspect is elaborated upon in Chapter 4. Here, I argue that although material in nature, resource conflicts are closely associated with identity politics. The chapter shows that, invariably, oil and gas, water, fertile land and some minerals are located in ethnically-contested areas between Arabs and non-Arabs. The chapter also highlights the effects of religious cleavages internal to the Islamic faith, such as those between the Shi'a and Sunni, or popular and orthodox Islam. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict aside, internal conflicts over resources pose serious threats to future economic and political development in the region. The Arab Spring has exacerbated ethnic and religious cleavages, as it has enabled the expression of political grievances that have been suppressed by authoritarian regimes for decades.

A response to current debates on why vocal political action persists in some Arab countries (yet is absent in others) is explored in Chapter 5, on quiescence. This is an attempt to answer the question of whether quiescence is a result of public expenditure on health and education (as is the case in this chapter) or whether it is the result of rentier state patronage, for example, in shoring up the support of loyalists, traditionalists or conservative entities known for their historic loyalty to authoritarian rulers (i.e. tribal and religious leaders, military and business elite). Do Arab authoritarian regimes maintain quiescence through expenditure on social development programmes in order to reduce grievances by those who may otherwise revolt for being excluded, or is quiescence meant to neutralize or counteract political actions against the authoritarian regimes? Other important issues worth considering are how quiescence is deliberately maintained through a balancing act that combines political oppression and social protection to appease the regime's opponents and mobilize sources of support. Quiescence in Arab authoritarian regimes is a clear demonstration of political action undertaken by the state to maintain control over its opponents and reduce the likelihood of rebellion.

The debate on economic development and political action is elaborated upon in Chapter 6, which offers detailed accounts of what I consider to be the structural factors explaining the Arab Spring phenomenon, i.e. unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. These are treated in three sub-themes: (1) an exploration of the determinants and linkages between unemployment, poverty and food security; (2) the relationship between the food security deficit and agricultural development; and (3) the effect of (1) and (2) on exacerbating, rather than reducing, unemployment, poverty and food security, hence echoing the structural problems that the Arab Spring has been inept at resolving.

Questions have often been raised as to whether the lax attitude of the European Union (EU) and the West in general has something to do with the Arab revolt against their regimes, whose authoritarianism was never seriously questioned by the architects of Euro-Mediterranean policy. Chapter 7 illustrates that the European-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has compromised the EU's good governance conditionality (embodied in the Paris Declaration of 2005 and

the European Consensus on Development of 2006 or successors to the SAPs and the Washington Consensus) in its relationship with the Arab Mediterranean. While strict good governance and human rights conditionality was advocated and proactively pursued and implemented in other regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the EU was the least proactive in implementing any form of conditionality in the Arab Mediterranean. At least three main factors, in addition to the EU's lack of proactivity, contributed to this differentiated treatment towards the Arab Mediterranean. These related to the Arab Mediterranean's strategic role in European security, specifically in relation to preventing illicit migration from sub-Saharan Africa; combating terrorism; and employing a regional partnership that should ideally ensure active Israeli participation as an instrument for managing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The choice of only one external factor (EMP) and not others, such as the effects of globalization and free trade, is mainly because it encompasses several elements of those other external factors. Furthermore, the choice of EMP safeguards against broad speculative analysis that is more difficult to substantiate than otherwise. The scramble of European and US leaders to respond to the Arab Spring protests in Tunisia and Libya illustrates how that policy did not sit too uncomfortably with the existing authoritarian regimes at the time.

Chapter 8 explores how the activities of transnational Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which originated in Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait, and operate in the Arab world and beyond, are guided by the teachings of the dominant schools of politico-religious thought peculiar to the dominant Islamic sect of their founders and the governments that support them. In other words, Wahabi/Salafi advocates Salafi-Wahabi teachings; likewise, Sunni or Shi'a transnational NGOs propagate the teachings of their religious denominations. As this chapter will show, Islamic transnational NGOs enjoy the explicit moral and financial support of their governments. In conformity with Islamic finance principles, they use Islamic development banks and investment practices.²⁶ This pattern of development tends to heighten confrontation between Islamic transnational organizations and secular Arab states with majority Muslim populations, illustrating that a religious-based mode of development contributes to the radicalization of traditionally moderate societies.²⁷

The politics of charitable development interventions of three globally networked transnational Islamic NGOs: (1) the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) (Saudi Arabia); (2) the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) (Kuwait); and (3) the World Islamic Call Society (WICS) (Libya) are interrogated in Chapter 8. The aim of this chapter is to explain the tension between Arab nationalism and Islam, and how Arab transnational Islamic NGO networks attempt to bridge this divide by extending their humanitarian development operations to non-Arab Muslims. Some transnational Islamic NGOs funded by oil-exporting countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Libya) do not advance puritan Islamic piety as they have claimed to do. Unwittingly, some transnational Islamic NGOs have become embroiled in activities allegedly supporting extremist organizations, which are incompatible with the