The Arab Spring

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Introduction

The Arab Spring is a blanket term to cover a multitude of uprisings and protests in the Middle East that began in the winter of 2010 and continue today. Disturbances have ranged from protests to full civil war and the overthrow of government. States involved include Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen; Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan; Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Bahrain, Syria and Western Sahara. While protests and riots have historically occurred relatively frequently throughout the Middle East, it is widely held that the, “start,” of the Arab Spring was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. His self-immolation was in response to continual harassment from government officials, and his death sparked the protests that led to the removal of then President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Generally speaking the protests are a response to dissatisfaction with the current authoritarian regime. These protests follow a rough pattern; generally beginning with non-violent protests, descending into more violent riots or even full out civil war. The intensifying violence is either in response to harsh governmental crackdown or the failure of peaceful demonstrations to enact any shift in policy. It is important to note that while there are similarities and spillover effects from State to State, the situation (and outcomes) vary widely across countries. It is also to be noted that while there are some elements of ethnic friction
between the Islamic factions, by and large the protests are in response to the dissatisfaction towards the authoritarian government as well as the large income disparity found in many of the Arab States. It must be noted that in several states a removal of the current regime does not result in an increase in stability. Several states such as Egypt and Libya, have removed their former leaders, yet uncertainty remains.

The Situation So Far

As every county is unique this section will break down the uprising and its effects country by country. Below is a brief history and situation report. As the situation is very dynamic, expect the situation to change.

Algeria
Has not engaged in serious reform. The government has appeased protests through a combination of measured tolerance, food subsidies and pay raises, as well as small political concessions.

Bahrain
The government is still in the process of clamping down the uprisings. In March, about 1,200 Saudi troops entered Bahrain followed by 500 police officers from the UAE under a Gulf Cooperation Council mandate. While there have been some conciliatory gestures, including the promise of a national dialogue and the lifting of a state of emergency, individuals linked to the protests - including key political figures and 48 medical professionals - are being tried in military courts. Hundreds still remain in detention and opposition supporters have been dismissed from their jobs. The opposition may have been weakened, but antipathy towards the regime deepens.
**Egypt**

Widespread uncertainty remains after the removal of then-president Hosni Mubarak. The economy has collapsed with tourists afraid to visit without a functioning police force and only one political party - a group that is the Muslim Brotherhood in all but name - has been officially registered. Many of other groups are in contention for power, but few have risen to the level of professional politics. The youth that led the uprising have yet to form a coherent party or even political member. Egypt has tentatively set parliamentary elections for September, but there are disagreements over this, too. A criminal trial of Mubarak is set for August and Egyptians hope they can move on after a full reckoning of the workings of his secret police state.

**Kuwait**

Kuwait's opposition has been holding sporadic rallies against the prime minister since 2009, but the size and regularity of the protests has increased in the past two months, sometimes attracting thousands. The emir said in a speech on Tuesday that the minister of interior has been told to adopt "all necessary measures" to protect the country's stability. Rulers have tried to appease citizens by sharing the emirate's oil wealth. In February, all citizens were given 1,000 Kuwaiti dinars (Dh13,360) and free food staples for more than a year. If this measure fails to appease the opposition expect the situation to worsen.

**Libya**

Anti-government protests in February spiraled into armed revolt, with rebels seizing Benghazi as Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi vowed to defeat them or die fighting. Full scale
Civil War broke out with the Rebels eventually overthrowing and killing Qaddafi. Periodic violence from his supporters continue while the country attempts to form stability.

**Morocco**

Moroccans, inspired by Tunisia's revolution launched Facebook-driven demonstrations in February condemning corruption and calling for limits to the power of King Mohamed VI. The king has promised a new constitution that would enhance the roles of political parties and parliament, and create an independent judiciary. Authorities have tolerated some protests, while sending baton-wielding police to disperse others and branding protest leaders as leftist and Islamist extremists. Protest supporters are an unlikely coalition including left-leaning political parties, trade unionists, human rights groups, independent activists and a Sufi-inspired Islamist movement.

**Syria**

President Bashar al Assad was confident the Arab Spring would not arrive in Syria but when it did, his security forces moved to stamp it out. But escalating use of force has failed to prevent dissent from spreading nationwide. However, just as the regime has been unable to decisively crush dissidents with what the UN has called "horrific attacks", demonstrators have been unable to bring decisive pressure to bear on the regime. Both sides believe they will prevail. The government says the opposition are Islamic insurgents who will soon be destroyed by the army; dissidents say the regime's archaic dysfunctions and a flatlining economy have already sealed its fate. The result is bloody stalemate that continues to this day.
Policy Options

The policy options have been ordered from least to most interventionist. Again these options must be considered country by country. All decisions must maintain the R2P doctrine.

1. **Non-intervention:** Open up to trade when State leaders are recognized. Open up refugee camps, and support NGO’s. Total refrain from military action. Best used for opening stages of protests.

2. **Safe-Area:** designate areas of the country to be cease-fire zones and actively move non-combatants to those areas. Allow armed forces to defend area as well as convoys. Do not move beyond defensive action.

3. **Air-Superiority:** institute no-fly zones over contested areas. As the government forces often have superior technology they can inflict massive causalities. By preventing aircraft that number can be reduced.

4. **Condemnation:** condemn forces who inflict civilian casualties and prevent any further. This may include some small open conflict.

5. **Open Conflict:** engage government forces. May violate the States sovereignty.
Sources
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