



Arab Spring between Hopes and Fears

31 October, 2011

Dr. Boshra EL-Guindy



Arab Spring





Introduction



- Arab Spring and World focus
- Decades of old political constructs of tyranny and abuse challenged and overturned across the Arab Muslim world



Introduction



- Majority of people unemployed/poverty stricken, poorly educated, and highly propagandized
- Youth population high in all of them; all majority Muslim societies





Hopes



- More individual liberties
- Eradication of corruption
- Better living and reduction in unemployment
- Achieving democracy from within and without help from other countries
- Fighting oppression and dictatorship



Historical Precedents and Contexts



- Revolutions across Europe in 1848
- Communist Revolution of 1917
- French Revolution of 1789
- Fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern European client states in 1989
- Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979

Where in history should we look for guidance?



The Big Question



When the upheavals have ended what will take their places?

- Democracy and civil society rise?
- Different brand of despotism, oligarchy, Islamic theocracy, and/or military dictatorship rise instead?

- Muammar Gaddafi's death and its impact on Libyan people and the Middle East
- Gaddafi's fate visibly worse than the others





Latest Events



- Elsewhere the broader Middle East, the region overtaken by the Arab Spring early this year
- Situation arguably worse
- In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad still in power; regime responsible for deaths of thousands of protesters since March 2011
- In Yemen, return of injured leader Ali Abdullah Saleh leading to more protests and more state-sponsored violence



Latest Events



- While protesters in Syria and Yemen appearing re-energized by Gaddafi's killing, no telling when and if leaders there might fall--nor what might happen if they do?

Fears/Challenges





Tunisia





Tunisia



- No political model to follow
- Putting a fairly-elected assembly in place—responsible for drafting the country's new constitution—no easy feat
- Difficulty to elect, from hundreds of political parties and thousands candidates, a 217-member assembly representing 33 districts



Tunisia



- Once elected, the assembly to deal with the country's roughly 19 percent unemployment rate and lingering security and law enforcement challenges
- Serious tensions between Islamists and secularists possibly keeping the country and its governance in an indefinite state of unrest
- The elections, internationally monitored for fairness, a significant step forward



Tunisia



The world community is looking toward Tunisia with hope

"We are at a critical juncture and successful elections will be key to keeping the momentum going"

The world's hope is that Tunisia will act as an inspirational role model for other countries in the region, and elsewhere in the world



Egypt





Egypt



- January 25, 2011, going down in history as the day the Egyptian people deciding enough was enough
- February 11, 2011, the end of President Hosni Mubarak's three-decade rule marking a new beginning for Egypt
- Since then, Mubarak and his associates on trial for abuses committed during his reign, Egyptians left wondering about their revolution's real accomplishments



Egypt



- Though the head of Mubarak regime gone, much of it still in power
- The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in charge of the country and responsible for organizing the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for late November



Egypt



- Like the Tunisians, Egyptians facing rough road ahead both economically and politically, as hundreds of groups around the country, including Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood, vying for control of the constitutional process

- Criticism of the military reaching new heights following its crackdown against Coptic Christian protesters early this month
- Many questioning the military fulfilling its promise to handing over Egypt to civilian rule



Libya





Libya



- With Muammar Gaddafi gone, Libyan rebels-turned-leaders, the Transitional National Council, likely encountering bigger challenges ahead
- Top priority for Libyans:
 - Getting the security situation under wraps
 - Collecting and securing dangerous weapons from the previous regime
 - Making sure that any remaining pro-Gaddafi forces are under control while preventing any attempts of "score-settling" against members of the Gaddafi regime



Libya



- Politically, the Transitional National Council, the internationally recognized government of Libya, having to prove capable of leading the democratic transition
- Elections to be conducted and constitution to be drafted
- The council, previously a regional power in Benghazi, needing expansion of representation of Libya's tribal society



Libya



- Libya beginning to recover from the conflict economically with the NATO countries like the United States promising to help Libya in its economic recovery and political transition



Libya



"We're under no illusions---Libya will travel a long and winding road to full democracy. There will be difficult days ahead, but the United States, together with the international community, is committed to the Libyan people" said President Obama on Thursday, 20 October, 2011, from the White House Rose Garden.



Syria





Syria



- "Your turn is coming, Bashar“, the chant reported from the streets of Syria following the death of Libya's Gaddafi on Thursday
- President Bashar al Assad's regime still continuing its violent repression of the Syrian people
- Assad responsible for killing about 3,000 Syrian people since anti-government uprisings in March 2011
- Countries around the world, including the United States, pressuring Assad to give up power



Syria



- The United States in August 2011, also imposing aggressive sanctions on Assad's government, blocking Syrian government property and banning American citizens investing in or exporting services to Syria or its petroleum industry
- Unlike with Libya, however, the international measures taken against Assad likely to stop with sanctions
- Little chance foreign nations intervening militarily on protesters' behalf



Syria



Now, a waiting game to see how long Syrian protesters can keep up their energy, and how long Assad's regime can survive amid increasing isolation in the region and a severe shortage of resources

According to President Obama in August, "the United States cannot and will not impose this transition upon Syria. It is up to the Syrian people to choose their own leaders, and we have heard their strong desire that there not be foreign intervention in their movement."

Yemen





Yemen



- Hopes of many in Yemen quashed with the return of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in September
- His return bringing another round of violent protests against his rule
- Amid international condemnation, Saleh still holding onto power
- Experts predicting his ouster—after 33 years of control—finally near



Yemen



- Political stability in Yemen, a hotbed for terrorist groups, especially for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a top concern for U.S. policymakers
- A challenge for the Obama administration with Saleh being a marginal partner in fighting terrorists within Yemen's borders, allowing U.S. drone strikes against terrorist targets, like al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, killed in a strike last month



Yemen



Even with Saleh's departure, possible resulting instability could allow terrorist groups to flourish. Not to mention, Yemen faces a whole host of economic problems, and as a fragmented society, the people there will have a chaotic time trying to form a unified post-Saleh government



Conclusion



- The Arab states have a long way to go to undo the terrible legacy of repression and stagnation and move toward democracy, the rule of law, social justice and **dignity**, which have been the universal demands of their peoples during this Arab spring
- The term “**dignity**” involves a dual demand: first, for the dignity of the individual in the face of rulers who treat their subjects as without rights and beneath contempt



Conclusion



- There is also a demand for the collective dignity of proud states like Egypt, and of the Arabs as a people
- Such was the demand that nationalist leaders rode to power starting in the 1950s, as they targeted colonialism and neocolonialism. After that generation's failures, they were replaced by dictators who provided the “stability” so prized by the West—stability purchased at the price of the dignity of the individual and the collective



Conclusion



- There will be further ripples across the region
- It is possible to envision democracy spreading across the Arab world, as it did across Latin America after decades of military rule
- Much will depend on the success of the transitions in the countries where it all started



Conclusion



- Arabs saw a long-time ruler ousted in Iraq in 2003, which temporarily made other autocrats afraid, and prompted various reform pledges across the region
- The violence, corruption and sectarianism, seen in Iraq tragically, however, meant that the Iraqi model was used by other rulers as a counter-argument to anyone calling for democracy