

Arab Spring: Background, Causes, and Consequences

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Abstract: *The Arab Spring has grown to encompass a wide range of protests taking place in the Arab world, including tribal insurgencies, sectarian conflicts, revolutions, uprisings, protests, resistance, and many other types. It also includes democratic aspirations, Islamic awakening, military coups, secessionist movements, and upheavals. A startling wave of public unrest shook the Arab region in the month of December 2010 after Tunisian seller Mohamed Bouazizi burned himself on fire. Little was anticipated about how drastically the ongoing political instability would change the area's political situation. However, Bouazizi's desperate act in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, first prompted significant popular discontent throughout the nation, resulting in President Ben Ali's fall and the end of his tenure at the beginning of 2011, and subsequently spurred a wave of regional uprisings in the entire area. Soon, Arab Spring affected not only Tunisia or Egypt but also countries of the entire region like Algeria, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and GCC countries. The main objectives of the research paper are to explore the background of Arab Spring in different countries of the region and causes of Arab Spring. This study further examines the consequences of the Arab Spring.*

Key Words: *Arab Spring, Conflict, Region, Unrest and Consequences*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia and extended to other Arab nations, has brought the entire region to the brink of a new era. It denotes a turning point in Arab modern history. This point in time can be unique. Two of them, the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, fell within a short period of time. The shocking fall of the two governments gave people in other nations the confidence to do the same. Similar uprisings have taken place in Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, and more recently, Syria. As is the case in Yemen and Libya, some of the regimes in these nations are already doomed. People are calling for reform in yet more nations, but in ways that were impractical just a few months ago. It's conceivable that other nations in the area will follow. Though this may take some time, it appears like it's only a matter of time (Gulrez, 2015, pp. 5-6).

The majority of these uprisings have been started by common people, especially the younger generation, who have peacefully demanded liberty, self-respect, democracy, social justice, responsibility, transparency, and the rule of law. The young generation of the region shares the same aspirations and values as the youth who contributed to the democratic changes in other parts of the world. As a result, it is a crucial time for the Arab world as well as how the rest of the world views Arabs. For the first time, people who have been consistently demonised in the West for decades are depicted favourably. Long-closed vistas have been opened by what has begun in Tunisia and Cairo. The youthful energy, dynamism, and intelligence of the Arab world had been stifled by a system that treated them with contempt and concentrated power in the hands of a much older age. The once-invincible police state governments in the Arab East have been rattled by the sudden courage, assurance, and confidence displayed by young people in that region. With the noteworthy exception of Libya, where a lack of organisation and the regime's ruthless response from the outset fueled an armed conflict that descended into civil war, these revolutions have mostly been peaceful. The regime's early use of lethal force added to the bloody conflict and took away one of the revolution's most potent tools, namely nonviolence. In general, these revolutions have avoided a violent showdown with the security and military machinery of the ruling governments. Several revolutions have featured ongoing sit-ins and nonviolent protests. Silmiyyah, Silmiyyah, which refers to the conflict as being "peaceful, peaceful," is a common chant heard throughout these nations (Gulrez, 2015, pp. 6-7).

2. BEGINNING OF ARAB SPRING:

The Arab Spring started on the seventeenth of December 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi, a road vendor from Tunisia, set himself ablaze. Mohammed Bouazizi, the graduate who was jobless, was unable to endure the humiliation inflicted upon him by the government. As he passed away on January 11, 2011, Tunisia saw widespread unrest. In three days, Mr. Zine el Abedine Ben Ali's 23-year rule came to an end. In Saudi Arabia, the despot took refuge. In the month of October 2011, Tunisians took part in the country's first post-revolutionary poll to select a constituent assembly that would draft a new constitution. After winning the elections, the moderate Islamic Ennahda party established a government under the leadership of Mr. Hamadi Jebali as prime minister and Moncef Marzouki as president. The new administration is working to stabilise the nation's political and economic landscape and get the economy back on track. Several Arab nations were also affected by the phenomenon. In Egypt, a large-scale uprising against President Hosni Mubarak's administration began in January 2011. By February, Hosni Mubarak's thirty-year rule also came to an end. At first, the army seized control. The emergency declaration, which had been in place for more than three decades, was revoked. Hosni Mubarak, his ministers, and members of his family had to face charges, and both he and his former interior minister received life sentences (Azhar, 2015, pp. 51-52). Libya was the next country to be impacted. It was clear that riots and protests in Libya's cities preceded the country's revolution. For the West and America, the Libyan revolution seemed like a pipe dream. The West considered Gaddafi to be an enemy. He opposed capitalism and imperialism. He was considered a member of the evil axis. It was also praised that Gaddafi had changed Libyan society in terms of employment, economic growth, and development of the nation's infrastructure. Yet, he was viewed as tyrannical and dictatorial by many. When we objectively examine the revolution, we can see that the Libyan experiment had some very good justifications. Notwithstanding the nation's abundance of oil, Ghaddafi's agreements with imperialism resulted in an economic catastrophe for the majority of the population. The unemployment rate in Libya is 30%, and the expense of living is steadily rising. In just three years, the cost of staple items like rice, flour, and sugar has jumped by 85%. This is the actual context of the current public uprising in Libya. Because of this, Gaddafi backed Mubarak and Ben Ali in their opposition to the popular upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt (Abdulyakeen, 2021, p. 18). On January 16, 2011, a few protestors assembled in front of Sana'a University to demand the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, sparking the start of the Yemeni revolution. Tawakul Karman, an activist and potential Nobel Peace Prize laureate, spearheaded the demonstration. A few days later, on January 22, Karman was taken into custody, sparking new demonstrations calling for her release. Over the month of February, the number of demonstrations grew as protestors demanded Saleh's resignation, economic reforms, and an end to corruption. Saleh pledged on February 2 that neither he nor his son will participate in the 2013 elections. The action had little effect because just one day later, protestors returned to the streets to demand Saleh's removal. After a number of youths between the ages of nine and fifteen were detained in the rural city of Deraa in late February for spray-painting graffiti that said "the people want to topple the regime," there were widespread protests in Syria by mid-March 2011. The release of all political prisoners, the abolition of Syria's emergency legislation, the expansion of freedoms, and an end to rampant corruption were among the demands made during the demonstrations. Nonviolent rallies were met with violence by the Syrian regime, which used live ammunition against defenceless citizens. The scale and frequency of protests only grew as a result of government brutality. On April 3, President Bashar al-Assad sacked his cabinet and chose a new prime minister after first refusing to make any compromises. A few days later, Assad promised the Syrian people more political and social rights, and on April 21 he issued a decree to lift the country's state of emergency. But the peaceful demonstrations and the brutality of the government persisted. The number of civilian fatalities was estimated to be above 1,100. Protesters ultimately started demanding the removal of Assad as the situation worsened (Jamshidi, 2014, pp. 14-15). Algerian protests and demonstrations also began, and in December 2010 there were violent clashes with the security forces. Algeria experienced a spike in self-immolation attempts in January 2011. The Algerian government was obliged to end the country's 19-year emergency as a result of the growing protests. The constitution of Algeria would be revised to include democratic reforms, the president promised. For the time being, Algeria's situation is under control. Moreover, there were protests against the governing authority in Iraq. In several Iraqi cities in February 2011, protests were held in support of fair and open public services, effective national security, and investigations into cases of corruption. In an effort to maintain control, Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki, the prime minister of Iraq, declared that he will not stand for reelection in 2014. These demonstrations were successfully put to an end by the Iraqi government (Azhar, 2015, pp. 53-54). National protests were planned for February 14, 2011, to mark the tenth anniversary of a constitutional referendum that failed to bring about the promised reforms in Bahrain. Violence greeted folks as they entered the streets that day. Crowds were dispersed by security personnel, who also murdered one protester and took other demonstrators into custody. Bahrainis launched additional protests the following day, unfazed. The nation's capital, Manama, has protesters occupying the Pearl Roundabout, the city's main traffic circle. Despite the fact that the majority of the demonstrators were members of the oppressed Shia group in the nation, their complaints did not centre on religious matters but rather political, economic, and social justice concerns. Protesters demanded a number of things, including the creation of a

constitutional monarchy, the prime minister's dismissal expanded civil freedoms, and a parliament that was elected by the people and had genuine power. The Al Khalifa monarchy, Bahrain's reigning regime, requested outside assistance as the conflict worsened. On March 14, the GCC decided to intervene and send out its military arm, the Peninsula Shield Force. Security personnel from the UAE and Saudi Arabia arrived on the scene the same day to put an end to the nation's protests. A three-month state of emergency was proclaimed on March 15 by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in an effort to "establish order." Authorities demolished the Pearl Roundabout, which had grown to be the centre of the protest movement, just a few days later, on March 18 (Jamshidi, 2014, pp. 12-13). The demonstrations in Saudi Arabia started in Jizan in January 2011 and quickly expanded, primarily to the eastern regions. Several casualties were also a result of the protests. Nonetheless, the Saudi leadership was able to keep things under control by using force and making political and economic compromises. There were municipal elections in September 2011. Moreover, King Abdullah declared that it was okay to run in the 2015 municipal elections. Stateless Bedouins in Kuwait began the demonstrations in January 2011. By year's end, there was widespread agitation among Kuwaiti civilians, which culminated in a brief occupation of the national assembly. The demonstrations persisted up to Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad al Sabah's retirement. In the United Arab Emirates, just a small group of intellectuals participated in the protest (Abdulyakeen, 2021, pp. 14-15).

3. CAUSES OF ARAB SPRING:

According to Azmi Bishara, an Arab scholar, Tunisia has been referred to be the mother of revolution during the Arab Spring because of its leadership in garnering support from all Arab countries and for being the first to protest against an oppressive system. An era in contemporary Arab history comes to a close. The lengthy conclusion chapter discussed the elimination of even the most superficial elements of Arab ideology and how Arab regimes have developed into near-identical copies of one another. All Arab countries, whether they are republics or monarchies, share the components of Arab rule. They include a governing family (with or without a ruling party), security organisations that actively participate in politics, and a new class of corporate tycoons who are intertwined with the political and security elites through a web of intermarriages, kinship ties, and friendships. A new governing class emerged as a result of the amalgam. It appeared for a time that this depressing ending might continue into a worse future (Abdulyakeen, 2021, pp. 11-15). Contrary to many other revolutions that swept the globe to topple autocratic regimes, the Arab Spring was not initiated by the poor and underclass of the Arab world; rather, it was the educated, unemployed, disenfranchised, and likely lower-middle-class youth of the region who took to the internet and the streets to protest. Arab Spring started in countries with rising GDPs: in 2009 and 2010, Tunisia's GDP rose by 3 and 4%, Egypt's by 4.7 and 5%, Libya's by 1.8 and 5.2%, Yemen's by 3.9 and 7.8%, and even Syria's by 4 and 5%. These nations were also among the world's leading proponents of economic reform, having "successfully liberalised" their economies. A strong sense of disenfranchisement, rising inequality, relative deprivation, and—most importantly—corrupt and autocratic regimes that deployed a powerful security apparatus to crush any form of dissent or independent thought were the main causes of the Arab Spring from its inception. Even though the populace had been feeling unsatisfied for the previous ten years, political revolutions and social protests in the area did not really take off until late 2010. Egypt rapidly joined the uprisings when they spread from Tunisia (Momani, pp. 1-2). The causes of the Arab Spring are described as follows:

- a. **Global Economic Crisis:** The economies of the countries in the MENA region is at various phases of growth. Their diverse economic structures and increasing levels reflect this. Oil-exporting nations have far higher GDPs than the other nations in the region. Some nations, like Libya and Algeria, rely on the sale of their oil and gas, while others, like Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, rely more on industry and tourism. Since the 1990s, the region's North African republics have implemented some economic reforms with the help of the IMF and World Bank. In these states, government influence in the financial sectors has lessened and the public sectors have been privatised. The sharp decline in oil prices between 2008 and 2009 had a negative impact on both oil-exporting nations and other countries in the region. During the crisis, Europe and America, which had imported manufactured goods from the region, reduced their demand (Afzal, 2017, p. 2).
- b. **Unemployment:** In 2010, fewer goods were manufactured, which increased unemployment in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. The North African region's unemployment rate was just approximately 10%, which was not particularly high given the conditions. One of the key factors contributing to the Arab Spring was the high rate of unemployment among young people, particularly women. Arab nations have the lowest percentage of women in the labour force globally. One in four young Egyptians and Tunisians were unemployed on the eve of the Arab Spring. The demographic boom contributed to both the decline in productivity and the rise in unemployment. The North African nations were severely impacted since there was a decline in the average age of the population. More than one-third of the labour force is made up of young people as a result of youth unemployment (Afzal, 2017, pp. 3-4).
- c. **Political freedoms and economic inequalities:** People in the region, and particularly the youth, asked their individual governments to improve their social and economic conditions by providing resources for work and

education, but the governments did not respond, which prompted the people to rise up in protest. In order to implement the structural adjustment process, the MENA States followed a policy of privatisation of public sectors, trade liberalisation, and deregulation. The middle classes and the majority of young people were excluded even if structural reforms had a positive impact on the economic development of South African nations. Also, it opposed political changes aimed at protecting commoners' civil rights. It merely strengthened the existing authoritarian regimes while obstructing democracy. The limitations of ongoing emergencies, as declared by Tunisia and other nations, have inhibited the exercise of core human rights such the freedom to vote, liberty, expression, and association. The North African kingdoms' monarchs have long had access to first-rate amenities. Examples include Mubarak in Egypt, Gaddafi in Libya, and the Ben Ali clan in Tunisia. These states' armies and religious authorities had a great deal of power. These states' wealth and power were concentrated in a few. For the permission of the exploitation of natural resources, corruption in the market was encouraged by a lack of justice and the continuation of awkward and ineffective regulatory regimes (Afzal, 2017, p. 3).

- d. Social Media:** Democratic movements existed in these countries prior to the emergence of the internet and mobile phones. Nonetheless, these technologies allowed those who shared a passion for democracy to develop vast networks, build social capital, and coordinate political action; virtual networks became real in the streets. Digital media contributed to accelerating the revolution's pace and expanding its constituency by allowing courageous folks to express their common resistance to authoritarian authority. Digital media acted as a "equaliser of information." The tale of political transformation can be told in a number of different ways. But, one of the themes that civil society leaders have repeated the most frequently has been that this time, it was the internet, mobile devices, and social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, and others that made all the difference. Social movements were able to achieve political aims that were previously unreachable thanks to the significant new instruments that digital media supplied (Hussain, 2013, pp. 17-18).
- e. Role of Media:** The role the Arab media played in the Arab Spring is known to a number of academics. Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia were the two main television networks in charge of reporting on world events and disseminating rebel information. The Arab Spring was referred to as a "social network revolution" by the media. Tunisia and Egypt are among the top states in the area with regard to the proportion of internet users. Internet, social media, and cell phones all had a significant impact on these states' ability to support uprisings. The local governments were unable to control the internet and other social networks because users of these platforms disseminated news and videos throughout the globe. Egypt's Hosni Mubarak dictatorship shut down the networks for five days in the areas where protests erupted. Before the uprising began, the Qaddafi regime in Libya cut off phone service in the area where protests were taking place. The media was crucial in disseminating the revolutions throughout the Arab world despite all of this official involvement in the region (Afzal, 2017, p. 5).

4. Consequences:

One successful experiment served as an inspiration for numerous others. Even if the fundamental demands and strategies for pursuing them have been identical, the results have not all been the same. None has yet reached its conclusion. Constitutions, political structures, legal frameworks, or verifiable demonstrations of widespread participation are just the beginning of a long-term social revolution (Dietl, 2015, p. 1). There cannot be a revolution without violence, and there cannot be a revolution without the devastation of economic and infrastructure systems. According to Juan Mendez, Special Rapporteur for the UN on Torture, 300 Tunisians died and 700 were hurt as a result of the Jasmine Revolution. Tourism has been impacted, and unemployment and poverty are more visible in Tunisia's cities and villages as a result of the revolution. Since President Ben Ali was overthrown in the month of January 2011, the unemployment rate has increased from 13 percent to 18 percent of those eligible for employment, translating to over 750,000 unemployed people. More concerning, Said Aidi, the economy minister for most of 2011, noted that a third of the unemployed are college graduates. By 2015, it's predicted that 100,000 new grads per year will be looking for work, compared to 20,000 graduates per year at most before the revolution. In post-revolutionary Libya, the estimated death toll of the rebel side, which included only Gaddafi's soldiers, ranged from 30,000 to 50,000. Nonetheless, the number of war dead from both sides that have been recorded in the country's mortuaries is often in the hundreds, not the thousands. And there are only as many as 1,000 people still missing (Abdulyakeen, 2021, pp. 19-20).

Most of the countries in the region were ruled by dictatorial governments. A few of them held power for a long time. The main outcome of the Arab Spring was the ouster of these long-standing autocrats. Some of them even pretended to have democratic elections in order to conceal the reality that they actually had autocratic regimes. The Tunisian movement eventually made its way to Egypt after Libya. Hosni Mubarak was in charge of Egypt at the time. On January 25, Egypt celebrated National Police Day, and a sizable crowd gathered to turn the day into a protest day. The motivating factors behind these peaceful people were the ongoing authoritarian rule of President Hosni Mubarak for the past thirty years, widespread injustice, an ongoing state of emergency, excessive emergency powers of the Home

Ministry and Police, and ongoing corruption. The cause of a small group of demonstrators swiftly spread to include the entire country. By appointing Omer Suleiman as his vice president, removing the previous administration, and promising not to run for president again with his son Gamal, Mubarak tried unsuccessfully to win over the protesters. Huge protests on February 11 compelled Mubarak to step down. Tantawi's Supreme Council of the Military Forces assumed control, disbanded the legislature, and later suspended the constitution (Afzal, 2017, pp. 6-7). Six of the twenty members of the Arab League-Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain have gone through major revolutions that have led to the removal of their dictators or protracted domestic conflicts. These six countries stand out from the rest of the region, which has experienced comparatively milder forms of protest. No one can yet say with certainty that any of the first six countries to experience upheavals had a successful revolution that resulted in a truly democratic political system. Authoritarian leaders Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak were overthrown as a result of popular protests in Tunisia and Egypt, respectively. Yet, given the length of their paths to democracy and the persistent economic challenges they face, the transitions' uncertainties and dangers persist. Benghazi, a city in eastern Libya, saw the start of the revolt, which swiftly escalated into a civil war between rival government factions and Gadhafi's army. The forty-two-year rule of Gaddafi was eventually ended by NATO military action, but uncertainty and a fractured security environment remained, clearly indicating mistrust among new parties. Bahrain's Sunni-majority ruling Khalifa royal family forcefully put down uprisings with assistance from the GCC military after an unsuccessful attempt at discussion with demonstrators. However, it has worsened sectarian polarization, which is likely to return in more assertive ways if the concerns are disregarded by the regime. This "has not bought significant time, nor social peace or stability," but it has reduced social cohesion (Muhammed Kürşad Özekin, 2014, p. 76). Along with other countries experiencing strong political unrest, the situation in Syria has progressively gotten worse as a result of the security forces' escalating repression and the rising number of civilian deaths since the uprising began. The political crisis in Yemen lasted even after Ali Abdullah Saleh's thirty three year dictatorship came to an end, increasing the ambiguity surrounding Yemen's southern issue and the potential for an escalation in the Salafi-Shiite conflict. The 33-year tenure of Ali Abdullah Saleh just prepared the ground for the change of leadership. In the upcoming months, it appears that both more serious political unrest and violent confrontation are still on the political horizon in the latter two cases. Several regions of the area have had relatively smaller-scale protests. The GCC states, with the exception of Bahrain, have only seen very small-scale demonstrations that haven't managed to coalesce into a larger, national movement for social change (Muhammed Kürşad Özekin, 2014, pp. 76-77). While keeping in mind what transpired with Bin Ali, Moammar Qadhafi, and Hosni Mubarak, the rulers of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Bahrain expanded social and economic rights to their respective citizens. It helped them keep from adopting the attitudes of the citizens of Tunis, Libya, and Egypt. The escalating situations in Yemen and Syria are also an Arab Uprising occurrence. Ultimately, it can be said that the Arab Spring, despite all of its flaws, marked the emergence of a public political sphere in which common citizens could openly discuss politics, their hopes for the future, and their efforts to bring about a democratic transition in the Arab world. One of the greatest successes of the Arab Spring was the birth of Arab citizen (Afzal, 2017, p. 8). Internal conflicts also plagued the Arab League, which was crucial to the Arab Spring. Some Arab League members displayed a double standard by supporting protesters who were against some states' leaders while also supporting those same leaders who were opposed to the protesters. The Gulf Cooperation Council also assisted to the Arab revolutions by sending its military to defend Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and then approving both parties' signing of the agreement. The Arab Spring sparked various GCC reforms. The Arab Spring was widely regarded as a successful attempt at democracy. As the protests grew more organized, people from other countries had to recognize them as genuine voices for democracy. From the perspectives of numerous schools of thought, the transition was addressed. The key nations assessed the situation as well in order to gain an advantage. Because of their substantial investments in Libya's oil industry, China and Russia were able to back Qaddafi. On the other hand, US-led NATO forces assaulted and killed him to gain the confidence and support of the opposition. The only and final customer of Russia in the region was Syria. Russian assistance to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad began for Russia to preserve its influence in this region (Afzal, 2017, pp. 8-9).

5. CONCLUSION:

Despite having a viral quality, the Arab Spring did not consistently affect the Arab region. Numerous subsequent experiments were motivated by one successful one. The underlying requirements and methods for achieving them have all been the same, but not all of the outcomes have been the same. Long-term social revolutions do not start with constitutions, political systems, legal frameworks, or observable signs of mass participation. Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Zine al Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, two of the most tenacious autocrats in the area, had been overthrown. As Libya was plunged into civil war, several constitutional monarchs disbanded their administrations and vowed to enact constitutional reforms. The leaders of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Bahrain increased social and economic rights for their respective citizens while bearing in mind what happened with Bin Ali, Moammar Qadhafi, and Hosni Mubarak.

The analysis divides the impact of the Arab Spring into three broad groups. The first category includes the overthrow of governments in nations including Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. Some nations have made changes or given their citizens some leeway, all the GCC nations falling within the second group. Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq are among the nations in the region that are still experiencing civil wars.

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