

Changing Faces of the Authoritarian Reflex and Islamist Actors in the Maghreb and Mashreq after Arab Uprisings

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Abstract : One of the main questions that have arisen after the Arab uprisings has centered on whether they will lead to democratic transition and what the roles of Islamist actors will be. It has become apparent today that one of the key outcomes has been the partial, if not total, overthrow of authoritarian regimes in some cases. So, this article aims to analyse three synchronous upshots brought about by the uprisings, referring to patterns of state formation in the Maghreb and Mashreq. One of the main outcomes has been the persistence of authoritarianism in various forms, and the fragility of the Arab republics coping with the protests as compared to the more resilient character of the monarchies. In addition, none of the uprisings has brought an Islamist organization to incontestable power, as some predicted. However, 'old' Islamist actors have since re-emerged as key players, namely the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere. Thus, to understand the synthesis of change and continuity in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, analysing the changing faces of authoritarianism in the region and the impact on Islamists in both the Maghreb and the Mashreq is imperative.

Keywords : authoritarianism, democratization, Arab spring, Islamists

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