Reimagining Middle Eastern Order after the Arab Uprisings

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ABSTRACT

After seven years, the Arab Uprisings have been given many interpretations and problematised in more than one way. The political economy, human rights and justice, Islamic awakening, terrorism and extremism and most important the conspiracy theories produced by each stakeholder. The causes notwithstanding, its implications are of long-lasting nature for the region’s historical, sociological and political imagination.

The continuity of post-colonial and post-Ottoman order was challenged by the weakening of the nation-states against global forces, the conflict between the status-quoists and forces of change, mainly the social, political and strategic faultiness. The old order, despite its undemocratic and despotic roots, monarchies, military generals or the authoritarian rulers, has been able to resist these forces and faultiness, strengthening the narratives that Muslim societies do not want or they are not fit for democratic governance. What has happened between 2011 and 2013 were not just political happenings, they were and continue to remain the source of political re-imagination, particularly against the forces of status-quo. Counter revolutions in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria might have restored the old post colonial order, they remain more vulnerable to the existing fault lines.

What has not been sufficiently recognised that the forces of change, diverse and divergent, have so far failed to produce an alternative model of power, and its distribution among the stakeholders? Islamists, Marxists, liberals, nationalists and clerics have found it convenient or tactically useful to not challenge the old order and remain in alliance with the ruling elites in one way or the other. With global forces and deepening fault-lines, the opposition forces broke away and the neoliberal economy took the main role in shaping the political re-imagination. As the old order started breaking, the opposition forces were already decaying. Their understanding of change and alternative order has failed to mobilise and unite the mass opinion and assure a smooth transition.

The paper attempts to analyse how the old order is facing a serious challenge and the oppositional forces have failed to evolve an alternative vision for a new order they wanted to bring.