

**Juan Cole, *The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation is Changing the Middle East* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 348.**

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The book, *The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation is Changing the Middle East*, is authored by Juan Cole. The book comprises of eight chapters. Juan Cole seems to have a dual purpose in writing this book. On the one hand, he wants to give a comprehensive overview of the role and function of the revolutionary youth of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Secondly, he tries to give the reader a sense of collective identity what he calls Arab youth, millennial of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

“The New Arab” focuses on the Arab Spring, and in particular, the youth movements in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya that played an imperative role to topple authoritarian regimes in these countries. “Young people are the key to rapid social and political change in the Arab countries that have been in turmoil since 2011,” (p.6) Jaun Cole argues that the members of this “Arab Generation Y” (p.15) are more educated, urban and technologically advanced than their elders. Mr. Cole argues that “a new generation has been awakened” and a new positive change is taking place.

By concentrating on the Middle Eastern nations for example, Syria, where the administration has been serious about dissenter with astonishing ruthlessness, or Bahrain, which has detained or kept most of its vocal rivals, Mr. Cole stacks the deck for his faith in the capacity of Center Eastern Millennials to shake “a complacent, stagnant and status quo” (p.288) and thus change the world.

He also highlighted the difficulties of implementing the democratic change. For example, a month ago, in part of a crackdown on news media freedom, an Egyptian judge sentenced three writers from *Al*

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*Jazeera's* English-language network to seven years each in jail without any proof.

The author attempts to take his readers inside the youth movements in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, demonstrating how activists utilised innovation and online networking to convey their messages. Although this phenomenon has already been widely covered by Western media, Mr. Cole accounts it as an intriguing element and relates the stories of prominent protestors and their regular utilization of *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter* and cell phone for networking and organising the societies for political causes.

In both Tunisia and Egypt, the spread of internet made “new virtual social spaces that created an opportunity in which activists could meet and interface during a period when physical gatherings of more than a couple can be pulled them in the consideration of police.” (p.78) Bloggers and *Facebook* users could contact through internet to share data, condemn political restraint, praise saints and call for activity. Activists were likewise ready to join advanced technologies with more customary strategies to interact with the student organisations and workers' parties, and to frame organisations together (however provisional) over the ideological basis.

The author highlights the formation of *YouTube* in 2005 and the developing range of satellite TV (most quite *Al Jazeera*) which served as important tools. He also discusses that how the blogger Wael Abbas in 2006 started posting recordings, taken covertly, of Egyptian police brutalising their prisoners, created chaos. In Tunisia, recordings of the police, opening flame on the young protesters who had turned out in the streets after a fruit vendor blazed himself to death in December 2010 because he was being humiliated by government authorities. It received a huge viewership and spread awareness across the country.

In Egypt, the youth which comprises 49.9 per cent of population, was successful to topple the Mubarak government.

One of the problems with the optimistic vision of the author is that he does not discuss the crucial aspect of usage of media by terrorist groups

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like ISIS, who currently influenced the northern Iraq. This has been accompanied by a sophisticated propaganda campaign conducted with Tweets, harrowing videos and photo shopped brutal images.

Also, the book does not address the problems that secular youth movements face in learning how to win elections and actually govern. Mr Cole acknowledges that “the youth who made the revolutions were guilty of a certain amount of magical thinking.” (p.282)

However, this book is a good read for policy makers, academics and students alike. Mr Cole’s conclusion to this book is a confident one. He writes: “The youth revolutionaries of the Middle East inspired their peers throughout the globe by their ideals of liberty and social justice and their collective action techniques. Fundamentalist movements seeking to take advantage of the political opening to impose new forms of theocratic authoritarianism suffered severe setbacks at the hands of the same youth activists.” (p.288)