

IRA WILLIAM ZARTMAN, ED, *ARAB SPRING: NEGOTIATING IN THE SHADOW OF THE INTIFADAT*, GEORGIA: GEORGIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015

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Covering the democratic upswell in the Middle East from 2011 – 2014, *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat*¹ is a political study of societies in transition. This edited, scholarly volume brings together academics from the world over, including many from the Arab world, to answer the question: what patterns can be discerned in societies negotiating to replace a ruling order? The editor of *Arab Spring* and its primary contributor (lending his pen to three of its fourteen chapters) is Ira William Zartman, professor emeritus of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at John Hopkins University in Baltimore. The varied contributors brought together by Professor Zartman are either local to the upheavals they analyze,² or are part of the international academic community.³ Drawing on his earlier work on both the Middle East and on negotiation theory,⁴ Professor Zartman and company use the tenets of negotiation theory – negotiation by societal stakeholders to replace existing regimes and bring order to chaos – to explain the relative success of the Arab Spring in some states, and its relative failure in others.

This work is analytical in flavour, and explanatory in objective. Its contributors perform their task capably, demonstrating that negotiation theory has value in dissecting the complex series of events of the Arab Spring. As a popular uprising affecting eight Arab states, the Arab Spring is unique, with elite, ensconced regimes finding their authority threatened by civil society actors, often unorganized and representing disparate interests. These actors – students, unions, professional groups, the military establishment, Islamist organizations, or even the teeming masses referred to simply as *the street* – derive their bargaining power from legitimacy, organizational capacity and the use or threat of violence. Negotiation in the sense applied here is the process of give and take among the full cross-section of society affected by replacing old regimes with new. The negotiation process exists at all

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¹ Ira William Zartman, ed, *The Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat* (Georgia: Georgia University Press, 2015) [Zartman, *Arab Spring*].

² For instance, Abdullah Hamidaddin of King's College London, who chaired a Yemeni non-governmental organization, contributes a chapter on this country. Likewise, Abdelwahab ben Hafaiedh of the University of Tunis co-authors the chapter on Tunis with Zartman, and Aly El Raggal (an activist in Egypt during the Arab Spring) and Heba Raouf Ezzat (of Cairo University and the American University of Cairo) co-author the chapter on Egypt.

³ Notably for Canadian readers, Carleton University's Osler Hampson and the University of Waterloo's Bessma Momani provide an excellent chapter outlining the practical implications for policy makers arising from the events covered (Osler Hampson & Bessma Momani, "Lessons for Policy" in Zartman, *Arab Spring*, *supra* note 1, 439).

⁴ Professor Zartman has been prolific on the subject. See, for brief examples, Ira William Zartman, "Justice in Negotiation" (1997) 18:2 International Political Science Review 121 at 138; Ira William Zartman, "Waiting for the Arab Spring" (2014) 86:3 Middle East Journal 465 at 465-68.

levels of society, including horizontally (between opposition stakeholders) and vertically (between oppositions and outgoing elites). In short, negotiation is everywhere and involves everyone.

The contributors to *Arab Spring* apply a tailored model of negotiation theory, dividing *short-track* transitions (less than eight months from initiation to overthrow) from *long-track* transitions (over eight months). The short-track is characterized by a quick overthrow of ruling authorities, and then successful, forward-looking negotiation by pluralistic opposition forces. In contrast, the long-track is marked by an intransigent outgoing regime, and stubborn violence that undermines the negotiation process. *Arab Spring* uses this framework to demonstrate that negotiating parties' approaches to inclusive, pluralistic negotiation tend to determine the success or failure of democratic outcomes. This is both a lesson in local conditions in the Arab world, and in the nature of democracy itself. Compromise and inclusiveness prove requisite to governing after revolution, just as they are to governing more established democracies.

Duration of transition is the primary pattern identified. Many uprisings were short-track transitions: a series of events involving a quickly disposed aging and autocratic ruler. The whirlwind events in Tunisia and Egypt typify this pattern. Once deprived of their leader, existing elites become open to negotiating to leave their own positions, allowing the opposition to negotiate for a political future. Short-track uprisings have the greatest chance of success,⁵ while long-track transitions are plagued by long-term violence caused by negotiation stalemates. Sometimes governments use force to quash uprisings, as in Syria, Libya and Bahrain,⁶ which all are examples of short-track reactions. On the other hand, long-track democratic transitions also provide space for third parties (foreign actors) to enter into the fray of negotiation. Once again, the abortive transitions in Libya and Syria are a case in point. A chapter dealing with Libya's long-track transition shows how the violent intransigence of the Qadhafi regime gave way to negotiation between international actors, under the aegis of the North Atlantic Treaty organization (NATO), preceding military intervention.⁷ In the case of Syria, a French-proposed intervention was pushed for, though ultimately did not come to fruition.⁸ If the Syrian chapter were to be published now, the current mix of foreign activity in Syria would undoubtedly only bolster this claim.

⁵ Short-track transitions can involve oppositions devoted to the maintenance of existing states and commitments to constitutional solutions. This is pointed out by Professor Zartman in his opening chapter, where he notes, among other things, that Tunisia and Egypt's transitions involved the continuity of existing judicial systems: Ira William Zartman, "Negotiations in Transitions: A Conceptual Framework" in Zartman, *Arab Spring*, *supra* note 1, 20 [Zartman, "Negotiations in Transitions"].

⁶ Bahraini authorities were particularly effective in quashing the transition quickly using violence on protesters, though the chapter on Bahrain displays optimism that reforms will yet take hold. See Roel Meijer & Maarten Danckert, "Bahrain: The Dynamics of Conflict" in Zartman, *Arab Spring*, *supra* note 1, 209.

⁷ Johannes Theiss, "NATO: The Process of Negotiating Military Intervention in Libya" in Zartman, *Arab Spring*, *supra* note 1, 332.

⁸ As remarked in Samir Aita, "Syria: Aspirations and Fragmentation" in Zartman, *Arab Spring*, *supra* note 1, 291 at 316.

Duration may be the most identifiable pattern of the Arab Spring, but there are others as well. Some of the most successful parts of this book describe what Professor Zartman et al refer to as negotiations for formulation and for coalition. Formulation is the second stage to any transition negotiation (following “negotiation for coalition”) or the forming of opposition. Canadians are more familiar with the phrase “constitutional wrangling” to describe more or less the same phenomenon as formulation. In fact, in some ways, parts of this book are reminiscent of Mary Dawson’s august account of Canada’s own negotiations for formulation, the constitutional negotiation of the 1980s.⁹ A compelling chapter on Tunisia’s transition¹⁰ describes the post-revolution consensus building that resulted in a horizontal renegotiation of the Tunisian constitution. In the end, two thirds of eligible voters cast ballots in the 2014 election that endorsed a new constitutional order. Egypt’s process of constitutional formulation similarly involved intensive horizontal negotiations and electoral approval of a new, 2014 constitution. Of course, the ultimate democratic impacts of these constitutional negotiations remain to be seen.

The application of negotiation theory to these events results in the identification of arguably more patterns than is useful for such a limited sampling of cases (notwithstanding the Spring’s breadth, it still only affected eight Arab states¹¹). Naturally, the theoretical model does not fit perfectly¹², but rather provides readers with a blunt tool with which to grasp the intricacies of such complicated events. Whether this study succeeds in identifying a general pattern remains an open-ended question. By dividing and subdividing *Arab Spring* case studies, Professor Zartman et al. do not succeed in presenting an overarching pattern. Duration of transition is the closest *Arab Spring* comes to developing a theory of general application, though even this concept is subdivided between the long-track and the short-track. Stages of negotiation, including the “formulation” stage, further divide these events into subgroups (for example creating short versus long-track negotiations for formulation, short versus long-track negotiations for coalition, etc.). And these do not represent all the divisions found in *Arab Spring*, nor do these necessarily apply to all cases. This is all to say that, in not identifying a singular pattern of transition applicable to all transitions discussed, this book could be interpreted to reinforce arguments that each spring is an individual event, only incidentally related to its counterparts.

⁹ Mary Dawson is Canada’s current Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and was a long-time Department of Justice lawyer. See Mary Dawson, “From the Backroom to the Front Line: Making Constitutional History” (2012) 57:4 McGill LJ 955 at 1000.

¹⁰ Abdelwahab ben Hafaiedh and Ira William Zartman, “Tunisia: Beyond Ideological Cleavage: Something Else”, in Zartman, *Arab Spring, supra* note 1, 50.

¹¹ It is worth noting that this book also includes comparative chapters on both Serbia and South Africa’s own democratic transitions. See Samir Aita and Siniša Vuković, “Serbia Moderation as a Double-Edged Sword” in Zartman, *Arab Spring, supra* note 1, 364; and Mark Anstey, “South Africa: Negotiated Transition to Democracy” in Zartman, *Arab Spring, supra* note 1, 392, respectively.

¹² Morocco’s spring was neither a short-track transition nor a long-track transition. The chapter on Morocco argues it was a different beast altogether, a “short track adaptation” (Amy Hamblin, “Morocco: The Struggle for Political Legitimacy” in Zartman, *Arab Spring, supra* note 1, 182 at 182. Throughout this book, negotiation-flavoured phrases describing the Arab Spring are both useful and distracting (at times) in their variety.

In sum, *Arab Spring* uses each chapter to feature a case study, with contributors drawing on journalistic and academic sources to identify trends. The result is an academic work that reads like a multi-perspective story, with different vignettes giving voice to the same themes. Such an approach has its advantages: it provides a comprehensive review of negotiating for a democratic transition in the Arab world, through a unique, shared perspective on these current events. The drawback, however, is that overarching patterns are lost in the ruckus. But perhaps ruckus is to be expected: like the Arab world itself, its Spring is diverse and still very much a moving current. Professor Zartman makes this point best:

It may appear odd to do a conceptual analysis of the Arab Spring at this point. The successive *intifada* are works in progress and will not hold still long enough to be subject to normal research methods... It is a story without an end.¹³

Even so, *Arab Spring* deals capably with these years of democratic transition, serving, above all, to demonstrate the value of negotiation theory in understanding political transition. This book is not a gripping read, but it is of use to anyone seeking to make sense of these recent upheavals. With any luck, Professor Zartman will see fit to update it as the story progresses, to the benefit of all who are curious about the fates of the evolving political systems of the Middle East.

¹³ Zartman, "Negotiations in Transitions", *supra* note 5 at 3.