

representatives in Niger. These weaknesses, however, do not detract from the book's contributions.

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Food Security and Revolution in the Middle East and North Africa: agrarian questions in Egypt and Tunisia by HABIB AYEUB and RAY BUSH

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Food Security and Revolution in the Middle East and North Africa provides an in-depth analysis of the complex processes that have shaped agrarian transformations and food systems in the MENA region. Adopting a political economy approach that is sensitive to the dynamics of local farming systems, the authors show how agricultural modernisation policies in Egypt and Tunisia, and the integration of these two countries into the world economy have resulted in their growing dependency upon international food markets and undermined the role of peasant farming.

The book comprises seven chapters. The first outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework that informs the analysis of transformations affecting agriculture and in particular family farming. Drawing on approaches of global food regime, uneven development, dependency theory and a long-term historical perspective, the authors advance the debate on small-scale farming and agricultural labour and shed light on the class dynamics that shape agricultural and food policies in Tunisia and Egypt.

In the second chapter, the authors characterise the context in which food security issues in the MENA region arise. They stress the need to combine in the analysis dimensions related to economic reforms, to environmental degradation and to war and conflicts, in order to gain a holistic understanding of the structural difficulties that family farmers are facing and to adequately address the issue of social inequalities in rural areas.

Following other authors, Chapter 3 shows how the agricultural crisis, the increase in rural poverty, as well as peasants' and farmers' mobilisations must be accounted for as part of the major drivers of the 2011 Arab uprisings and regime change in Egypt and Tunisia. Chapter 4 critically analyses the paradigm of food security fostered by international funding institutions and underlines the importance of placing farm producers, and not only international trade, at the centre of the debate and action on food security. The implementation of trade-based food security policies and the liberalisation of agricultural activity, while accelerating the commodification of land and labour, have contributed to the marginalisation of small-scale agriculture and increased the vulnerability to food import dependency, both in Egypt and Tunisia.

The specific dynamics of the two case studies are explored in Chapters 5 and 6. In Tunisia, the shift from food self-sufficiency to food security objectives and the implementation of policies to promote the private sector and large farm enterprises has had the effect of reinforcing the process of social and spatial differentiation of farming, without however increasing the economic performance of agriculture and improving the trade balance of the country. With regard to Egypt, the analysis

highlights a major paradox in the evolution of the farming sector. While neoliberal agricultural policies carried out since the 1980s have resulted in the aggravation of food dependency and the impoverishment of Egyptian peasants, the latter continue to ‘maintain one of the most highly productive forms of agriculture’ (146). Based on this observation and pointing to the longstanding struggles of Tunisian and Egyptian peasants to defend their existence, as well as to recent initiatives developed by local NGOs, the authors explore the model of food sovereignty promoted by the international farmers movement *Via Campesina* as an alternative option for agricultural development for the two countries (Chapter 7). Although the authors recognise that advancing this agenda requires the emergence of a political force capable of promoting policies to support smallholder farming and encourage the diversification of production systems and their orientation towards local market needs, the final note of the book remains optimistic. This is not unrelated to the activist approach within which the authors have placed their research.

Based on extensive empirical and theoretical literature, drawing on longstanding field research and a comparative approach across the MENA region, Ayeb and Bush’s book constitutes a significant contribution to the understanding of agricultural issues and their stakes in the MENA region and to broader reflections on alternative development models.

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Inside African Politics (second edition) by KEVIN C. DUNN and PIERRE ENGLEBERT
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There is an often cited lacuna in textbook provision on the topic of African politics. There are a few notable exceptions (*Government and Politics in Africa* by Tordoff, Macmillan HE 2002; *Routledge Handbook of African Politics* by Cheeseman *et al.*, Routledge 2005; *An Introduction to African Politics* by Thomson, Routledge 2016; amongst others), yet there remains space for texts in this area to take new and original approaches to the study of the continent. Or, more realistically, the study of certain aspects of a diverse and historically complex continent that has often been presented through a homogenising lens. As the authors of *Inside African Politics* recognise in the opening pages of this textbook, there are many problems associated with the way that the continent of Africa is engaged with, taught and written about. Among these is the fact that the ‘continent [is] often marginalised and its study frequently relegated to the periphery of knowledge about the world ... [suffering] from people’s limited knowledge of it being based on stereotypes, many informed by racist tropes and assumptions’ (1).

Yet, as they state early on, there are many reasons to grapple with African Politics. For instance, recentring the continent in our discussions of Politics and International Relations provides key lessons for understanding security, economics, growth, strategic relationships and broader questions of comparative politics. *Inside African Politics* provides a valuable jumping off point for students and scholars to do this – to engage with questions of statehood, identity, power, regime types, war and security through a lens that centres rather than marginalises the continent of Africa.