Where Did the Revolution Go?

*Where Did the Revolution Go?* considers the apparent disappearance of the large social movements that have contributed to democratization. Revived by the events of the Arab Spring, this question is once again paramount. Is the disappearance real, given the focus of mass media and scholarship on electoral processes and “normal politics”? Does it always happen, or only under certain circumstances? Are those who struggled for change destined to be disappointed by the slow pace of transformation? Which mechanisms are activated and deactivated during the rise and fall of democratization? This volume addresses these questions through empirical analysis based on quantitative and qualitative methods (including oral history) of cases in two waves of democratization: Central Eastern European cases in 1989 as well as cases in the Middle East and Mediterranean region in 2011.

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Where Did the Revolution Go?

Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy

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Scuola Normale Superiore
To Sid, friend and mentor
Contents

List of Figures page x
Acknowledgments xiii

1 Where Did the Revolution Go? The Outcomes of Democratization Paths 1
2 Cycles of Protest and the Consolidation of Democracy 37
3 “How Great That You Exist . . .”: Shifting Conceptions of Democracy 79
4 “It Was a Tsunami”: Shifting Emotions 112
5 “Like a House of Cards”: Time Intensity and Mobilization 141
6 Civil Society Organizations: Decline or Growth? 167
7 A Normalization of Politics? 203
8 Socioeconomic Rights and Transition Paths 231
9 The Protest Process in the Arab Spring 259
10 Arab Spring: Which Democratic Qualities in Egypt and Tunisia? 311
11 Where Did the Revolution Go? Some Conclusions 345

Bibliography 365
Index 395
Figures

1.1 From Critical Junctures to Outcomes: The Theoretical Model  page 23
2.1 Protest Events (Number and Intensity) in Selected East European Countries  43–46
2.2 Mobilized Participants per Million Inhabitants  53
2.3 Mobilized Participants per Million Inhabitants in selected East European Countries  63
2.4 Events per Million Inhabitants in Selected East European Countries  64
2.5 Forms of Protests in Germany  68
2.6 Share of Extreme Right Mobilization and Counter-Mobilization in East Germany  69
2.7 Issues of claims in East Germany and in West Germany  71
9.1 Evolution of Recorded Protests: Egypt versus All Countries (ICEWS)  271
9.2 Number of Reported Protests (graph line and table: ICEWS)  271
9.3 Geographic Distribution of Protest Events in Egypt (2010–2012), GDELT  272
9.4 Protest Actors in Egypt (GDELT)  273
9.5 Normalized Number of Protests and Coercion in Tunisia by Month–Year in Percentages, 1979–2014 (GDELT)  284
9.6 Number and Size of Protest Events in Tunisia by Month (2010–2012)  284
9.7 Forms of Protest in Tunisia per Year (%)  285
List of Figures

9.9  Mentioning of Social Groups of Protest (when organizational affiliation is not reported) per Year in Tunisia (%)  288
9.10  Occupational Categories of Protest Groups per Year in Tunisia (%)  288
10.1  Repression by Months in Egypt (Gdelt data)  318
10.2  Reported Repression in Egypt by Year (ICEWS)  319
Acknowledgments

I asked myself the question “Where did the revolution go?” in 1990 in Berlin, where I was working at the Social Science Center. Just a few months after the excitement of the “peaceful revolution” of 1989, the streets seemed empty and the hopes fading away. At the same time, however, it was my impression that those events had provided some long-lasting empowerment capacity for the citizens. It was only many years later that I formulated that question in more scientific terms and tried to address it through empirical research. In the meantime, the very same question was asked, over and over again, after another wave of mobilization for democracy in the Arab Spring in 2011.

For the opportunity to develop a cross-national, cross-area, and cross-time empirical research project, I am most grateful to the European Research Council, which financed the project on Mobilizing for Democracy with a generous Advanced Scholars’ Grant. In this project, I aim at analyzing the forms and effects of social movements on democratic politics in transitions to democracy, as well as in democratic consolidation and deepening. While the results of the research on different paths of transition have been published, among others, in my Mobilizing for Democracy (2014) and those on democratic deepening in, among others, in my Can Democracy Be Saved? (2013) and Social Movements in Times of Austerity (2015), I look in this volume at the impact of different paths of transition on the democratic qualities of the ensuing regimes.

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