

From Arab Spring to the Present
THINKING TOGETHER ON THE GEOGRAPHY WE LIVE IN

Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek
Black Sea Center for Strategic Studies
2020



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FOREWORD

Is the Arab Spring over?

Were the people who said, “It was already a vain hope and it has turned to winter” right? Or what happened were a part of the great change and transformation process or a “moment” in the long and zigzaggy walk of history?

What will happen next? How will the future take shape? Will we continue to live under coup regimes, restored oligarchies, religious or secular dictatorships rising again on the rubble of defeated revolutions, or are there reasons to be hopeful?

Is “the wheel of history” heading towards its goal whatever we say, or will that target be shaped by our conscious action? If the latter is true, what should and should not we do in this process? How should we read the process, strive to improve which rights and which mistakes should we persistently avoid in order for freedom, justice, and peace to prevail in the geography we live in.

Within the framework of these questions, this year’s first round table meeting of “Bosphorus Talks,” which has been held periodically for three years by intellectuals from various countries of the geography we live in, to understand the present and the near future, was held at the Black Sea Foundation on January 30, 2020. The issue was widely discussed in the negotiation program titled “From Arab Spring to the Present: Thinking Together on the Geography We Live in,” moderated by the experienced politician İhap Şiha, following the framework speeches of Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah and Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek.

The report in your hands consists of a variety of opinions expressed around this roundtable.

RECENT PAST AND TODAY: SHORT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The collapse of the Berlin Wall at the end of the twentieth century symbolized the beginning of a new era, with the hopes of democracy and freedom blossoming in the world. Totalitarian regimes were defeated and democracy won.

Under a new “reverse wave”

- According to Samuel Huntington, there have been three waves in the world in the last 200 years that brought about democratization:

1st Wave ↑ 1820 1922 Mussolini rule ↓

2nd Wave ↑ 1942 1960 Coup regimes ↓

3rd Wave ↑ 1974: We are in it ↓

- And after each wave, the “counter wave” that takes some of its gains back

‘Waves of democracy’ left their mark on various periods of the world and the ‘reverse waves’ followed. It seems that humanity is now under a new reverse wave: While democracy, human rights, and justice are declining, discrimination, racism, and xenophobia are increasing.

and destructions against the Islamic geography, the spread of negative perceptions towards Muslims all over the world, and the Middle East again witnessing ethnic, religious, and political conflicts under the control of the great powers.

Today, the situation that bears the mark of wars, civil wars, occupations, and conflicts involving people living in the Middle East-Islamic geography has been shaped based on this short historical background in 2020.

This process affected the Middle East and Islamic geography, like all parts of the world, and the demands for change and transformation became more visible there too.

At the beginning of the 2000s, Turkey also would represent a significant turning point in terms of democratization. There were important discussions from Bosnia to Tunisia and Iran.

The Arab Spring, which sparked hopes in 2010, was an important turning point in terms of the remarkable reflection of these demands on the squares, politics, and daily life.

However, the same period also marked the beginning of a negative process that would later bring about the opposite of these values at the global level. The destruction of the Twin Towers in the USA would mark the beginning of a period that brought about a series of invasions

A. COMMONIZING THE AGENDA IN THE GEOGRAPHY WE LIVE IN

Middle East, Islamic Geography, and the World: Overall Picture and Issues

How should we read the days? Findings on this issue point to a general negativity.

“As of 2020, our overall situation looks no bright. In fact, it is often compared with the Crusades and Mongolian invasion periods in the past.” According to Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek, this comparison is not too wrong: “One million Iraqis lost their lives in the recent past. Syrian tragedy is still happening. There is a war in Yemen that no one can win; another war continues in Libya.”

Does Russia’s involvement in the conflicts in Libya today after settling in Syria point to the beginning of a new era? Does the tension between the USA and Russia ensure the continuity of the conflicts in the region?

Özipek asks, «I wonder if the partition continues in Yalta, or did they share out the world again?» and comments that “There are also signs of this latter. The US and Russia have been in Syria for seven years, but did not even once, accidentally, clash with each other.” “One way or another, our task is not easy,” he adds.

Why Western Democracies Support Dictatorships in the Middle East?

Why do the social forces seeking justice, freedom, and democracy seem defeated? Why do Western states that claim to bring democracy to the region prefer to support not democrats but despotic monarchies, coup regimes, and religious or secular dictatorships?

This situation can be explained in many ways. However, the forces of democracy brought to power by the Arab Spring did not become political actors in line with the strategic expectations and interests of the United States and others.

According to Özipek, “The winds blowing from the West were not always bad.

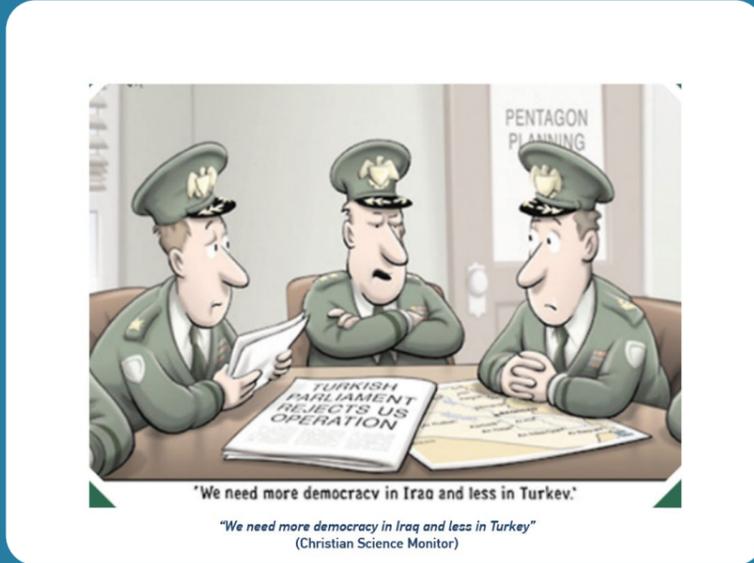
Does the Yalta partition out continue?

Dr. Christos Teazis explains;

“In Greece, a group of MPs from the SYRIZA Party of Alexis Tsipras, who had been educated in Moscow in the past, visited Putin and asked him to support Greece in getting rid of the IMF and to side with Russia. But Putin’s answer was clear: “You belong to the West.”

Can we trust the tension between the USA and Russia in this process? Can we pin our hope upon their conflicting interests? Or are we experiencing a new “balance” based on the controlled warfare between the states under the control of the USA and Russia, as in the Cold War years?

Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek
Istanbul Medipol University



When the USA wanted to use Turkey's territory to attack Iraq in 2003 and the Turkish Parliament did not give this permission, US Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz criticized the armed forces for not putting pressure on the parliament, saying that "the army did not fulfill the leadership task expected from it." The above cartoon was about the displeasure of the USA, which wanted to bring democracy to Iraq, from the results of democracy in Turkey. The official in Pentagon says, "We need more democracy in Iraq and less in Turkey".

Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek

They also helped bring the forces of democracy to power in the past. But today the winds blowing from the West are blowing oppositely."

When America decided to fight to bring democracy to Iraq in 2003, it asked Turkey's permission to use its territory. Turkey's Parliament rejected.

How should we explain this situation? Why do Western democratic states prefer to collaborate with dictators? According to Özipek;

"Not satisfied with the results of democracy that came with the Arab Spring, Western states prefer coup leaders, traditional monarchies, religious or secular dictatorships that will obey them rather than dealing with a functioning parliament. Manageable Sisis, Assads are now in demand, rather than a parliament that reflects the preferences of societies or rejects the motion as what happened on March 1, 2003. This is the reaction of the global status quo against regional democracy movements."

In this context, Yıldız Önen points out the external dynamics that revolutions in this geography must overcome. "The task of all countries in the Middle East is twice as difficult as America or France," she says, "because they are fighting against 1) the dictators in their own countries; 2) those who support them."

According to Önen, America's support for Sisi in Egypt should not be overlooked:

"Anti-coup demonstrations lasted for days, but many countries, especially Saudi Arabia, provided millions of dollars in loans and military aid. It is also necessary to say no to all foreign interventions, especially military interventions in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and many other countries. So when you look at Iraq, how many countries have soldiers there? When you look at Syria, America, Russia, and many other countries have soldiers. It does not matter if the number of soldiers is 10 or 20. The Arab peoples have to fight against much larger powers, while struggling against their local government. So I think we should talk about this international military support, intervention when talking about these things."

As a result, the process that brought the coup in Egypt or sustained Assad in Syria is not independent of the USA, the EU, and Russia. The power that defeats their own people comes from external dynamics, as well as from militarism and the social base that underpins an oligarchic rule.

"The Egyptian coup represented the pruning of the demands for democracy from the





people in the Islamic geography within the approval of the “free world.” Assad was found to be preferable in Syria, and Haftar is supported today,” says Özipek;

“The Syrian tragedy showed that we are alone in the struggle for justice, freedom, and peace in our geography. However, it showed not only this but also that it is a so-called ‘free world’ ready to support dictatorial regimes when we take the risk of exercising our right to resist them in our region.”

Not a revolution, but people’s shake-up

Will we call what happened and what is happening in the Arab countries a revolution? Or is it a counter-revolution? What happened in our Arab countries was the people’s shake-up, which we call intifada. Against what? Against racism, against sectarianism, against tyranny. Of course, there were supportive reactions from social parties and political movements. However, when everyone worked for their own benefit, the wave reversed. If it were a revolution literally, things would not be like this.



Rabih Haddad, General Secretary of the Ahlus Sunnah Organization, Lebanon

The USA, Russia, and Others: The New Regional “Balance” Built on Conflicting Societies

Özipek talks about the policy of the USA, which remains unchanged despite the changing governments, to create geography that is divided in ethnic, religious, sectarian, and political terms and hostile to each other.

Özipek says, “*What we experience is an old story. The seeds of hostility are carefully planted among us*” and gives some examples:

- In fact, the US did not need Turkey while attacking Iraq in 2003. However, it wanted to enter Iraq by using the territory of Turkey. Maybe it also wanted the blood to splash on the people of Turkey. Maybe it wanted this not only for military reasons but also because of this policy.
- Remember Saddam’s execution in 2006. A symbolic reading of the whole process was also possible. The death penalty was handed down by a Kurdish judge, and the execution was carried out by a Shiite executioner. There were bombings and clashes the next day; 75 people, 75 Shiite Muslims were killed.
- It was obvious that the Houthis would take over the country in Yemen in 2015. The USA first allowed this, now it makes them fight by ‘supporting’ Saudi Arabia. However, somehow the war does not end. Meanwhile, civilians are dying; pain and hatred are accumulating.
- Today, in 2020, it is especially emphasized by giving the country names that the planes that killed Soleimani took off from the bases in Arab countries.
- It is now desired to add a sectarian conflict to ethnic divisions and conflicts in the Middle East. While having tension with Iran on the one hand, the USA also gives it some elbow room. Thus, it is desired to add a new axis of conflict, the Shiite-Sunni conflict, to the Islamic geography.

New Divisions and Alliances: Who is at war with whom?

How are political divisions and alliances taking shape in the region today? Özipek is talking about three groups of countries in the region:

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Managing the coup and efforts to legitimize it through religion

“What does Azhar Sheikh’s invitation mean?”

“I was born in the former Yugoslavia. An invitation came to the Islamic Unions in Bosnia and the Balkans. This was a letter of invitation to the meeting on “renewal of Islamic thought” organized by Azhar Sheikh Ahmet Tayyib in Egypt. Except for one country in the Balkans, none attended this meeting in Cairo. Is it possible to establish a relationship between this meeting organized by Azhar Sheikh, that is, the renewal of the Islamic idea and what happened in the Arab world?”



Davut Nuriler, Vice President of the Friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina Foundation

“Religious excuses are produced for the coup”

They gave some fatwas. Once upon a time, they gave a fatwa that “the revolution should not be strife; the people should not be involved in strife.” They were actually fatwas given by the government. When it comes to the issue of renewing the idea of Islam, the coup plotter Sisi frequently expresses this. If we look inside, what is the change for? What kind of renewal is this? He says, “There is no resistance in religion,” for example. When you express certain demands, they immediately call it “violence.” The coup can produce a religious excuse. Azhar Sheikh was able to take part in the scene of the coup. The head of the church, the head of the Supreme Council of Judiciary... they were all involved in the coup. The head of the Nur Party was already in the coup. This is a tactic. We need to be aware of the difference between a real renewal and a fake renewal.



Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University

“The USA, which has taken Saudi Arabia under more control especially after the consulate murder in Istanbul, has started to use Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries that it can control in the region as a block directly in the direction it wishes.”

Iran is the central country of a second state group in the region. It prides itself on being an anti-imperialist, but in the final analysis, it plays a role in the Islamic geography that Western states will have consent with.

Currently, there are countries against them in the Islamic world, such as Turkey, Qatar, and Libya, and they are resisting to the global status quo. But they are pretty lonely.”

“Counter-revolutions sometimes reach their peak,” says Prof. Abdelfattah. He emphasizes that the wing represented by Trump represents a stance against any future change or transformation: “They use a number of local proxies. Look at Arabia, look at the United Arab Emirates. The USA uses its own proxies there. Sisi, for example, is one of them. Of course, there are many tyrannical administrations that act like proxies of the USA. These will happen in the region, of course, until revolutions take place.”

Also evaluating Turkey’s policy, Prof. Abdelfattah emphasizes that Turkey takes a tough stand in the region and continues to call Sisi a coup plotter regarding the coup in Egypt. He comments that:

“Turkey persistent on this issue. It persists in its stance. It emphasizes this frequently. I think Mr. Erdogan is taking the right stance. We are talking about a leader who faced a coup attempt in his own country. This stance of Turkey is also compatible with its interests because the stance against military coups is indispensable in all societies. “

B. ARAB REVOLUTIONS AND TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

“If you cannot manage the transition period, that transition period becomes the graveyard of the revolution.”

Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah

The Common Demand of Revolutions: Human Dignity, Freedom, and Justice

What was the meaning of the Arab Spring and the revolutions that came with it? What basic motivations, goals, and demands did people act with?

“These requests were not different from those in Tunisia, they were not different from those in Egypt, Yemen, or Syria,” says Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah, “It was the same thing that was demanded in all these revolutions. In other words, we are talking about human dignity, freedom, and especially justice. These were desi-

red. These were indispensable. Democratic regimes were required to be established. These tyrannical governments were wanted to be removed. That was the purpose.”

However, the revolutions that set out with this purpose seem far from this goal today. Moreover, there is an image of being defeated. The comments that “The Arab Spring has turned into winter” and “The situation dropped behind the original situation”. Did this really happen, or is the revolution going on its way? How should we explain what happened?

“There were great pains,” says Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah, “These revolutions in Syria, Yemen, and Libya have been turned into wars. Regionally, it played into the hands of opportunists; it was transformed into ongoing civil wars. It turned into a war between factions within the country. At the same time, doors were opened to outside interventions.”

Why did not this revolution turn into a civil war in some countries, for example, in Egypt? *“Because Egypt’s population is large; Egypt is an axis country and an indispensable country in the region. The West cares about its relations with Egypt. The West said, “It is better for me to have a military coup in Egypt”. So this is the picture actually; the West preferred a coup.”*

How can the general situation of the region be described at this point?

According to Prof. Abdelfettah, *“Our region is experiencing a situation like osteoporosis. There is a rottenness and looseness. This creates a suitable environment for the reshaping of the region. The tyrannical governments in the Arab world are part of this betrayal project.”*

Finally, Trump’s “Contract of the Century”, according to him, is about the reshaping of the region rather than Palestine: *“The purpose is to disintegrate the entire Middle East, that is, the region, so to speak! Turkey is supposed to have an important initiative in this regard.”*

Interventions and Errors: “The Revolution Should Not Have Been Expected to Solve All the Problems”

How did it come to this point? Prof. Abdelfettah prefers to read the result of the current stage, together with its internal and external dynamics:

Western states and “the mirage of democracy”

Democracy is like a mirage. It is visible but you cannot touch it. Take a look at the USA. Let us say there is a very beautiful democracy there, but it is colonial towards the outside. There is nothing it cannot do in its own interests. Today, it is directed precisely to our countries. Trump himself is in the first place. They oppose when the results of the democratic elections go wrong. There was FIS (The Islamic Salvation Front) in Algeria. The West declared war there, they overthrown the elected party. Palestine is another example. However, when we look at all the elections, they came with democracy, they came with elections. We are experiencing such things.



Both the issue of democracy and human rights are like the sharp sword held to the head of weak countries. They can use this sword whenever they want.

Rabih Haddad

“Revolution or the Arab Spring, whatever the name, interventions from the West and outside have also become important. This is one of the most important issues,” says Prof. Abdelfettah, but adds: “To say this does not mean to say that Arab revolutions are controlled from the outside or they happened because of this”.

Why did the revolutions fail in the first wave? Where were the mistakes made?

Abdelfettah continued his analysis by emphasizing that revolutionaries made big mistakes and commented that “the revolutionaries made mistakes even about the revolution”:

“There were great difficulties and challenges. The biggest issues were the reference issue, the identity issue, the legitimacy issue, the participation issue, the citizenship issue, and the activity issue. Arab revolutions could not overcome these problems. For example, they could not overcome the legitimacy issue. The Arab revolutions behaved in such a way that revolutionaries felt they could make the necessary change without outside intervention.

According to him, the biggest problem facing the revolution was that it was expected to solve hundred-year-old problems at once. However, this should not have been expected from the revolution, and revolutionaries should not have brought them to the agenda:

“When the revolutions took place, they emerged like a compact disc, in computer language. So it is full of files. Some files had to be opened before the public. We had the disc, but we lack the program to solve it. Another problem was that we also raised problems that had not been solved for two hundred years. So all this overlapped. There was no need! The revolution would not grow stronger in this way.”

According to Abdelfettah, the main issue, or the original problem, should have been “to consider how a national consensus could be achieved”: “We should have legitimately united political forces and groups for a single purpose”.

In this framework, according to him, the problems that the revolution could not overcome could be listed as follows:

- There was no national consensus! Ideological fractions emerged. The forces emerged against the



revolution. Some stakeholders emerged. There was a loosening in terms of security. There was disorganization in the social sense, especially in the economic sense. These happened.

- You cannot change laws, you cannot change many laws, so what are you going to do? These laws were made to protect the regime! So how will you make the revolution? This was the problem with legality and legitimacy.
- On the other hand, the revolution must have protective mechanisms. There must be a system. It is necessary to put forward the mechanisms that will protect the revolution and keep the people together.
- There was also a problem with participation. We were faced with such a picture where there was a division between political powers. Each group started saying “I am this,” the other group, “I am that.” In other words, each faction tried to raise its own flag, instead of supporting the revolution by coming together. Then they stole the revolution, so to speak.
- The white-haired elite took the initiative. They discarded the young people. Of course, they did it in a fancy way. However, young people are indispensable for revolutions. Generations experiencing revolutions had to be leaders, mastermind

“Sometimes, the absence of leadership is beneficial for the revolution”

You talked about the absence of central leadership. It is true. Sometimes I also think that the absence of leadership is beneficial for the revolution. Sometimes and to some extent. However, it definitely needs a leader and leadership after that. The revolution may come out without a leader, but eventually, it will produce leadership. New creativity will emerge. Leadership can emerge within the community, for example in the form of networked leaderships. Something may arise in a form that we have never seen before.



Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah

social movement. It turned into “I want this, I want that”. Yet consciousness was required.

What Rabi Haddad reported from Lebanon on what happened are parallel to this. “I am someone who lived through that situation,” says Haddad, “Revolution emerged in Lebanon as well. Nobody expected it, actually. Lebanese people or foreigners, experts, political parties, sects, sectarian movements, nobody.”

Haddad also speaks of the broad and widespread support given to the revolution at the beginning in a country with different regions and many divisions. His determinations regarding the aftermath are similar to those in other countries:

these things around. They should work in a networked fashion systematically, organizationally, by creating organizational networks. The structure in the pyramid is crucial. The subject of obedience is crucial. Unfortunately, we did not see this. A gap occurred.

- The absence of institutionalism was remarkable. The old institutions remained. These of course had a negative effect. Why did people pour into the streets? For specific demands. It ceased to be a

“The revolution began, people poured into the streets. Rich and poor, Muslims, Christians, and party members and non-party-members, everybody poured into the streets. They emerged with a popular shake-up. These revolutions had no central management. Let’s say it was against the tyrannical rule that we had had for 30 years. There was no revolutionary movement organized against it under a single leadership. Therefore, I call it the public shake-up. It was infertile, so to speak. I mean, it did not have any fertility. There was no unity of voice or unity of words.”

“There is a stillness right now; people look like still water,” adds Haddad: *“There is stillness in place of revolutionary movements”.*

Managing Transition Periods ...

What prevents Arab revolutions or waves? What are the problems in the transition period?

What are the internal and external dangers and risks?

“It is important to identify the problems,” says Prof. Abdelfettah and emphasizes the vital importance of managing the transition period: *“If you cannot manage the transition period in the revolution, be it political forces or relevant authorities, then the transition period becomes the graveyard of the revolution. Anarchy takes its toll. Everywhere is drowned in anarchy. Then the transition period will be very dangerous and you feed the counter-revolution! Thus, you will create the counter-revolution with all its systematic.”*

According to him, three revolutions overlap in terms of transition: Egypt, Syria, Yemen. *“Look at what is happening in Libya, counter-revolutions are not only based inside but also outside. They also have regional and international support. But the support of the people is essential here. We need to*

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The Afghanistan Experience

“Taliban emerged when the transition period could not be managed”

I would like to give an example from Afghanistan regarding the inability to manage revolutions. After the Russians left Afghanistan in 1989, the mujahideen groups, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hikmetyar could not come to terms. The mujahids were successful against the Russians, but because they were not successful among themselves, they dragged the country into a civil war. After that, in just two months in 1991-92, armed people (mujahids) affiliated with these groups caused the deaths of thousands of Kabul residents and their emigration abroad. They gave Kabul the damage that the Russians did not. They bombed the houses and made Kabul uninhabitable. Because they could not manage this transition period, the Taliban came into the scene with Pakistan’s help. After that came the American intervention and the current war...



Zabihullah Kokcha, Academician, Afghanistan

“Guns are not consensus tools”

If the subject of change and transformation is weaponized, the “magic of the weapon” emerges after a while. Weapons are not tools for dialogue. Weapons should not have been a means of establishing a dialogue between the different powers within Afghanistan. This was a huge danger because you stop the dialogue when you resort to guns. You cannot make a dialogue by showing a gun, so to speak, by speaking softly while carrying a big stick. It is important to restructure societies and establish balances. All this will happen through dialogue. We need a consciousness, we need to reveal consciousnesses, there must be a consensus, there must be a social contract. But Afghanistan has a legacy, we cannot ignore it. There are tribes, mountainous structures, geographical conditions, and they have an influence.



Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah



focus on the question of what people expect from the revolution. People's demands! How can we handle this issue, we need to dwell on it."

At this point, Prof. Abdelfettah proposes an important strategic choice: "We have to support the existing current in society to support the revolutions," and adds, "In other words, it is not like 'let's take these with us, let's not take those'. Again, young people are essential here."

"The main deficiency here is the lack of a political subject that can carry these movements somewhere, for example in Egypt," says Yıldız Önen and argues that there should be a political party that will carry the goals of the revolution: "Without such an organized power, people on the streets express their demands, but there is a lack of a subject to carry the demands to power. I call it a political party."

It is equally important not to play into the hands of the colonialists in these upheavals. Stating that there was never a conflict between Russia and America in Syria and that there is an agreement between them even though it seems like a "vicious cycle" from the outside, Rabih Haddad said that we have entered a new stage, and at this stage, the states in question will divide and deepen the fragmentation in the region and ensure that any existence against them is prevented.

In this context, Haddad also warned the revolutionary movements that they should not adopt attitudes that can be used by the colonialists and said, "Revolutions should not involve movements that will play into the hands of the colonialists outside, because when we look at Trump's statements, he says that 'I will do this and I will do that' about our regions with all his aggressiveness. This is the truth."

The Revolution Continues: Predictions for the "Second Wave"

In what direction will the future take shape? In what direction will history flow? Are we going to stay under the "Reverse Wave" for a longer time, or are we on the eve of the "Second Wave"?

Regarding the future of revolutions, Prof. Abdelfettah makes an optimistic prediction: "I cannot say that the Arab revolutions failed in their first wave. No! I don't mean that, because revolutions can make a tremendous impact in their second wave. Therefore, as Dr. Özipek stated, the history is not over. History did not end. Revolutions have begun and will not end."

Dr. Yıldız Önen's analysis of revolutions and their future also supports him:

"Berat Özipek talked about Huntington's reverse wave theory at the beginning of his speech, but I think like Dr. Abdelfettah, for example. I think we are experiencing a second revolt or the second wave of revolution, not a reverse wave."

If we call the one that started in Tunisia as the first wave, when we consider

A slogan from the Wall Street occupations: "Salute to Cairo"

Yıldız Önen says, "One aspect of the issue that is overlooked is that all these waves are part of an international movement. In 2011, there were Wall Street invasions in Washington, where a banner with the slogan 'Salute to Cairo' was unfurled" and adds, "Those who demonstrated against economic inequality were in solidarity with the Arab Spring. Today, hundreds of thousands of workers in France have been on strike once a week for more than one and half a month, the yellow vest protesters have been on the streets every weekend for a year. Hundreds of thousands of people are on the street against the pension bill since December. Both counter-revolutions and revolutions are taking place in Latin America. The answer to the question of "So how will the Arab Spring win again?" also depends on the achievements of the struggles in other countries."



Yıldız Önen, Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (DSİP) Member

the demonstrations that lasted for a few months in Lebanon, Iraq, and the rest in 2019, I think that this second wave has actually come in Algeria and many other places."



Sharing her observation that the wave that started in 2019 was stronger, Dr. Önen says that the demonstrations in Iraq, in Algeria and Lebanon, bear the difference of coming after the experiences in 2010 and from this aspect, *“Those who poured into the streets can tell more than their friends in 2010:”*

“They say that we are neither Shia, nor Sunni, neither from this nor from that, we are together. The slogan they shout the most is ‘we are together,’ which I think is a very important thing. Dr. Abdelfettah said that this is one of the most important problems in the Arab Spring. Everyone goes out on the streets for a few days together, then everyone starts to pull from here and there, and the movement falls on each other. Then of course the movement is defeated more easily. Maybe this movement, the movement that started in 2019, has the chance to be more successful in this respect because they also have the experiences of the previous waves.”

C. TODAY AND THE FUTURE: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AND WHAT SHOULD NOT?

Realizing a Transboundary Dialogue

So what will happen? Where does it end? Will our future be societies that clash over ethnicity and religion, countries that constantly harass each other and cannot lift their noses out of the mud?

“Europe established its peace after agonizing itself for centuries,” says Prof. Özipek, “We do not need to repeat those conflicts and go through the same bloody roads. It would be right for us to look at their present and learn from it.”



“We need a different paradigm from the sovereign paradigm”

This is an interest-centered world. The realist school, that is, the realist theory, says that every country thinks of its own interests in international relations. If we cannot replace this with a new paradigm, that is, if we cannot establish not interest-centered but rights-centered international relations, our job is difficult. Rights-centered politics should be prioritized, but there is no Non-Aligned Movement of the 60s. There is no Third World movement. Here we have a problem of determining a theoretical political perspective. Our job is not easy unless we solve this problem because we have seen in Syria, Libya, and Egypt that there is no such thing as local. Now every problem at the local level is formed by a global alignment. For us to establish this, we have to create a different paradigm than the sovereign paradigm.



Ufuk Uras, Founding Chairman of the Freedom and Solidarity Party

Asking the questions of *“Is what we need a savior leader? Or is it the Mahdi or a Messiah?”*, Prof. Özipek said, *“I don’t know if they will come or not? But what I know is that we cannot trust any person, state, or government in the long term”*.

According to him, legitimate administration may lose in Libya tomorrow; perhaps the government changes in Turkey or Qatar, and new governments begin to play roles that are attributed to them in the region. So we cannot rely on states and alliances. Therefore, we must develop transnational communication and dialogue independent of states, governments, their alliances, and conflicts.

“14th-century Anatolian poet Yunus Emre says, ‘It is necessary to say a word which even angels do not know’. But how is this word born?” asks Prof. Özipek, and thinks this could be a process:

“Basic principles and values are crucial and it is necessary to struggle in line with them. Basic human, moral values that all ethnicities and beliefs can agree on... I am not talking about a theory yet. Not starting from a theory, a claim, a political strategy, but primarily from those values. The struggle may bring with it language, theory, and dis-

What not to do?

"What we should not do is clear, too."

- Whatever we go through, we must manage not to be the other end of scissors to cut each other. "Our fire burns us," says the poet, we should not get into fights that are trying to get us into the trap of sectarianism and nationalism and try to put our geography on fire.
- We can avoid segregation and conflict over sects. When criticizing Iran politically, we should not make the mistake of becoming anti-Shia. Today we are rightly angry with Iran for its role in Syria. Okay, let's be angry, but without being hostile to the Iranian people and the Shia sect.
- We should not be hostile to Kurds, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Sunnis, Nusayris, Yazidis, Coptics or Syriacs by getting angry with states, regimes, and organizations.
 - We should not live in history. We should get rid of the dreams of old glorious days and look at today. We should not look at the great states of the Ottoman, Iran, and Egypt in the past and try to carry the past to the present. It is wrong to say that "Only Turks, or Egyptians, or Iranians can do it." Perhaps it will be done by another subject or our salvation will be the product of a collective effort.



Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek

course over time, or it can go like the two ends of scissors. I think this will manifest in direct connection with the practice."

"Experiences learned in the first wave are used later"

Dr. Abdelfettah said something very right. Each wave also feeds the next wave. The experiences learned in that first wave are used later.

I saw this best at the 2002-2003 anti-war demonstrations. You all remember those days. Interviews were held with people who participated in these anti-war demonstrations in Turkey, the United States, and Egypt. The documentary "We Are Many" was released in 2014. I recommend you find and watch that video. Those who demonstrated in America, England, Germany... The one that attracted my attention the most was the one in Egypt. The anti-war movement was wide in Egypt.

Dr. Abdelfettah maybe has more experience than me if he was there at that time. However, when the United States bombed Iraq on March 20, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in many places in Cairo. The friends who organized those shows were interviewed ten years later: why did not we win? Participants in the demonstrations in Egypt say, "We went to the demonstrations on March, 20. We returned to our homes in the evening, but we could not go out on March, 21. We encountered very serious attacks as soon as we went out on the streets. When we went home on March 20, we couldn't think that they could prevent us from going out on the street the next day. But the next time, when the uprising broke out in Egypt, we did not go home that night, we continued to resist in the square." They said, "So this was our experience from the previous one, we didn't repeat it in the second."



Now, there is no need to discuss the Arab Spring, how it was defeated in Egypt, or something, but I think that I also look very positively like Dr. Abdelfettah. In fact, I think I will see these revolutions.

Dr. Yıldız Önen

There are also some things to avoid during this process:

Özipek says *"We must fight discriminatory language and attitudes that make us hostile to each other by dividing us over ethnic, religious, political, and sectarian identities. We have to reflect on ourselves. There is no magic formula for our salvation. But we can find out what we need to do through dialogue"* and adds:

"As millions of people sharing the same geography, we have to have a shared agenda and talk. We must create a common public opinion in the Sunni and Shiite world, in the Islamic and Mediterranean geography. We must establish communication that is independent of states and regimes and transcends them, initiate and develop a cross-border debate. Clearly, our job is not easy. But history is not over yet, and we are not desperate either."

The Future of Revolutions

How will the future be shaped in the geography we live in?

Drawing attention to the "accumulation of consciousness" created by the process, Prof. Abdelfattah says, *"Waves feed on and learn from each other. They are also connected. They are complementary to one another."* *"When talking about the revolution, it is mentioned as if it was done, realized, and finished,"* says Prof. Abdelfattah pointing to a fundamental characteristic of sociological change and revolution. He criticizes this thesis as *"No it's not over. Revolutions start somewhere, then there are accumulations. Sometimes it dies down, sometimes it turns to ashes. After that, it can rise again from its own ashes. So revolutions can be subject to radical changes. Sometimes they can take a long time. I say it could take a long time, decades. The change, the transformation will definitely come; it is indispensable."* Despite all, his prediction about the future of revolutions is that the revolution will reach its goal with new waves:

FOCUS

Why did it happen in Tunisia, in Egypt, but not in Arabia?

"There will be revolutions that will make a tremendous impact in the Gulf countries."

Transformation and change are difficult in the Gulf region. Look, I'm not saying it's impossible, I'm saying it's difficult. However, we will see in the coming days; it is inevitable, it will definitely come. I have full faith. I say that the big change will definitely come to the region, the Gulf, the Gulf countries in a comprehensive way. In fact, I believe there will be revolutions that will make a tremendous impact, it is more than a shake-up. Maybe we are going through a training phase right now, as a region, as the Gulf countries.



Prof. Dr. Seif Abdelfettah

"There is change even in societies that seem the most stable"

In fact, we cannot say that what happened in a whole region does not affect Arabia. However, it does not have an effect in every society at the same time, so this effect can give its product in different ways, in different societies, at different times. There is a change even in societies that seem the most static and I agree with Dr. Abdelfettah that we will see their products there as well. Baudrillard points out about the period we live in that societies do not react as expected. He states that it receives the message, kneads it within itself, and reflects it in a completely different way.



Prof. Dr. Bekir Berat Özipek



“These waves will continue. All these oppositions, those who oppose, those who try to prevent this will never be able to resist too much. This change and transformation is inevitable and the waves come powerfully because these are very basic demands and are related to their own existence. These demands are related to their own lives. There is no leadership today, but it will come tomorrow. Maybe it will come the next day. In any case, the revolutions will continue. The changes and transformations will continue, and a result will be reached.”

Expressing that it is unnecessary to attribute much meaning to short-term successes and failures in this process, Özipek emphasizes that the important thing is the sociological transformation. *“We should not be disappointed by looking at the current state of Arab revolutions,”* he says, *“politically speaking, short-term successes, failures, victories, and defeats should not be attributed too much meaning. It is the sociological transformation that matters, and if we can look at revolutions as a process, we have reasons to be more hopeful.”*

