

# THE ARAB SPRING

*Change and Resistance in the Middle East*



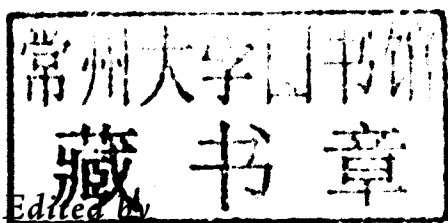
EDITED BY

MARK L. HAAS and  
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*Change and Resistance  
in the Middle East*



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# **The Arab Spring**

*Mark dedicates the book to his aunt Trudy and  
uncle John, for a lifetime of love, support, and interest  
in his work and well-being. He cannot thank  
them enough for all they have done.*

*David dedicates this book to his wife, Judy Dunlap,  
for her unswerving support, energy, and love, without  
which tasks such as this would be impossible.*



## Preface

WRITING OR COMMENTING on current or recent events in the Middle East is a hazardous business. The fluidity of the moment and the different outcomes of a particular course of events, frequently resting on the whim of individuals, often make predicting anything an exercise in futility—or a book risking being partially outdated before it is even published. Who would have guessed that a twenty-something fruit vendor in Tunisia, by lighting himself on fire in late 2010 in abject frustration and anger at his lot in life, would unleash a torrent of protest that may rewrite the landscape of the Middle East? Sometimes, however, such is the importance of a series of events that they demand coverage and examination in the short term. This is the case with the so-called Arab Spring that engulfed the region—and riveted the world—beginning in late 2010 and continuing throughout all of 2011 and well into 2012. Although the ultimate impact of the uprisings of the Arab Spring may not become truly apparent for a generation, attempting to understand the origins of the uprisings, the actual course of events in particular countries directly and indirectly hit by the Arab Spring, and the regional and international responses is necessary in order to acquire a level of comprehension that will allow us to track and give meaning to all this history and politics in the making.

The editors of this volume selected the countries and topics to be examined. Anyone who has ever edited a volume such as this, however, understands that sometimes the topics chosen depend upon who is or is not available and who can or cannot complete their chapters in the requisite amount of time—which was very short in this case in order to quickly react to what has happened in the Middle East. Additionally, we are, as always, mindful of page counts—and

thus of the price of a book—in order to make this volume affordable. We are very happy with the final tally of topics and pages. We believe that it was necessary to paint a broad picture of the Middle East in order to account for the interplay between actors and states at the domestic, regional, and international levels. As such, we have chapters on Arab countries that gave rise to the term “Arab Spring” as well as chapters examining regional and international players that have become deeply involved in the Arab Spring and/or deeply affected by it. We think this will be particularly useful for the interested general public and in the classroom for students attempting to understand the short- and long-term causes of the Arab Spring itself as well as the complex matrix of the Middle East that often reverberates well beyond its geographical limits. This book should act as an in-depth introduction to the Arab Spring and/or a supplementary reader for courses on modern Middle East history, politics, and international relations.

The editors first and foremost want to thank the contributors, whose expertise and dedication to their work are recognized and much appreciated. They had a small window of time in which to write their chapters, and they all answered the bell. It is quite the compilation of well-known specialists in their respective fields, so we feel particularly fortunate to have gathered such an esteemed group on short notice. We also want to thank Westview Press for their professional and efficient handling of the process, particularly Kelsey Mitchell, Priscilla McGeehon, and Collin Tracy. When we approached editors at Westview Press with the idea of this volume, they instantly saw the value of it and acted accordingly in an expeditious fashion in order to get this volume out in a timely manner. Most importantly, the editors want to profusely thank their families, without whose support none of this would be possible. Finally, we hope that the Arab Spring and its aftermath, which have thus far resulted in so much change—or at least the potential for it—in a way that has been at one and the same time hopeful and foreboding but also very disruptive, often at the cost of thousands of lives, may ultimately bring peace, freedom, and prosperity to peoples who deserve it no less than anyone else.

## A Note on the Text

ONE OF THE CHALLENGES of compiling an edited volume is ensuring stylistic and spelling consistency among chapters written by different contributors. In particular, many authors have used their own system of transliteration. We generally retained each author's style except for names, places, and terms that appear throughout the text. In these cases, we selected one variation of spelling, which is often the more recognizable version rather than a strict transliteration: for example, Assad rather than Asad; Hussein rather than Husayn; and Gadafi rather than Qadhdhafi, Kaddafi, Qaddafi, or numerous other transliterations of the name of the former Libyan leader.

Also, as is the case with every other region on earth, Middle East history, politics, and even geography are subject to many different interpretations depending upon who is doing the talking or writing. As such, wars, events, and places are often referred to in sometimes drastically different ways. Even the term "Arab Spring," as pointed out in the Introduction and in several other chapters, is not at all universally accepted and is something of a misnomer. As a historical example, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (the most neutral and objective of all appellations for the event) has been called the October War, the Ramadan War, the War of Liberation, and the Yom Kippur War. In the few cases such as this one, authors sometimes employ one particular reference; however, the reader should be aware that oftentimes there are other references as well that have meaning to different populations, and for the most part this has been pointed out by the authors and/or editors.

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# Introduction

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MARK L. HAAS AND DAVID W. LESCH

THE SO-CALLED ARAB SPRING unexpectedly erupted in late 2010 and early 2011. It was characterized in the beginning by huge and largely peaceful popular protests in a number of Arab countries against long-standing entrenched regimes. It began in Tunisia, where a young man trying to eke out a living as a street vendor engaged in an act of defiance against the government borne of frustration and disillusionment over the socioeconomic malaise and political repression in his country. He lit himself on fire. Little did he know that he would light a fire across the region. Soon mass protests forced the Tunisian president to leave office. In neighboring Egypt, also suffering from many of the same systemic maladies, throngs of protesters gathered at Tahrir Square in the center of Cairo, eventually forcing President Husni Mubarak from power. Protests sprang up elsewhere in the Arab world from the Persian Gulf to North Africa, most spectacularly leading to the death of Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi following a campaign of armed popular resistance supported militarily by NATO and the Arab League. Then the regime in Syria, which many had thought would weather the storm of the Arab Spring, began to encounter mass protests. The regime in Damascus, however, unleashed a brutal crackdown against the opposition, displaying a resiliency that confounded the prognostications that it, too, would soon fall.

All the while, countries in and outside of the Middle East, such as Iran, Israel, Turkey, the United States, and Russia, that have a significant stake in what the Arab Spring means in terms of their own interests and objectives, look on in fascination and confusion as to how to respond to the tremendous

changes occurring before their eyes. Debates in both academic and policymaking circles about the meaning, consequences, and likely outcomes of the mass protests abound. Indeed, the very name “Arab Spring” is controversial. As a number of the contributors to this volume point out, this term is something of a misnomer. Just ask the protesters in Syria in the spring of 2011 or 2012 fighting against a brutal crackdown ordered by a repressive regime if they feel like they are in an “Arab Spring.” You will likely get laughed at or punched in the mouth. However, we employ the term in the title of this volume primarily for recognition purposes, because rightly or wrongly and more so than not, most of what this volume addresses is known as the Arab Spring.

Beyond the matter of labeling, the events of 2010 through 2012 create a host of questions that have major implications for regional and global politics. Were the uprisings a spontaneous combustion caused by the unique confluence of factors that produced a “perfect storm” of dissatisfaction and dissent? Or were there important historical antecedents, of which the Arab Spring is only the latest, albeit most dramatic, manifestation? Or both? Will the Arab Spring auger in a period of democratic development and prosperity? Will it lead to a period of retrenchment as status quo forces fight back and find ways to effectively remain in power? Has the Arab Spring simply cleared the road for Islamist parties, long suppressed across the region, to take power? If so, what will this mean for domestic and international politics?

This volume attempts to answer these and other key questions by examining specific countries directly or indirectly affected by the Arab Spring. It collects an impressive array of leading experts in the field who are noted specialists on the countries and/or issues on which they write. It is intended to introduce and explain the Arab Spring for the interested general public as well as students and scholars of the Middle East in a way that will help them understand how all of this came about and what might happen in the near- and long-term future of the region.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE PROTESTS AND THEIR KEY CONSEQUENCES

The mass demonstrations throughout the Arab world beginning in 2010 took most analysts by surprise. The Middle East and North Africa seemed to be an important exception to what prominent political scientist Samuel Huntington labeled the “third wave” of democratization that swept across

much of Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia after the end of the cold war.<sup>1</sup> Analysts consistently ranked the Arab states as the least free in the world, and few in 2010 were predicting that this situation was likely to change any time soon.

Soviet leader Leon Trotsky reportedly asserted that revolution is impossible until it is inevitable.<sup>2</sup> The logic underlying this statement applies to the Arab Spring. In retrospect, it is clear that there were very powerful forces pushing people across the Arab world to revolt, and that some authoritarian governments had feet of clay: they were not nearly as invulnerable to popular protests as widely believed.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps most importantly, states in the Middle East and North Africa have more “youth bulges”—which are a disproportionate number of young people in a particular state—than any other regions in the world. Throughout the entire Middle East and North Africa, roughly one out of every three people is between the ages of ten and twenty-four.<sup>4</sup> Youth bulges are particularly pronounced in those countries that experienced the most widespread and powerful protests during the Arab Spring. In Tunisia, more than 42 percent of the population is under twenty-five. This number is 48 percent in Libya, 51 percent in Egypt, and 57 percent in Syria.<sup>5</sup>

Youth bulges, as numerous studies have documented, frequently create highly combustible social and political environments. Large numbers of young people are much more likely than other demographic cohorts to act on their grievances to try to rectify them, even if this requires large-scale protests and even violence.<sup>6</sup> Arab youth certainly had pressing grievances against their governments, including the systematic denial of basic rights, massive governmental corruption, extreme levels of unemployment, widespread poverty, and steady increases in the cost of living. There was also a general hopelessness that none of these conditions would improve without revolutionary political change. Youth bulges and widespread dissatisfaction with the political status quo, combined with the socioeconomic challenges created by the 2008 global financial crisis, were critical to the creation of the Arab Spring protests.

Systemic, powerful incentives pushing populations to rebellion does not mean, however, that revolutions will succeed. The Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate major variations in outcomes. Tunisian and Egyptian protesters were able to topple their governments, Libyan rebels did so only with significant foreign militarily aid, demonstrators in Bahrain and Syria have thus far been unsuccessful in their efforts, and protests in Saudi Arabia barely got off the ground. A number of factors account for these differences. The chapters

in this volume highlight some of the most important. When a state's military largely comprises ethnic and/or religious minorities (as is the case, for example, in Syria—see Chapter 4), there is an increased likelihood that military personnel will remain loyal to the regime, even if this loyalty requires firing on fellow citizens engaged in political protests. Minority groups will fear that the creation of a more democratic regime will result in their ouster from power or even their persecution. These fears create powerful incentives to do whatever it takes to remain in positions of influence. Large revenue streams that are controlled by the government—such as are created by Saudi Arabia's massive oil wealth—further tip the balance in favor of the political status quo. Resources allow governments to maintain patronage systems (including for the military) to help ensure loyalty and assuage some popular grievances. As long as repressive governments are able to continue vast financial support systems, and especially when their militaries remain willing to brutally crush dissent, it will be very difficult for revolutionary forces to achieve their objectives.

Conversely, when governments do not control large resource-based wealth (as is the case in Syria and Egypt) that can maintain patronage systems and buy off protesters, or when states possess professional militaries whose leaders and personnel are drawn from the dominant ethnic and religious groups in a society (as is the case in Tunisia and Egypt), revolutionary forces are advantaged. In the latter scenario, militaries can reasonably anticipate that they will remain in power even after a regime change. The incentives for militaries to support current governments to the bitter end against popular protests are, as a result, much lower in these instances.<sup>7</sup>

Even in those cases, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, in which protesters were able to topple dictatorial governments, the creation of stable democratic regimes in their place is far from guaranteed. Unfortunately, the same factors that spurred the protests in the first place are likely to work against such political transitions. Youth bulges and high levels of youth unemployment will continue to create highly unstable and violence-prone environments. Moreover, the pernicious effects of authoritarianism, even after the dictator has been overthrown, are likely to continue to plague new governments. Authoritarian regimes that crushed independent sources of power, thereby preventing the creation of a thriving civil society, inhibited widespread respect for democratic principles and political pluralism, and prevented the creation of democratic institutions and leaders, often greatly handicap future efforts at state building, sometimes for generations. One 2005 study found that of sixty-seven countries trying to tran-

sition from authoritarian regimes, roughly only half were judged to be “free” a generation after the transition began.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting issue for postauthoritarian societies in the Middle East and North Africa concerns the relationship between Islam and democracy, and especially between Islam and liberal democracy. Although populists, democracy activists, and liberals appeared to lead the uprisings in early 2011, these groups have been less successful in creating effective, cohesive parties that can challenge in competitive elections either the old elite or, especially, Islamists. Political mobilization for mass demonstrations is one thing; effective campaigning is another. Given this current reality, there is little doubt that Islamist parties, because of their superior political organization, will be the most powerful actors in the new regimes, at least in the short run. Islamists believe that the prescriptions in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad should have important political effects. These parties have already dominated in elections held in Tunisia and Egypt after the Arab Spring began. Islamists’ victories mean that the separation between religion and politics will not be as great as is the norm in Western liberal democracies.

It is a mistake, however, to paint all Islamist parties with the same brush, as is frequently done in popular outlets in the West. Indeed, in many ways the most important domestic battles in postauthoritarian societies in the wake of the Arab Spring will not be between Islamists and secular liberals, but among different types of Islamists. Three broad varieties of Islamist leaders are likely to vie for power: hard-liners (or ideological conservatives), pragmatic conservatives, and liberal Islamists.<sup>9</sup> Hard-line Islamists believe that a primary objective of government is the regulation of personal virtue based on a narrow and literal interpretation of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. This position most often requires that religious authorities have important input into political decisionmaking and also that there be limits on popular sovereignty. To hard-line Islamists, majoritarian preferences should not take precedence over sharia, or Islamic law. Hard-liners also tend not to support equal rights for all groups, especially women and religious minorities. Leaders of the Egyptian hard-line Islamists known as Salafis, for example, have demanded “strict prohibitions against interest-bearing loans, alcohol and ‘fornication,’ with traditional Islamic corporal punishment like stoning for adultery.” One leader of this party, Sheik Abd al-Monam al-Shahat, expressed in a public debate his understanding of the priority of Islamic law over all else as follows: “I want to say: citizenship restricted by Islamic Shariah, freedom restricted by

Islamic Shariah, equality restricted by Islamic Shariah. Shariah is obligatory, not just the principles—freedom and justice and all that.”<sup>10</sup>

Pragmatic conservatives share with their hard-line brethren the objectives of creating a state based on Islamic law. This goal, however, is subordinate to more pragmatic considerations, including creating modern, dynamic economies and fostering political stability based on widespread participation and engagement. The *New York Times* summarizes this position by examining the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s 2011 platform for parliamentary elections: “Unlike the Salafis, [the Muslim Brotherhood] has not proposed to regulate the content of arts or entertainment, women’s work or dress, or even the religious content of public education. In fact, the party’s platform calls for smaller government to limit corruption and liberalize the economy.”<sup>11</sup>

Liberal Islamists, like other Islamists, ground their political prescriptions in Islamic principles and tenets. The *content* of these prescriptions is, however, largely liberal. Many liberal Islamists, including leaders of the Ennahda Party in Tunisia and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (see also Chapter 2, where Bruce Rutherford argues that key Egyptian parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, are dedicated to important liberalizing objectives) assert that God gave individuals free will, which makes religious compulsion immoral. Similarly, because humans’ interpretations of the Quran and God’s will are always imperfect, pluralism, tolerance, democracy, separation of powers, the protection of minority rights, and an evolving interpretation of scripture are all necessities.

The domestic future of new regimes created in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings is likely to vary widely depending on which of these varieties of Islamists dominates. The tension between democracy, especially liberal democracy that respects minority rights and protects political pluralism, is great for hard-line Islamists, but not nearly as much for pragmatic conservatives and, particularly, liberal Islamists. Indeed, the preferred political institutions for liberal Islamists are likely to be quite similar to those found in Western democracies, even if the ideological foundations and justifications for these preferences are different. The forces for liberalization will obviously be even stronger the more power secular liberals possess. Such individuals were instrumental in creating and sustaining the protests that ultimately toppled authoritarian governments. Their challenge will be organizing in such a way that allows them to compete against well-established Islamist parties in competitive political processes.