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What is New in the History of Social Movements?

Jochen Roose and Hella Dietz (eds.): *Social Theory and Social Movements: Mutual Inspirations*, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016, VIII + 173 pp., ISBN: 9783658133801.

Martin Löhnig, Mareike Preisner and Thomas Schlemmer (eds.): *Ordnung und Protest. Eine gesamtdeutsche Protestgeschichte von 1949 bis heute*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015, VIII + 307 pp., ISBN: 9783161537936.

Wilfried Reininghaus: *Die Revolution 1918/9 in Westfalen und Lippe als Forschungsproblem. Quellen und offene Fragen. Mit einer Dokumentation zu den Arbeiter-, Soldaten- und Bauernräten (Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Westfalen Neue Folge 33)*, Münster: Aschendorff, 2016, 392 pp., ISBN: 9783402151242.

Kristina Meyer: *Die SPD und die NS-Vergangenheit 1945–1990 (Beiträge zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts 18)*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015, 549 pp., ISBN: 9783835313996.

John Chalcraft: *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 606 pp., ISBN: 9780521189422.

Mohamed Zayani: *Networked Publics and Digital Contention. The Politics of Everyday Life in Tunisia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 304 pp., ISBN: 9780190239770.

Social movement research needs theory, as Jochen Roose explains in the introduction to the volume he edited with Hella Dietz. A number of medium-range theories have been particularly popular with social movement researchers, including the framing theory, the political opportunities approach, network theories, and theories emphasizing the role of ideologies.¹ From the perspective of the historian of social movements, some of these medium-range theories can at times seem a little rigid and one-dimensional in their application to rich seams of empirical material. It may even appear as though the empirical material becomes mere cannon-fodder to demonstrate for the umpteenth time the validity of a particular theory. Hence, many historians of social movements have been cautious in

1 For an excellent survey, see Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, Oxford 2015.

adopting those theories in their own work. But Roose is, of course, right. We need theory, and, in fact, all of us operate, consciously or unconsciously, with particular theories of social developments which guide the selection of our empirical materials. Hence it is ultimately a question of intellectual honesty to be self-reflexive about one's theoretical assumptions, especially as a conscious use of theory allows us to formulate sharper research questions and to come up with more convincing research designs.

The volume, edited by Roose and Dietz, emerges out of a network of researchers funded by the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) under the heading 'New perspectives on protest and social movements'. One of the themes within this network was the relationship between broader social theories and more specific social movement theories, and given the shortcomings of the latter that I mentioned above, it is entirely welcome to reflect on how broader social theories can be made meaningful to social movement research.² Britta Baumgarten and Peter Ullrich take a closer look at how discourse theories and theories of governmentality that are rooted in the work of Michel Foucault can be used constructively in social movement research. Foucault's conceptualisation of power and of dispositives as well as his understanding of subjectivity, they argue, can all be used to understand better the emergence of protest movements and their success or failure. As a historian of social movements, I have been struggling with the peculiar a-historicity of Foucault for some time, as it would appear to me very difficult to conceptualise historical change with Foucault. The power of his dispositives is such that it seems as though human subjectivities are caught within them and unable to move beyond the discursive frames that are set by them. But apart from what would appear a major shortcoming of his theory for historians, Foucauldian approaches have, of course, also been used very productively in historical studies of social movements.³

Annette Schnabel investigates the synergies between rational choice theories and social movement research. It is arguably indicative of the limited usefulness of theories of rational choice for an understanding of social movements that she identifies more problems with these theories than fruitful avenues to employ them. Thus, it remains a

- 2 Another theme of the network had to do with the role of culture in social movement research and resulted in the volume edited by Britta Baumgarten, Priska Daphi and Peter Ullrich: *Conceptualising Culture in Social Movement Research*, Basingstoke 2014. See also my review in *Moving the Social* 56 (2016), available online at http://moving-the-social.ub.rub.de/index.php/Moving_the_social/article/view/910/866, DOI: 10.13154/mts.56.2016.155–167 (accessed 15 August 2017).
- 3 For the impact of Foucault on historical writing see Kevin Passmore: *Poststructuralism and History*, in: Stefan Berger/Heiko Feldner/Kevin Passmore (eds.): *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed., London 2010, pp. 123–146; Andrew Thacker: *Foucault and the Writing of History*, in: Moya Lloyd/Andrew Thacker (eds.): *The Impact of Michel Foucault on the Social Sciences and Humanities*, Basingstoke 1997. To give just one example, one may look at the work of Patrick Joyce: *Democratic Subjects: the Self and the Social in Nineteenth Century England*, Cambridge 1994.

fundamental problem why anyone ever gets involved in social movements when their success produces public goods that benefit everyone and when the struggle that is involved in social movement mobilisation often comes at high costs for social movement activists. Furthermore, rational choice theories tend to underestimate and downplay the ideological input into social movement mobilisation. Finally, rational choice theories struggle to understand the importance of emotions in explaining the rise of social movements. The history of social movements should take note, in this respect, of the recent development of the history of emotions, whose practitioners have not neglected to reflect on theories, especially from anthropology but also from critical Marxism (e.g. E. P. Thompson). Arguably, social movement research can learn a lot from the rapidly developing field of the history of emotions.⁴

Pierre Bourdieu's theories had a major impact, both on the social sciences and on history. As Bourdieu was himself a social activist, he paid special attention to understanding social movements as a social phenomenon, which arguably also makes his ideas particularly meaningful for social movement researchers. In the volume under review here, Lars Schmidt discusses in particular Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', of 'field' and of 'symbolical capital' which can indeed help to understand specific societal conflicts and ways in which marginalised groups in society seek to find a voice against hegemonic discourses and practices. As Schmidt also points out, Bourdieu's theories do not only help to understand the positioning of social movements in society but also shed light on internal social movement organisation, including their internal differentiations and hierarchies.⁵

Niklas Luhmann's system theory that is rooted centrally in the idea of functional differentiation also offers much to social movement researchers, as Isabel Kutsche argues here. She sees social movements as being rooted in a fundamental criticism of the consequences of processes of functional differentiation. The decisions taken within autonomous systems are challenged by protests behind which invariably stand social movements.⁶ Another theoretician who has started from the assumption of functional differentiation is Jeffrey Alexander, discussed here by Thomas Kern. Unlike Luhmann, however, Alexander views differentiation as the outcome of permanent conflicts in which social movements play a prominent role. As functional differentiation produces social injustice and dissatisfaction, social movements pick up the protest against its consequences and give a public voice to those unhappy with its repercussions.

4 Ute Frevert: *Emotions in History—Lost and Found*, Budapest 2013; Jan Plamper: *The History of Emotions: an Introduction*, Oxford 2015.

5 See also the fascinating conversation between history and sociology in the persons of Pierre Bourdieu and Roger Chartier: *The Sociologist and the Historian*, Cambridge 2015.

6 Luhmann, of course, directly engaged with social movements in *Niklas Luhmann: Protest: Systemtheorie und soziale Bewegungen*, Frankfurt/Main 1996.

Jochen Roose in his chapter investigates how Weberian organisational theories can be fruitfully applied to social movement research. Are social movement organisations similar, he asks, because the movements use similar tactics that appear to be the most rational ones? This Weberian assumption is almost impossible to demonstrate, according to Roose, as the reasons for the success of social movements are difficult to determine. Hence, Roose pleads for neo-institutionalist approaches that emphasise the importance of institutionalised scripts for determining what appears to be the norm for social movement organisation. Such scripts or rules are diffused amongst social movement organisations and these diffusion processes in turn form the basis for the convergence of social movement organisations.⁷

Theories of recognition and performativity associated with Judith Butler are discussed by Dorothea Reinmuth, who argues that they have much potential to be applied to social movement research, as social movements always campaign for the recognition of particular norms and values, which they underline through a variety of performative acts. Finally, Nick Crossley discusses the potential usefulness of relational sociology and its attention to networks for social movement studies. After all, networks have played a massive role in understanding the emergence, specific style of campaigning and ultimate success or failure of social movements. Overall, no one interested in social movements will put this book away without having received a plethora of new insights and ideas about diverse theoretical bodies of thought that might be useful for their own empirical understanding. In this sense it really is recommended reading for all social movement researchers.

I would also strongly recommend it to the editors and authors of the German-German protest history from the 1950s to the present day that originates in a lecture series (*Ringvorlesung*) organised jointly by the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich and the Law Department of the University of Regensburg. Here, we have a range of well-written and highly interesting case studies on social protest and social movements in West and East Germany during the Cold War and after. However, hardly any of the contributions reflect their theoretical predilection and choices. Furthermore, the volume does not really present an all-German protest history, as the perspectives from West Germany clearly dominate the volume.

The introduction to the volume by Martin Löhnig and Mareike Preisner sets out the legal frames for social protest in both German states and more particularly in both German constitutions from 1949 onwards. Subsequently a range of contributions analyse the strength of a developing protest culture in West Germany during the 1950s. Wolfgang Kraushaar discusses the impact of protests regarding co-determination, atomic weapons and the general Western orientation of the young Federal Republic. Canan Candemir looks at protests directed against German re-armament and the Paris Treaties. Henriette

7 André Lecours: *New Institutionalism: Theory and Analysis*, Toronto 2005.

Hosemann traces the success of the social movement representing German war victims in ensuring financial compensation for the loss of limb and health. And Sebastian Schmidt-Renkhoff provides an intriguing case study of protests rooted at the University of Göttingen leading to the demise of the right-wing minister for culture in Lower Saxony. All of these contributions point to the validity of recent reinterpretations of the Adenauer years as dynamic years of change rather than leaden times of tradition and reaction.⁸ The 1950s in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) are only present in the form of one article by Dierk Hoffmann on the people's rising against the Communist state on 17 June 1953 that highlights in particular the character of the protests as social protests.

The remaining articles in this volume all have a strong legal orientation and discuss forms of social protest in the context of frames provided by (largely constitutional) law. Arndt Sinn deals with protests that are construed as coercion and carry a criminal liability. He argues that the law here is extremely vague and unclear as to when coercion becomes a criminal act and when it does not. Susanne Schregel describes the conflictual relationship between law and protest in the controversy surrounding the twin-track decision of NATO of the late 1970s. Martin Borowski analyses political protests surrounding church asylum that refer to the freedom of conscience guaranteed by constitutional law. He concludes that such freedom of conscience is interpreted by the law as strictly personal freedom that does not cover political protests.

Thomas Schlemmer compares different reactions to the closure of plants of heavy industry in the Ruhr area and Upper Bavaria, arguing that in the context of the 1970s, plant closures in Upper Bavaria resulted in a forward-looking and optimistic structural change that left the past behind, whereas in the Ruhr, the example of Duisburg-Rheinhausen is interpreted as a symbol for decline and failure that dominates the discourse of structural transformation of the region until today. This is a very peculiar interpretation of Rheinhausen in particular and the structural transformation of the Ruhr area in general. Instead, I would put forward an interpretation that sees Rheinhausen as a positive symbol and re-conformation of one of the key values of the Ruhr population, that of solidarity. The structural transformation of the Ruhr is, by and large, a story of success, especially when compared not with Upper Bavaria but with other major regions of heavy industry in Britain, Northern France, Asturias or the rust belt of the United States. And the heritage of the past is a vital resource in the Ruhr with which to mould its future.⁹

- 8 Axel Schildt/Arnold Sywottek (eds.): *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 1950er Jahre*, Bonn 1998.
- 9 Stefan Berger: *Gewerkschaften und soziale Bewegungen: Das Beispiel von Rheinhausen 1987/88 in historischer Perspektive*, in: Michael Kerstgens: *Aufruhrgebiet*, Berlin 2016, pp. 6–11; Stefan Berger: *Representing the Industrial Age: Heritage and Identity in the Ruhr and South Wales*, in: Peter Itzen/Christian Müller (eds.), *The Invention of Industrial Pasts: Heritage, Political Culture and Economic Debates in Great Britain and Germany, 1850–2010*, Augsburg 2013, pp. 14–35.

The following article by Philipp Fischinger is also concerned with plant closures and deals specifically with the legal context for social plans that are worked out by employers and unions. Christian Starck subsequently deals with the legal framework for the equality of men and women in Germany during the twentieth century. In one of the most fascinating articles of the entire collection Tobias Hof provides a portrait of right-wing terrorism in the Federal Republic. The absence of an article on left-wing terrorism seems a particular loss in this volume, but it is not the only topic that is absent. Thus, for example, there is nothing on the environmental protest movement, on protests against nuclear energy or on urban protest movements, and there is also nothing on youth protest movements. The remaining three articles deal with anti-religious protests and their legal prosecution (Jörg Eisele), the legitimization of major building projects through the decision to adopt an urban land use plan (Gerrit Manssen, who takes the 'Stuttgart 21' developments as his case study), and the range of juridical questions surrounding German reunification (Sebastian Müller-Franken).

Together the contributions to this volume raise a range of interesting questions. One of them concerns the forms of protest that have ranged very widely from demonstrations to strikes and further to sit-ins, teach-ins and violent actions against objects and persons. These forms of protest are located on both sides of a line demarcated by the law that divides lawful from unlawful protest. Another interesting question relates to the relationship between social protest and social change. Is the latter a product of the former or is protest a symptom of and accompanying social change? Many of the contributions here, deriving from a law department, ask about the impact of social movements on the legal order and, vice versa, the impact of the legal order on the shape and success of social movements. Many contributions also reflect on the fact that social movements had unintended consequences. An important issue raised in the introduction, namely that of comparison, is not really present in the volume. Indeed, it would be extremely worthwhile to think about to what extent the German-German protest history is one that resembles protest histories in other parts of Europe and the globe. How is it specific and what are general characteristics of particular forms of protest?¹⁰ The current volume can only raise these issues but it cannot answer them. Nevertheless, the volume provides the reader with a range of intriguing case studies and for those, like the present reviewer, who have no strong connection to legal studies, the emphasis here on social protest and the law is particularly interesting. The fruitfulness of more interdisciplinary perspectives in social movement studies is thus powerfully underlined by the volume under review.

10 For an introduction to global perspectives on the history of social movements see Stefan Berger/Holger Nehring (eds.): *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspectives*, Basingstoke 2017.

Undoubtedly one of the most paradigmatic cases of social protest in twentieth-century German history was the German revolution of 1918/19. A conservative historical profession ignored the revolution from the 1920s to the 1950s, during which period it was either treated by actors in the revolution, such as Richard Müller or Hermann Müller-Franken,¹¹ or by outsiders within the historical profession, such as the former Communist Party member of the Reichstag and professor of ancient history, Artur Rosenberg.¹² It was therefore only in the context of the 1960s that a variety of different studies on the German revolution came into being that amounted to a major re-evaluation. Following a small but influential interpretation by Sebastian Haffner from 1969,¹³ in which he interpreted the German revolution as a missed opportunity for the more thorough democratisation of the Weimar Republic, historians such as Eberhard Kolb, and even more decisively, Peter von Oertzen, now interpreted the workers' and soldiers' councils not so much as institutions of Bolshevik determination to achieve the German October and topple the young Weimar Republic but rather as instruments for the democratisation of economy, society and politics.¹⁴

In the 1980s and 1990s hardly any new research was being conducted on the German revolution, as the topic of labour history was relegated to the back-burner of historical studies. Only more recently have there been attempts to put forward new interpretations and provide a state-of-the-art on the research surrounding the German revolution.¹⁵ The new studies could build on a wealth of regional research on the German revolution that highlighted how different the circumstances, the development and the afterlife of the revolution was depending on where in Germany you are looking. The volume by Wilfried Reininghaus on the German revolution 1918/19 in Westphalia and Lippe adds considerably to this valuable regional research. On the first 140 pages of the volume, he provides the reader with the state-of-the-art of existing research on the revolution in Westphalia and Lippe and then proceeds to formulate a whole host of open questions regarding the reasons for the outbreak of the revolution in the region, and the character

- 11 Richard Müller: *Die Novemberrevolution*, Berlin 1925; Hermann Müller-Franken: *Die Novemberrevolution*, Berlin 1928.
- 12 Artur Rosenberg: *Die Entstehung der deutschen Republik*, Hamburg 1928.
- 13 Sebastian Haffner: *Die verratene Revolution—Deutschland 1918/19*, Hamburg 1969.
- 14 Eberhard Kolb: *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918/19*, 2nd ed., Düsseldorf 1978; Peter von Oertzen: *Betriebsräte in der deutschen Novemberrevolution*, Düsseldorf 1963.
- 15 Karl-Christian Führer/Jürgen Mittag/Axel Schildt/Klaus Tenfelde (eds.): *Revolution und Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland, 1918–1920*, Essen 2013; Wolfgang Niess: *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung: Deutungen von der Weimarer Republik bis ins 21. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2013; Ralf Hoffrogge: *Working-Class Politics in the German Revolution: Richard Müller, the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and the Origins of the Council Movement*, Leiden 2015; Volker Stalman: *Die Wiederentdeckung der Revolution von 1918/19: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven*, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 64:6 (2016), pp. 521–541.

and development of the councils, differentiating soldiers' councils, workers' councils, farmers' councils and middle-class councils (*Bürgerräte*). Furthermore, he formulates questions regarding the opponents of the revolution, the elections of January and March 1919, the biographies of major actors, the role of women in the revolution, the importance of communication for revolutionary developments, and, finally, the role of anti-Semitism in the revolution.

The remainder of the 392-page strong publication is made up of a comprehensive list of published and unpublished literature and source materials relevant to the history of the revolution in Westphalia and Lippe, a list of all councils and their regional spread as well as formidable registers concerning locations and personnel. The book is the result of Reininghaus's tour de force through all the archives of the region and his digging up of a range of relevant materials on which he also comments very lucidly and helpfully in this volume. Anyone interested in the history of the revolution in Westphalia and Lippe will have to start from this marvellous publication that is asking all the right questions and is providing some of the answers derived from an extremely thorough survey of the materials that are available for a comprehensive history of the revolution in Westphalia and Lippe. Wilfried Reininghaus can hopefully be convinced that he should now also take the second step and write this history.

The German revolution resulted in the Weimar Republic that in turn was overcome by National Socialism. When the 'Thousand-Year Reich' ended in ruins in 1945, the new Germanies that followed had to position themselves towards that past. The publication by Kristina Mayer gives a comprehensive account of how the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) dealt with the National Socialist past between the end of the Second World War and reunification in 1990. Hers is an intriguing story. The Social Democrats had belonged to the most steadfast opposition to National Socialism. Many of their members were murdered, imprisoned, persecuted and exiled during National Socialist rule. After 1945, many of them quickly rebuilt the party organisations and felt that they, because of their opposition and suffering, had the moral right to determine the fate of post-war Germany. However, in the East they were forced by the Soviet rulers to merge with the Communist party and lose their independence as a political force.¹⁶ In the West, the newly-formed Christian Democratic Party was the political force that shaped the politics of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) nationally for almost two decades, even if in many of the West-German federal states Social Democrats played an important role politically. But what is in some respects surprising in Meyer's story is the extent to which the Social Democrats shied away from using its symbolical capital that derived from having been a vital part of the anti-fascist resistance in the FRG.

16 Andreas Schmidt: ... 'mitfahren oder abgeworfen werden': Die Zwangsvereinigung von KPD und SPD in der Provinz Sachsen/im Land Sachsen-Anhalt, Münster 2004.

Behind this reluctance stood a deep-rooted conviction that a majority of Germans had supported National Socialism in the 1930s and that therefore the SPD's resistance had to be treated with caution. In exile, the party executive had planned a brochure with which to honour those Social Democrats who had distinguished themselves in the resistance. After 1945 these plans were first shelved and then dropped altogether. The Association for the Persecuted of the National Socialist Regime ('Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes', VVN) was the most prominent organisation looking after the interests of political opponents of National Socialism. Among them, the Communists were prominent, and for this reason, following its increasingly anti-Communist logic, the Social Democratic leadership decided in 1948 to announce the incompatibility of SPD membership with VVN membership. It set up its separate Social Democratic association for their own victims of National Socialist persecution, the Working Group of Previously Persecuted Social Democrats ('Arbeitsgemeinschaft ehemals verfolgter Sozialdemokraten', AvS) only to ignore it in years to come. It certainly did not become a major force in West Germany fighting for forms of restitution for victims of National Socialism.¹⁷

True, the Social Democrats criticised prominent cases where leading National Socialists continued their career in the Federal Republic, most notably in the case of Hans Globke, one of Konrad Adenauer's advisors,¹⁸ but otherwise it did not put particular emphasis on ensuring that German society would be cleansed of former National Socialists. Again, the underlying assumption was that, of course, many, maybe most Germans had at some point supported National Socialism. A politics of the past that would radically identify with the opposition to National Socialism and seek to remove former National Socialists from office would not go down well with the German public as a whole. Hence, with one eye on potential voters, the Social Democrats neglected to publicise its own opposition and instead over-identified with the, by and large, conservative opposition associated with 20 July 1944—in an attempt to counter charges from the centre-right that the Social Democrats lacked patriotism and were, in fact, a fifth column of Moscow.

When the Socialist German Students' Association ('Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund', SDS) ran a campaign to highlight continuities of former Nazis in the German legal system in 1959/1960, the party quickly distanced itself from the campaign. One of the foremost public prosecutors in West Germany seeking to bring former National Socialists to justice, Fritz Bauer, faced stiff opposition from his own Social Democratic party.¹⁹ And the first speech of a Social Democratic chancellor in parliament, that of Willy Brandt in 1969, is often referred to today for its emphasis on 'waging more democracy'

17 For the context see Constantin Goschler: *Wiedergutmachung: Westdeutschland und die Verfolgten des Nationalsozialismus 1945–1954*, München 1992.

18 Erik Lommatzsch: *Hans Globke (1898–1973): Beamter im Dritten Reich und Staatssekretär Adenauers*, Frankfurt/Main 2009.

19 Irmtrud Wojak: *Fritz Bauer (1903–1968): eine Biographie*, München 2009.

and on opening a new, more liberal chapter in the history of the Federal Republic, but Meyer points out that, rather surprising for someone who had been so active in the resistance to National Socialism, his iconic speech contained no reference at all to the Social Democratic resistance.

The Social Democrats changed their tact only when, from the late 1970s onwards, German society as a whole put greater emphasis on honouring the resistance to National Socialism.²⁰ Now the SPD supported various memory projects to do with the Social Democratic resistance and it highlighted particular moments of glory such as Otto Wels's speech against the so-called 'Enabling Law' (*Ermächtigungsgesetz*) in the Reichstag in 1933. Meyer's study, based on her PhD thesis finished at the University of Jena, is founded on stupendous archival research in the Archive for Social Democracy in Bonn and she has also used the stenographical reports from the debates in the national parliament (Bundestag) to great effect. She has written the definitive history of the Social Democratic attempts to deal with the National Socialist past in the old Federal Republic from the end of the Second World War to the end of the Cold War.

If a comprehensive history of social protest in Germany still needs to be written, we have in John Chalcraft's magisterial volume a truly breath-taking survey of popular politics and its contribution to the making of the modern Middle East. In a 53-page introduction the author sets out a wonderfully clear and yet highly complex framework for the study of protest movements in the Middle East. Strongly influenced by Gramscian theories of power and domination,²¹ yet avoiding any forms of Marxist determinism and ever-attentive to highly specific economic, political, social and cultural contexts, Chalcraft emphasizes a particular set of conditions allowing popular protests to flourish at different times over the two and a half centuries that are covered by his book. First of all, he argues that at certain moments, hegemonic powers failed to integrate those aspiring to representation and this failure resulted in challenges to the hegemony of elites through popular protests. Secondly, Chalcraft pays special attention to forums of articulation, either public or private, which allowed protest to be voiced. And finally, the author argues convincingly that moments in which political power becomes so centralised that it can only use force and violence to ensure its continued hegemony are also moments in which opposition to such exercise of power comes to the fore.

His strong attention to specific historical contextualisation leads him to avoid Orientalist ideas about the Middle East being caught in an ever-reproducing and static cycle of violence, fanaticism and chaos. At the same time he also carefully avoids any

20 On the 1970s as a Social Democratic decade see also Bernd Faulenbach: *Das sozialdemokratische Jahrzehnt: von der Reformeuphorie zur neuen Unübersichtlichkeit. Die SPD 1969–1982*, Bonn 2011.

21 James Martin (ed.): *Antonio Gramsci—Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers*, vol. 4: *Contemporary Applications*, London 2002.

identification of protest with revolutionary progress, thereby escaping one of the major fallacies of Marxist interpretations of protest. Whilst social-economic change and Western imperialism are important in the evolving story of protest in the Middle East they can, according to Chalcraft, not be seen as determining factors in explaining protest at all times and places. The framework of analysis that Chalcraft develops in the introduction is both informed by theory and yet insistent on the value of careful historical contextualisation and reconstruction. The following 500 pages of analysis are therefore never led by theory but instead informed by it.

Chalcraft follows a chronological structure. His first chapter starts in the 1780s and goes up to the outbreak of the First World War. Here, he traces the slow disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the crisis of the Egyptian empire, both under attack by various Western imperialisms and challenged by protest movements from below. He traces the emergence of secessionist and nationalist movements, investigates the interrelationship between top-down reform movements, such as the *tanzīmāt*, and bottom-up mobilisations, such as the Greek revolution or the Mashriq uprising. In Egypt, in Iran and in the Ottoman Empire, the forces seeking greater political representations mobilised to push through political reforms in the years before the First World War. Chalcraft also describes the strength of repressive and reactionary forces employed against popular protest movements in the region. Yet almost everywhere contentious forms of mobilisation contributed greatly to the crises of states in the region. Guerrilla warfare was a very effective means of challenging existing power hegemonies in the region. Important factors holding back contentious politics from below were the large-scale absence of popular constituencies in the region as well as the unwillingness of the religious establishment to put their weight behind popular protest movements. Overall, Chalcraft ranges magisterially over regions as diverse as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon and Iran.

In his second chapter he deals with the force of nationalism in the Middle East between the First World War and the early 1950s. The nationalist insurrections of the interwar period were often repressed with enormous violence, but they were successful in establishing a new political community, that of the nation, on the imperialist map of the Middle East that would not go away again.²² The conflagration of a multitude of different crises led to the emergence of a perplexing variety of revolutionary and reformist protest movements, seeking to integrate political, economic, social and religious demands. New organisations emerged in the Middle East: political parties, trade unions, syndicates, religious, social and cultural organisations proliferated. Socialists, Communists and the Muslim Brotherhood all contested the terrain of oppositional politics in the interwar

22 Keith David Watenpaugh: *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class*, Princeton 2014.

period. Chalcraft highlights the degree to which in particular rural groups contributed to forms of protest, which, in his view, belies the old Marxist preference for economic explanations of social protest.

In his third chapter that deals with the period from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, Chalcraft charts the impact of contentious mobilisation on diverse national independence movements. Armed struggles and revolutionary groups played a vital role; far-reaching social and economic reforms followed. The military and various vanguardist organisations had major influence over developments. The left in the region was weakened by internal divisions, doctrinal sectarianism and differences over strategy. Many movements seeking power tried, above all, to capture the state and use it, without too much concern for democracy, to transform society and the economy. The new hegemonies that were established in a variety of different postcolonial situations produced its own tensions and idiosyncrasies that were challenged by new mobilisation from below in the last third of the twentieth century.

It is the period from the mid-1970s to the Arab Spring of 2011 that the final substantive chapter of the book is concerned with. Revolutionary Islamism was the most powerful political force to emerge in this period, but Chalcraft also traces a variety of different popular uprisings. Statist solutions significantly weakened in this period as did developmentalism, but state repression against oppositional forces, especially Islamist forces, still played a major role in many countries of the Middle East. The left declined everywhere, as it failed to democratise and became marginalised in its support of statist forms of repression against Islamism. This chapter concludes with a fascinating interpretation of the Arab Spring that highlights far more the dynamics of hegemony in the outcome of the Arab Spring than the much-publicised and over-emphasized impact of the new media.

Overall Chalcraft successfully underlines the role of contentious politics in understanding the history of the Middle East. Mobilising projects from below contributed vitally to the region's political dynamics. The crisis of the dynastic and Islamist states before 1914 cannot be explained without taking into account the diverse revolutionary, reformist and autonomist social movements active in those states. Liberal nationalists constructed a new form of political community in the interwar years. They brought about national liberation, and their state-building attempts in the post-Second World War period led to substantial socio-economic change across the region. As both nationalism and socialism failed in their developmentalism, revolutionary Islam came to the fore in the 1970s and coincided with advances of neoliberalism across the Middle East. The liberal democratic mobilisation associated with the Arab Spring produced mixed results in many of the states of the region and had many unintended consequences. No reader will put this book away without being impressed with the virtuosity with which Chalcraft leads them through a bewildering number of different historical scenarios, ideologies, groups,

challenges and states. Social movements, he shows convincingly, had powerful agency over developments in the Middle East for more than two centuries and popular protests are key to any understanding of the region.

As mentioned above, Chalcraft is sceptical whether it is possible to understand the Arab Spring by focussing one-dimensionally on new media. However, the book by Mohamed Zayani, highlighting the impact of digital forms of contentious politics in Tunisia before, during and after the Arab Spring does underline the importance of new communication networks for the success of the Tunisian popular protests in ousting the despotic regime of Ben Ali. A combination of youth and technology produced new forms of 'digital activism' that could be actualised in the specific historical circumstance we now call 'the Arab Spring'. The author succinctly describes key characteristics of the historical development in Tunisia ending up in a fine account of the development of the authoritarian government and its economic and social policies at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It spread a 'culture of fear' in wider Tunisian society, and the more unstable the authoritarian regime became, the more it was challenged by both 'online' and 'offline' forms of activism.

Yet it was the online forms of activism by highly educated Tunisians (sometimes living abroad and thereby escaping the oppressive sphere of the Tunisian state) that made the crucial difference and lifted protest to another qualitative level in 2012. Communication processes were the vital precondition for social mobilisation. The regime's multiple attempts to control the digital revolution are analysed here, but the author comes to the conclusion that despite their repressive potential they failed to make the Internet safe for the regime. Instead, the regime championed technological change as precondition for modernisation but whilst it was successfully censoring and watching traditional media outputs and protests, a new generation of technology-savvy youngsters moved the most important forum for public dissent to the Internet. Thus, political activism increasingly took the form of blogging, as the authoritarian regime's attempt to shape a modern communication society opened spaces for the freedom of expression. Here dissident intellectuals increasingly found a ready audience to voice and spread their political dissatisfaction with the Tunisian government. Social networks via Facebook and other social media further increased the community of those willing to voice protest. Ultimately, this groundswell of internet-based opposition translated into real-life protests on the streets of Tunisia. The revolution, thus the central argument of the book, would not have been thinkable without the digital technological support for the revolutionaries. Overall Zayani has assembled an impressive array of data by interviewing a great number of Tunisian activists and analysing many internet pages as well as a whole range of digital information. It is a powerful reminder of how important the digital media and cyber-activism were for the contentious politics of the Middle East.

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