RICE UNIVERSITY'S BAKER INSTITUTE

TRAJECTORIES OF CHANGE:
CHALLENGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE WAKE OF THE ARAB SPRING

PUBLISHED BY RICE UNIVERSITY'S BAKER INSTITUTE CENTER FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

center for the
MIDDLE EAST
Rice University's Baker Institute

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APRIL 2014

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Foreword — The Arab Spring: Three Years On

The events in the Middle East over the past three years represent a tectonic shift in the political landscape. Popular movements, initiated by no single party or faction, have demanded greater political, economic, and human rights from unresponsive governments. The overthrow of regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and the emergence of an educated, connected youth reveal the power of a new generation that will not accept the same stale social and political repression of the past. Leaders throughout the region, from Morocco to the Gulf countries, have faced these new pressures for reform and reacted to them in different ways. In sum, we are witnessing the true end of the post-colonial period of the Middle East.

The role of U.S. policymakers and academics now is to understand why these momentous developments occurred, what they mean for the countries of the region and outside powers, and to articulate policies toward the Middle East that adapt to the new shape of the region. In so doing, we should be clear-eyed about the limitations of American influence to direct or even to contain events on the ground. In my view, the critical policy challenge throughout the region is to strengthen the forces of moderation and marginalize the forces of extremism.

The Baker Institute's Center for the Middle East provides policymakers, scholars, and the general public with analysis and recommendations addressing the change in societies throughout this critical region with important implications for U.S. policy and global stability. In confronting the interconnected policy challenges presented by the so-called Arab Spring, the center serves as a valuable meeting point for different academic and expert viewpoints and disciplines to discuss regional phenomena in diverse, yet related, countries and contexts.

This report collects the work of the center's researchers on the impact of the Arab Spring. Marwa Shalaby examines patterns of women's political participation in Egypt and Tunisia. Ben Stevenson assesses the implications of the Arab Spring for Israeli–Palestinian conflict resolution. Kristian Coates Ulrichsen analyzes the policy responses of the GCC states and their connection to local, regional, and global stability. Jim Krane applies an economic perspective to study the reaction of national oil companies throughout the region to the changed political environment. Ariana Marnicio focuses on the evolving role of social media in the Syrian conflict. Within sections, the authors offer conclusions and, in some cases, potential policy recommendations for key stakeholders.

The Honorable Edward P. Djerejian
Founding Director, Rice University's Baker Institute

Executive Summary

Overview

On December 17, 2010, a young Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in front of the local municipal office in an act of defiance that catalyzed the Tunisian revolution and the end of nearly 55 years of authoritarian rule over the country. Although he was not the first person to take his own life in recent years to protest against authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, the death of Bouazizi has come to represent the beginning of the political and social transformations, the so-called Arab Spring, currently impacting the Middle East and North Africa.

In the nearly three and a half years since Bouazizi's death, an outpouring of popular mobilization across the region has toppled long-standing regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya; pushed another in Syria to the brink; and forced the monarchies in Morocco, Jordan, and the Gulf to moderate levels of unrest. However, despite these major shifts, the people in most of the region appear no closer to the goal behind many of the movements—equal opportunity within a just system. Political and religious divisions kept in check by authoritarian power have gained increased importance. Counter-revolutionary forces from the remnants of old systems call for stability above all else. The individual actions of Mohamed Bouazizi and many others have helped open the space for political expression in the Middle East, but transforming this opening into lasting change for populations long denied self-determination will require the sustained engagement of many more.

This report analyzes the significance of the Arab Spring through brief assessments of its impact in five different regional contexts. The authors represent diverse areas of expertise within the Baker Institute's Center for the Middle East and approach the uprisings and their effects through a range of socio-political, institutional, and economic perspectives. The key findings below address the implications of the Arab Spring in each of the five issue areas.

Women's Political Participation in Egypt and Tunisia
   • The Arab Spring brought down not only autocratic regimes, but also prevalent misconceptions and cultural stereotypes in regard to women's roles in the Middle East and North Africa region.

- Patterns of women's political mobilization in the Tunisian context have been remarkably distinct from their Egyptian counterparts over the past few decades. While women in Tunisia have succeeded in securing a place in the political arena by acting as powerful agents of change, women in Egypt have continued to play a marginal role in the public sphere over the past few decades. However, the ideological as well as the political environment is now ripe for women in Egypt to play a more influential role in shaping the country's future and to act as "moderators" of change.
- While women in Egypt and Tunisia have achieved substantive gains in the newly drafted constitutions, legislative and executive bodies should gear efforts to formulate the necessary laws and institutional mechanisms in order to ensure the strict enforcement of constitutional provisions in both countries.

Israeli–Palestinian Peace Negotiations

- The Arab Spring has complicated prospects for Israeli–Palestinian peace and created new obstacles for an agreement on key issues, including refugees, settlements, security, and Fatah–Hamas reconciliation.
- The Arab Spring has strengthened new Israeli and Palestinian movements calling for economic opportunity, greater dignity, and more responsive government. However, to date these groups have not had a significant effect on the direction of the conflict.
- Policymakers can use the changing regional environment to redirect Israeli–Palestinian negotiations to more positive outcomes by working to stabilize neighboring countries, engaging international organizations, and encouraging greater public diplomacy efforts in support of a lasting peace deal.

The GCC and Regional Security

- Although the Gulf region displayed many of the same conditions that led to the protests in other countries, such as high youth unemployment, imbalanced labor markets, and political stagnation, the Gulf countries have remained relatively stable by increasing short-term social welfare spending.
- Nonetheless, in Bahrain—and, to a lesser extent, in Oman—greater political activity and discussion through new forms of media and communication emphasized the potential for discontent based on rising political expectations even in the comparatively wealthy GCC countries.
- Several GCC countries have become more assertive in the region, using increased capabilities and a more expansive policy intent to forge new financial and political connections to groups in the Middle East and North Africa.

National Oil Companies in the Middle East

- Policy responses to the Arab Spring contributed to increased revenue and patronage demands on the region's national oil companies (NOCs) as a way of inhibiting political opposition.

- As a result, companies have raised contributions to state budgets, increased the supply of fuels to meet subsidized domestic demand, and expanded hiring for nationals within NOC workforces.
- These changes signal a rebalancing of priorities by some NOCs away from increased efficiency and capital investments toward social welfare and political stability.

Social Media and the Syrian Conflict
- Social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube increasingly inform the international community's understanding of the conflict in Syria.
- The Syrian regime, through the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA), has taken the conflict into the cyber realm by flooding social media and news sites with pro-regime slogans and disruptive cyber attacks.
- By subverting instead of silencing social media, the Syrian regime has effectively twisted the narrative of the conflict and prevented the Syrian opposition from presenting a unified voice online and attracting significant support from the U.S. and Europe.

From these distinct, yet interconnected vantage points in Egypt, Tunisia, Israel, Palestine, Syria, and the Arab Gulf, a number of core themes emerge. The events of the Arab Spring, first and foremost, have altered the fundamental relationship between the people of the region and their governments. The wave of protests swept away the prevailing legitimacy-for-stability model and carried in new demands for greater accountability and more responsive government. In addition, the revolutions highlighted the interaction of domestic and foreign policies in the Middle East and reshaped regional dynamics by strengthening certain states and groups while marginalizing others. In part through increased connectivity throughout the region, the Arab uprisings transcended prevailing political stagnation and apathy and created new opportunities for popular mobilization and engagement.

Implications for U.S. Policy

Given the varied and evolving nature of the Arab Spring, finding effective policies to influence outcomes in the region is challenging. Nonetheless, the overarching themes of the Arab revolutions—increased mobilization, regional connectivity, and new concepts of legitimacy—align closely with stated American policy goals related to international rights and freedoms. Leaders in the United States can pursue a number of policy measures to support a more positive direction for the Arab Spring as it evolves by:
- Recognizing the limitations of external actors to direct domestic change and regional forces
- Emphasizing a "listen first" approach to newly politicized voices using social media and other tools of public diplomacy
- Adopting a comprehensive framework for regional engagement to marginalize extremism and bolster moderate voices in the Middle East

- Stating clear policy positions regarding political expression and the rights of women and marginalized communities
- Identifying select opportunities to cooperate with leaders to support mutually-beneficial efforts regarding regional peace, economic development, and the protection of human rights

Women as the Conduits of Change Across the Arab World: The Cases of Egypt and Tunisia

by Marwa Shalaby, Ph.D.

Patterns of women's political participation across the Arab world have witnessed a dramatic transformation over the past three years. In contrast to the "culture of misery"[1] that has dominated Western discourse for the last few decades—picturing women in the region as passive, oppressed, and in need of saving—the Arab Spring brought down not only autocratic regimes, but also prevalent misconceptions and cultural stereotypes in regard to women's roles in the MENA region. As the winds of change were sweeping through the Middle East and North Africa, women across the region came into the spotlight for being at the forefront of these protests—notably in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya—demanding justice, equal citizenship, and fundamental rights.[2] Following decades of social and political marginalization, women were determined to create a legitimate public sphere to voice their grievances and to play an active part in the political processes in their countries.

Over the course of the transition, women demonstrated deep commitment to democratic processes and to the realization of the revolutionary ideals in their countries. This commitment is evident in the unprecedented levels of women's turnout during the latest parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt and constitution referendums in both Egypt and Tunisia. While women have made undeniable achievements as an active part of the public sphere during these revolutionary moments—challenging stereotypes and altering perceptions about women in the region—it is still unclear what they have actually achieved over these past few years. Therefore, this analysis aims to offer a detailed assessment of women's substantive gains three years after the Arab Awakening in Egypt and Tunisia. To achieve this goal, this section offers an evaluation of the gender-related articles in both the Egyptian and the Tunisian Constitution—especially those directly related to women's political representation.[3] It concludes with proposing specific policy recommendations to further promote women's presence in the political decision-making process.

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[1]   Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl, eds., *Muslim Women and the Politics of Participation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Suha Sabbagh, *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996).
[2]   Marwa Shalaby, "The Arab Awakening and Gender: Challenges and Opportunities for Women" (Houston: Rice University's Baker Institute, 2013).
[3]   Throughout this section, I will be using Pitkin's definition of political representation as: "A public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements." (1967, p. 221).

The Path to the Tunisian Constitution: Women's Activism in Tunisia

Following months of political crises and heated debates between the ruling Islamist party (Ennahda) and the secular opposition, Tunisia successfully adopted its first democratic constitution[4]—after its ratification by an overwhelming majority—on January 26, 2014. Despite reservations on some of the articles in the constitution, the text was largely applauded by international and regional analysts[5] as a victory for women in Tunisia. After the fall of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's regime and the inception of the transitional period in the country, the task of drafting the new Tunisian constitution began as a joint venture between various societal and political stakeholders, including civil society organizations, women's groups, policymakers, and government officials. The substantial gains the new constitution grants women are mostly considered to be the realization of a long history of women's mobilization and political activism in the Tunisian context.[6]

The Tunisian constitution of 1959—drafted a few years after Tunisia's independence from the French colonial rule—largely paved the way for increased women's participation and inclusion by establishing a liberal, progressive Tunisian state.[7] Furthermore, President Habib Bourguiba succeeded in positioning himself as the champion of women's liberation and promulgated a skillful, politically-engineered "state feminism"[8] as a means to garner support, build legitimacy for the regime, and curb the opposition (especially the Islamists). Even before finalizing the 1959 constitution, Bourguiba pressured for the creation of the Tunisian Personal Status Code in 1956. These legal reforms were supplemented a few decades later with further family and personal status laws (e.g., the Tunisian Code of Nationality of 1990) that were—and are still—considered a major step forward for women in Tunisia.[9] These laws established unprecedented rights and freedoms for women, such as the rights of divorce, marriage, and equal citizenship; ended the legal guardianship of man over woman; and banned polygamy in Tunisia.

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[4] "Tunisia's Draft Constitution: An English Translation," *Tunisialive*, January 21, 2014, http://www.tunisia-live.net/2014/01/21/tunisias-draft-constitution-an-english-translation/.

[5] United Nations Development Programme, "Gender in the New Tunisian Constitution – Fact Sheet," January 28, 2014, http://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/advances_for_women_in_the_new_tunisian_constitution_1.pdf.

[6] Xan Rice, Katherine Marsh, Tom Finn, Harriet Sherwood, and Robert Booth, "Women Have Emerged as Key Players in the Arab Spring," *The Guardian*, April 22, 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/22/women-arab-spring.

[7] After gaining independence from the French rule, the newly established Tunisian state sought to adopt a moderate interpretation of Islam and enforce a more progressive version of Islamic laws and Sharia, especially in regard to women's personal freedoms and family laws. The main goal was to establish a modern centralized state and to put an end to the predominance of tribal and kin relationships in the country (Charrad 2009). As maintained by Moghadam: "[The Tunisian government] has prioritized women's emancipation and integration in the economy, and the constitutional and civil rights have reflected and reinforced this position." V.M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013).

[8] Moghadam, *Modernizing Women.*

[9] Valentine Moghadam, "Tunisia" in *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Citizenship and Justice* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005).

Despite the fact that Tunisian women were "handed down" their rights,[10] women's formal and informal organizations across the country continued to operate under close state supervision and were subject to numerous restrictions and regulations. Yet, women's rights organizations in the country became one of the most established and vibrant structures for women's activism in the entire region, relentlessly pushing for positive change for women and gender parity. The culmination of these efforts is clearly evident in the Tunisian Constitution of 2014. Essentially, the text of the constitution has three main areas of progress for women: an increased emphasis on gender equality, the state's commitment to eradicating all forms of violence against women, and the establishment of gender parity in all legislative assemblies.

Specifically, there are two provisions in the newly drafted constitution that embody these significant gains for women. The first is Article 21 that stipulates:

> "All citizens, males and females alike, have equal rights and duties, and are equal before the law without discrimination. The state guarantees to all citizens individual and collective rights. The state is also responsible to provide them with conditions to lead a dignified life."[11]

Another constitutional article of particular concern to women's political representation is Article 46. This provision marks another major improvement for women's status in Tunisia, as it stipulates that:

> "The state shall ensure the protection and support of women's accrued rights. The state should also guarantee the equal opportunities for men and women in carrying different responsibilities. The state will seek to guarantee gender equality in legislative assemblies. The state will take the necessary measures to eradicate violence against women."

While Article 21 enshrines gender equality in the social and legal realms by equating women with men in rights, duties, and responsibilities, Article 46 is a remarkable achievement for Tunisian women in the realm of political rights.[12] According to this provision, not only are women and men guaranteed equal representation in Parliament, but women will also be able to run for presidency—a constitutional right that has not been granted to women in any other country in the MENA region. Subsequently, necessary laws and legal mechanisms will be formulated to ensure the described representation of women in all levels of the decision-making process.

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[10] Mounira A. Charrad, *States and Women's Rights. The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[11] Constitution of Tunisia, art. 21, http://www.marsad.tn/uploads/documents/TnConstit_final_1.pdf.

[12] Naveena Kottoor, "Tunisian Women MPs Celebrate New Constitution," *Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention*, January 27, 2014, http://pncp.net/news/tunisian-women-mps-celebrate-new-constitution.

In regards to women's political rights, it is worth mentioning that Tunisia's new constitution stands out as a major leap even compared to the 2011 electoral system, established after the fall of Ben Ali's regime. The 2011 system required a vertical zipper (i.e., political parties should alternate between men and women on their ballots), which has limited women's presence in the current Tunisian Parliament to merely 25 percent of the total seats. The significance of this provision becomes even more evident when we consider that despite efforts by many Arab countries to promote women's presence in the political arena by means of gender quotas and other legal mechanisms (reserved seats as in the case of Jordan), the Arab world has continued to lag behind the rest of the world. The region has one of the lowest average percentages of women in government (17.8 percent) compared to Europe (24 percent), the Americas (24 percent), and sub-Saharan countries (21.8 percent),[13] which calls attention to the immediate need for such constitutional provisions to achieve fair representation for women. The inclusion of women in the decision-making process would also provide Arab women with the necessary powers to push for change,[14] ensure fair representation of women's interests,[15] and lead to a better deliberative process. Finally, the increased presence of women in leadership positions will considerably contribute to altering common regional stereotypes about women's roles as political leaders and allow women to stand as role models[16] for other women and girls across the MENA region.

Egypt's Uncertain Path to Democracy: The Politicization of Women

Following three years of political and ideological polarization, Egypt has recently ratified its newly drafted constitution by a 98.1 percent majority vote in a constitutional referendum January 14–15, 2014. After ousting former President Hosni Mubarak in early 2011, the process of constitution-drafting in Egypt has faced numerous diversions and obstacles. The rising tensions between the Islamists and the progressive forces in the country have resulted in many deadlocks and clashes over the past few years. As a result, Egypt has had to undertake the task of constitution-drafting three times since the January 25 revolution and had to administrate two constitutional referendums. Despite the fact that women's rights groups and activists in Egypt played a minimal role in drafting the constitution of 2014 (it is notable that less than 10 percent of the constitutional committee were women), the most recent constitutional referendum witnessed a remarkably high turnout among women—with the vast majority voting

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[13] "Women in national parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, last modified January 1, 2014, http://www. ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

[14] Pamela Paxton and Melanie M. Hughes, *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2014): 4.

[15] Leslie Shwindt-Bayer, "Still Supermadres? Gender and Policy Priorities," *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2006): 570–585.

[16] Christina Wolbercht and David E. Campell, "Leading by example: Female members of Parliaments as political role models," *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (2007): 921–39.

in favor of the new constitution.[17] Furthermore, over the two days of the referendum, women across Egypt celebrated the new constitution by chanting and dancing publicly in the streets,[18] defying their traditional roles in society, more determined than ever to play an active part in shaping the country's political scene.

Unlike their Tunisian counterparts, women's organizations in Egypt have mostly failed to push for genuine social and political reforms in the country over the past few decades.[19] Apart from being controlled by elites and middle-class women in Egypt (in a sharp contrast to the Islamist women's movement that focused attention on grassroots mobilization), these feminist movements struggled to build solidarity with other national and regional organizations. Despite the undeniable contributions of Egyptian women who advocated for a feminist agenda, demanded increased freedoms, and put an end to the British occupation in the country[20] during the early part of the 20th century,[21] women's movements witnessed a severe regression over the last few decades due to widespread state repression, state control of civil society organizations, limited funding, and the rise of political Islam and Islamic fundamentalism.[22] These developments have forced women back to the private sphere and, most importantly, have significantly limited their presence in the decision-making arena both as candidates and voters.

Despite the fact that women in Egypt gained the right to vote in 1956, women continued to play a marginal role in the political process. The notable regression of state-sponsored feminism over the last three decades of the 20th century made it even harder for women's groups in the country to push for a feminist agenda. In an attempt to promote women's inclusion in decision-making, the Egyptian government implemented a quota system in 1979 (30 seats out of 360 seats were reserved for women)[23]; however, the quota system was revoked five years later, and women's political representation continued to decline in the country. Women's political marginalization continued to surface even post-January 25 revolution, as women constituted merely two percent[24] of the Egyptian parliament of 2012.

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[17] Amina Abu Chehab, "Women reassert political role in Egypt," trans. Sahar Ghoussoub, *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/01/women-political-role-egypt-constitution.html.
[18] Mariz Tadros, "Egypt's constitutional referendum: The untold story," OpenDemocracy, January 17, 2014, http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/mariz-tadros/egypts-constitutional-referendum-untold-story.
[19] Krista Masonis El-Gawhary, "Egyptian Advocacy NGOs: Catalysts for Social and Political Change?" *Middle East Report* 214 (2000): 38–41.
[20] Thomas Phillip, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," in *Women in the Muslim World*, eds. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).
[21] Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and the Nation: Gender in the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
[22] John Esposito, "Islam and Civil Society," in *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East*, eds. John L. Esposito and Francois Burgat (London: Hurst, 2003).
[23] Gihan Abou-Zeid, "The Arab region: Women's access to the decision-making process across the Arab nation," in *Women, Quotas and Politics*, ed. D. Dahlerup (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[24] "Egypt," Quota Project: Global Database of Quotas for Women, last modified May 25, 2012, http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=EG.

A closer examination of Egypt's 2014 constitution shows little evidence that the issue of women's political inclusion was a priority for the policy and lawmakers in the country. Unlike Tunisia, which has taken the necessary steps to ensure equal representation for women in the political arena, Article 11 of the Egyptian constitution stipulates that:

> "The state shall guarantee the implementation of equality between men and women in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this constitution. The state shall take the necessary measures to ensure adequate representation of women in representative assemblies, in the manner specified by the law."[25]

In addition, Article 180 stipulates that women are granted "one quarter of the seats in elected local councils." As determined by these two provisions, there seems to be no solution in sight for women's underrepresentation in the Egyptian Parliament. Despite the fact that the state committed to take the necessary measures to ensure women's equal representation, it is still unclear how—especially given the fact that there are no explicit guarantees or quotas for women in Parliament.[26] Another issue Article 11 presents is how to determine the definition of "adequate" and how this "adequate representation" of women will be established. However, the fact that women were able to gain a 25 percent quota on the municipal level may signal a promising start for women to garner support on the grassroots level, gain voters' confidence, build women's confidence in regard to their own political and leadership skills, and eventually lead women to compete effectively on the national level.

Apart from the shortcomings of the 2014 constitution in regard to women's political representation, there are several areas of progress for women. For the first time, women were granted the right to full citizenship (Article 6).[27] Other areas of progress for women include the state's commitment to enshrine gender equality and to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women (Article 53). For instance, according to Article 11: "The state shall also be committed to protecting women against all forms of violence." Also, Article 19 emphasizes the right of education for girls. These changes will contribute to ushering women into a new era of political and personal freedoms in the country.

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[25] Constitution of Egypt, art. 11, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/20131206Egypt Constitution_DecAr.pdf.

[26] Menna Omar, "Women's Gains in the Egyptian Constitution of 2014," AGORA, February 3, 2014, http://www.agora-parl.org/news/womens-gains-egyptian-constitution-2014.

[27] This article stipulates: "Citizenship is the right of any child born to an Egyptian father or an Egyptian mother; that the child shall have the right, which is protected and regulated by law, to be legally recognized and given official papers indicating his personal information; and that the law should specify the terms for acquiring citizenship." Prior to this provision, women married to non-Egyptians faced great difficulties conferring citizenship to their children. According to Article 6 in the constitution of 2014, women will be able to pass on citizenship to their children.

The Way Forward

Despite the fact that Egypt and Tunisia's recent transitions to democracy bear many similarities, constitutionalism in both countries has taken very different routes—especially in regard to women's rights. The fact that Egypt's constitution was, and still is, based on Islamic "Sharia" law as the main source of legislation has significantly distinguished the Egyptian experience. The tension between the Islamist and the liberal forces in Egypt marred the political scene over the last few decades, eventually breaking the surface after the January 25 revolution.

While Tunisian women have continued to play a critical role as "moderating voices" across Tunisian society since the second half of the 20th century, the Egyptian scene has witnessed the absence of an organized "moderate" voice for women. Women's voices have been mostly silenced, and they have become incapable of confronting the sharp rise in Islamic fundamentalism in the country. This reality significantly dampened calls for change and led to further decline in women's rights and personal freedoms. Fortunately, the political scene in Egypt is currently ripe for women to seize the opportunity and to play a more active role, especially after the fall of Mohammed Morsi's regime and the considerable regression of Islamic Fundamentalism. However, there are three main points to be addressed in regard to women's rights to achieve gender parity—not only in Egypt and Tunisia but in the entire region.

- First, observing the current political scene in the region, it is clear that there is a huge gap between constitutional articles and laws and reality that needs to be immediately addressed. In addition, articles related to women's rights in both constitutions (Egypt and Tunisia) are mostly vague and open to multiple interpretations. This is why there is a strong need for organic and ordinary laws to implement the constitutional framework. Policy and lawmakers must ensure that these laws are strictly enforced and executed without discrimination.
- In addition, cultural stereotypes and the lack of societal support for women in leadership positions are the biggest obstacles facing women in the MENA region at present. Despite the fact that institutional mechanisms may help rectify some of these injustices, without parallel efforts on the societal level, these mechanisms may not be entirely effective (the Egyptian example in 1979).
- Finally, policymakers in the region should pay special attention to building strong political parties and to providing women with adequate financial means to compete for office. Recent research in the MENA region has shown that the lack of financial resources and structured state campaign funding continue to be one of the main impediments to women participating effectively in the electoral arena.

Finally, the Moroccan experience is a very intriguing case that may offer valuable insights regarding Egypt's current situation. Over the past decade, King Mohammed VI and his government coordinated efforts to co-opt women's issues to initiate a far-reaching

democratization process and to curb Islamic radicalism—especially after the Casablanca bombings.[28] Remarkably, secular women's movements in Morocco succeeded in organizing and joining forces with the Islamist women's networks to push for a "feminist agenda."[29] What was unique about the Moroccan experience was that secular women's groups effectively used the language of Islam to bridge the gap with Islamist women's groups, and they both succeeded to produce a coherent "feminist agenda" that allowed them to push for substantive reforms (i.e., the Moudawana reforms in 2004). The most important question now is whether women in the MENA region, especially in Egypt, are ready to put their disagreements aside and start working on a unified "feminist agenda."

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[28]   Fatima Sadiqi, "Facing Challenges and Pioneering Feminist and Gender Studies: Women in Post-Colonial and Today's Maghrib," *African and Asian Studies* 7 (2008): 447–470.

[29]   One of the biggest triumphs for Moroccan women's movements was the reform of the Moudawana (family code) in 2004. This reform highlighted the state's commitment to women's issues.

The Arab Spring and Israeli–Palestinian Peace
by Ben Stevenson

The dramatic changes sweeping across the Middle East over the past three years have largely bypassed the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Popular forces confronting long-standing autocracies in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere focused their demands on domestic political and socioeconomic reforms rather than Israeli or Palestinian concerns. Policymakers in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have viewed the new regional dynamic as either tangential or completely irrelevant to the issue of Israeli–Palestinian peace, at least in the short term. However, despite the perceived lack of impact on the current status of the conflict, the mobilizing power of the Arab Spring has reshaped the environment for negotiations in Israeli and Palestinian societies and created new demands and opportunities for a comprehensive, sustainable peace between the parties.

Introduction

The outlook for a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians was bleak even before the start of the Arab Spring. Despite the initial optimism following President Obama's 2009 speech at Cairo University where he announced his intention to "personally pursue" the two-state solution, the first direct negotiations between the parties collapsed only three weeks into the talks.[1] In late 2010, as a young Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire and triggered the first revolution of the Arab Spring, Israeli and Palestinian interlocutors exchanged recriminations and took unilateral action to gain the advantage in future negotiations. The Israeli government restored settlement construction in the West Bank to prenegotiation levels. The Palestinian Authority turned to the international community to pursue recognition of the Palestinian state in the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly.[2]

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[1] "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, June 4, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/.

[2] "Table 4. Dwellings, by stage of construction, district and construction initiator," Central Bureau of Statistics, November 22, 2012, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2012n/04_12_051t4.pdf; "An Insider's View of the Peace Process: A Palestinian Perspective," The Brookings Institution, December 8, 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2010/12/08-mideast-peace.

At the outset, the uprisings that toppled regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen—and that continue to fight against the Assad regime in Syria—did not use the Israeli-Palestinian issue as a mobilizing influence.[3] The youth organizations, labor unions, and opposition groups that took to the streets framed their demands almost exclusively in terms of domestic issues related to social justice, economic opportunity, and political legitimacy.[4] In each case, protesters mobilized against autocratic regimes with different policies toward Israel, ranging from Egypt's normalized relations and Tunisia's limited ties, to Libya and Syria's veiled or outright hostility.

However, as transitional governments took power and the uprisings spread with intensified violence to Syria, the implications of the Arab revolutions began to connect more directly with Israeli-Palestinian affairs.[5] The new environment led to extended debate on both sides about the implications of mobilized Arab publics and the proper response to the events of the Arab Spring.

Israeli Perspectives on the Arab Spring

Reacting to the rapid pace of events across the region, Israeli leaders initially chose to remain silent in public, while emphasizing the need for stability and pragmatism behind the scenes. Through private diplomatic channels in the United States, Canada, and the European Union, Israeli officials stressed the importance of Egypt's stability in particular and the need for the international community to not abandon President Hosni Mubarak without considering "their genuine interests."[6]

After the announcement of Mubarak's resignation, the consistent, if somewhat detached cooperation between Egypt and Israel on national security and economic issues evaporated overnight.[7] Although Egypt's new leaders emphasized their commitment to the 1979 Camp David Accords, the decisions to open the Gaza border, help broker Fatah-Hamas

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[3]   Katerina Dalacoura, "The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications," *International Affairs* 88 (2012): 75.

[4]   "Statement of the April 6 Movement Regarding the Demands of the Youth and the Refusal to Negotiate with any Side," *Jadaliyya Reports*, February 6, 2011, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/579/statement-of-the-april-6-movement-regarding-the-demands-of-the-youth-and-the-refusal-to-negotiate-with-any-side.

[5]   In Tunisia, a constitutional draft for the new government explicitly prohibited the normalization of ties with Israel and enshrined support for the Palestinians as official state policy. In Syria, hundreds of demonstrators on two occasions attempted to cross security barriers into Israel in what Israeli officials called a "cynical and transparent act by the Syrian leadership to deliberately create a crisis on the border so as to distract attention from the very real problems that regime is facing at home."

[6]   Barak Ravid, "Israel urges world to curb criticism of Egypt's Mubarak," *Haaretz*, January 31, 2011, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-urges-world-to-curb-criticism-of-egypt-s-mubarak-1.340238.

[7]   Abigail Hauslohner, "In the siege of Gaza, Israel walks a delicate line," *Time*, January 11, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1953015,00.html; Matt Bradley and Joshua Mitnik, "Egypt Cancels Israel Gas Deal," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 22, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303459004577360213475479688.

reconciliation, and cancel the natural gas supply contract with Israel all added to Israeli concerns about the outcome of the revolution.[8]

Perhaps the clearest sign of the change in Egyptian-Israeli relations occurred when Israeli forces pursuing Palestinian militants killed five Egyptian policemen along the Gaza border. In the days afterward, thousands of protesters in Cairo marched on Tahrir Square to voice demands for political reform and then continued on to the Israeli embassy, where they broke in and ransacked the building. Although the Egyptian military eventually regained control of the situation, prior to the fall of Mubarak, demonstrations of any kind at the Israeli embassy in Cairo were effectively banned.[9]

As the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt gained ground and the Syria uprising turned increasingly violent, Israeli leaders began to characterize the popular movements as misleading and as a dangerous development for the region in general, and for Israel in particular. Rather than sweeping reform bringing new opportunities of progress, the protests and opposition movements represented an ugly wave that exploited the fundamental lack of legitimacy among the secular republics of the region to advance a more nefarious agenda. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu labelled the ongoing trend as "Islamic, anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-Israeli and anti-democratic."[10] Another Israeli official summarized the situation stating, "We see it as Tehran 1979."[11]

In voicing a deep cynicism about the nature of the Arab Spring along their borders, Israeli leaders avoided connecting the regional political change to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon, in a *Foreign Policy* piece, discussed Israel's strengthened position as a result of the turmoil without any mention of Israeli-Palestinian issues.[12] Dore Gold, a former Israeli diplomat and advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu, is more explicit, stating not only that the Arab revolts had nothing to do with Israel, but also that any Israeli policy linking the two would fail as the Islamist parties gaining from the uprisings would find any Israeli peace plan unacceptable.[13]

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[8] "Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (1993): 123; Ethan Bronner, "Palestinian Factions Sign Accord to End Rift," *The New York Times*, May 5, 2011, A1.

[9] Salma Shukrallah, "Egyptians protest at Israeli embassy in Cairo following attacks on Gaza," *Ahram Online*, April 9, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/9619/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptians-protest-at-Israeli-embassy-in-Cairo-foll.aspx.

[10] Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu: Arab Spring pushing Mideast backward, not forward," *Haaretz*, November 24, 2011, http://www.haaretz.com/news/netanyahu-arab-spring-pushing-mideast-backward-not-forward-1.397353.

[11] Janine Zacharia, "Israel wary of transition in Egypt, concerned about regional stability," *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/israel-worries-about-peace-amid-regional-tumult/2011/02/01/ABZtFbE_story.html.

[12] Danny Danon, "Rider on the Storm: How Israel won the Arab Spring, and why a dangerous new instability threatens the entire region's geopolitical landscape," *Foreign Policy*, November 27, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/27/israel_arab_spring_iran_instability.

[13] Dore Gold, "Is Israel truly isolated?" *Israel Hayom*, September 16, 2013, http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=493.

Although Israelis predominantly viewed the Arab uprisings as a serious threat, opinion was not monolithic. Some policymakers and commentators, including Israeli President Shimon Peres, saw a possible opportunity for Israel to engage substantively with empowered Arab publics. According to this more favorable view of the Arab Spring, Israeli-Palestinian relations were not seen as unrelated, but as a critical component to Israeli success in the new environment. Rather than past arrangements between Israel and its neighbors that did not extend past Arab autocrats, progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions could open the door to the political, economic, and security benefits tied to peace and Israeli integration with the region.[14]

However, despite diverse Israeli perspectives on the implications of the Arab Spring, the Israeli strategic response has adhered closely to the view that the changes along Israeli borders represent, at best, an unrelated regional descent into chaos and, at worst, a newly empowered threat to the state of Israel. Acting on this outlook, Israel has pursued a policy of fortification and insulation, building a new security barrier along the border with Egypt, considering plans for one with Jordan, and engaging in the regional turmoil only as its security interests dictate in order to limit terrorist threats to Israel.[15]

As of now, this approach seems to have outlasted the initial surge of the "Islamic wave," at least in Egypt. There, and to a lesser extent in Syria, Israeli leaders have quietly welcomed the strong counter-revolutionary forces that precipitated the Muslim Brotherhood's fall from power and that continue to weaken Sunni terror groups as well as Bashar al-Assad, Hezbollah, and Iran in Syria's civil war.[16]

Palestinian Perspectives on the Arab Spring

Historically, the Palestinian issue has been overshadowed during periods of political upheaval in the Arab world. Throughout the Lebanese civil war, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the American invasion of Iraq, regional instability has worked against Palestinian efforts to achieve an independent state.[17] While leaving some room for optimism, the dominant Palestinian view has regarded the Arab Spring as the latest in a long line of regional developments that have set back the Palestinian cause. A little over a year after

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[14] *See* Elie Podeh and Nimrod Goren, "Israel in the Wake of the Arab Spring: Seizing Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges," (paper presented at the fifth annual Israeli Presidential Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, June 18-20, 2013); Volker Perthes, "Europe and the Arab Spring," *Survival* 52 (2011-2012): 80; Eylon Aslan-Levy, "Israel and the Arab Spring," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 19, 2012, http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Israel-and-the-Arab-Spring.

[15] Anne Barnard, "Israeli Warplanes Strike Near the Border of Syria and Lebanon," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2014, A3.

[16] Dannon, "Rider on the Storm"; Ariel Ben Solomon, "Analysis: With a Sisi presidency imminent, expect business as usual in Egypt," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 7, 2014, http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/With-a-Sisi-presidency-imminent-expect-business-as-usual-in-Egypt-340679.

[17] Ghassan Shabaneh, "Egypt and Syria's Effect on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Al Jazeera Center for Studies, November 4, 2013, http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/10/2013103014381658925.htm.

the Egyptian revolution, then-Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Salam Fayyad lamented that "The biggest challenge we face—apart from occupation—is marginalization. This is a direct consequence of the Arab Spring, where people are preoccupied with their own domestic affairs."[18] Indeed, on the fundamental issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab Spring and the accompanying Israeli policy response have left the Palestinians more isolated and in a weaker position than before the revolutions.

For Palestinians within the West Bank, the Arab Spring has led to increased settlement building on the ground and heightened security along the border with Jordan. Israeli construction data reported 2,534 new West Bank housing starts in 2013, an increase of over 120 percent from 2012.[19] While some analysts contest whether settlement construction constitutes "aggressive" Israeli activity—especially if the building is mainly in the "blocs" that will likely become part of Israel in a future deal—there is no doubt that the end result is additional obstacles for the peace process and heightened Palestinian distrust.[20] In addition, Israeli plans to build a new security fence along the Jordanian border to strengthen security in the event of an Islamist takeover of Jordan is viewed by Palestinians as a blatant breach of sovereignty to establish a permanent Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley.[21]

In responding to the new setbacks to the Palestinian cause, President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah have first had to address their own internal legitimacy crises sparked by the Arab Spring. The popular protests against undemocratic, repressive regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria had roots similar to the Palestinian context. The Palestinian Authority, while not as entrenched as the "monarchical republics" of the region, nonetheless repressed popular demonstrations, faced frequent charges of corruption, and lacked legitimacy from a free and fair electoral process.[22]

Palestinian leaders attempted to preempt a legitimacy crisis by pursuing an agenda of change. One of Abbas' first moves after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt was to call for new elections before the end of the year as part of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation discussed

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[18]   Ethan Bronner, "Mideast Din Drowns Out Palestinians," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2012, A1; Abdalhadi Alijla, "Are Palestinians the Losers of the Arab Spring?" *Mondoweiss*, January 10, 2014, http://mondoweiss. net/2014/01/palestinians-losers-spring.html; The dire situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria has been a particularly tragic consequence of the Arab Spring.

[19]   "Table 4. Dwellings, by stage of construction, district and construction initiator," Central Bureau of Statistics, March 3, 2014, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2014n/04_14_052t4.pdf.

[20]   Elliott Abrams and Uri Sadot, "Israel gets no credit from Obama for year of moderate settlement construction," *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/israel-gets-no-credit-from-obama-for-a-year-of-moderate-settlement-construction/2014/03/13/d2ee1b12-aab8-11e3-adbc-888c8010c799_story.html.

[21]   Nicola Pratt, "The 'Arab Spring' and the Israel-Palestine Conflict: Settler Colonialism and Resistance in the Midst of Geopolitical Upheavals," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 5 (2013): 24.

[22]   Jamal Juma', "PA repression feeds flames of Palestinian Discontent," *The Electronic Intifada*, July 3, 2012, http://electronicintifada.net/content/pa-repression-feeds-flames-palestinian-discontent/11456; The Palestinian legislative elections scheduled for 2009 were postponed due to Fatah-Hamas infighting. No elections have been held since 2006.

above.[23] In addition, Abbas urged "popular resistance" to support Palestine's diplomatic campaign for full membership in the United Nations.[24] However, the new direction failed to bring any real change, as the process of reconciliation and plans for new elections stalled and the Palestinian bid for full UN membership was effectively vetoed by the United States in the UN Security Council.[25]

The Arab Spring and Prospects for Peace

The Arab Spring has had a decidedly negative impact on the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace. As discussed above, on core factors of the negotiations—security in the Jordan Valley, settlements, refugees, and Fatah-Hamas reconciliation—the Arab Spring has tended to widen rather than narrow the gaps between the parties. In this context, the restart of direct negotiations between the parties in July 2013 is surprising, but does not offer much hope for reaching a final agreement, at least in the near term.

The resumption of talks resulted from two key factors. First, US Secretary of State John Kerry has adopted a personal, sustained model of US engagement including "marathon sessions" with Palestinian and Israeli leaders, as well as regional stakeholders.[26] The second and perhaps more important component has been Israel's periodic release of Palestinian prisoners, which gives President Abbas the necessary political cover to sit down for another round of talks for a peace process viewed as discredited in the eyes of the Palestinian public and much of its leadership.[27] However, Prime Minister Netanyahu has carefully balanced the prisoner releases with announcements of new building activity in the West Bank.[28] Ultimately, this key driver of negotiations not only leaves both sides unhappy, but also creates new facts on the ground, raising the requirements for a peace agreement as it is being discussed.

Although the short-term outlook is discouraging, the Arab Spring has created the potential for dramatic changes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from bottom-up public pressure, especially among young Israelis and Palestinians. To date, however, most of the popular

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[23] "Abbas Calls for Palestinian Polls," *Al Jazeera*, February 13, 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011213772175689.html.

[24] "Abbas tells Palestinians: Step up Arab Spring-style protests against Israel," *Haaretz*, July 27, 2011, http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/abbas-tells-palestinians-step-up-arab-spring-style-protests-against-israel-1.375589.

[25] Mick Krever and Joe Vaccarello, "With Security Council Report, Palestinian Statehood Bid Stalled at U.N.," CNN, November 11, 2011, http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/11/world/meast/un-palestinians/; Palestine gained non-member observer status one year later in the 2012 UN General Assembly.

[26] Michael R. Gordon and Jodi Rudoren, "Kerry Achieves Deal to Revive Mideast Peace Talks," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2013, A1.

[27] Khaled Abu Toameh and Herb Keinon, "Abbas Fails to Win PLO, Fatah Backing for Resuming Peace Talks," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 2013, http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Abbas-fails-to-win-PLO-Fatah-backing-for-resuming-peace-talks-320301.

[28] Herb Keinon and Yaakov Lappin, "Israel to again couple Palestinian prisoner release with new construction plans beyond Green Line," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 2013, http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/PM-to-announce-new-settlement-construction-336141.

protest movements—especially among Israelis—have not had a significant effect on the direction of the conflict or the prospects for peace.

On the Israeli side, there are clear similarities between the uprisings of the Arab Spring and the unexpected mass demonstrations in the summer of 2011.[29] At its peak, the movement brought more than 300,000 people (nearly 5 percent of Israel's population) to the streets in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. Like the Arab Spring movements, the core protesters consisted of educated, disaffected youth with a message of social justice, economic opportunity, and basic dignity that resonated with broader segments of society.[30] A few demonstrators made explicit connections to revolutions of the region, with one carrying a sign reading "Walk like an Egyptian," and another telling an Israeli radio station, "We have to do what they did in Egypt. *Yalla, Tahrir, Jihad.*"[31] Despite this remarkable use of the "Arab street" as a laudable model, the Palestinian issue, deemed by activists to be too politically divisive, was intentionally absent from the protesters' agenda.[32]

Palestinians used the techniques of mass mobilization for popular resistance and protest well before the start of the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, regional uprisings did give new legitimacy to the efforts of youth activists in particular to fight internal political stagnation in addition to Israeli occupation. Regarding internal Palestinian affairs, several new organizations, such as Gaza Youth Breaks Out (GYBO) and the March 15th Movement, attempted to use networks of social media–savvy activists to call for greater freedom, dignity, and accountability from Palestinian leaders and for Fatah–Hamas unity.[33] When the factions signed the initial reconciliation agreement in Cairo, many observers hailed the document as a victory for the new movements. However, as reconciliation efforts made little impact on the ground, leaders in Fatah and Hamas made efforts to crack down on the organization's networks, and many young Palestinians returned to the demoralized, depoliticized status quo ante.[34]

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[29] Menachem Klein, "Is the Arab Spring Israel's Winter?" *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 18 (2012).

[30] Melanie Lidman, "Scale of Social Justice Protests Surprises Experts," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 11, 2011, http://www.jpost.com/National-News/Scale-of-social-justice-protests-surprises-experts.

[31] Harriet Sherwood, "Israeli Protests: 430,000 take to the streets to demand social justice," *The Guardian*, September 4, 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/04/israel-protests-social-justice.

[32] Joel Beinin, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Arab Awakening," The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), August 1, 2011, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080111.

[33] Mohammed Matter 'Abu Yazan,' "From Manifesto to Reality: 'Gaza Youth Breaks Out' Member Tells His Story," *Al Jazeera*, October 20, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/201210159115846939.html.

[34] Mona Christophersen, Jacob Høigilt, and Åge A. Tiltnes, "Palestinian Youth and the Arab Spring," The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), February 2012, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/562d62ccb49d92227b6865a8b2d11e1a.pdf. In extensive interviews with Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza, the NOREF study reveals particularly interesting data on the relatively low awareness of these movements (only 20 percent of those surveyed had heard of GYBO, while 64 percent had heard of the March 15th movement) and the divided public opinion among youths on whether criticizing Palestinian leadership is "the right thing."

Organizations in the Palestinian territories have been more successful in using the momentum of the Arab Spring to reinvigorate popular resistance against Israel. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign, started in 2005, has received increased attention in Palestinian and Israeli circles as well as in the United States and Europe.[35] BDS, as well as a smaller organization called *al-Harak al-Shababi* (the youth movement), are part of a more decentralized protest trend that builds off of Palestinian frustration with leaders in both Fatah and Hamas. This newer strategy avoids the seemingly bankrupt negotiation process of Fatah and the PA as well as the violence of Hamas.[36]

Although the result of the current round of direct negotiations remains to be seen, the Arab Spring has raised new obstacles for a final agreement while offering little in the way of new advocates mobilizing for peace. Instead, the most effective bottom-up movements on both sides of the border have either been wholly irrelevant to the peace process or specifically worked to move beyond it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Arab Spring has challenged much of the standard wisdom about the societies and politics of the Middle East. For many, the internally focused revolutions that toppled long-standing regimes also delivered a decisive blow to the notion that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of regional dynamics.[37] However, the Israeli and Palestinian perspectives, policy responses, and popular movements that have been generated or influenced by the Arab Spring reveal a more complex system of interconnected events and processes.

Despite the setbacks, the Arab Spring has delivered to the prospects for peace a more strategic policy direction the region can use to reshape Israeli-Palestinian relations.

- First, policymakers should adopt a comprehensive strategy to stabilize the countries along Israel's borders, notably Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Although each of these crises presents significant challenges, resolving them addresses core regional rivalries that work against stability and unified policy approaches toward Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.
- Second, policymakers should consider the use of international organizations, particularly the UN Security Council, as a forum for unifying American and European positions toward not only Palestinian economic state building, but also the core political issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If the current Kerry initiative falters, this would continue to emphasize a negotiated

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[35] BDS National Committee (BNC), "*The Economist* warns Israel of growing strength of BDS," BDS Movement, February 8, 2014, http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/the-economist-warns-israel-of-growing-strength-of-bds-11729.

[36] Christophersen, Høigilt and Tiltnes, "Palestinian Youth and the Arab Spring."

[37] Crispian Balmer, "Analysis: Israeli-Palestinian riddle won't answer Middle East's woes," *Reuters*, August 4, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/04/us-palestinians-israel-mideast-analysis-idUSBRE97303X20130804.

settlement to the conflict while opening the door for new parties on the ground and abroad to contribute to negotiations.

- Third, policymakers should engage in greater public diplomacy efforts that listen to the newly mobilized Israeli and Palestinian publics and attempt to build a constituency in support of a sustainable end of conflict agreement.

Given the chaotic environment of the last three years, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have reacted predictably to consolidate their legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens and their strategic positions in relation to each other. The current initiative of Secretary Kerry follows a similar bunkering approach, protecting the perception of a viable two-state solution when both parties see little or no incentive to make the necessary sacrifices for peace. However, if policymakers are planning to simply wait out the storm of the Arab Spring, they will be unprepared for its aftermath. The people of the region have demanded change and seized a small piece of greater freedom and opportunity, which they will not easily surrender.

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Gulf Security and the Arab Spring

by Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Ph.D.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have weathered the initial storm of protests that shook the Arab world in 2011 and become more assertive in projecting leverage across the Middle East and North Africa. However, the Gulf states remain vulnerable to the potent social dimension of the recent upheaval as their technologically savvy, youthful populations are pushing the boundaries of political activity and public debate as never before. Policy responses to the Arab Spring prioritized instead short-term solutions aimed at restoring order at the expense of longer-term moves toward sustainable economic and political development.

Introduction

During 2011, a wave of popular protests and intensifying opposition to authoritarian governance began to sweep through the Middle East and North Africa. What developed into the Arab Spring led to the rapid fall of longstanding presidential regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and posed a grave challenge to leaderships in Syria and Bahrain. Popular anger at economic stagnation and political repression intersected with a disenchanted youthful population wired together as never before. Its size and contagious overspill distinguished the civil uprisings from other expressions of discontent.[1] They also revealed the narrow social base of support underpinning longstanding authoritarian rulers and their reliance on the use of coercion or the threat of force. The popular mobilization did not spare the GCC states, although the nature and depth of protest varied widely within the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates were relatively less affected by the instability than Bahrain, Oman, and parts of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

The civil uprisings shook the political economy of authoritarian state structures across the Arab world. Mohamed Bouazizi's act of self-immolation tapped into powerful feelings of helplessness among youthful populations lacking sufficient opportunities for employment or advancement. Additionally, it widened an intergenerational gap between rising demands of an educated populace and the perceived failure of gerontocratic regimes to manage or meet expectations. The spread of the unrest to Bahrain and (to a lesser degree) Oman indicated that mounting discontent was capable of affecting the comparatively

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[1]   Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, David Held, and Alia Brahimi, "The Arab 1989?" *Open Democracy*, February 11, 2011.

richer GCC states as well as the less resource-rich states of North Africa.[2] Notably, the Gulf states shared many of the same conditions—bulging young populations, high youth unemployment, imbalanced labor markets, and authoritarian regimes' reluctance to open up to meaningful political reform—that characterized the protests in Egypt and Tunisia. An example is unemployment among Saudi nationals between the ages of 20 and 24, which was reported at 38.4 percent in 2008, with the figure rising to 72 percent for women alone.[3]

The Social Dimension of the Arab Spring

Globalizing pressures also played a significant role in creating an enabling environment for the expression and overspill of popular frustration. The appearance of a form of "global politics" occurred alongside the revolution in information and communication technologies. This created new forms of private, public, and increasingly virtual spaces in which to mobilize, organize, and channel societal demands.[4] Political bloggers were active during the parliamentary elections in Bahrain in 2006 and Kuwait in 2008 and 2009, while online youth networks were important organizers of the "Orange movement" that secured important changes to the electoral process in Kuwait in 2006.[5] Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and encrypted communications technologies such as Skype and Blackberry Messenger emerged as forums for debate, coordination, and unregulated exchanges. In addition, Al Jazeera's coverage of the Egyptian uprising spread transformative images of largely peaceful demonstrations defying political suppression and refusing to submit to the security regimes that had kept authoritarian leaders in power. This was immediately evident in Bahrain, where cafes that usually showed Lebanese music videos instead aired nonstop footage from the enormous demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square.[6]

These new forms of media and communication had the greatest impact on a youthful generation who are highly technology-savvy. Their synthesis eroded the system of controls and filters constructed by ministries of information and official government media outlets. Significantly, they constituted social as well as technological phenomena as powerful agents of social change and political empowerment.[7] The social dimension of the Arab Spring has transformed notions of entitlement and demands for social justice, public accountability, and political freedoms. Yet official responses in the GCC states combined governmental handouts with crude attempts to censor and harass oppositional

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[2]   *Gulf States Newsletter* 900, May 13, 2011, p. 1.

[3]   Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States* 15 (2011): 20.

[4]   Emma Murphy, "ICT and the Gulf Arab States: A Force for Democracy?," in *Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, ed. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Steven Wright (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2008), 183.

[5]   Michael Herb, "Kuwait: The Obstacle of Parliamentary Politics," in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf*, ed. Joshua Teitelbaum (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 153.

[6]   Interviews with Bahraini activists in London, March and June 2011.

[7]   Ng Sue Chia, "Social Media's Role in Revolt: A Technological Or Social Phenomenon? — Analysis," *Eurasia Review News & Analysis*, March 22, 2011.

activists. Preemptive domestic responses encompassed "gifts" of money (Kuwait and Bahrain), the creation of additional jobs in already-saturated public sectors (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman), sizeable wage increases (Saudi Arabia), and social welfare redistribution (UAE). Even Qatar, with its fortuitous combination of substantial revenues and a small national population, prescriptively announced a record-breaking 2011–12 budget, while Saudi Arabia's $130 billion package of spending measures in welfare decrees—announced at short notice in February and March 2011—represented a sum larger than any national budget up until 2007.[8]

The great difficulty facing regimes across the Middle East and North Africa is that technocratic solutions can no longer suffice by themselves to meet (or extinguish) demands from populations wired together as never before. They also lock government spending into incrementally higher levels and create hostages to fortune should oil prices ever fall substantially.[9] Moreover, short-term largesse both masks and perpetuates the longer-term challenges of moving from comparative to competitive advantage in polities in which the state is no longer the primary provider. Domestic stability has been closely linked to the possession of substantial reserves of hydrocarbons that enabled ruling elites to co-opt opposition and spread wealth, but they will not last forever. Moreover, governments in the Gulf are uneasily aware that significant numbers of relatively less-well-off nationals and pockets of relative hardship exist, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman, but also in the poorer northern emirates of the UAE.[10] In this regard, stability is more fragile and transient than regimes would care to acknowledge, and the violent tensions in Bahrain and (to a lesser extent) Oman are indicators of the troubled transition to an eventual post-oil era that lies ahead.

Shaping the Regional Response

In addition to these very considerable domestic challenges, Gulf states' reactions to the Arab Spring demonstrated how intertwined were local, regional, and global considerations in framing the policy response. Two macrofactors came together to shape the evolving role of GCC-centered actors in the Middle East and North Africa. These can broadly be defined as the matching of Gulf states' *growing capabilities* with more expansive *policy intent.* From direct support for Bahrain and Oman to political and financial support for regimes in North Africa and rebel groups in Syria and Libya, the GCC states became major players in shaping the regional transition. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE therefore reacted to the outbreak of political upheaval by developing policies of far greater assertiveness in a bid to at least control the trajectories of change that seemed to be cascading through the region in 2011. In addition, GCC assistance mushroomed at a time when austerity packages and cost-cutting measures in Western states have reduced their capacity to engage at anywhere near the same level; this is especially pertinent

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8   Steffen Hertog, "The costs of counter-revolution in the GCC," *Foreign Policy*, May 31, 2011.
9   Ibid.
10   *Gulf States Newsletter* 906, August 5, 2011.

in the case of southern European states' (in)ability to take the lead in addressing the transitions underway in their immediate "strategic neighborhood" in North Africa or the Levant. A combination of Gulf states' abundant resources, linguistic and cultural connection, and geographical proximity thus propelled them to the forefront of regional engagement.

The GCC intervention into Bahrain in March 2011 preceded by one week the international community's intervention into Libya. The two developments revealed how an ostensibly similar principle—in this case, of intervention—can mean very different things in contrasting contexts to actors with diverging motivations and objectives. In Bahrain, 1,000 Saudi Arabian troops and 500 police from the United Arab Emirates crossed the King Fahd Causeway at the invitation of the ruling family on March 14. This "GCC force" ostensibly was intended to protect critical facilities such as oil and gas installations and the Bahrain Financial Harbour from the ongoing unrest. However, it signalled that Saudi Arabia was simply not willing to permit the pro-democracy campaign in Bahrain to endanger the position of the ruling family.[11]

Just days later, after the move into Bahrain, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1973, authorizing measures to protect the civilian population in Libya from the Gaddafi regime's onslaught against Benghazi and its eastern territory. While largely led by Western (and subsequently NATO) forces, Qatar played an instrumental role in rallying Arab support for the adoption of the no-fly zone at the UN. It also dispatched Mirage fighter jets to participate in its military enforcement in a powerfully symbolic act. Moreover, Qatar was one of the first states to recognize (and finance) the opposition's Transitional National Council in Benghazi, and Qatar Petroleum provided them with vital gasoline, diesel, and other refined fuels, as well as direct military assistance and supplies.[12] This high-profile role was consistent with Qatar's carving out a global profile in the strategic niches of diplomatic mediation and conflict resolution in recent years.[13]

The difficulty facing the Gulf states, and Qatar in particular, is one of squaring the ostensibly divergent choices to support the political status quo in one instance while materially and financially assisting the opposition to dictatorship in another. Qatar did not send personnel to Bahrain, yet its membership in the GCC left it open to accusations of double standards and guilt by association. The UAE, which did send police to Bahrain, was also active in the initial stages of the Libya campaign. Abu Dhabi hosted a meeting of the International Contact Group on Libya in June 2011 to discuss the transition to a democratic post-Gaddafi Libya, while Kuwait pledged $180 million in funding to the Transitional National Council.[14] Yet, in parallel to these moves (which included qualified

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[11]   Toby Jones, "Bahrain, Kingdom of Silence," *Arab Reform Bulletin*, May 4, 2011.
[12]   *Gulf States Newsletter* 903, June 24, 2011.
[13]   Anders Gulbrandsen, "Bridging the Gulf: Qatari business diplomacy and conflict mediation" (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 2010), 27–28.
[14]   "Libya Contact Group meets in Abu Dhabi," *Al Jazeera English*, June 9, 2011.

support for a change of leadership in Yemen and Syria), the GCC positioned itself as a counterrevolutionary bulwark to the Arab Spring where it threatened to clash with their regional interests. This was led by Saudi Arabia and the surprise announcement in May 2011 of possible expansion to include the two remaining Arab monarchies of Jordan and Morocco, followed by an attempt later in 2011 to deepen the existing integrative mechanisms into a "Gulf Union."[15]

These measures threaten to undermine the GCC states' "global branding" initiatives, at least in the short term. Much of the Gulf states' "strategic visions" revolved around their self-portrayal as secure places to do business in an otherwise unstable region, yet they remain vulnerable to external perceptions that stability is a façade resting on unsteady foundations. Outbreaks of civil resistance and repressive responses provide succor to skeptics of their global rise, with reactions to the Bahraini crackdown a case in point. In the short term, damage was done to Bahrain's international credibility with the cancellation in 2011 of flagship events such as the Formula One Grand Prix and the Volvo Golf Champions tournament, as well as keynote international conferences such as the Bahrain Global Forum and the Manama Security Dialogue.[16] In the longer term, the "Business-Friendly Bahrain" image (and slogan) that formed the cornerstone of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 was severely undermined, with many international firms relocating to Qatar and Dubai and reassessing proposals to open regional hubs in Bahrain.[17]

Policy Challenges and Responses

Globalizing flows represent a challenge to the GCC states as well as an opportunity. They enable the Gulf states to maximize their leverage in rebalancing global geoeconomic power but also inject new political and social pressures into the domestic and regional landscape. Powerful forces of communication and interconnectedness are giving voice to the new "global politics" as citizens across the Arab world mobilize in support of economic and social justice and political accountability and participation. Thus, the Gulf states find themselves caught between two paradoxical trajectories, able to project their influence and shape changing global institutions and structures, while susceptible to domestic contestation arising from the interlinking of local discontent with regional and international pressures for reform.

Moreover, the rise of the Gulf states as regional powers with international reach poses new challenges for policymaking in the Middle East and North Africa as the region emerges unsteadily from the Arab Spring. Specifically, their emergence as more assertive actors injects new policy considerations into how regional and international partners can most productively engage with each other. Chief among these challenges is the growing evidence that Gulf officials are prepared to "go it alone" and act unilaterally or, at best,

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15   Jane Kinninmont, "The maybe greater GCC," *Foreign Policy*, May 16, 2011.
16   "Bernie Ecclestone admits team protests will prevent Bahrain Grand Prix," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2011.
17   *Arabian Business*, April 28, 2011, www.arabianbusiness.com.

as a loose regional bloc to secure their interests in transition states. Such actions raise questions for the international community of how to align Gulf states' support in the short term with moves toward sustainable development and political inclusiveness in the longer run.

Policy recommendations for international actors looking to partner constructively with the Gulf states in the changing Middle East include the following:

- Acknowledge that the GCC states are firmly embedded in the global system of power, politics, and policymaking and possess both the intent and the capability to assert influence over regional issues.
- Understand that since the start of the Arab Spring, Gulf states' regional and foreign policies have become more overtly connected with attempts to control the pace and direction of change in transition states in the Middle East.
- Identify avenues of practical cooperation along issue-specific lines that best enable Gulf and international actors to pool resources in pursuit of common and manageable regional objectives.
- Generate mutual confidence-boosting measures that can underpin the scaling-up of GCC-international cooperation in support of the complex and targeted interventions needed to stabilize the broader region in years ahead.

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The Arab Spring's Hidden Effects on the Mideast's National Oil Companies

By Jim Krane

Introduction

The violent uprisings that have convulsed the Arab world since late 2010 appeared to bypass most of the region's major energy exporting states. With the exception of Libya, the countries with the most virulent uprisings play minor roles in world markets. But the lack of unrest does not mean that the region's national oil companies (NOCs) escaped unscathed.

Emerging data suggest that NOCs responded to the Arab Spring with activities that have made them less efficient. These include increased contributions to state social welfare schemes, distribution of patronage jobs, and delayed reforms of domestic energy subsidies. However, while these increased outlays may have set back firms' operating efficiency, the spending policy may have also contributed to the political stability that was, for the most part, maintained.

The Tension Between Operating Efficiency and State

NOCs have been shown to be less efficient producers of revenue than their shareholder-owned counterparts. Scholars describe how state ownership creates mandates that differ from the profit-maximization directives of shareholder-owned international oil companies (IOCs). In particular, NOCs are under political pressure to overemploy domestic labor and divert products into domestic markets at below-market prices. Marcel (2006) and Losman (2010) find that these social mandates bias NOCs toward shoring up home governments while shirking required capital investments. Eller et al. (2011) show that these non-commercial objectives reduce NOC capacity to generate revenue. Political objectives contribute to lower levels of oil and gas production and higher market prices than would occur under more efficient commercial development. However, Hartley and Medlock (2013) find that NOCs as a group have grown more efficient over the last decade, narrowing the gap between themselves and IOCs.

Oil's Counterrevolutionary Role

The state-society relationship in the energy-rich Arab states is built around social pacts in which welfare benefits and subsidies are exchanged for regime support. Distribution has allowed regimes in the richest oil states—the Gulf monarchies—to maintain long-

term stability through periods of enormous social change while concentrating political power in the hands of long-serving ruling families. These political structures are underwritten by the region's oil companies, whose exports comprise the largest share of GDP and government budgets. At times when regime survival concerns come to the fore, such as during the Arab Spring, national oil companies assume a counterrevolutionary function. Efficiency of operation is sacrificed in favor of social welfare imperatives that bolster regime legitimacy.

A survey of company documents and media reports documents these forces in action. NOCs increased contributions to government budgets and social welfare programs at the same time that they stepped up the delivery of discounted energy for domestic distribution. Some also increased hiring. These spending responses have exacerbated the growing fiscal and energy distribution burdens amassed by these states while impeding plans to reform them.

Prior to the uprisings, officials within several Arab governments made public statements about plans to address energy demand by reforming subsidies responsible for keeping prices low. In most cases, once the uprisings started these proposals were dropped and demand continued to rise. Electricity price reforms announced in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Abu Dhabi had not come to fruition at the time of writing. In Egypt, ongoing reforms of energy subsidies were halted by the global financial crisis in 2009 and had not been restarted following the ouster of the government of President Hosni Mubarak. In Syria, ongoing reforms of subsidized energy prices were halted after the Tunisia uprising, with the government reversing course to increase allotments of subsidized heating oil. Neighboring Jordan cut diesel and kerosene prices.[1] However, a modest subsidy reform did take place in Dubai during the politically fraught environment following the December 17, 2010, start of unrest in Tunisia.

A 2012 survey by the recruitment firm GulfTalent found employers reporting increasing pressure to hire nationals, as well as expanded workforces across the six Gulf monarchies. Among the 10 sectors surveyed, oil and gas firms (including those in the private sector) reported the highest rate of increasing headcount and the highest expectations for further hiring. The survey attributed the hiring impetus directly to government responses to the region's popular uprisings.[2]
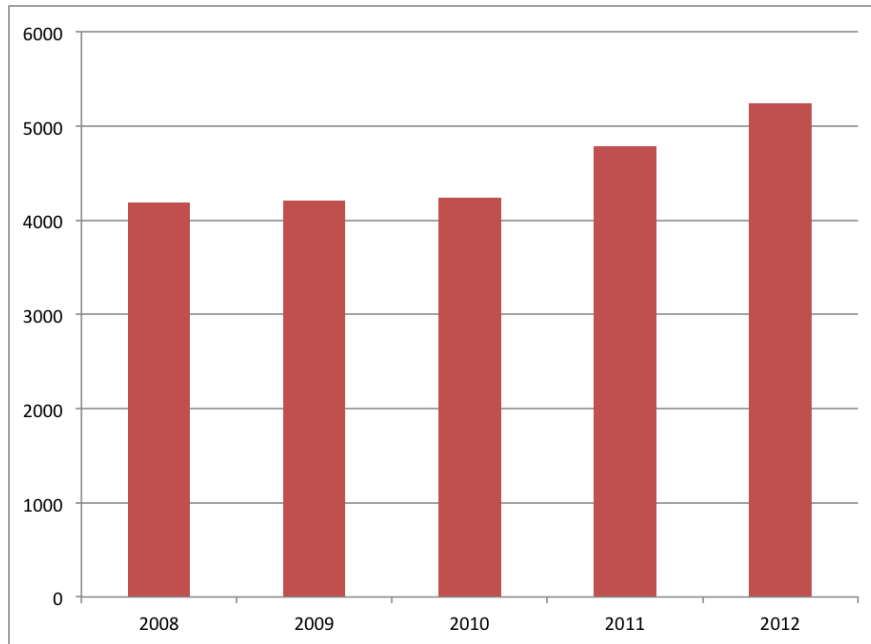
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[1] Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Syria hikes key price subsidy after Tunisia events," *Reuters*, January 16, 2011, http://af.reuters.com/article/tunisiaNews/idAFLDE70F0DH20110116?sp=true.

[2] *See* GulfTalent, "Employment and Salary Trends in the Gulf, Results of 2012 survey of HR managers in GCC businesses, with focus on hiring practices," 2012, http://www.gulftalent.com/home/Employment-and-Salary-Trends-in-the-Gulf-2012-Report-33.html. The survey measured hiring among state-owned as well as private sector firms. It is possible that smaller private sector firms also experienced decreased revenue per employee. The survey also mentioned that pay hikes awarded to public sector employees has made it harder for private firms to attract nationals.

Highlights: Oman

The 2011 annual report of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) declares that the company hired 787 new workers, a level comprising "a record number of Omani nationals." In 2012, PDO hired another 1,167 Omanis to reach a new record level of 5,240 Omani employees.

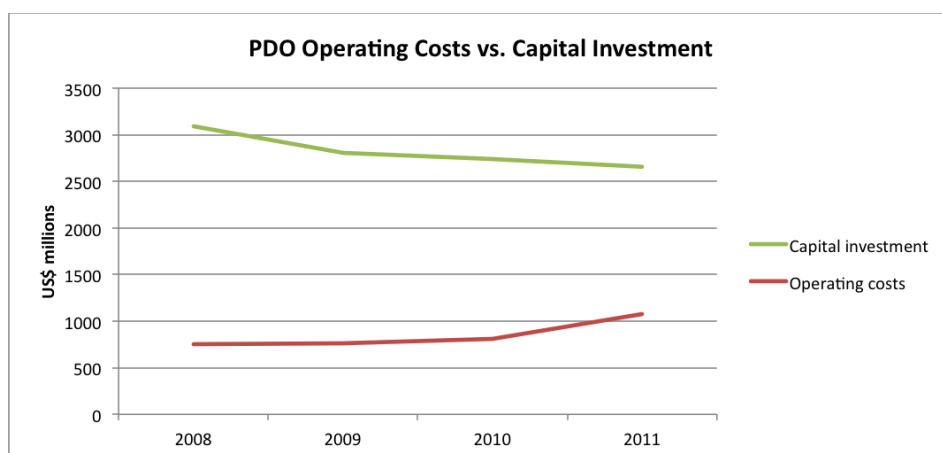*Figure 1 — PDO Omani Staff Increases*

PDO reported a 13 percent boost in Omani nationals employed in 2011 and a 9 percent increase in 2012. Source: PDO 2011, 2012

The Omani NOC also launched an initiative to hire Omani-owned subcontractors and vendors, announcing the creation of a total of 4,300 new jobs through increased in-country spending.[3] In addition, the company launched a social investment program that offered job training, as well as grants for charities, camel racing, and schools. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the company's operating costs rose sharply in 2011, while capital investment spending declined.

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[3] *See* managing director's comments, Petroleum Development Oman, Annual Report 2011, page 6, http:// www.pdo.co.om/Publications/_PublicationsFile_Annual%20Report%20201120127309952.pdf.

Figure 2 — Operating Costs Crowd Out Capital Investment

Source: PDO 2012

Further, plans to raise the subsidized electricity prices charged to Oman's commercial and industrial sectors were placed on hold. Policymaking officials said reforms had been delayed by the 2011 unrest, even though the increase would not have affected the politically sensitive residential sector. In the meantime, rising gas demand has forced Oman to divert exportable gas into the domestic economy, leaving its LNG export facilities operating at 80 percent of capacity (Darbouche 2012). Gas exports are expected to continue to decline.

Highlights: Bahrain
The response of the Bahrain Petroleum Co. (BAPCO) to the violent uprising included the firing of nearly 300 workers who took part in Arab Spring demonstrations.[4] The absence of workers forced the Bahraini NOC to reduce some operations. BAPCO also issued bonuses to employees who remained loyal. In addition, BAPCO "accelerated its obligations" in other social causes, reporting an increase in training and scholarships, as well as donations to community programs, charities, and sporting and business events.[5] Bahrain also dropped 2010 plans for higher fuel prices for "companies, affluent people and expats."[6] In 2013, the government revisited subsidy reform on a more modest basis, announcing that diesel prices would rise by 80 percent over the three years to 2017, from $1.02/gallon (27 US cents/liter) to $1.82 gallon (48 US cents/liter).[7]

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[4]   "Bahrain's Bapco fires nearly 300 employees," *Reuters*, May 11, 2011, http://www.arabianbusiness.com/bahrain-s-bapco-fires-nearly-300-employees-399252.html#.UwUzxfldWgY.
[5]   "Energising the Future: Annual Review 2011," Bahrain Petroleum Co., pages 3, 15, http://www.bapco.net/ebook/annual-rev/2011/files/bapco%20ar11_web.pdf.
[6]   *See*, for example, "Bahrain unions seek say in subsidies decision," *TradeArabia News Service*, November 24, 2010, http://www.tradearabia.com/news/ECO_189397.html.
[7]   "Bahrain will lift diesel prices to cut subsidy burden," *Reuters*, December 24, 2013, http://www.arabnews.com/news/497496.

Highlights: Algeria

The Algerian government responded to the unrest with an outpouring of patronage spending, notably offering salary increases and "business incubation" loans to unemployed youths on very favorable terms.[8] Algerian NOC Sonatrach said it had increased hiring. After reporting an 11 percent rise in investment in 2010, Sonatrach reported a significant drop in capital spending in 2011. The country finds itself in a similar bind as its counterparts to the east, with domestic consumption (fueled by very low domestic prices, smuggling, and high population growth) rising at a faster rate than production, which—all else constant—will begin displacing export capacity and revenues.

Highlights: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's NOC, Saudi Aramco, is the world's largest oil company by reserves and production. It has traditionally been exempt from political manipulation and some of the kingdom's cultural restrictions, and is left to operate as a profit-making entity.[9] As such, Hartley and Medlock found Aramco one of the most efficient wholly government-owned NOCs. Despite this, Aramco remains the key source of government revenue and, simultaneously, the dominant source of underpriced fuels for the kingdom's needs in transportation, industry, and power generation. Its annual reports detail increasing local procurement, preferential home loans, and free building lots for employees, and training of young Saudis for new downstream jobs. It reported "a significant increase in the number of new employees hired" and a "generational shift" in the workforce, with 40 percent under the age of 30 within five years.[10] Meanwhile, Saudi electricity authorities appeared to drop plans for higher residential electricity rates. The kingdom's electricity regulator, Abdullah al-Shehri, said in 2010 that he would seek approval for higher residential prices for Saudis who could afford them. But in an interview in 2012, al-Shehri said political developments led him to delay his request.[11] As of the time of writing, there was no sign of a change in subsidies driving electricity consumption. More recently, Saudi Electric Co. chief executive Ali al-Barrak added his voice to calls for reform, suggesting that subsidies should only be delivered to low-income customers.[12]

Highlights: United Arab Emirates

Prior to the Arab Spring, the UAE's two NOCs—which had already imposed the Gulf's highest transportation fuel prices—were in the process of phasing out subsidies on gasoline and diesel fuel. Plans to hike prices were halted in Abu Dhabi after the Arab Spring, when a flurry of demands emerged for prices to be aligned with much lower

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[8]   Adam Nossiter, "Algerians Belittle Elections, but Not Enough to Protest," *New York Times*, May 19, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/world/africa/in-algeria-belittling-elections-but-no-arab-spring.html.
[9]   Marcel, Oil Titans, 62–63. Marcel writes that Saudi Aramco operates under its own rules within the country's tightly controlled environment. This includes conducting business in physical as well as cultural isolation from the rest of Saudi Arabia on its own compound, where women retain more rights inside its perimeter than outside.
[10]   "Shaping the Future: 2012 Annual Review," Saudi Aramco, page 10, http://www.saudiaramco.com/content/dam/Publications/Annual%20Review/AnnualReview2012/2012AnnualReview_EN.pdf.
[11]   Author interview, Abu Dhabi, March 6, 2012.
[12]   "Saudi Arabia Oil & Gas Report Q1 2014," Business Monitor International, London, 37.

levels in neighboring states. But Dubai managed in 2013 to raise diesel prices to $3.83/gallon ($1.01/liter), nearly reaching the average 2012 US price.[13]

Dubai in 2011 also imposed a 15 percent hike on electricity and water prices, including on the politically powerful citizen-residential sector. The increase triggered a citizen backlash and the regime compromised on aspects of the increase, but overall the new prices held. In 2010, Abu Dhabi officials said the emirate was preparing an increase in heavily subsidized electricity and water prices alongside a new residential billing format that revealed the services' true cost.[14] The new bills were released in 2012, but the increase in prices did not take place.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

National oil companies in the major Arab oil-producing states appear to have complied with increased state demands for cash and in-kind resources. Political overseers have then deployed these resources to purchase political support among citizenry in an effort to reduce the appeal of pan-Arab revolutionary rhetoric. These efforts appear to have succeeded. While several of these countries experienced increases in anti-regime protests, only Bahrain underwent a serious uprising that threatened its Sunni-dominated regime. In his pathbreaking work on the causes of political violence, Gurr (1970) argues that individuals' discontent is driven by their expectations, which often defy an objective observer's assessment of poverty. A key predictor of political violence is a progressive and palpable decline in living standards. Incumbent regimes can minimize the potential for collective violence by maintaining the status quo in the distribution of social, economic, and political goods.

In their responses to the Arab Spring, surviving regimes governing wealthy oil states appear to have gone beyond Gurr's advice. Rather than maintaining the distributional status quo, which, in Libya, and also in Bahrain and Oman (and arguably Kuwait and eastern Saudi Arabia), was insufficient to prevent political violence, these regimes have increased their social welfare spending while keeping intact subsidies that had been targeted for reform. The funds and resource products behind this distributive munificence are supplied by their national oil companies. These companies have increased contributions to state budgets, increased supply of feedstocks and fuels to meet subsidized domestic demand, and increased hiring on their own workforces. There are signs that they may have also reduced capital investments in future production. These moves also increase the medium-term pressure on governments to reform prices and behavior that has exacerbated consumption of exportable resources while increasing

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[13] Ameena Bakr, "'Cheap' UAE gasoline: citizens and industry square up," *Reuters*, May 30, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-emirates-petrol-idUSBRE84T0VW20120530.

[14] Author interviews with Nick Carter, director general, Regulation and Supervision Bureau, Abu Dhabi, November 9, 2010; and David Scott, executive director, Economic and Energy Affairs Unit, Abu Dhabi Executive Affairs Authority (telephone interview), November 11, 2010.

fiscal dependence on ever-higher oil prices. Increased patronage also undermines states' long-term progress toward economic diversification by giving citizens a financial interest in counterproductive policy.

However, high levels of efficiency may be good for NOCs and their wherewithal to invest in future production, and it may be beneficial for international energy markets. But it may not be so good for political stability within NOC home countries. If last decade's increases in NOC efficiency were brought about by retrenchment policies such as streamlined workforces and social welfare programs, increasing efficiency may have actually contributed to the socioeconomic grievances that caused the pan-Arab uprisings. In that light, the increases in patronage can be viewed as a rebalancing of NOC priorities.

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3. Gurr, Ted R. 1970. *Why Men Rebel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
4. Hartley, Peter R., and Kenneth B. Medlock III. 2013. "Changes in the Operational Efficiency of National Oil Companies." *Energy Journal* 34, no. 2.
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6. Marcel, Valerie. 2006. *Oil Titans: National Oil Companies in the Middle East.* Baltimore: Brookings Institution Press and Chatham House.

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From Progressive to Repressive:
The Role of Social Media in the Syrian Conflict

By Ariana Marnicio

The advent and popularization of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter transformed the nature and capabilities of protest movements during the Arab uprisings. Social media was a medium through which the truth could finally be told after years of repression and censorship. By providing an alternative to the government's carefully cultivated and controlled narrative of the conflict, social media supplied a neutral space for a spectrum of opinions and experiences. At the beginning of the Arab uprisings, social media played a critical role in disseminating information, organizing, and promoting the work of peaceful protestors. More recently, however, it has been appropriated by authoritarian regimes, most notably in Syria, and has become a channel of communication that circulates both propaganda and truth. As this "socially mediated" battle continues, the international audience is left to parse a contradictory narrative of the conflict. The aim of social media dialogue on the Syrian conflict has become the condemnation and repudiation of the opposing side in the eyes of foreign powers, rather than an outlet for sharing personal experiences and opinions. In this cyber battleground, the militant and brutally efficient organizations of the Syrian regime have dominated and effectively silenced the voice of the opposition.

Constructing the Narrative

Social media is often credited with providing a more accurate and up-to-date stream of information on the uprisings, particularly in a region where many conventional media sources are funded and controlled by the government.[1] After decades of repression, the citizens of Syria were finally able to express themselves and document in real time the atrocities that were being committed. Due to the lack of professional journalists in the country, YouTube videos and Twitter updates constituted the bulk of the coverage on traditional news sources, thereby intensifying the need for citizen journalism.[2] The footage taken on the ground and events described via Facebook and Twitter informed the international community, and therefore foreign policy decisions related to the conflict.

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[1]   Habibul Haque Khondker, "Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring," *Globalizations* 8 (2011): 675–679.
[2]   Sahar Khamis, Paul B. Gold, and Katherine Vaughn, "Beyond Egypt's 'Facebook Revolution' and Syria's 'Youtube Uprising:' Comparing Political Contexts, Actors and Communication Strategies," *Arab Media and Society* 15 (2012).

The Syrian conflict brought with it an overwhelming stream of images, videos, and tweets from people on the ground. Rami Nakhla, a Syrian online activist, stated, "A huge part of this revolution is exposing Assad of crimes and making sure the Assad regime is held accountable for those crimes."[3] At the start of the revolution, the Syrian opposition formed a coherent narrative that juxtaposed the opposition's peaceful requests with the regime's violent response. In their recordings, activists quickly adopted the technique of saying the name of the city as well as the date and time in order to prove their credibility.[4] The Syrian opposition often directed their updates to foreign media correspondents, either by sending them videos directly or using the @ function on Twitter, as a means to further broadcast their message.

The idea of amplifying a message to reach a broader audience and targeting this audience intentionally is inherent in social media. At the start of the protests, the majority of tweets about the Syrian uprising were written in English, suggesting that their message was intended for the English-speaking, Western public.[5] By amplifying the message, the Twitter users intended to alert those who could apply pressure to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime. By June 2011, however, Arabic became the dominant language of the discourse. Interestingly, the English-language Twitter discourse continued, but diverged from the Arabic-language discussion in theme and imagery.[6] The variation and lack of engagement between these two conversations has far-reaching implications on each community's understanding of the conflict.

Recognizing the impact of this unified narrative, the Syrian regime quickly attempted to redefine its character in the media to better suit its agenda and prove its legitimacy to the international audience. Al-Assad is quoted as saying, "The thing that annoys me in the protests is those people who take photos and video to send them to hostile TV stations."[7] The nontraditional documentation of the Syrian crisis lent itself to contestation and manipulation. In response to videos depicting the regime's violent repression, al-Assad's supporters posted videos of protestors committing atrocities against the police and other citizens. The Syrian regime would not merely take a defensive stance within the cyber realm, but would increase its offensive tactics as the conflict progressed.

The Cyber Battleground

By incorporating social media into its defense, the Syrian regime has muddied the once clear narrative of the conflict. It is no coincidence that the Syrian regime actively chose to unblock social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube, which had been banned

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[3] Marc Lynch, Deen Freelon, and Sean Aday, "Syria's Socially Mediated Civil War," *Peaceworks* 91 (2014).
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Juliette Harkin, "Is it Possible to Understand the Syrian Revolution Through the Prism of Social Media?" *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 9 (2013): 95–114.

since 2007, as the opposition movement developed.[8] "There is a race in social media now, among the activists and the political opposition, to get more followers on Twitter or to be heard more on Facebook or to send information about what they are doing,"[9] explained Nada Alwadi, a Bahraini journalist, to the Center for International Media Assistance. Alwadi's comments indicate that the Syrian conflict has extended into the cyber realm.

As the Syrian opposition posted YouTube videos depicting regime brutality, the regime posted videos demonizing the protestors. With technological advancements in the field of digital editing, verifying the validity of materials—produced by either side—becomes problematic.[10] News agencies such as the BBC and Al Jazeera have used videos from YouTube or the Internet without citing its original source or owner—an oversight that disregards the political stance of the creator of the content.[11] Audiences often make the assumption that videos on the ground reflect the reality of the conflict, but much of these materials are carefully developed and targeted toward a Western audience to elicit a policy response.

The role of social media and technology became especially important after the formation of the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) in May of 2011. This cyberbattalion has close connections to the Syrian Computer Society, headed by Bashar al-Assad himself before his presidency.[12] Although the Syrian regime does not claim responsibility for the army's activity, al-Assad has publicly thanked the organization, hailing them as a "real army in virtual reality."[13] The organization takes a very systematic, even militaristic approach to attacking the opposition's online activity. SEA's strategy to attack the opposition is threefold: First, to deface and distort the Syrian opposition's presence online. Second, to launch cyberattacks on Western websites, particularly those that have displayed support to the opposition, and third, to spam frequently visited Facebook pages with pro-Assad comments.[14]

The central aim of these three tactics is to confuse the narrative of the opposition by discrediting their leaders or by saturating their spheres of influence with antirevolutionary sentiment. The SEA's online aggressive activity is primarily phishing, or the acquisition of login and other personal information to pose as that individual or post viruses meant to target that individual's network. This breach of privacy not only corrupts and distorts the target's social media activity, but exposes their personal information as well, leading to

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[8]   William Lafi Youmans and Jillian C. York, "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements," *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 315–329.

[9]   Jeffrey Ghannam, *Digital Media in the Arab World One Year After the Revolution* (Washington, DC: Center for International Media Assistance, 2012).

[10]   Lynch, Freelon, and Aday, "Syria's Socially Mediated Civil War."

[11]   Ibid.

[12]   Helmi Noman, "The Emergence of Open and Organized Pro-Government Cyber Attacks in the Middle East: The Case of the Syrian Electronic Army," *Information Warfare Monitor*, May 30, 2011, http://www.infowar-monitor.net/2011/05/7349/.

[13]   Youmans and York, "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit."

[14]   Noman, "The Emergence of Open and Organized Pro-Government Cyber Attacks."

dangerous consequences in the real world. Once an activist's identity has been revealed, many are forced by the government to go into exile or are arrested.[15]

Interestingly, much of the SEA's hacking activity has been directed at Western news sources such as the New York Times, Forbes, the Huffington Post, and the Washington Post. The SEA's cyberattacks have increased significantly since March of 2013, and presumably will continue to increase in the current year.[16] This sharp increase correlates with the appearance of chemical weapons in Syria, a critical moment in determining the necessity of foreign intervention. On August 27 of 2013, the SEA successfully shut down the New York Times website for 20 hours, at the same time the United States debated how to respond to the regime's use of chemical weapons.[17] Given the nature of these cyberattacks, it would appear that the Syrian regime is not trying to gain the favor of the United States, but rather seeks to confound the discussion of the conflict in American media and perhaps also to assert some sort of dominance or legitimacy within the cyberworld as a whole.

Policy Imperatives

Social media is no longer simply a means of connecting individuals, but it is also a tool for sharing information with the goal of constructing legitimacy for both revolutionaries and authoritarian regimes. Social media sites have become contested spaces during the Arab uprisings, therefore it is crucial to protect the identity and security of activists online, as well as their right to express their opinions and views of the conflict to both a local and international audience. Although social media sites were not specifically designed to be activist-friendly platforms, there are several policies that limit activists' ability to safely disseminate information. For example, Facebook prohibits the creation of anonymous accounts, which is a means of protecting one's identity from government discovery. The preservation of anonymity in social action is critical to the security of all online users, particularly those in an unjust and repressive political environment.[18]

Community guidelines, along with lack of anonymity, limit the Syrian opposition's ability to contribute to the dialogue. In order to prohibit exceedingly graphic and abusive materials, most social media sites allow users to flag or report inappropriate posts. While these rules and regulations are in place to protect the general community from spam and inappropriate materials, supporters of the regime frequently report the opposition's materials to prevent their content from being seen. This automated system, left unchecked, impedes the opposition's ability to contribute to the narrative. Additionally,

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[15]   Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, "Beyond Egypt's 'Facebook Revolution.'"
[16]   Information compiled by Max Ingraham-Rakatansky, research intern for the Program on Energy and Cybersecurity at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.
[17]   Suzanne Choney, "New York Times hacked, Syrian Electronic Army suspected," *NBC News*, August 28, 2013, http://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/new-york-times-hacked-syrian-electronic-army-suspected-f8C11016739.
[18]   Youmans and York, "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit."

social media companies frequently receive requests from governments to provide their user data or to remove specific content.[19] Although Google and Twitter release these requests publicly, it can be assumed that many such transactions occur under the radar in order to maintain a positive relationship with the requesting foreign government and continued access to its user-base.

Social media sites have tremendous power over the dissemination of information and should be regulated in a way that recognizes that influence. These sites must adopt policies that protect the rights and freedoms of all of their users, regardless of political alignment, and should take measures to limit governments' ability to manipulate the medium by allowing for anonymity and carefully reviewing flagging requests. NGOs that work to expose these online abuses should be supported. Policymakers should utilize social media data; however, it cannot be a substitute for on-the-ground intelligence, and the origin of the data and the biases of its creator must be taken into account.

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[19] Ibid.