

tion,” p. 135.) The idea here is that individual idiosyncrasies operate within a complex set of social and economic conditions and considerations that must keep all conclusions and generalizations “tentative,” which the authors themselves duly acknowledge.

The organization of the book, furthermore, creates a mismatch between its first, theoretical part, on the one hand, and the remaining two parts, on the other. Some readers (e.g. students) may have difficulty following the theoretical part without sufficient background on its subject (and those already fa-

miliar with it may question the need for a long exposition of debates about modernity, religion, and social theory). The value of the theoretical part becomes evident when the reader reaches the second and third parts of the book, where specific case studies are discussed. It may be more useful for the reader to spend less time grappling with theoretical questions, and see instead these discussed in tandem with actual case studies. Other than making the book more accessible to a wider readership, this could also demonstrate how the dialectics between the theory and case studies work to produce the authors’ thesis.

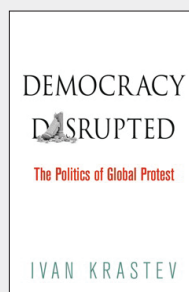
Democracy Disrupted: The Politics of Global Protest

By Ivan Krastev

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, 88 pages, \$12.95, ISBN 9780812223309.

Reviewed by Boris Popivanov

IN A 1994 BOOK, “The Twilight of Democracy,” American analyst Patrick Kennon examined various negative trends in contemporary politics and concluded: (1) the form of government of most states in the mid-21st century will have very little in common with what we today call democracy, and (2) it will be called democracy. Ivan Krastev’s latest book on the global protest wave cites examples of protest upsurges as diverse as Brazil, the US, the UK, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Thailand, and finds a common feature. People who protest these days, he contends, either wish for democracy if they don’t have it, as a form of government, or advocate another type of democracy, more genuine and moral than the one they currently



enjoy. So we observe a real “wave,” not a chain of isolated events.

For me as a Bulgarian it is satisfying to see “our” protests embedded in a global trend, which is generally praised by progressives all around the world. Surely the same applies to Thai readers. As the author admits,

it is a great temptation to the social scientist to make typologies and classify processes even when they seem to resist attempts at classification. But how otherwise would a book on “the protest wave” be possible, especially one following in hot pursuit the actions of the International Protestor in so many spots around the globe? Ivan Krastev is familiar to the public in many ways. His recent research touches on different issues while maintaining a com-

mon theme. The metaphor of a “red thread” running through his books should be evoked; he holds a specific interest in problems, which in his interpretation I dare to label the joint pain, or the rheumatics of democracy. This metaphor of mine serves to illustrate Krastev’s treatment of corruption, populism, protests today, and probably even other phenomena that challenge the smooth and painless functioning of democratic systems. Such phenomena ceaselessly disturb and disrupt the body public of modern representative democracy and require adjustments, new ideas, decisions, and “political medicines.” No pejorative sense is necessarily invested here. It is just the notion that democracy should find means to peacefully coexist with factors gradually questioning its claim to represent people and its presumable commitment to the common good.

Krastev’s book doesn’t fall into the clichés, which tend to be rampant among scholars of protests: that social media positively changes societies in terms of their democratic and public-spirited consciousness, and that protests strengthen the democratic process. Instead, his view is centered on a peculiarity that roughly dissociates contemporary protests from models of social uprising of the last two centuries. What we witness today is “participation without representation,” a separation of electoral politics and protest anti-politics, a lack of ideologies and manifestos, and a surprising absence of uniting positive causes for the future. These are leaderless protests, despite the famous assertion by Lenin that, without a political vanguard, the masses are deprived of the chance to successfully achieve their aims. These are revolts of non-voters who generally don’t imagine the desired change as produced by casting ballots.

Krastev’s analysis identifies the middle class to be the social base of recent protest waves.

Sociologically speaking, this middle class is much more divided and estranged than at any time before, materially deteriorating in some cases but surely not in all of them, and consolidated only by the depressing feeling of its rising political disempowerment. It wishes just to maintain and reaffirm its status. It has a shared experience but no collective identity. It considers its place in societal hierarchy to be threatened by some populist alliance between elites and lower social strata. Paradoxically, the middle class has lost confidence in the very weapon that provided for its rise in the past: free elections. Elections seem to have lost their political relevance. Middle-class voters don’t see distinct clear alternatives and a personal power to choose one of them, and go to the streets rather than to the polling stations. Middle-class protest impulses are fueled by the perception that governments tend to be less and less dependent on citizens, and more and more on stock exchanges, professional armies, and immigrant labor power. All this culminates in general mistrust. The middle class treats politics as an opportunity to stop, control, and punish. Protests are not about some alternative but about the line which elites should not trespass.

No doubt protests have become popular, fashionable, and some sort of a lifestyle way of social involvement. Nevertheless, the issue of their legitimacy inevitably comes to the agenda. Krastev’s book presents a sympathetic vision on protesters’ viewpoints. In spite of various aspects of criticism, the honesty and spontaneity of protests are left above suspicion. According to Krastev, protesters can be sometimes wrong in what they do, but we have to accept their own version of who they are, and of what they have seen, experienced, understood, and outspoken. When we learn that citizens try to (efficiently or primitively) control democratic institutions, we don’t ask

ourselves if it is the citizens who really make such a claim. Any discussion of possible manipulation and steering of protests is light-heartedly dismissed as conspiracy theories or elite propaganda. Counterfeit protest activity needs elaboration in further research.

Ivan Krastev states that democracy will survive out of this disruption caused by protest anti-politics. Twenty years ago, Patrick Ken-

non shared a similar opinion. Whatever happens and to whatever consequences, its result will still be called “democracy.” Krastev’s book on the protest wave is not only timely, fascinating, and profound, it is full of many superb references and observations, which made me several times passionately, wish I have come to them myself. Such brilliantly written books usually receive the label “must-read.” I opt to extend it to “must-think.”

Political Islam in the Age of Democratization

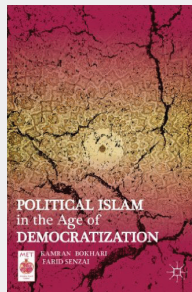
By Kamran Bokhari and Farid Senzai

Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, ?????????? pages, \$?????????, ISBN 9781137008480.

Reviewed by Ravza Altuntas-Cakir

IN *POLITICAL ISLAM in the Age of Democratization*, Kamran Bokhari and Farid Senzai explain the complex and diverse nature of Islamism by underscoring the primary role it plays in the context of democratization in the wider Middle East region. This work starts by offering a corrective view of Islamism in the first two chapters, which establishes the basis for the theoretical framework in the third chapter, which is then applied to several Islamist case studies. A major accomplishment is the authors’ convincing and systematic challenge to two monolithic biases within academia: *Islamic exceptionalism* and *Islamist universalism*. This review will focus on how Bokhari and Senzai present their opposing narrative in the first three chapters and the ways they validate it through the conceptual framework, as evidenced in the empirical studies.

In the initial chapters, the authors explain their theoretical position that offer a more nu-



anced and cognizant understanding of the relationship between democracy, Islam, and Islamism in challenging the notions of *Islamic exceptionalism* and *Islamist universalism*. The former notion refers to the idea that Islam is resistant to secularization and is therefore incompatible with democracy, which in turn makes democratization of Muslim societies improbable. Antithetically, the possibility of creating new and genuine ways of thinking about democracy that are specific to Muslim contexts in view of the significant role of religion in politics within Muslim societies is illustrated in this work. The second assumption challenged by the authors addresses the definition of Islamism in a way that simplifies a complex and varied movement with multiple dimensions and assigns universal qualities to actors that, in fact, do not necessarily share them. Bokhari and Senzai go to great lengths to defy this sweeping notion by presenting the Islamist image in many forms,