

# Aleksandra Wilczyńska

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## "Arabska wiosna. Rewolucja w świecie islamskim", Jörg Armbruster, Wrocław 2012 : [recenzja]

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

**Aleksandra Wilczyńska**

National Defence University, Poland

(rev.) Jörg Armbruster, *Arabska wiosna. Rewolucja w świecie islamskim* [The Arab Spring. A Revolution in the Arab World], Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2012, pp. 232

At the beginning of the following review it is worth to present an overall outline of some problematic aspects encountered while reading this book. In December 2010 a wave of public protests hit countries of North Africa. The first revolution took place in Tunisia after a street vendor Muhammad Buazizi had set himself on fire. The reasons of revolutions were similar, they mainly resulted from public dissatisfaction, but not exclusively... Each subsequent revolution was not only stronger but also more violent.

The book *Arabska wiosna. Rewolucja w świecie islamskim* [The Arab Spring. A Revolution in the Arab World] written by Jörg Armbruster appears to be the most recent comment to events that have generated a lot of interest around the world. The author of this book is a German ARD correspondent who witnessed these events. He gives a Polish reader a fascinating analysis of the so-called Arab Spring. It is, without a doubt, a report of an attempt to eradicate a sense of helplessness among Muslim youth, as well as a record of their incredible courage and determination. Because it was the youth who contributed to the overthrow of the long-standing regimes and challenged the authority in individual countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The author in his publication analyzes the situation in individual countries. He lists the reasons for the outbreak of the revolutions, which at first glance are identical; however, the author shows us differences between the revolutions, their courses, and causes. The wave of revolutions in almost all of the Arab countries started at the turn of 2010 and 2011 and appeared to be economic, social, and political in their nature. What is more, unemployment, corruption, poverty, or nepotism were generally regarded as the causes of revolutions, but Jörg Armbruster pointed to the complexity of these phenomena. The author suggests that this is only a small part of the big picture, and the hidden and deep undertow of the so-called Arab Spring appears to be based on religion or ethnic-tribal differences. In the book some questions are posed and the answers to them are not simple; on the contrary, they are rather complicated due to historical circumstances or simply due to people's beliefs and traditions. The author makes an attempt to answer following questions: Where are the Arab countries heading? Is it possible for Arab countries to live in a democracy? Are democracy and Islam mutually exclusive?

The author focuses his attention on the role of communication technologies highlighting the power of the Internet, particularly social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, which were used by young, rebellious people to stage anti-regime protests.

Revolutions are not described in the order in which they broke out, so at the beginning of the book we are in Egypt (chapters 1–6). This is the second revolution in the

chronological order, after the Tunisian one. The Egyptian revolution was characterized by greater brutality and ended with the overthrow of Mubarak's totalitarian regime. However, it failed to gain much because, in fact, the Supreme Military Council is in power. The author concludes that in Egypt criticism of the army is allowed only if it fits the generals, "the army is seen as a state within a state, inviolable and not subjected to the control of the parliament or the courts".

Jörg Armbruster shows us the stereotypical view of Egypt through the eyes of people from Western countries – tourists who are closed in a resort by the Red Sea. According to them, it is a land of beautiful beaches and coral reefs. However, the reality is different. As the author writes: "For over 30 years the West preferred to look away than to meddle for the fear of a demon – the Muslim Brotherhood". Egypt is the most conservative state in the Arab world, which provides an excellent basis for the organization of Islamic fundamentalists.

Then, *Tunisia, Muhammad Buazizi and generals* (chapter 7). The revolution in Tunisia proceeded relatively peacefully, leading to the fall of the president Ben Ali. Nevertheless, it is frequently associated with a symbol of one young man who desperately set himself on fire, and as a result, simultaneously gave impetus to the revolution, which has led to transformations in the Arab world in less than two years.

After the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, waves of social unrest have spread to most of the Arab countries. However, the most dramatic in consequences were revolutions in Libya (chapters 12–15), Yemen (chapter 9), Bahrain (chapter 10), and Syria (chapter 11).

According to Jörg Armbruster, in January 2011 reporters were using the words: "See you in Syria" when they were saying goodbye to one another in Cairo. As we now know, they did not have to wait long, because the revolution in Syria started in the beginning of February.

Much like the Egyptian revolution, the Libyan one is also described in detail by the author. The reporter presents to us both Gaddafi's and revolutionaries' perspectives (in Libya, like in the previous cases, we can follow the events from the point of view of the average Libyan). In turn, in chapter 14, we read the personal story of al-Obeidi Iman. As for Yemen (chapter 9), the author starts with presenting his opinions on Yemen as a failing state. In this chapter, however, a reader may find out the message of the book on the role of the army, which was clearly visible in the course of the revolution, namely: "Admittedly, generals in the Middle East eagerly join democratic movements – as in the case of Yemen, Egypt, and Tunisia – but certainly they are not guarantors of effective democracy. They change sides when they see the benefit of doing so" (p. 85).

Due to the fact that the reporter's work was drawn up on a regular basis, you will not find here the most recent issues in the current stage of the Syrian revolution. We are only provided with some information about the very beginnings of the Syrian revolution, we do not find anything about the powerlessness of the international community regarding the humanitarian crisis. The downside of this book is the lack of a chronology of the events, which may slightly confuse the reader.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the book *Arabska wiosna. Rewolucja w świecie islamskim* [The Arab Spring. A Revolution in the Arab World] written by Jörg Armbruster is an interesting read. Its main advantage is the valuable content and the fact that it is written in plain language so it does not require specific knowledge on international relations or a grounding in Arabic studies. Moreover, it presents the young Arab society as people full of dreams, determined and willing to achieve something in their lives much like their foreign peers in other parts of the world.