

When the sweet Arab Spring turns sour: The ties that bind.

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Abstract

The "Arab Spring" is a great moment of history in our lifetimes. However, the uprisings and the related profound political transformation in the Arab world have aggravated many of the suppressed problems. A situation has clearly built up and escalated destabilization in the region, which has stained the desperate attempts toward freedom and democracy. The disorientation that has shaped the "Arab Spring" is unlikely to change for a long time to come and will reap bitter fruits. No one really knows when or if these fruits can ever sweeten.

Many Arabs could never think that the regional situation could ever bring about the exile of Ben Ali, the falling of Mubarak, the death of Gaddafi, the Bahraini recruiting of the Saudi military and many other examples of police states in the Middle East and North Africa collapsing.

The success of the first stages of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt caused euphoria in the West, which talked about a "fourth wave of democratization" that swept the Arab world and new opportunities for democratic transition of the Arab countries. Many inside and outside the region perceived these events as similar to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signaling end of the Cold War.

Arab publics remained bitter for a long time because they felt that the western media discriminate against them or look down at them, but since 2011 the situation has been reversed. As media experts and politicians started to change their positions after the persistent sit-ins at the Tahrir Square (Liberation Square), it was defined as a "People Revolution." These mediated events created theatrical scenes that nurtured an inspiring story line of an emerging "Arab Spring," which started in Tunisia and provided the spark that set off fires elsewhere in the region, especially in Egypt. It was thus rational to have an escalation effect in Lebanon; joint rallies of Egyptian Islamists and liberals against the Mubarak regime; and elections in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia.

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