

# Essay on the arab spring and terrorism

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



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‘ Instructor’s Name’

The “ Arab Spring” and Terrorism

Arab spring is an umbrella term used by the media, to denote the series of uprisings, which took place independently and spread across countries in the North Africa and the Middle East in 2011. It all started on the fateful day of December 18, 2010, when a so far unknown street vendor of Tunisia, called Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire, when his cart was confiscated by the police. Nobody then thought that this would turn out into a history changing event, but that is what it exactly turned out to be. This incident sparked off a series of protests in Tunisia, and resulted in the ouster of the autocratic Tunisian president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. (Fahim, 2011) The protest started by the ‘ burning man of Tunisia’, rapidly spread throughout the neighboring countries in the Arab world and a massive wave of demonstrations took place in countries like Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Yemen. Mass civil uprisings were also witnessed in countries like Syria, Kuwait, Bahrain, Sudan, Iraq and Morocco, and relatively minor civil resistances were also seen in Saudi

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Arabia, Western Sahara, Mauritians and Oman.

Though the events in each of these countries were not connected with each other, they are grouped under a single phenomenon because, basically all these protests were against common evils found in the governance of Arab countries namely, autocracy, denial of human rights, corruption, unemployment and skyrocketing consumer prices. In a period of two years from December 2010 till September 2012, four countries (Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya) have removed autocratic regimes from power. The global implications of these protests are enormous and the world community recognized the efforts of these protestors by awarding Tawakel Karman, a Yemeni politician, the Noble Prize for peace for the year 2011. (Nobel Prize Announcement, 2011)

### **Impact of the Arab spring on Egypt**

Witnessing the massive success of the uprising in Tunisia, people of Egypt were influenced to carry on protests of their own, against the three decades old rule of their president Hosni Mubarak. The protests started by January 25, 2011, and continued for three weeks. Seeing the intensity of the protests, the government tried to curb the internet services thus restricting social media access, which was the main tool for rapid circulation of messages among protestors. Later millions of people took to streets, thereby forcing Hosni to dismiss his own government, and eventually he was sentenced to life imprisonment by an Egyptian court. (Cornell Library Guide, 2013)

He transferred the power to the Egyptian army, which promised to lift the emergency laws of the country. There were widespread celebrations in Tahrir square, but incidents of violence continued till December 2011. In the

subsequent elections that followed, Mohamed Morsi of the " Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)," the political party founded by the Muslim Brotherhood, which was outlawed in Egypt for almost 6 decades, won with a thumping majority, garnering 51. 7% votes. (CIA, 2013) He is the fifth president of Egypt, first non-military head of the country and the first Arab head of state from an Islamist party. He followed his elevation with a declaration which granted him unlimited authority, which resulted in fresh uprisings in November 2012. Though the country had its first successful democratic election, the political scene is still a chaos, with dictatorship being substituted with Islamic fundamentalism.

## **Impact on terrorism**

Throughout the world, intelligence agencies are witnessing the events unfolding in the Arab world both with, elation and apprehension. While the elation pertains to the choice of democracy emphatically embraced by the Arab people, the apprehension is towards the future of alliances, the intelligence networks made with the erstwhile leaderships of the Arab countries, for fighting against terrorism. Analysts fear that the political vacuum created by the recent protests, might urge the succeeding governments to build a political identity for themselves, by adhering to the popular sentiments of the so called ' Arab street'. As historically seen the views of the Arab public are slightly more radical than those of the Governments ousted. (Aaron, 2011) Particularly the Muslim Brotherhood which is currently in power in Egypt is known for its radical Islamic thoughts. As Bernard Lewis states in his book ' The Crisis of Islam', Islam provides a basis and a compulsive reason for various Arab groups to bond together and

fight for a cause. He also states that these groups, who are supposedly fighting for the cause of Islam, have the uncanny ability to meet and organize strategies, even under the most oppressive governments. Lewis also cites the lack of modernization of the Arab world, as the primary reason for the terrorist groups being able to get easy recruits in this region. (Lewis, 2003) Some scholars disagree with this view and say denial of political freedom is a more compelling reason for terrorism than poverty.

But as democracy gains foothold in the Arab countries, the people there would realize that they have now within their grasp a plethora of methods, for non-violent political persuasion, and this would definitely undermine the position of groups like Al-Qaeda.(Angle, nd) Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri, the successor of Osama Bin Laden is an Egyptian by birth, and is known to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood, outlaws under Mubarak, now in power in Egypt.(BBC, 2011) He gave a long speech to his followers trying to make them believe, that the recent uprisings are in sync with Al-Qaeda's anti-western policies.

But so far Morsi has said, he would uphold the peace treaty with Israel, and is concentrating more on the internal conflicts. He is yet to announce a concrete foreign policy and the Western countries should take steps to rebuild the strategic alliances with the newly formed regimes. History has repeatedly proven that democracy is the perfect antidote to all social problems. So it would be safe to assume that, though there would be short term instabilities, in the long term this Arab Spring would definitely be remembered as the, scourge of the extremist movements in the Arab countries.

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