

Land and the Arab Spring: What Land Policies and Practices Reveal about the Uprisings

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There is a large literature written on the Arab Spring, the series of popular uprisings that shook many Arab authoritarian states from December 2010. This paper hopes to contribute to the discussion on the Arab Spring by exploring a subject that may seem unrelated to the uprisings: land. The paper uses land as the vehicle for studying the background and events surrounding the Arab Spring. It first presents a historical framework that reveals how post-independence land redistribution policies in Arab states shaped the nature of the regimes and popular grievances. The paper then studies Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen as case studies to examine how each country encountered distinct land-related issues. The paper also considers land-related issues that currently exist in the above countries and speculates on future outlooks. The use of land as a focal point of study uncovers problems and grievances neglected by the dominant narratives.

