

# Iran and russia's concerns with the arab spring essay example

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## **Iran and Russia's concerns with the Arab spring**

Just like in many other governments across the globe, the outburst of the uprising witnessed in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya caught both the Russian and Iranian governments off guard. The Arab spring is a term that is used to refer to the revolutionary demonstrations that began in late 2010 in Tunisia and moved across the Arab world sweeping away the long ruling authoritarian governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The response by both the Iranian and Russian governments to the eruption of Arab uprising in late 2010 could be argued to have been inconsistent and seemingly confusing.

The Russian government position on the Arab spring was no different from the position of the western world. It sought to protect its interest in the countries involved. It was clear that the Russian government sided with the western world with regards to the revolutions that happen in three countries, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The interest of Russia was similar to that of the western world. They supported change and democracy while honoring the wishes of the people. While responding to what began in Tunisia, the Russian president said in 2011 at the world economic forum that the end of Ben Ali's regime is a huge lesson that countries in similar situations can learn. It was clear from this statement that governments across the globe need to develop together with the society instead of sitting back in their comfort zones. This could be assumed that the Russia government was aligning to the concept of democracy in the region.

In Egypt, the response was slightly different compared to that of Tunisia. Having heavy support from the western world, the Russian government began supporting the Mubarak while calling for a peaceful resolution of the

situation. It was only until the fall of Mubarak that the Russian president indicated a willingness to work with any new government formed afterwards and he also called for a strong democracy in the region. Therefore, the in Egypt, the Russian government also leaned more towards the western world.

The reaction to the Libya uprising was different from that of the first two countries, Tunisia and Egypt. The difference was brought about by the fact that in Tunisia and Egypt, the revolutionary demonstrations were peaceful. However, in Libya, it took the intervention of the western world through military action to topple the Kaddafi's government. Because of the nature of the Libyan uprising, the Russian government had to respond differently. It was against the idea of military intervention in Libya. This was because of the fact that western world supported rebel groups and militias that were fighting against the government. If the militia groups win with the help of the western world, it would be like putting fanatics into power. At the same time, the Russian government believed that the main intention for the western world in supporting democracy and political change in the Arab region was to eventually bring a change in government in Russia. This fear made the Russian government to take a different stand regarding the Libyan case. By supporting the militia groups in Libya, the Russian government predicted that there would be a rise of extremists which could negatively affect other regions of the world as well. Despite vetoing the resolution that authorized the military intervention led by the US and NATO forces, Russia's main focus was to maintain positive relations with the Arab League, the US, and other western countries.

On the side of Iran, the government mainly regarded the Arab spring that began in Tunisia as a proof of diminishing US influence. The Iranian government further saw this as a perfect opportunity to increase its influence in the region. It was believed that the precursor for these uprising in Egypt and Tunisia was in Iran. This means that the Iran played a role of inspiring Islamists to demonstrate. This inspiration came from the 1979 revolution witnessed in Iran where the then leader, Mohamed Reza Pahlavi was unseated. Analysts argue that even though this could have been a source of inspiration, the events that occurred in Iran and in North Africa were distinctively different from each other.

The Iranian government took the case of Libya differently. This was because of the rise of insurgents who managed to topple Kaddafi's government. The insurgents were mainly supported by the US and western military group, NATO. The fear for Iran was that Al Qaida or the Gulf States were beginning to have an influence in the Islamic world; something that Iran had interest in. However, after the overwhelming support by the western world, the Iranian government joined the criticism against Qaddafi's government. But the one concern that the Iran had is for the rebel and insurgent groups not to get too close to the western world. Therefore, despite supporting the rebels and insurgents, Tehran went ahead to invite representatives of these rebel groups warning them against accustoming to the western world or forming strong ties with the western world.

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