THE ‘ARAB UPRISINGS’ AND AFTER

By Philip Leech-Ngo
TODAY

• News questions

• Contested interpretations of the ‘Arab Spring’

• Break

• What happened? How did the world react?
BIG NEWS STORIES FROM THE WEEK

• 5 news stories you have seen this week?
NEWS STORIES FOR YOU

• US Army report: Iran the only winner from the 2003 war in Iraq

• US now in the process of doing a deal with the Taliban

• War with ISIS won?
THE ‘ARAB SPRING’
BIG QUESTIONS

• What is ‘The Arab Spring’?

• What caused ‘The uprisings’?

• What does the uprisings mean?
QUESTION FOR YOU

• Brexit, Trump and Doug Ford have all ridden the wave of populism in Anglo-Saxon contexts

• Why is this not an Anglo-Saxon Spring?
ANGLO-SAXON SPRING?

- Obviously - similar populist movements have occurred in non-Anglo-Saxon Context

- Significant differences between UK, US and Ontario

- BUT - there is something a bit ‘spring-like’
  - Similar messaging
  - Similar grievances
  - Similar ‘disorder’
ITS NOT EASY

- Dynamic situation (even now)
- Alarmist media coverage
- Complexity of actors and relationships
‘THE ARAB SPRING’

A short introduction - video from the ‘History Channel’
SOME COMMENTS

• ‘allegedly corrupt and authoritarian’

• Represents uprisings as a singular movement

• Suggests a fundamental contradiction between secular and religious identities

• Suggests terrorism is aligned with religion only
‘THE ARAB SPRING’?
‘ARAB SPRING’

- The phrase “Arab Spring,” first coined by Marc Lynch, has been widely adopted as a metonym for the protests of 2010–2011 across the Middle East and North Africa.

- The term ‘spring’ been contested for ‘European-ising’ uprisings

- The term ‘Arab’ has been contested because suggests artificially ethnocentric boundaries
OVERVIEW OF THE UNREST (ARAB COUNTRIES)

- What happened?
- How did it happen differently?
- How and why did different states respond differently?
THREE EXPLANATIONS

• Failure of Arab secularism
• Failure of Arab capitalism
• Multi-causal - but with common elements (language and methods)
• Not ‘Arab’ specific
BEGINNINGS

• It began in December 2010 when the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor from Sisi Bouzid, Tunisia, sparked protests.

• Bouazizi’s act highlighted popular dissatisfaction with socioeconomic hardship in Tunisia, and similar protests quickly spread across the Middle East and North Africa,

• Toppled four long-standing regimes and leaving several others embattled.
TIMELINE (ARAB STATES)
REGIME RUPTURES

- Ben Ali - 23 years in power
- Muammar al-Gaddafi - 42 years in power
- Hosni Mubarak - 30 years in power
- Ali Abdullah Saleh - 34 years in power
- Hafez and then Bashar al-Assad - 41 years in power
- Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa - 17 years in power
EXPLANATION ONE: RELIGION VS SECULARISM

- Secular authoritarian republics were challenged by a range of actors
- Non-religious and overtly religious
- But the religious communities were best able to take advantage of the chaos
- Some simplistic explanations - some not so…
- “mosques...functioned as a locus of anti-government agitation and logistical centers of preparation for demonstrations” (Ardic 2012, 38).
• Hoffman and Jamal (2019):

• Qur’an reading, not mosque attendance, is robustly associated with a considerable increase in the likelihood of participating in protest. Furthermore, this relationship is not simply a function of support for political Islam.

• Evidence suggests that motivation mechanisms rather than political resources are the reason behind this result.

• Qur’an readers are more sensitive to inequities and more supportive of democracy than are nonreaders

• the role played by religion in the Arab Spring—at least from a behavioral perspective—was primarily psychological rather than organizational.

• Religion played a role in helping highlight grievances and providing motivation
EXPLANATION TWO: ITS THE ECONOMY, STUPID

- Marxist inspired perspectives:
  - Adam Hanieh:
    - the (Arab) uprisings are best understood through focusing on the key variables of capital and class
  - Gilbert Achcar:
    - Uprisings are neither the product of general crises of capitalism nor the decline of neo-liberalism.
    - Instead products of Arab ‘fettered development’:
ACHCAR (2013, 36)

- We have to deal, not with a manifestation of the contradiction between the capitalist system and the development of the productive forces in absolute terms, but, rather, with a blockage specifically linked to particular capitalist modalities. We must go on to identify these modalities that, in a context of unequal development on a world scale, are inflicting economic growth rates on the Arab region that are lower than those in other parts of the developing world – disputed that regions wealth in factors of production (capital labor, and natural resources) – and, most importantly, saddling it with unemployment rates considerably higher than those found elsewhere.
METHODOLOGICAL REGIONALISM

- Arab-World exceptionalism
- Suggests that because ‘the crisis in Arab countries is clearly limited to them as far as its peculiar modalities are concerned’ (Achcar 2013, 9),
- ‘methodological nationalism’ identified by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003)
- “intellectual orientation and pattern in scholarly research that conceives of the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis or as a container for social processes.”
METHODOLOGICAL REGIONALISM

• “the ARAB spring”?

• What about similar uprisings in non-Arab Countries?

• What about the significant differences across the different uprisings?

• And what about Arab contexts where there were no uprisings at all?
ITS A NOVEL, NOT AN EPIC

• Hamid Dabashi:
  • transnational uprisings ‘proceed more like a novel than an epic’ (2012, 3).
  • while the ‘epic’ seeks to provide its reader with a full static history of events,
  • the novel ‘reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, the reality itself in the process of its unfolding’ (Bakhtin 1981, 7).
There are significant differences

- Can focusing on commonalities encourage a “blindered” approach? (Dalacora, 2012).
- Diversity in the particular grievances and courses of each uprising (Anderson 2011)
- … and a variety of regime reactions
- A wide range of different outcomes some of which are still unfolding.
- A plethora of ‘known unknowns’.
BUT NOT COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

- In the broader post-colonial context (Anderson 2011)
- Methods of organization
- In the performativity of resistance (Tripp 2012)
SIMILAR PROTESTS OUTSIDE THE ARAB WORLD

- Iran’s green movement, 2010
- Protests in Iraqi Kurdistan 2011
- Icelandic protests
- Occupy movements
  - Portuguese "Geração à Rasca", the Spanish "Indignants", the Greek protests, and the Occupy movement. The protests
- Gezi park protests 2013
- Ukraine’s orange revolution and euromaidan
- Can we see these protests through the lens of globalization?
• What’s different about this picture?
HOW DIFFERENT ARE THE ‘ARAB’ AND ‘ANGLO-SAXON SPRINGS’ AFTER ALL?

• similar movements occurred outside the particular context

• Significant differences between each case study

• BUT - there is something a bit ‘spring-like’ about each
  • Similar messaging
  • Similar grievances
  • Similar ‘disorder’
BREAK
THE WORLD REACTS
AFTER THE SPRING

- Yemen - war
- Syria - war
- Libya - war
- Bahrain - Authoritarianism restored
- Egypt - Authoritarianism restored
- Tunisia - fledgling democracy
- Rest of the region - authoritarianism resurgent
- What happened to ‘Human Rights?’ And democracy?
British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring

PHILIP LEECH and JAMIE GASKARTH
A MASSIVE OPPORTUNITY
WHAT CAN WE LEARN

• How do external governments interact with the ME

• Why do some alliances hold and some do not?

• How important are ‘Human Rights’ and ‘Democracy’ vs. other interests?

• How can we expect external countries to act in the future?

• What can we infer re: the current situation in the ME?
Key Question

- Why did the UK government respond in the way it did to the Arab Spring?
- Inconsistent treatment of human rights abuses in the region
- Unethical foreign policymaking?
- Condemned the suppression of protests in Libya
- Only muted comment on government brutality in Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen
“networked world”

• “although the world has become more multilateral...it has also become more bilateral. Relations between individual countries matter” (Hague, 2010).
• By implication, engaging with countries in a different manner is a matter of policy intended to extract maximum benefit.
• Hague explained the importance of “networks of states with fluid and dynamic patterns of allegiance, alliance and connections” (Hague, 2010)
Networked World

• In the networked world British foreign policymakers would be less consistent in supporting particular groups or governments abroad, prioritising the underlying British interests.
What shapes UKFP?

• Analyses the security, economic and cultural networks shaping Britain’s links with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
• Finds that Britain’s security networks seem to be a far more reliable indicator of policy direction than economic or cultural links.
British view on the ‘Arab Spring’

• The turmoil afflicting many Middle Eastern and North African countries today confirms the truth of Ronald Reagan’s adage: all political systems are inherently unstable that have no peaceful means to legitimise their rulers.

• The Arab Spring has shown that stability and peace cannot be attained through repression. The idea of freedom cannot be confined behind bars, however strong the lock.

• William Hague (2013)
Variables

• A more nuanced view of the protests:
  – (a) the nature of the regime that existed in each Arab state prior to December 2010;
  – (b) the severity of protests; and
  – (c) the various regime responses to protests.
the nature of the regime prior to December 2010

Table 1: Regime type in the MENA region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritarian Monarchy</th>
<th>Authoritarian Republic</th>
<th>Hybrid Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain (122)</td>
<td>Algeria (125)</td>
<td>Iraq (111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan (117)</td>
<td>Egypt (138)</td>
<td>Lebanon (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait (114)</td>
<td>Libya (158)</td>
<td>Palestine (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco (116)</td>
<td>Sudan (151)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar (137)</td>
<td>Syria (152)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia (160)</td>
<td>Tunisia (144)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates (148)</td>
<td>Yemen (146)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman (143)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the severity of protests

Table 2: overview of severity of protests and government response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No significant protests</th>
<th>Some protests; no significant government concessions</th>
<th>Some protests; some government concessions</th>
<th>Significant protests; some government concessions</th>
<th>Significant protests; limited government concessions</th>
<th>Significant rupture in the structure of rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qatar / UAE</td>
<td>Lebanon / Palestine / Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Iraq / Oman / Kuwait</td>
<td>Jordan / Morocco</td>
<td>Algeria / Bahrain / Sudan</td>
<td>Egypt / Libya / Tunisia / Yemen / Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Analysis

• There is apparently no significant correlation between the scale of protests, how the regime responded and the extent to which they were authoritarian.

• Authoritarian governments are represented across all categories of this model.

• Furthermore, the three hybrid regimes – Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon – fall within different categories due to the different levels of government concessions granted.
Monarchies and Republics

- The two non-Gulf monarchies – Jordan and Morocco – experienced equivalent levels of protest and reacted in a similar way; though Morocco proved more adept (Pelham, 2012).
- Yet all five regimes experiencing a significant rupture in the structure of rule were republics.
- Authoritarian republics experienced more severe unrest than monarchies and also proved more vulnerable.
Bahrain

• significant protests; limited government concessions

• Important is Regime’s capacity to suppress protests – albeit with help from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), states (Bellin, 2012)
International reaction

• Both Libya and Syria attracted substantial criticism, spearheaded by Britain, for using force against protests.
• Yet for Bahrain commentary was far more muted.
## British Reaction

### Table 3: UK government responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantial support for the protesters.</th>
<th>Substantial support for the regime.</th>
<th>No substantial commitment to either side.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libya, Syria</td>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Death Tolls

Table 4: Estimated fatalities during the ‘Arab Spring’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantial support for the protesters.</th>
<th>Substantial support for the established regime.</th>
<th>No substantial commitment to either side.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libya (500-700)$^\text{ii}$</td>
<td>Bahrain (30)$^\text{iv}$</td>
<td>Algeria (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria (5000)$^\text{iii}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt (846)$^\text{v}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iraq (26)$^\text{vi}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jordan (1)$^\text{vii}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuwait (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lebanon (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morocco (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oman (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Palestine (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saudia Arabia (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sudan (1)$^\text{viii}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tunisia (132)$^\text{ix}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yemen (2000)$^\text{x}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
States of concern

High death toll
- Egypt
- Yemen
- Libya
- Tunisia
- Syria

Supported by UK
- Bahrain
Networks

• Policymaking in developed states is now less hierarchical, with participation from a wider range of actors, and confronts a broader range of challenges across local, national, regional and global levels.
Networks

• “Relations between states are now no longer monopolised by Foreign Secretaries or Prime Ministers. There is now a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, businesses, pressure groups and charitable organisations which are also part of the relations between nations and which are being rapidly accelerated by the internet”. (Hague, 2010)
Significant Variation in types of Networks

• Formal or informal
• temporary or longstanding
• can also differ in their institutional structure and regulation.
• “tight networks” where membership and behaviour are highly consistent over time Marsh and Rhodes (1992).
• “Issue networks”, comprising “loosely ‘organized’ collections of stakeholders” formed and disbanded more readily as contexts change (Richardson, 2000).
Networks in Practice

Security
Egypt

• Arguably the most important security actor of the group,
• US’ annual provision of $1.3 billion in military aid to Egypt since 1979
• Legacy of hostility between UK-Egypt
• “Training or other assistance is being provided by the MoD to assist the Egyptian authorities develop accountable institutions, but very little detail is available” (Smith, 2013).
Mil-Mil relationship

• “President Mubarak and military leaders view our military assistance program as ... "untouchable compensation" for making and maintaining peace with Israel.

• The tangible benefits to our mil-mil relationship are clear: Egypt remains at peace with Israel, and the U.S. military enjoys priority access to the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace” (“US embassy cables,” 2011).
UK-Egypt Links

• By extension, these benefits were also enjoyed by Britain.
• However, independent of the US, Britain’s specific military links with Egypt are not easily identified.
Bahrain

• Substantial and Longstanding
• Strong ties to US
• Bahrain supports Britain’s efforts to counter Iran’s influence in the Persian Gulf
• cooperates on counter-terrorism and engages in multinational counter-piracy.
• training and assistance programmes
• “The Ministry of Defence has helped train more than 100 Bahraini military officers in the past five years at Sandhurst and other top colleges in the UK” (Quinn and Booth, 2011).
Other security links

• Bilateral defence cooperation accord (October 2012)
• Bahrain’s hosting of major defence installations allows Britain to project influence, with allies, across the Gulf.
• Involvement with the GCC = another network that links Britain through various political initiatives, such as managing the government transition in Yemen (FCO, 2013b).
Libya

• More recent but substantial
• Cooperate in “defence, counter terrorism, police co-operation and training” and “Regional security” (Hansard, 2009).
• Controversial: e.g. rendition of individuals to Libya and their subsequent torture (HRW, 2012)
Yemen

- Security cooperation on counter AQAP operations
- Joint work with coast guard
- Limited by terrorism threat
Syria and Tunisia

Syria
- Antagonistic relations
- Close relations with strategic rivals (Iran, Russia)
- Some intelligence cooperation over Al-Qaeda
- Undermined by Syria’s support for Hamas, Hezbollah

Tunisia
- Insubstantial
- Ben Ali Regime ‘closed’
- Much closer to France
Security

**Issue-led**
- Egypt – US-led, UK indirect beneficiary
- Libya – counter-terrorism dominated

**Antagonistic**
- Syria

**Pragmatic/Insubstantial**
- Tunisia, Yemen

**Tight Network**
- Bahrain – Longstanding and substantial
Networks in practice

Economic Networks
Table 5: UK trade with Case Study States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Average value of exports from the UK 2000-11 (£)</th>
<th>Average value of imports to the UK 2000-11 (£)</th>
<th>UK balance of trade 2000-11 (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>216,126,681.5</td>
<td>121,775,723.5</td>
<td>94,350,957.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>761,743,704.2</td>
<td>575,890,825.2</td>
<td>185,852,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>242,699,029.3</td>
<td>649,427,299.7</td>
<td>-406,728,270.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>90,663,504.55</td>
<td>86,643,092.55</td>
<td>4,020,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>153,128,054.5</td>
<td>272,837,981.7</td>
<td>-119,709,927.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>69,762,103.18</td>
<td>30,568,129.55</td>
<td>39,193,973.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UK Exports to Case Study States
UK Imports from Case Study States
Analysis

- UK-Egypt relationship is the most valuable, measured by both total trade and net gain.
- The next is Libya, as the second largest market for UK exports on the list (though the balance of trade equates to a deficit larger than any of the other bilateral relations listed).
- Trade between Britain and Bahrain is the fourth largest in total but the second most significant in terms of net gain.
Analysis

• If economic networks alone determined policy, we could expect either stronger UK support for the Egyptian regime, or a more neutral stance towards Libya.

• However, the response to the situation in Bahrain seems consistent with that country’s economic importance.

• As a net contributor to the UK’s balance of trade, and a destination for over £200 million of exports, this is a valuable economic link but arguably not so large that it demands UK action in the case of unrest.
Economy: Conclusions

• No obvious *prima facie* connection between the total value of trade between Britain and each case study state that can directly explain UK policy during the Arab Spring.

• While one might expect Britain to support those governments with which it has the strongest trading relationship it is apparent from the data that the opposite is largely true.

• This suggests that UK policy was not simply motivated by the need to protect its interests in important foreign markets.
Networks in practice

Civil Society Networks
Elite Interactions

- Close relations between UK and Gulf Royal families
- Egyptian and Syrian elites closely tied to the UK
- Tony Blair gifted holidays at the expense of Mubarak regime
- Allegations of corruption around UK higher education and Gaddafi family
- Less evidence of Elite ties with Yemen, Tunisia
NGOs

• Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch – various reports
• Most focused on Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Libya
• Less interest in Tunisia, Yemen
• Britain had “not been tough enough, frankly, on Bahrain” David Mepham (HRW)
• “the UK is also a little bit selective. It puts more emphasis on Syria than it does on Bahrain or Yemen”
Civil Society: Conclusions

• Six states stood out as experiencing a different order of protest, namely: Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen

• Britain gave Bahrain’s government substantial political support despite criticism from NGOs and the media.

• By contrast, for Libya and Syria, it offered strident criticism of the regimes and sought diplomatic and military action.

• to Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, it offered little substantial action at all
Overall: Conclusions

• security networks with each state bears a much closer correlation with government policy than either of the other two networks.
• UK-Bahrain We see a substantial security relationship and heavy interaction at the elite societal level.
• Although Libya had faltering interactions at the elite level, these were highly controversial.
• Its economic and security relations with Britain were significant but relatively new and perhaps constituted a ‘loose network’ of an opportunistic nature
IMPLICATIONS

- Human rights, democracy, even economic interests
- Subordinated to security concerns
- Tighter networks considered far more valuable than more recent - even if that provides substantial help
- Stability - above all
- But has it worked?
Questions

• How do other big external players act in the ME? Is this always consistent?

  • US
  • Russia
  • China
  • EU

• What motivates these actions?