The Arab Spring: The 'People' in International Relations

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Overview

This chapter presents a timely and critical account of the Arab uprisings from an international relations (IR) perspective. It does so via a revisionist interpretation that stresses the importance of the interactions of civic (peaceful/ruly) and non-civic (violent/unruly), top-down and bottom-up, state and non-state, local and global manifestations of political behaviour. Conventional wisdom reduces the Arab Spring to a local phenomenon of 'street politics' unconnected with global trends. Challenging the conventional wisdom, the chapter throws the Arab 'revolution' into sharper relief, first, by tracing its origin and, second, by analysing its 'itinerary' through the region on a global train.

The whole matrix of oppositions—internal–external, state–society, democratic–non-demo cratic, peaceful–violent, and secular–religious—is underscored to upend conventional thinking about forces of mass democratic resistance (trade unions, secular and Islamist parties, NGOs) and unruly Islamism (Al-Qaeda, ISIS, militias in Libya and Yemen), local (Arab Spring states and regimes, armies, social movements, and sectarian identities), regional/global actors (ranging from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to the US), and revolutionary and counter-revolutionary trends, by accounting for their local and global moorings and triggers.

A minimalist definition of the Arab Spring is offered here: a bottom-up ground swell of activism accompanied by cultural, political, and social transformation; or in the absence of transformation, a novel revolutionary or rebellious impulse, taking peaceful and violent forms, to exert pressure for change bottom-up.

Introduction: 'travel' of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring defies essentialist-Orientalist narratives about the Arab Middle East (as shall be discussed). It reminds observers that the Arab Middle East is plugged into the global society like any other region. Arabs do not live detached from the world around them and all it offers through the 'travel' of ideas, goods, and peoples. They affect the world and are in turn affected by international happenings, ideas, norms, products and encounters with the cultures, agents, and structures of globalization. Young leaders and protesters from Agadir along Morocco's Atlantic shores to Aden on the Red Sea are socialized into the global ethos. But the Arab Middle East is also plugged into globalization. Economic management panders to policy preferences invented in the chancelleries of Europe and North America, in the core countries of the globalized North. These range from macro-economic management strategies devised to lessen the impact of creeping economic globalization to the lowering of food subsidies as often counselled by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Arab classrooms have introduced curricula that coach learners into the Internet, computer literacy, and even Chinese. Linguists are seeking to equip Arabic with the means to keep up with rapid changes in IT and sweeping cultural homogenization in consumption patterns and greater interaction between global and local goods, ideas, and values deriving from globalization. The Arab region has not escaped globalization's perils (imbalances due to a dominant North; opening up of weak economies; the powerful economic interests of core countries from the North setting political, economic, and geostrategic agendas; the marginalization of poor areas and social classes; and privatization) and opportunities (regional integration; travel of goods; people, ideas, and investments; WTO membership; satellite TV such as Al-Jazeera redressing the New World Information and Communication Order; and greater awareness of democracy and human rights).

The Arab cities whose public squares have seen sustained protests, and all kinds of contests of authoritarian forms of power, are today joined to the 'indignant', the 'marginals' everywhere. Arab protesters (*thuwwar*) are part of the 'Global Village'—the shrinkage of time and space has not spared them. Like protesters elsewhere, the young protesters that spearheaded the Arab Spring relied on social media, such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter to disseminate their message. The deftness with which they deployed social media and other gadgets of globalization to challenge the postcolonial authoritarian order showed how they have mastered the technology of protest. Ideas of human rights, good governance, social awareness, and democratization travelled further afield from their origin in the West to the Arab heartland. These issues form a kind of thread that tie the marginalized masses across the globe regardless of nationality, gender, religious creed, or ethnic background.

Two interrelated ideas are in order. Partly, the emerging activism is driven by the desire to transform Arab Spring states; the aim is to put an end to intolerable disparities in political power and economic wealth between individuals and regions within countries such as Egypt

and Tunisia. And, in so doing, the new types of activism have helped foment new fearless and leaderless democratic identities. The result is a movement of activists, in which marginal individuals coalesce with workers, students, opposition forces, women's groups, Islamists, leftists, and liberals, forming the nucleus of a multitude-based democracy, at least during the moment of public square mobilization and organization (Hardt and Negri 2005). The Arab Spring is stamped with the birthmarks of marginalization: inclusion-exclusion, self-other, centre/periphery, and inside–outside. However, the Arab Spring has also emerged from the womb of popular aspiration for greater freedom and dignity (*hurriyyah*, *karamah*) the common slogans of Arab protesters everywhere.

When these ideas were combined with the Muslim tradition of speaking truth to power at the risk of one's life, they created a powerful catalyst to overthrow the yoke of authoritarian tyranny. Abysmal levels of poverty and joblessness in some countries further minimized for many the opportunity cost of dying in anti-authoritarian protests. Co-optation, coercion, institutional design, and constitutional manipulation and distribution typically relied upon by tyrants were finally rendered impotent by the tsunami of mass protest—though not in all cases. Civic activism and moral protest in the name of 'freedom' (*hurriyyah*) and 'dignity' (*karamah*) put to rest any notions of Middle East 'exceptionalism'. Military might and seemingly uncontested hegemony collapsed when confronted with the tidal wave of relentless demonstrations by Arab youth. The authoritarian regimes that were ousted could no longer reproduce themselves by way of the 'social adhesive' (Kirby 2000) or 'deference' (Hudson 1977: 167) deployed to keep the masses at bay—on the margins of political power. Thus, since Egypt's Tahrir Square uprising in 2011, some of the world's longest-surviving dictators have fallen from power. Libyan strongman, Mu'ammar Gaddafi was brutally murdered in the same year and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Salih was forced to abdicate under a GCC-orchestrated deal by peaceful protesters. These were men who once seemed poised to stay in power till their death in their gilded beds and palaces. The Arab Spring that spread from Tunisia to Egypt continues to gun for Syria's Bashar al-Asad.

Global precedents

Global parallels are legion: the 1979 Khomenei Revolution in Iran that put an end to the tyranny of the Shah, the 1986 People's Power revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos in Philippines, or the 1989 'November-December' or 'Velvet' Revolution in Czechoslovakia which led to the demise of the Soviet-backed regime, the 2004 Orange Revolution against the erstwhile dictator Kuchma in Ukraine, and the 2005 Tulip Revolution which resulted in the overthrow of Askar Akayev in the Kyrgyz Republic are just a few examples. These were no different from the popular uprisings that led to the ousting of Zine Elabidine Bin Ali in Tunisia (14 January 2011) and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (25 January 2011 Revolution). Although the so-called Arab *thuwwar* (revolutionaries) come in many political colours: secular, liberal, Islamist, and feminist, they stand on a shared space of 'peoplehood'. They form a new civic stratum. They hail from backgrounds as diverse as the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, the liberal April 6 Movement (Egypt) as well as non-ideological or specific issue interest groups such as the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), *femmes Democrats* (democratic women), 'EKBES' ('Firmness') protesters in Al-Kasba Square (Tunisia), and workers, tribal leaders, women, students, and civil society activists (Bahrain, Yemen).

To an extent, the post-Cold War moment matters. The stress here is on 'peoplehood' as an important explanatory concept through which I undertake a reading of the Arab Spring complementing an international relations (IR) approach. It speaks to the dynamic of the post-Cold War moment. Peoplehood is in this context both prescriptive and analytical. In its prescriptive guise, it is a cosmopolitan ideal, a product of globalization transcending polarizations such as communist–capitalist, East–West, Orient–Occident, and even more recently North–South. The travel of discourses (understood as both ideas and social practices) via technology and the Internet has created various forms of subjectivities (individual and collective) which conform to or rebel against authority. Further, in the context of this chapter the focus will be on collective subjectivities and attendant social practices. As an analytical concept, 'peoplehood' (i) refers to a bottom-up mobilizational capacity in physical spaces seeking to subvert and transform the hegemony of the state; (ii) has a demotic and democratic dynamic, is people-driven and embodies the ideal 'for the people'; and (iii) is local and global in its reach and manifestation, in which solidarities are formed internally and transnationally.

What links the indignant voices of the Arab street and the 2011 angry protests of *Occupy Wall Street* in the US and the 2011–12 anti-austerity *acampadas* (encampments of protesters in public squares) in Spain? Evidence of commonality abounds in the global squares of protest and in the triggers of discontent. All of these protest groups seem to embrace, at least rhetorically, an emancipatory mantra of freedom and dignity. Again, the Arab Spring's protesters and groups do not differ much from those made popular by the movement of the *indignados*/M-15,[1] ATTAC,[2] *Democracia Real Ya* (genuine democracy), and *juventud sin future* (future-less youth) in Spain. They are driven by demands for inclusive citizenship shared by like-minded activists who took to the streets throughout 2014 in Thailand, Greece, Portugal, Venezuela, and Ukraine. The cries of 'indignation' at unchecked power, police brutality, corruption, cronyism, discrimination, and obscene levels of inequality hail, in varying degrees, from some of the richest (e.g. United States) to some of the poorest nations on earth (e.g. Yemen). It is moral outrage at the structural injustice inherent in the prevailing socio-economic and political order. While specific grievances vary from country to country, protests in diverse locales were bound together by displays of moral indignation at ill-governance (political and economic exclusion, cronyism, and corruption), familiarity with the gadgetry of globalization (Internet, Facebook, etc.), and usage of the 'technology' of resistance (moral protest, transnational solidarities, language of human rights).

Thus diverse backgrounds, levels of income, nationality and temporal and spatial distance are dissolved in the cauldron of shared moral outrage and revolt against the tyranny of existing political and socio-economic order. We witness the paradox of polyphony/plurality (of languages and cultures) and harmony/uniformity (of messages and activisms). The Arab Spring thus serves as a connector between Arab and non-Arab societies. As a historic moment of change, embodying anti-systemic protest, it has proven its worth. In many parts of the world, people seem to share the glee of despots fleeing, one of the most recent being Yanukovych in Ukraine in February 2014. They seem to act in unison: the banners of 'occupy' 'degage', or leave (*irhal*), and 'game over' have a kind of revolutionary and poetic synthesis: as if all of a sudden the world's rebellious youths, students, and other types of marginalized groups dissolved into a singular, cohesive, and solidaristic complex.

On the ground, the Arab Spring seemed unstoppable. Indeed, many argue that the Arab Spring, or at least the consequences of the uprisings, are still ongoing. In this sense, it continues to 'travel' steadily, eerily popping up in diverse socio-political terrains shaking apparently stable regimes, with host polities and societies deploying it in their locale according to their own needs. The initial spark was ignited by the Tunisian youth. The Egyptian and the Libyan youth intensified the flame of protest. Tunis was the trigger; Cairo built the momentum; Tripoli and Benghazi signalled a kind of 'domino effect'. From then on, the 'travel' of the Arab Spring took a life of its own. From this perspective, the Arab Spring is just another manifestation of the human desire for freedom, dignity and justice. From an IR perspective, we take three ideas from the foregoing. First, there is a dynamic of 'deterritorialization' of activism whereby new political imaginaries, solidarities, language and protest strategies render nationalist borders meaningless. Second, the resulting trans-border newly reconstituted identities, moral protests, and networks hint at the idea of social 'movement spillover' (Meyer and Whittier 1994), captured in this chapter by the notion of al-harak or 'peoplehood'. Third, for the first since the emergence of the modern Middle East, societies have led the drive to change, or forced it, in a fashion akin to a bottom-up redistribution of power, even if ephemerally taking advantage of disarray or powerlessness of power-holders. This speaks both to the Marxist idea of radical change from below (changing history, as it were, not describing it). Similarly, it accentuates the liberal standpoint of IR which exalts the dynamic of politically, ideationally, and socially differentiated power in which non-state actors contribute to the crafting of power relations, domestically as well as internationally.

A caveat is in order here. Popular revolutions are seldom smooth. Tribal solidarity, religiosity, sectarianism, democracy, social justice, and equal citizenship all seem to be part of the normative vision that animates these new activisms. The road to freedom and justice is bumpy. Thus, protracted protests when brutally suppressed can morph into militant campaigns and weaken states to the point of near collapse such as in Libya and Syria, or when states seem to melt away from specific regions, leaving the ground to be occupied by terrorists (as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula—AQAP—in South Yemen) or to be overrun by centrifugal forces (such as the Houthi campaign in Yemen).

Regional differences

It may be stated that parts of the Arab Middle East, such as the Gulf States, are islands of 'stability' and 'prosperity' amidst a sea of turmoil, and are immune from the contagion of the Arab Spring. However, this is a misreading of the situation on the ground. Although the spill-over and 'demonstration effects' of the Arab Spring have not been even across the vast Arab geography and demography, and—regardless of how the message of emancipation integral to the Arab Spring 'travels', that is, manifests itself, or mutates socially and politically—it resonates with wide publics within and without the region. The Arab Spring has inspired masses at the same time that it has struck fear among autocrats across the region. Protests have been spearheaded by both individuals and groups in these countries. The periodic protests of increasing frequency by Saudi women drivers are symptomatic of such protests, as are the individual voices of bloggers and poets. And that spooks up the state's security apparatuses. Thus, the reality lurking behind the appearance of stability is not pleasant.[3]

Perhaps an abundance of natural resources combined with a supernormal surplus of workers extracted from a seemingly infinite supply of cheap labour from South and South-East Asia has enabled the oil monarchies to set up a system of economic privilege and buy the acquiescence of their nationals. The unusual amount of wealth enjoyed by the oil exporting Gulf States has propelled the ruling elite into adopting a two-fold strategy to deal with the prospect of revolutionary contagion. On the one hand, it has led to the adoption of irrational or draconian measures—for example, the Qatari government gave a life sentence to Mohammad ibn al-Dheeb al-Ajami, a poet whose 2012 poem, 'Tunisian Jasmine,' supported the uprisings in the Arab world. 'We are all Tunisia in the face of repressive elites!' wrote al-Ajami. The sentencing of the Saudi blogger, Raif Badawi, to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison is another glaring example of the brutal silencing of protest. The combined Saudi and UAE intervention (14 March 2011) in Bahrain and the July 2013 Saudi–UAE-backed military takeover of power in Egypt, combined with massive aid packages, were complementary measures designed to contain people-driven system reforms. No process of dialogue between the Sunni ruling elite and the Shia majority in Bahrain was facilitated by neighbouring states, that is, a process that redistributes power and welfare in a way that produces a win–win outcome (positive-sum game) for the power holders and civil society. On the other hand, the oil-rich Gulf regimes are unique in their ability to effectively bribe entire national populations into silence. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the Gulf States, like Saudi Arabia, enhanced subsidies and other welfare payments for nationals.[4] Moreover, the measures put in place to appease the national population were not only financial. For instance, women were granted the right to vote and run in the 2015 municipal elections, without the permission of their male guardians. The Arab Spring's absence, thus far, in countries such as Saudi Arabia, may be thought to suggest a shadowy presence.

The Arab Spring and globalization

Equally important in understanding the expansion of the Arab Spring is the fact that the 'explosion' of protest and socio-political revolutions—as an ideational and moral dynamic—is on display as a consequence of the shrinking of time-space in the wake of globalization. This is often attributed to high-tech revolutions. With the shrinkage of time and space, disillusion with the prevailing socio-economic order appeared to be increasingly shared across the globe. The 'rebellious' citizens and denizens (in the global 'North') are the kind of individuals that today populate polities marked by disillusionment and contest of power. In this time-space collapse, there is an emerging tendency towards reclamation of citizenship rights. Issues of freedom and dignity and the desire to foment empowered identities resonate through all these societies. However, the question of timing must not be underestimated in the facilitation of 'movement spillover', from Egypt and Tunisia to other Arab countries. Through enactment of moral protest the people come together to challenge existing political organization, be it democratic or not. The bid to reconfigure power relations –in order to normalize state–society relations—has strong resonance in the Arab Spring. This it shares with protest movements that preceded it (e.g. in Eastern Europe) or followed it (across many an Arab state, as illustrated in Figure 15.1): there is dissolution of political thought practices that coached citizens to delegate (in democracies) or surrender and defer the management of their futures (in autocracies).
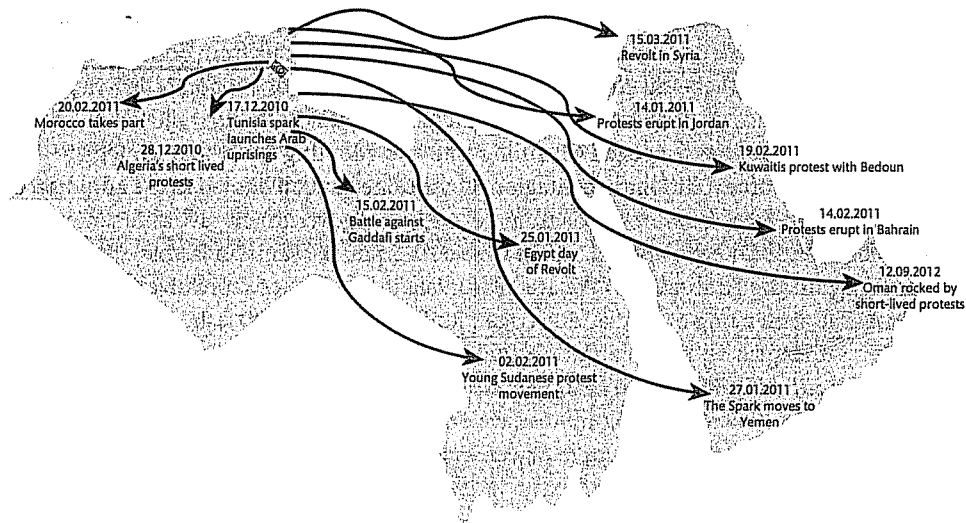
Figure 15.1 Travel of the Arab Spring

What has proved infectious in all of these instances of protest is the impulse towards self-organization, speaking back, writing back, and striking back at all symbols of power. The hitherto silent majorities in the West that had for so long been lulled to check out of political participation are inspired by the moral symbolism as well as the victories recorded against autocrats in the Middle East (West 2011). Social movements are playing a proactive role through moral protest and disruptive power, forcing either change in the political landscape (as with Greece's Syriza) or drawing wide support in favour of reforms (e.g. Spain).[5] Specifically, in the Arab Middle East, similar reference can be made to those who have until early 2011 opted out of political participation in delegitimized polities that took various forms from traditional autocracies to privatized polities such as the 'republican' dynasties (Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen; Sadiki 2009). They were the first to buckle under the juggernaut of anti-despotic popular defiance and resistance in 2011.

As far as moral symbolism goes, the death knell of the 'passive' Arab thrown into oblivion in the Orientalist discourse has been sounded. The revolutionary and visible Arab would not be 'voided' by Al-Jazeera, the Internet, Facebook, and the like. These have been perhaps 'over-romanticized' as drivers of change. Undoubtedly, the information and high-tech revolution has lent a helping hand to Arab uprisings. But, it is the free will and capacity of fearless and leaderless individuals to assume agency—more than the structural dynamic—that features prominently in the Arab uprisings. Agency matters when accounting for the Arab Spring as it did in the case of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Because agency is primary in these revolutions (Sharp 2012), the techniques and technologies of protest, resistance, and communication would have been invented if they had not existed. At the time of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Xerox and cassettes were the technologies of the time. They were no match to Facebook or Twitter today. Nonetheless, defiance led them to be used to optimum effect in the bid to reach a wider audience. Agency is what has turned people into a mobilizable 'monument', a critical mass that was able to assert itself against unjust rulers.

The position of international actors vis-à-vis these movements and the Arab Spring will be discussed in the chapter's last section.

Hopelessness in the face of systemic forces is what led Mohamed Bouazizi to take his own life in protest in December 2010. Bouazizi's individual act of desperation was just a dramatic manifestation of the feelings of marginalization shared by the youth across most of the natural resource poor Arab Middle East. Arab countries seemed to be susceptible to influence by the protests led by youths across a vast geography irrespective of local realities. This is where the Arab Spring impresses: the Arab region remains a cohesive cultural sub-system. It has continuously shared the quest for decolonization and modernization. This very quest is what the Arab region shares with other parts of the world (such as Africa) where merging solidarities as modes of collective against marginalization and joblessness have been present. These solidarities and protests are shaking established power and elites and range from civic and peaceful movements (e.g. Y'en a Marre movement in Senegal, April 6 in Egypt, Femmes Démocrates in Tunisia) to unruly and violent manifestations (such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Ansar Dine in Mali, al Shabaab in Somalia, and ISIS in Iraq and Syria). While some champion the cause of re-Islamization (the quest for greater representation of Islam in polity, society, and economy), as in the cases of Ansare Dine and ISIS, others are leading struggles for social justice and socio-economic rights (e.g. in the Mozambique riots of 2010–12). Artistic expression as a mode of protest has entered the fray too. Rap music has emerged throughout the Arab World: for example, 'El General' led this wave in Tunisia with many songs against the dictatorial regime ousted in 2011.[6]

To sum up, that the Arab masses are connected with the rest of the world is evidenced by their proclivity to respond to and learn from other protest movements and revolts, such as those in Europe and Asia. There appears to be a new dynamic in the Arab Middle East: while there may be temporary setbacks and differential pace of protests, there is no winding back of the clock to pre-2011 state–society relations. The margin carved out by Arabs to speak back, write back, and engage in dissidence cannot be reclaimed by relics of the old regime, even in the states where vigilance against all dissidence has been heightened. That is the prosaic fact of life in the post-Arab Spring world.

Orientalism challenged

Orientalism as an attitude or a mode of speaking and writing about the Middle East (Said 1978; Mitchell 1988) persists. Orientalist narratives have historically relegated the Arab Middle East to a sphere of irrelevance, ahistoricity, and exile from the realm of civility and modernity—however understood. Theses of authoritarian 'resilience' have dogged the Middle East for the greater part of postcolonial history (Anderson 1991b).

The Arab Spring and the myth of exceptionalism

The Arab Spring poses a huge problem for conventional wisdom on the Middle East (or 'Orient') as a discursive formation produced by some Orientalists. Specifically, it warrants serious interrogation of the Arab Middle East 'exceptionalism' which manifests itself in the following two forms:

a) as an exilic and exclusionary device that situates the Arab Middle East outside the 'box' of modernity, democracy, legal-rationality, civility, etc., before the Arab Spring; and

b) as an attitude that elevates the Arab World (especially Arab Spring states) to a kind of beacon of light for the rest of the developing world suffering under the yoke of tyranny and oppression as they join the wave of protests in the wake of the Arab Spring.

The display of people power in the public squares of Cairo, Hama, Homs, Manama, Sanaa, Tripoli, and Tunis challenges Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs as passive, invisible, and resistant to the values of 'freedom'. The irony was not lost on keen observers as it was freedom that was one of the key demands of the *thuwwar* of the Arab Spring. Writing in the Ahram Centre's Arabic journal *Majallat Al-Dimuqratiyyah (Journal of Democracy)* in reference to the '25th of January Revolution', Hala Mustafa (2011: 6–14) observed that the Arab Spring represented 'a return of spirit and consciousness' for the eighty million-strong Egyptian nation. She notes that at the core of this revolution was the urge to create a 'democratic system', based on justice, dignity, and freedom (Hala Mustafa 2011: 7–8). This sums up the ethos of the Arab Spring from Tunisia to Yemen. A similar notion is encapsulated in the phrase 'the Tunisian people's charisma' (Qawi 2011: 143). This characterization draws attention to the empowering effect of the Tunisian people's success in ousting their dictator, thus setting in motion a revolutionary demonstration effect across the Arab Middle East. 'This charisma derives its moral flame from the long tradition of struggle all over the Arab Maghreb. This region led a fierce resistance against French colonialism, and [in Tunisia] led to the organization of labour unions of which the Federated Union of Tunisia Workers (UGTT) was a key force [during the 2011 revolution]' (Qawi 2011: 142).

These positive properties attributed to the enabling power of the Arab Spring are overlooked in some Orientalist discourses of the Oriental 'other'. The notions of 'spiritedness', 'consciousness', and 'charisma' stand in stark contrast to the invisibility and passivity attributed to Arabs, especially as agents of democratic change. Note how these terms of reference compare with those used by Steven Cook (Senior Fellow at the US-based Council on Foreign Relations) in his *Foreign Policy* article (Cook 2011): he talks about 'the Frankenstein of Tahrir Square' at the height of the 2011 protests. The phrase smacks of the old blinkered Orientalism. Doom and gloom is written all over his take on the protests : 'Egypt is spinning out of control. But it is not only the fault of the ruling military junta, but the protesters in the street deserve plenty of blame, too' (Cook 2011). Obsession with 'order' and 'stability' has created in the minds of international 'touristic' news-makers of Tahrir Square unrealistic expectations of 'orderly' protest. Revolutions are nothing short of messy historical moments.

The Arab Spring brought tremendous fervour. It galvanized Arab public squares into waves of sustained protest intermittently in Tahrir Square and the Kasba or Bardo squares in Tunisia, and escalated into armed conflict in places like Syria, Libya, and Yemen. It enthused the masses to dismantle the authoritarian structures of power (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya) similar to the democratizing energies of the Philippine, Indonesian, Czech, or Georgian peoples. Yet the emergence of this movement with its implications for civic reconstruction has not escaped the denigration typical of Orientalist depiction of the region. Early in 2011, Tahrir Square drew worldwide attention and admiration for the creative display of peacefully sustained protest, nine days before Mubarak was ousted. That admiration was not universal. There were concerns, some of them legitimate. American billionaire, Mortimer Zuckerman,

warned that a takeover by the Muslim Brotherhood would be a disaster for US interests. What the Egyptians dared to think did not matter, it seems. Partly, this brand of thinking is a feature of a typically patronizing rhetoric (Zuckerman 2011).

The standard precautionary proviso, about 'Islamic militants' lurking to take over power after the departure of autocrats, is all-pervasive. The Israelis and their intellectual supporters in the West, led by Bernard-Henry Levy, launched an organized campaign to unseat Mursi.[7] Thus the *Telegraph* (UK) quipped on 27 January 2011 that what Egyptians needed was 'reform not revolution' (Grant and Petersen 2011). 'Revolution' as the emblematic zeal of the Arab Spring tends to be represented as suspect. For Ziya Meral, a Turkish legal expert, the protests are a moment of 'evolution' not 'revolution'. He championed evolution, viewing it to be in 2011 pushing Egypt towards an Israeli model of political transformation. In that model, he intimates, the army would be the only force with the capacity to reign in fissiparous Islamists and secularists (Meral 2011). Maybe that is what Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi attempted when he overthrew the elected Mursi government on 3 July 2013. His actions to date leave no doubt that democracy was the last thing on his mind. The role of external powers as antagonists or backers of the Arab Spring will be touched upon in the final section of this chapter.

The use of the term 'awakening' is denounced by many Arab observers as a misnomer in reference to the Arab Spring. It is taken to be tainted by its usage in reference to the resurgence of the 1980s during the height of antagonism between secular regimes and Islamists, on the one hand, and Islamists and the West, on the other. The usage is considered pejorative. Its connotations—intended or un-intended—signify contempt and communicate misunderstanding of the Arab Spring. One scholar writing in *Al-Jazeera English* criticizes the use of the term 'awakening' for ignoring Arab and Middle Eastern history of uprisings. The term is similarly questioned for assuming passivity (as opposed to participatory culture) to be the norm. 'Those who call what has unfolded since the last year in the Arab World as an Arab "awakening" are not only ignorant of the history of the last century, but also deploy Orientalist arguments in their depiction of Arabs as a quiescent people who put up with dictatorship for decades and are finally waking up from their torpor' (Massad 2011). For Massad, the advent of the Arab Spring has not stopped Orientalism.

Doubt over the 'Arab Spring' is widespread. It has elicited global debate. This is positive, since the discourse of the phenomenon is dispersed and plural. Yet this debate tends to be mired in a great deal of negativity about the actual or possible outcomes of the Arab Spring. Specifically, democratic outcomes are questioned. Some observers could see only a 'winter'. Indeed, the notion of the Arab Spring morphing into a winter is one of the most common metaphors used in this respect. Writing in the well-known Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, Oudeh Basharat sounds off alarm bells about the rise of *fanatics*, a totalizing neat label in reference to Islamists (Basharat 2011). In an Op-Ed in the *Huffington Post*, New York University IR scholar, Alon Ben-Meir, also places 'the dark forces' of Islamism, including the emerging Salafist forces, as the harbingers of this winter (Ben-Meir 2011). He adds the following to the mix of factors conspiring against the Arab Spring: tribes, lack of 'traditional liberalism', 'ethnic minorities' hold on power', the army, and 'the religious divide and extremism' (Ben-Meir 2011).

There is no denying that these dynamics exist. But they are not monoliths immune to any kind of shift. They are historically evolving. Furthermore, the voices and forces of democratic

renewal do not come from a single or fixed bloc of 'liberals'. Use of common generalizations about Islamism, the Arab Middle East's lack of a liberal tradition, and the West's democratic repertoire are superficially assumed to be the main factors leading the Arab Spring to degenerate into a 'winter'. Paradoxically, many so-called liberals were cheerleading the military takeover of the democratically elected regime in order to stem the tide of Islamism in Egypt. Democratic values, practices, or struggles are not abstractions stored in an age-long repository, awaiting reification or reincarnation in a concrete form. They are instead constructed in the tensions, arguments, and disputations between these seemingly irreconcilable and inhospitable forces. The emerging sites of democratic struggle across boundaries of ideology, religion, sect, and even class that these forces share constitute the real terrain on which democratic compromises and learning take place.

Salman Masalha of *Haaretz* quips that the 'Recent revolutions are neither Arab nor spring' (Masalha 2011). He views the 'Arab Spring' as no more than a new phase in the nationalist crisis that has gripped the Arab Middle East for decades, making assertions that it is part of a bigger scheme to support Sunni Islam to stem the tide of Shia Islam. He concludes that the Arab Spring rather than a conscious spirited popular movement, 'is just another golem [an artificially created human being] that is liable to turn on its maker' (Masalha 2011). The Arab Spring warrants a questioning of persistent Orientalism. It allows observers and scholars to marshal evidence from the field with which to refute stereotypes of passivity and servility. The nature of postcolonial politics in the Arab Middle East cannot be explained by anything in Islam or Arab culture *per se*. Rather, one must look to the oppressive tactics of singular elites who ruled with an iron hand without any system of checks and balances. They did so, in fact, in a manner strikingly similar to elites in a number of predominantly Catholic (and non-communist) societies—Franco in Spain, Marcos in the Philippines, and junta-led regimes in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Nicaragua in the 1970s and 1980s. This Third Wave of Democratization was termed a Catholic wave even by Huntington (1991). However, all they see in the Arab uprising is a tendency for it to degenerate into a winter.

The main recipient of blame for this degeneration is the rise of Islamists. Yet, through Arab eyes,[8] the Arab Middle East is on the cusp of a democratic metamorphosis. Some Islamists (Nahda in Tunisia) are waging battles with the ballot, others with the bullet (ISIS). The October 2011 Constituent Assembly elections in Tunisia and the parliamentary elections in Egypt that took place in three phases between November 2011 and January 2012—the first two parliamentary elections of the Arab Spring—and the 2015 peaceful transfer of power from 'Islamists' to 'liberals' challenge the stereotypical constructions of the Arab Middle East. Fanaticism is not perennially cemented to Islamists; and an absence of civil society cannot be attributed to Islam. Resistance to authoritarianism, assumption of popular agency, and the new activism of plural political forces across the region are today defying Orientalist stereotypes. The people have in the wake of the Arab Spring emerged as agents of change, once the exclusive prerogative of states and political elites.

It is common ground to reject (neo)orientalism. However, more serious scholarship must be distinguished from extreme and unrepresentative voices. Nuanced and sophisticated representation of the Arab Spring, and the Middle East more generally, can be found in the views of more established Orientalists. Robert Irwin, a well-known British historian, offers a vigorous rebuttal of what he views as Said's mischaracterization of Orientalism and

Orientalists as tools of colonial powers. He gives a Pre-Saidian account of Orientalism as a serious undertaking to study Islam, Arab literature, language, culture, and history begun in the seventeenth century, untarnished by links to modern-day Western geopolitics or imperialism (Irwin 2006). Irwin's teacher, Princeton University historian Bernard Lewis expresses 'delight' at the advent of the Arab Spring. He stresses and lauds Islam's attention to the institution of justice (*adl*) and opposition to tyrannical rule (Weiss 2011). Moreover, he rejects any imposition of Western democracy on Arab Spring states. He champions a route of political renewal that, in his view, must be guided by local history and tradition. 'I don't think we can assume that the Anglo-American system of democracy is a sort of world rule, a world ideal ... Muslims should be allowed—and indeed helped and encouraged—to develop their own ways of doing things' (Weiss 2011). In the same vein, Foud Ajami, senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, promotes agency of the Arabs as being the main drivers of change in their region during the 2011 uprisings. This is a far cry from Orientalist generalizations about Arabs/Muslims as passive subjects, out of step with history. Ajami rejects suggestions that President Obama's June 2009 Cairo speech inspired the Arab Spring. As he puts it 'America should not write itself into every story: There are forces in distant nations that we can neither ride nor extinguish' (Ajami 2012). Moreover, he deprecates American officialdom's loss of credibility in the lead-up to the Arab Spring. Ajami specifies Obama's 'ease with the status quo'—driving home the message that his administration must not be credited with making the Arab Spring, which was the invention of Arab youth and protestors such as in Tahrir Square (Ajami 2012).

People-driven international relations

The study of IR within a Middle Eastern setting poses new challenges in the wake of the 'Arab Spring'. As noted already, the Arab Spring is loosely used here in reference to the people-driven actions. This includes protest, dissent, civic political organization, and unruly/violent political manifestations that have acted as catalysts for and against change. As briefly outlined in the section which follows, these challenges call for reflection on the dominant perspectives:

(a) **Bringing religion back in IR:** IR has been imported, in whole or in part, as part of wide-ranging Eurocentric disciplines and paradigms for interpreting and explaining a whole range of phenomena from state- and war-making to colonial and post-colonial encounters with Western powers in the region. As yet no uniquely Arab or Muslim analogues to IR's diverse theoretical approaches have emerged locally. Religion's lasting power—in an ideational or behavioural sense—suggests it continues to be a potent force common to Jews, Muslims, and Christians in this region (Armstrong 1994). The Middle Eastern perspective should be informed by the central place that religion has in it. This is not unique to this region. *Liberation theology* (Brown 1990) as a radical movement in the context of South America was deployed to bring about social change and justice to the working class. Demands for re-Islamization on behalf of democratic/civic and unruly/violent movements in the Middle East illustrate the point about the relevance of the religious perspective. Yet religion is seldom incorporated in studies of the IR of the Middle East with the possible exception

of the Gramscian and the Constructivist models (Wendt 1992; Lawson 2006). Distinguished anthropologist Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) interrogates the reigning wisdom that tends to construct religion and secularity as mutually exclusive categories. His study marshals empirical and textual evidence to argue that secularity alone is unable to explain social and political historical happenings. Juxtaposed with this is his view that liberal theory's stress on secularity renders it devoid of the tools to understand realities in non-Western societies. He questions liberal theory's categories and their ability to read 'different political futures in which other traditions can thrive' (1993: 306). He poses this question: 'Must our critical ethnographies of other traditions in modern nation-states adopt the categories offered by liberal theory?'

(b) **Counting realist narratives:** There still exists a conspicuous realist bent in the analytics of international events. However, it is appropriate in the wake of the Arab Spring to make use of the full range of alternative IR perspectives. This raises the level of sophistication and critical thinking when interpreting the complex dynamics of change in power relations, both within and without nations. IR theories are perennially subject to contestation and so are the interpretations of the events associated with the Arab Spring. Protest and dissent on behalf of 'freedom and dignity' were echoed in many an Arab public square. This fact points to the potency of ideas in explaining discontinuous change—deserving of special attention by the dominant schools of IR.

By the same token, violent and non-violent 'resistance' against authoritarianism (Hafez 2003) may intensify interest in alternative perspectives hitherto underrepresented in analytical discourses on global politics—along the lines of Gramscian and other critical theories, and 'revolution' as a driver and explanatory tool of change (see, for instance, Halliday 1990). It may be argued that religion fits into the Gramscian sense of 'hegemonic discourse'. At least, in so far as religion is used by the ruling regimes as a 'soft' mechanism to generate consent of civil society without recourse to brute force, it remains an important part of hegemonic discourse in Arab Gulf states. It is no less true of counter-hegemonic discourse across the Arab Middle East. In the same vein, constructivists may equally find plenty of food for thought in the 'explosion' of identity discourse (Hatina 2007). Identity narratives (e.g. Shia vs Sunni) are deployed to re-map out power relations. This may be within nations (e.g. Iraq, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen) as well as between them (for example, Iran-backed Shia Houthis in Yemen pitted against a Saudi-led ten-Sunni majority states coalition in operation 'Firmness Storm' launched on 28 March 2015).

(c) **Marxists and revolution:** The idea of revolution as a driver of history is sketched out by many Marxist scholars. Revolution has been a major driving force in IR theory and in the regional life of the Arab Middle East. Examples abound of revolutions which targeted the state apparatus and old bureaucracy of monarchical realms from Iraq in 1920 to Egypt in 1952. Young officers who executed coups in many an Arab country (e.g. Libya, Syria, Yemen) adopted an anti-statist posture, viewing monarchies and their alliance with the landed class and acquiescence to colonial rule to be stifling progress and emancipation of polity and society. However, the military officers who came to power after smashing monarchical systems sought singular possession of the state—a kind of a 'booty' for the victorious officer class and their clients (workers, peasants, soldiers, Muslim clergy, and a parasitic state-dependent bourgeoisie).

Revolution is a regional dynamic in the Middle East. States are made and unmade in the process of unfolding revolutions. Although the persistence of authoritarian regimes has to a large degree obscured the presence of change, specifically radical political change, political actors within and across national boundaries in the Middle East have challenged incumbent regimes and threatened to introduce—and in a few cases have succeeded in introducing—a new political order. Thus revolutions have played a major role in speeding up the formation of state-building (1952 Egypt; 1979 Iran) and also shoring up counter-revolutionary regimes which have shored up their institutions of the state to stem the flow of revolution to their territories.

The late Fred Halliday's article (1990) is very sharp piece on the state of IR and the study of revolution. Grand moments ushering political change are products of a combination of national and international factors. The nation state and all that transpires within are not immune to the vicissitudes of the global theatre. Revolution can be counted among the various phenomena which bind the national to the international in a complex network of actors and institutions. In international relations, as Halliday aptly observed, revolution has been neglected in the theorizing of the international system. The presence of revolutions or other interruptions to the harmony of the state system are not exceptional, nor are they exclusively internal developments. Halliday cites Martin Wight's findings that revolution was dominant for 'over *half* the history of the international system' (Halliday 1990: 212). Decisive transformations such as the Bolshevik revolution have defined the very systemic nature of international politics, particularly in the twentieth century, in both war and post-war periods (Halliday 1990: 213). Interactions among states have been equally shaped by revolution as much as war. And moreover, wars have been preceded by revolutions. Revolutionary internationalism is contrasted with counter-revolutionary internationalism whereby conflicts ensue in a tendency to homogeneity seeking to export revolution or contain and overthrow revolutions (Halliday 1990: 215). The definition of revolution provided by Halliday is largely derived from Theda Skocpol's social revolution consisting of a combination of 'two coincidences' bringing together societal structural change with class upheaval on the one hand and political and social transformation on the other hand (Halliday 1990: 210). Popular mobilization against a weakened state, rendered so by international factors, produce revolutions with an emphasis on the latter (Halliday 1990: 213–14). The force of revolution gathers momentum through the deterioration of the state's coercive capacity to maintain order (or rather repression). The Arab Spring points to deleterious effects of international structural adjustment policies on societies linked to authoritarian policies. Bottom-up dynamics were produced by and in turn responded to the continuing political and economic marginalization of individuals and social groups (Sadiki 2000). Ostensibly durable authoritarian regimes in the Middle East were subject to challenges to their ability to repress against the backdrop of erosion of the post-colonial distributive arrangements (quasi 'republics of bread' that provided subsidies in return for political acquiescence and loyalty) due to international economic pressures. However, the reassertion of authoritarianism in some Arab countries (Libya, Egypt, and Syria) can be understood to be a region-wide counter-revolutionary trend seeking to privilege the most dominant actor in the region: the military.

(d) **Introducing a pluralist perspective:** While state-centric explanations remain important, a pluralist approach that incorporates alternative perspectives is necessary in

grasping the full meaning of regional politics. To illustrate, 'Firmness Storm' can be read in multiple ways. On the one hand, it exemplifies the Saudi-led Gulf states' quest for regional leadership and their security, and, as such, it is a classic exercise of realpolitik à la realism. On the other hand, the operation can be assessed through a constructivist prism in so far as identity narratives (Shia vs Sunnis) underpin the conflict.

What the Arab Spring presents IR with is an opening for critically assessing the deep-rooted state-centric approaches to regional politics. Not so long ago, the region's 'game changers', as it were, belonged to a different IR imaginary. Such an imaginary was uniquely straddled by regional powers (e.g. Egypt, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and of late Qatar and UAE) and iconic statesmen, both local and global. That phalanx included a mix of figures such as Arafat, Asad, Begin, Gaddafi, Khomeini, Mubarak, Nasrallah, Nasser, Rabin, Reza Shah, Saddam, Henry Kissinger and his 'shuttle diplomacy' in the 1973 war, James Baker, Condoleezza Rice, Richard Pearl, Colin Powell, and Hilary Clinton, amongst others. The Arab Spring has changed all of that: for the first time since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that brought Shia clerics to power in Iran, peoples across a vast Arab geography have emerged as actual and potential 'game-changers', driving change from below (though interestingly still around an iconic leader in the Iranian case). This is one more reason why we must guard against mono-causal explanations of politics in the Arab Middle East. Non-state actors associated with the Arab Spring have challenged (Egypt), destabilized (Libya, Syria, Yemen), and radically reformed (Tunisia) the nation state.

Arab Spring: moment of 'peoplehood'

The Arabic term 'al-harak' (referring to 'peoplehood', and popular mobilization) captures the essence of the political, social, cultural, and religious people-driven ferment. It marks an important watershed in the life of the post-colonial Arab state. It partakes of both civil and uncivil manifestations of thought and practice across boundaries of rich diversity and complexity. Factors such as ethnicity, demography, history, geography, and varying degrees of political organization, good governance, and overall development make up such diversity.

This ferment is noted for its transformative impact on the region's politics. Actors, ideas, and events within one country seem to prove infectious or destabilizing in neighbouring countries. From the outset, the Arab Spring took on a life of its own: morphing from a national into a transnational phenomenon.

Four trends are integral to this people-based and driven ferment: migratory, transitory, participatory, and fragmentary. This four-fold process has impacted state–society relations within specific countries as well as state–state relations across the region. These trends have pushed a spectre of multi-faceted upheavals and transformations wide-open: power vacuum (Libya, Yemen), protracted contests and counter-contests over value allocation (Bahrain), reversals (Egypt), identity politics (Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria), power and resource distribution (Kuwait, Libya, Yemen), civil and unruly modes of engagement (Egypt, Yemen), patronage and client politics (Gulf states), and the consolidation of legitimate polities (Tunisia) (see **Table 15.1**).

Table 15.1 Emerging trends in the Arab Middle East

Transitory	Electoral processes	Democratic breakdown/reverse
	Constitution-framing	Counter-revolutionary reflexes
= motion and movement	Political party legalization	Political impasse
challenging *status quo*	Fledgling democratization	Civil war
		Insurgency / Terrorism
Participatory	Civil/Civic/Legal:	Uncivil/Unruly/Violent:
= agents of change made up	New political elites (Islamists,	Radicalized youth/forces
of individuals, old and new	Salafists, Leftists) + old elites	Militias (Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen)
groups, and solidarities	New social movements (youth	Warring tribes (Yemen, Libya)
	movements) + political parties	Warring sects (several countries including
	+ civic bodies	Lebanon)
	Emerging forms of citizenship	Warring ethnicities (Iraq, Syria, Libya)
	(protesters, dissidents, social	
	media agents)	
	Voters	
Fragmentary	Authoritarian power structures	Dissolution of political authority
	Post-colonial ruling houses	Regimes morphing into militias (Syria)
	Former ruling political parties and	Fragmentation of religious authority
	elites	(esp. in Sunni countries: Salafi vs. Muslim
	Old networks of patronage-	Brotherhood schools)
	clientelism	State dismembering scenarios
= break-up of collective	Mass mobilizational and populist	Regionalization (Libya, Syria, Yemen)
morality, laws, identity, and	ideologies (Iraq, Syria, Egypt,	Refuge in primordial templates of identity
conceptions of community	Tunisia, Yemen) and corporatist	Parochial solidarities (based on commonality
	forms of political organization	of region, sect, ethnicity, tribe, ideology, etc.)

Never before had such vociferous and diverse publics been at the heart of political contests. At the core of these contests lies the drive of peoplehood to reclaim and/or redefine power. That is, power in its multiple dimensions as governance, distribution of resources, morality, laws, belonging, citizenship, freedom, and dignity. The peoplehood moment represents a historical opening to strike back at the decaying post-colonial structures of authority and rule. To an extent, peoplehood is a novelty, with popular mobilizations being an integral part of the political landscape. Instructive examples range from mass-based resistance groups to cultural 'awakenings' (such as political and cultural salons) to autocratic regimes seeking to mobilize citizens for public shows of support in order to tame and channel their energies (sometimes nationalism and patriotism is invoked as we are currently seeing in al-Sisi's Egypt). From this perspective, peoplehood also marks a challenge to the whole discipline of IR. Even if marked by fluidity and susceptible to temporary setbacks, the Arab Spring seems to be irreversible in terms of enabling the region's peoples to transcend the threshold of fear. States no longer command all of the moral resources of defining change. Democratic participation and maturity (e.g. Tunisia) or violent resistance (e.g. Syria) call into question the ability of the Arab post-colonial order to reproduce itself intact.

The Arab Spring has been uneven in its impact. Nonetheless, peoples are empowered to contest, redefine and reclaim a space and a voice. Non-violent civic resistance and violent strategies are equally used. On the violent front, militias of all kinds have mushroomed— backed by internal and external constituencies. Their aim is to unseat authoritarian rulers (e.g. Asad in Syria) or have an input in the rebuilding of the nation state after overthrowing

erstwhile leaders (e.g. Libya; Yemen). Peoplehood thus looms large on the IR and political horizon of the Middle East; the travel of positive ideas (freedom, moral protest) as well as of negative thought-practice (terrorism). Nonetheless, this new monumental force has been catapulted into political centre-stage after being relegated to the periphery for decades. It gives a flavour of the bottom-up dynamics to inform and transform polity, society, identity, information, and culture in the foreseeable future in this region. On the transitory front, democratization and constitution-making have begun a slow but sure induction into a few polities, with Tunisia being the most promising thus far. This is the biggest and most obvious trend shaping state–society relations in the wake of the Arab Spring. These processes are already impacting upon the state system itself, in the sense of changing the boundaries as well as the political arrangements, of that system. Fragile security is the hallmark of weakened states whose territories are today disputed, threatened, or divided among feuding militias (e.g. Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen). A continuous youth bulge bereft of development goods (education, employment, and housing) remains vulnerable to heightened radicalization. Tunisia's paradox is a case in point. It is at once the Arab Spring's only democratizing polity and the country with one of the highest number of fighters (more than 3,000) in the ranks of terrorist groups such as ISIS. Politically, centralized authority is subject to fragmentation either along sectarian or ideological lines.

In one way, the Arab Spring-type revolts of 2011 and the events that attended upon them have set the stage for polarization of state–society power relations within and between states in the region. The fragmentary nature of this moment marks the new politics evident across the region's vast geography. The twin protest–contest dynamic and explosion of violence shall not wither away. The Arab Spring cannot be oversimplified by reducing it to manifestations of 'hungry mobs' or 'street politics' (Sadiki 2009). It is indirectly a public opinion barometer that speaks to important issues of distribution of power and wealth. For example, the Arab human development agenda is noted for glaring deficits in need of urgent attention. They include deficits in inclusiveness, freedom, equality, empowerment, and knowledge (UNDP 2003). The emerging trends that are driving the process of change—for and against stability—be they violent or non-violent, spontaneous or planned, top-down or bottom-up, and motivated by domestic or external agenda-setting, all point to a heightened state of polarity in state–society relations. The centre and margin seem to be locked into a kind of logic of rivalry.

In contradistinction to previous phases of postcolonial history, the political margin has rekindled the practice of speaking back (dissent and protest) or striking back (with physical force). The political margin has always challenged the centre, emerging every now and again when the state retreats or is complacent. Conventional wisdom in IR has ignored the stubborn persistence of the political margin or peoplehood in shaping politics, regional and global. Non-state actors have been potent, for example the Muslim Brotherhood spread from Egypt to Arab and non-Arab locales during the twentieth century. Externally, the Arab Spring has created openings for discourses and forces that have produced (ideologically and materially) transnational entanglements. The 'fallout' from these entanglements has complicated the region's politics. The proliferation of non-state actors, flowing from new national politics, has its imprint all over the chessboard that is the Middle East, seeking to transform the game with nonconventional gambits. The peoplehood (*al-Harak*), is today on full display, taking both civic and unruly permutations. Its drive to change the political landscape in the Arab Middle East such as on behalf of the forces of re-Islamization has from the outset

accompanied the Arab Spring. It has manifested itself in various ways, such as by non-state actors, namely Islamists who have imprinted on the Arab Spring either as legal or illegal agents of indelible change. More or less, it seems to outweigh the impact of secularist forces and is checked only by forces of the so-called the 'deep state' (the armed forces) in countries such as Egypt and Syria. Peacefully and violently, Islamist non-state actors have contributed a great deal to the drive to reconfigure power in the Arab Middle East.

The renewed prominence of non-state actors during the Arab Spring has added new factors to regional and national political contexts. Key characteristics of non-state actors are identified in **Table 15.2** according to adoption or non-adoption of violence, sect, date of formation, and field of action, for example countries and elections. Political activity revolving around the poles of ruly and unruly forms have led to a state of affairs which includes longstanding regimes falling (such as those of Ben Ali, Gaddafi, and Mubarak), those stubbornly holding on to power (such as Asad and Bouteflika), and others co-opting opposition movements (King Mohamed VI). The use of violence and non-violent political methods by Hezbollah and Libya Dawn blurs these two categorizations, which is accounted for in the category of 'hybrid violent-non-violent movements'.

Three additional categories would further help to identify crucial aspects of the movements in this table. Ideology, activities (rather than field of action) and countries/country will enable the reader to make sense of a typology of movements in the Arab Spring period. Ideologies could be Salafism or Islamism. In the case of the latter, we have examples ranging from reformist/moderate (*Wasatiyyah*) to Khomeinist. Activities include elections, violence, armed resistance, etc. Some of the movements in the table are simultaneously national, regional, and global while others are merely located in one specific country.

Centre vs periphery: bottom-up change

The centre–periphery model is deployed here very loosely. This model views power relations in a quasi-concentric sense: the centre represents the powerful industrialized states. The periphery refers to the states which remain politically and economically dependent on these powerful states. Neo-Marxist scholars use it to explain disparity between the developed colonial and neo-colonial North and the developing and under-developed South in the world economy. In so doing, they underscore the underdevelopment and/or dependent development of the periphery as a structural feature of the world capitalist system. Wallerstein (1974), Amin (1974), and Frank (1978) take the centre–periphery cleavage to be integral to the development of capitalism. The core (colonial and neo-colonial developed North) has advantages over peripheral countries in terms of technology and capital-intensive production. At the centre of the core–periphery model there exists a reproducible structure of unequal power relations. What reproduces this structure of inequality is the near monopoly of technology and predominantly capital-intensive production of high value added products in the North, and specialization in labour-intensive low value added raw material and light industrial products in the South.

The post-colonial ruling houses and elites associated with the military bureaucratic and comprador capitalist groups are complicit in exploiting the working poor at both the centre and the periphery. They control financial, technical, and coercive resources.

Table 15.2 Islamist non-state actors and movements active in the Arab Spring

Violent movements			Movements of political Islam				
			Non-violent movements			Hybrid violent-non-violent movements	
Name & Muslim sect	Date of formation	Field of action	Name	Date of formation	Field of action	Date of formation	Field of action
Al-Qaeda Sunni	1996	Global	Freedom & Justice Party (political arm of Muslim Brotherhood)	2011	Egypt [Winner of 2012–13 elections]		
Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS/ISIL/Daesh) Sunni	2013	Iraq, Syria, and Libya	Hezbollah	1982		1982	Post-Arab Spring Lebanon & Syria conflicts
Nusra Front Sunni	2012	Syria	Al-Noor Party	2011	Egypt [2012–13 elections]		
Beit AL-Maqdis / Saini Emirate Sunni		Egypt/Sinai	Al-Wasat Party	Formed 1996/ legalized in 2011	Egypt [2012–13 elections]		
Houthis Shia	2008	Yemen	Justice and Development Party	1998	Morocco [winner of 2011 legislative elections; governing party since then]		
Ansar Al-Sharia/ Sunni	2012	Libya & Tunisia	Dawn Libya (alliance among Islamists and revolutionaries)	2014	Muslim Brotherhood came second to secularist front in 2012 National Congress elections	2013	Libya Civil war
Uqba Ibn Nafaa/ Sunni	2012	Tunisia	Nahda Party	1980/legalized in 2011	Tunisia [winner of 2011 Constituent Assembly elections; second in 2014 National Assembly elections]		
Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi/Sh'a	2014	Iraq					
Peace Brigades (a new version of al-Mahdi Army-2003)/ Shia	2014	Iraq					

Parsimoniously, the centre–periphery model in which various globalized systems are entangled is used here as a metaphor to refer to the asymmetrical structural power relations within post-colonial Arab states. A variant of the centre–periphery metaphor depicts the territorial nation state in the Middle East. Charles Tripp connects the uneven power relations with the modelling of the post-colonial Arab state by colonial powers on the modern European Westphalian examples—though these are increasingly discredited. The post-colonial ruling elite that inherited power from the colonies engineered unequal state–society relations. The entire new statist foundation is built to control resources (e.g. politics, coercion, education, bureaucracy) and distribute goods (e.g. employment, status, power, etc. ...) (Tripp 2007: 13–15). This neutralized the traditional power-holders, pushing them to the periphery of polity and economy. In the same vein, Chalmer Johnson's outline of the anatomy of what he calls the 'developmental state' approximates this in terms of economic planning (Johnson 1982). It displays features of a strong state, acting autonomously of society, and having the means to control and determine the content and direction of economic development.

The neat characterization of the post-colonial Arab state as a 'strong' entity in control of a 'weak' society is problematized here (Ayubi 1990). The Arab Spring has not landed from the 'moon'. It has been incubated in a matrix of dynamics that has since the 1990s seen the profusion of protests, emergence of countervailing forces, and discourses from below. The post-colonial ruling elite relied on the classic divide-and-rule policy to sustain their political and socio-economic dominance over post-colonial societies. This fragmentation has come to haunt them. The very weakness of that fragmentary and weakened society became a site of resistance and even de-nationalization. The forces, voices, and discourses relegated by the centre to the margins of power refused to be sidelined and silenced. The periphery was refashioned into a site of visibility not invisibility, struggle not passivity, and resistance not acquiescence. Even the return to 'primordial' networks of solidarity facilitated the creation of civic spaces empowering society—at the expense of the state. From this angle, the Arab Spring has been in the offing since before 2011. The void of power (the peripheral sites abandoned by the state) was turned into a power of the void (the peripheral forces and voices that re-organized themselves) to strike back at the state (Sadiki et al. 2013).

Thus, the notion of 'peoplehood' is used here as a way of contextualizing the trend of rising sites of anti-systemic struggles in the Arab region. The periphery is the space from which society has launched its uprisings, revolts, and self-organization into a formidable adversary to the central core, the authoritarian state. This is what has given birth to a historical moment of 'peoplehood', literally a 'wave' of dynamically revolutionary change in the Arab Middle East. These bottom-up revolts happened in societies such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, where in the 1950s and 1960s army-led revolutions and coups unseated monarchical power-holders.

The tensions that have historically characterized the centre–periphery dyad are not necessarily flaws where the Arab Spring is concerned. Instead, they have set into motion processes that doomed excessively authoritarian structures of power to historical exit and signalled the return of the periphery to politics. These centrifugal processes are described below.

1. **The 'over-stated Arab state' breathes its last:** This type of Arab state (Ayubi 1996), which has historically invested itself with all the attributes of power (mostly coercive, but in

varying degrees financial, legal, tribal, ideological, informational, social, etc.) has allocated little or no shared-space for normalizing state–society relations, and even less space for societal contests of state power. A great deal of the conflict to be generated over the next decade will be produced by the state's resistance to change. Since its emergence into territorial existence, the Arab post-colonial state's design of this brand of statecraft fulfils what might be called 'total politics' or 'total state'. That is, a state with a notable blind spot: the 'unoccupied sites of power' (such as in moral and distributive fields). This has resulted, especially after 2011, in a power vacuum, discussed in point 2.

2. **There is a power vacuum:** power is clearly up for grabs and the contests and counter-contests take many forms, ranging from civic (political, transparent, peaceful, legal) to unruly (secret, violent, illegal). Varying degrees of this power vacuum grip many an Arab polity and society. It is pronounced and unfolding in some (populist republics), and latent in others (monarchies).

3. **People occupy vacant spaces:** This trend is diverse and varies in substance, impact and sustainability across the Arab Middle East. Largely, it points to emerging, ongoing, hidden, or dormant attempts below the level of the state, by society to carve out a space for occupying vacuous sites of power (including in the realm of coercion: e.g. Al-Qaeda, Houthis, ISIS, and affiliates). However, this should not preclude civic struggles such as for good government and more equitable distribution. It is within these unoccupied sites that *power* seems to be susceptible to renegotiation, contest, protest, and anti-systemic challenges. By and large, these are the sites where society (civic and uncivil, legal and unruly) strikes back. This struggle manifests itself either as an urge (a) to invent the vocabulary of self-recognition and self-existence as well as the attendant thought-practice for speaking to and responding to the decaying authoritarian post-colonial state (newly emerging democratic discourses, forces and voices; Islamist and secular, liberal and illiberal); and (b) to cohabit or populate the unoccupied sites of power, as the new legitimate power holder and claimant (e.g. militias in Libya, Houthis in Yemen, ISIS in Syria and Iraq).

4. **Society advances as the state retreats:** In every retreat/absence by the state, there emerges the potential for advancement/presence by society. The Arab Spring's seismic political activity will be marked by contests at the boundaries of state authority/power and societal reclamation of some of that power. This explicates the attendant four trends: migratory, transitory, participatory, and fragmentary as shown in **Table 15.1**. These are trends that are integral to the shape of both domestic politics as well as IR to be witnessed by the Arab Middle East over the next decade, as has been noted in this chapter.

The Arab Spring: progenitor of democratization?

Two observations are in order. First, there is an aspect of 'contagion' that is useful to illuminate the nexus between indigenous agency or home-grown push to reform and the exogenous impact on democratization. The Arab Spring is one dimension of how to relate IR to democratization. It exemplifies the local energy summoned to democratize as well as the external dynamics that condition democratization or inhibit it (as argued in the final section of this chapter). The nexus between IR and democratization is under-studied. Order (security)

not equality (freedom) has historically been the area singled out for scholarly investigation as a progenitor of stability, alliances, modernization-cum-development, oil-based economies (rentierism), and now terrorism. Comparative politics students concerned with questions of democratic transition in this region have tended to look at political culture, Islam and Islamism, and recently civil society. External dimensions are seldom analysed.

Second, preoccupation today by the US and the EU with democratization in the Arab Middle East is relatively new when compared with other regions. The US, for instance, has since the nineteenth century actively promoted democracy in Central and Latin America and the Caribbean, be it unevenly at times and through non-democratic means throughout the twentieth century. Such a commitment, not always motivated by principled ideals but by realpolitik and by pursuit of national interests, necessitated extreme measures such as intimidation (e.g. in Nicaragua) and invasion (e.g. in Panama, Haiti) (Whitehead 1996: 45–60). President Reagan's National Endowment for Democracy (NED) accorded priority for democracy promotion during the 1980s to Europe and Asia with little or no attention to the Arab Middle East.[8]

The indigenous inheritors of the post-colonial state fare no better than the ex-colons with regard to democratization. No sooner had the elites that were at the vanguard of the nationalist resistance against colonialism 'colonized' the newly founded states than they set out to erase all of the vestiges of foreign rule. They dismantled the emergent independent states' democratic façade, namely, political parties and parliaments. They made no effort to revamp, reform, or found on these institutions more representative and accountable government. The absence of an indigenous contagion effect, a democratic model, from within the Arab region has contributed to the routinization of autocracy.

Discussion of democratization in the context of the Arab Spring cannot ignore the notion of peoplehood. Peoplehood has not won out outright in its continuous quarrel with authoritarian structures of power. The notion of the 'deep state', often related to Turkey and Egypt, comes to mind as an example of the challenges facing bottom-up democratization and restructuring of the state and citizenship along legal, participatory, inclusive, and accountable means. Nonetheless, peoplehood can be introduced as a conceptual unit of analysis to put into sharp relief the role played by non-state actors in democratic transition, namely, in relation to the Arab Spring. This is an investigation at a very preliminary stage and lacks the long time-span and comparative attention that thus far allow only for tentative observations about the democratic potentialities, much less outcomes, in the context of the Arab Spring. Democratization here is not a reference to a bourgeois notion of democracy since what animates peoplehood, or *al-harak*, as noted earlier, are aspirations for an inclusive quasi-Rawlsian notion of justice and a form of redistribution of political and economic goods that serve as a harbinger for freedom or *hurriyyah*.

The crux of *al-harak* is public mobilization and organization through self-configuration and reconstructions of a brand of political organization, run by the people and driven by their quest for equality and dignity. Rebellion against authoritarianism does not necessarily have a democratizing effect in an institutional sense. Thus far, only a few years have elapsed since the uprisings and while the electoral gains may be significant in Tunisia (2011 October Constituent Assembly elections; 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections) they may hardly be indicative of democratic change in other countries where they were subject to reverses or total breakdowns of order and fledgling democratization (Egypt and Libya—both

had elections in 2012). *Al-harak* is displayed simply as 'occupation in reverse' of spatial, temporal, and discursive fields, which have for so long been constructed, reproduced, and occupied by the post-colonial power-holders. In the quest for freedom and dignity (*hurriyyah*, *karamah*), *al-harak* is society's agential deployment against the 'occupiers' of the authoritarian state. Peoplehood facilitates practices whereby bottom-up notions of sovereign identities and participatory citizenship are engendered informally in the public squares of protest. Central to *al-harak* is the people's coming together to ephemerally substitute the authoritarian regimes' practice, thought, and language of controlling power. Peoplehood thus invents new conceptions of political practice (peaceful protest, civic organization, armed resistance, leaderless-ness), thought (a stress on social justice, radical change), and terminology (a mantra of freedom, dignity, public solidarity, revolution, and uprising's martyrs). Thus the regimes' routinized notions of stability, loyalty, and deference, for instance, are traded for spontaneously conceived practices, thought, and language. Stability cedes to fluidity, loyalty gives way to hostility and rebellion, and deference to resistance. To borrow a term from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 'critical consciousness' is thus forged and invented in the public squares of protest as a necessity to counter the hegemonic order with action, thought, and all kinds of signifiers of opposition and resistance (Freire 2006). While instantaneous and spontaneous, the critical consciousness summoned in the public squares of protest seems to generate (e.g. Egypt and Tunisia in 2011) the necessary democratic agency to unify the rebellious publics around a spirit beckoning a new beginning. The stand as a united public with unified practice, thought (perhaps dreams), and terminology constitute initial steps towards a reconstitution of democratic subjectivities, and rejection of subjection to authoritarian rule and rulers. The Arab Spring constitutes thus far, even if not a progenitor of democracy, an élan, an opening, and a space for popular empowerment. It will, for some time, be marked out by dialectics between a decaying old order and an emboldened peoplehood that has, across boundaries of geography and culture, tasted—directly or through neighbourly experiments—a sweet victory over challenged dictators and states.

The international relations of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring has exposed the decay of the authoritarian Arab state system. Both in terms of politics and territory, the state continues in varying degrees to be rocked to its foundations. At least, this is the case of Arab Spring states—that is, states which have in some form or another experienced the travails brought about by the 'travel' of this phenomenon within their precincts of sovereignty: territory, polity, society, and culture. Therefore *the* 'conceptual, historical, and cultural' context within which Arab states (monarchical and republican) have emerged (Korany 1987) and reproduced their capacity to juggle nationalist, secularist, corporatist, rentier, traditional, and modernizing roles is tested by the new atmospherics. In the context of the Arab Spring atmospherics, in the case of the Arab state vs the people, the centre vs the periphery, and the internal vs the external, Arab polities look far more challenged than at any other moment since their establishment and consolidation in the course of their post-colonial careers. As Korany (1987: 47–74) rightly quipped, post-colonial Arab states looked 'alien and besieged' in the community of nation states, yet without doubtful prospects of survival: they were 'here to stay'. And stay they did through a

combination of distribution of subsidized goods, status, a share of the 'booty' for client social groups (tribes, learned scholars, co-opted opponents, armies, and business interests), and coercive regulation of the political. However, the notion of permanence now looks tattered by time, practice, and the 2011 uprisings. For example, the Iraq that emerged following the 1958 revolution and eventually inherited by the Baathist power-holders ceased to exist in 2003. Bourguiba's Tunisia, the centre of which was 'occupied' by Ben Ali following the 1987 bloodless coup, was given its marching orders by the protesters who ousted the dictator and sacked an order which was until then thought to be sufficiently resilient and reproducible. Tunisians nowadays call the incipient democratic order that has unfolded through electoral and constitution-making process the 'Second Republic'. Scholars were more or less 'ambushed' by rapid historical events that led to post-Arab Spring conflict and weakened or failed states such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen. They are noted by the fragmentation of centralized authority, politically. Territorially, today none of these formerly assumed 'strong' states possess full control of their national geographies. Furthermore, violent non-state actors occupy huge tracts of land within these embattled states. All of a sudden, history's course is partly diverted in favour of the people. In the case of the Arab state vs 'peoplehood', the people (civic or unruly) are prevailing over the statist apparatuses and establishments affected by the Arab Spring. One thought to be gleaned from this is the notion that 'nation' and 'state' are now animated by competing sets of imaginaries for the onerous task of 'imagining' and 'reimagining' community, to paraphrase Benedict Anderson (2006).What complicates the unfurling order is that some of the forces competing with existing weakened centres (Yemen) or ruling houses (Asad in Syria) is that the new power configurations are not demanding the creation of new statist territorial realms. Rather, in the case of ISIS, their quest is for a Caliphate, a borderless realm based on faith, as opposed to territorial sovereignty, harking back to a re-envisioned model of a religio-political organization created by the Prophet Muhammad some 1,400 years ago. Thus if the national-secular politics of post-independence since the 1940s and 1950s have been deftly and surreptitiously used to conceal the fault lines of the newly created states, the unfurling post-Arab Spring order is revealing the potential of such fault lines in reconstructing states and reconstituting nationalist and legally protected and emancipated identities. To go back to Anderson's imagined communities, what seems to be at issue in the moment of the Arab Spring is that 'nationalization' and 'de-primordialization' of politics are being reversed (Yemen, Libya, and Syria). Narrow notions of self and other seem to animate the conflict over territory, polity, and culture. Religion, ethnicity, sect, ideology, regionalism, tribalism and wealth are all competing resources that fan the scramble for reconfiguration of power in recently destabilized countries. Little or no shared values are yet in sight in some of these countries: contestation (Tunisia) and/or state coercion (Egypt) may be seen as the 'midwife' to aspiring young Arabs struggling for better futures.

IR is never far from this narrative. The full potency of the realist armour with which external powers have in the course of post-coloniality sought to configure and reconfigure power to optimize their own and maximize the power ratios of their client regimes has more or less atrophied. Foreign powers had played a pivotal role in the creation of allied Arab states (e.g. Britain in the case of Jordan and France in the case of Lebanon), lending them continuous financial, political, and even military support.

That protective shield and overall tutelage have been seriously challenged, if not morally questioned, by the 2011 uprisings—not to mention public opinion, Arab and Western. The

US and the EU's foreign policy towards the Arab Spring display tensions and dilemmas but almost invariably these are resolved in favour of states or at least the governing entities at the apex of power, not the region's peoples.

The Arab Spring reveals two interrelated aspects of IR in the Middle East: first, to refer to Booth (1991: 317–19), the state-centric visions of realists rule the crafting of policy with exaggerated focus on security, power, and strategy as 'ethnocentrism writ large'. This vision leaves much to be desired in terms of moral standards given the self-interest motif that drives realist political agendas (Booth 2007: 35–6). Translated to the Middle East, this pessimistic assessment of IR seems to be validated by US and EU reactions to the Arab Spring. There is much trepidation even if somewhat favouring states over peoples. In the case of the US, there was from the outset a lack of coherence despite the odd declaratory rhetoric such as in 2011 when Obama championed the courage of young Tunisia before Congress after the ousting of Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. On the whole, however, caution won the day, with Obama and his foreign policymakers refraining from lucidly endorsing fast-moving events. It can be said that the pragmatic approach towards national interest prevailed over principles of democracy promotion and human rights (which constructivists would pinpoint as emblematic of US democratic identity). Obama perhaps erred on the side of caution, demonstrating contradiction between reality (geostrategic interests) and ideal (democracy). Of course, it is a moot point whether the US could actually influence the course of events by the time the Arab public squares swelled with the *al-harak* driven by peoples. In a nutshell, by indecision and calculated reaction (the US intervened in Libya in a secondary capacity to aid the anti-Gaddafi raids conducted by France and Britain), the US opened up room for dealing with the regimes that followed the fall of dictators such as in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia.

Secondly, securing oil routes and markets, as well as good relations with Israel, remains paramount for the US, before and after the Arab Spring. These are more or less immutable interests that are at the heart of America's power calculus. This is an agenda driven by sustaining regional allies, preferences, and balances that promote these core interests. In principle, the US is committed to democracy promotion, although this did not apply when communism seemed to threaten ruling houses in possession of oil wells, especially where such houses tended to be risk-averse, and opposition to Israel tended to be mostly through rhetoric. This is perhaps one reason why the US led a coalition of the willing in the early 1990s to protect both Israel (a democracy) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (an autocracy): security, oil, and alliance were all at stake. Just as the US deployed anti-communist containment in the 1980s and 1990s to stand by autocratic oil-rich states, today endorsing Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime in Egypt may be justified on grounds of preventing terrorist threats not only against the US and the Western world, but also allies in the Gulf region, the Middle East, and North Africa. In March 2015, Obama finally decided to fully endorse al-Sisi. In the same vein, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel received al-Sisi in Berlin in June 2015. In March, her Economic Minister had joined a huge business delegation to a Sharm el-Sheikh investment summit that resulted in a memorandum of understanding between Siemens, the engineering and blue chip company, and al-Sisi's regime, worth up to €10 billion to Germany (Salloum 2015).

Generally, it can be said that the EU was slow to react to the Arab Spring and often took cues on how to act following US initiatives or policies. The US treated each case on the basis of its merit and context. For example, Tunisia is less important strategically than Egypt. Even here the US was cautious and it was weeks before the Obama Administration endorsed the

Tunisian revolutionaries' right to self-determination. By contrast, the EU did not speak with uniformity, and each member state had its own historical, financial, and apolitical append-ages to the various Arab Spring states. France today supports al-Sisi unquestionably, siding with him against the Muslim Brotherhood and the regional fight against terrorism, espe-cially ISIS. On the other hand, France did not give up on Ben Ali and the reaction of Sarkozy's Foreign Minister at the time, Michelle Alliot-Marie, spoke of some EU powers' aversion to the Arab Spring. Alliot-Marie was in favour of a Special Forces dispatch and intervention to rescue Ben Ali's regime (Willsher 2011). Catherine Ashton, the EU's top diplomat, was not forthcoming with outright support of Tunisia's revolution and her rhetoric pointed to prudence. Only after Ben Ali's removal did she speak of peaceful democratization.

The above assessment still holds true today. The threat of terrorism has blunted enthu-siasm for the Arab Spring, and pragmatism overrides moralism. This has been rehearsed many times over in terms of real politik in the case of the Gulf oil-rich states, with the quali-fied exception of Qatar. Definitely KSA and the United Arab Emirates have invested billions in the counter-revolutionary movement in Egypt, including financial aid to al-Sisi's regime and military. The picture cannot be starker between the billions invested in ending an im-perfect experiment in democracy led by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the austerity of international development aid to Tunisia, the only democratizing Arab Spring state. Even a small percentage of the funds invested in counter-revolution (Hertog 2011) would provide a huge fillip for the cash-strapped Tunisian economy. This is a vignette that serves to drive one message: both Arab oil-rich states and Western powers are very circumspect in their approach to the Arab Spring. And security matters once again seem to have dictated that the fight against terrorism outweighs democracy promotion in terms of importance.

Conclusion

Regarding the aforementioned issue of Orientalism in IR, the introduction of contemporary history into the study of the Arab Spring can help to refute Orientalist claims about it as an 'exceptional' phenomenon. The latent and manifest dynamic of 'peoplehood' which privi-leges resistance, rebellion, and unruliness is not unlike other historical anti-authoritarian struggles past and present.

On another note, 'peoplehood' in the current juncture is a cosmopolitan ideal, arguably a product of globalization, transcending binaries like East–West and North–South. Peo-plehood or *al-harak* engenders a form of new politics from below. This development has changed the internal structures of the state as a result of broader global diffusions of ideas and practices. While in the West (for example, in the UK and US) politics from below has been primarily in opposition to increasing and unbearable austerity measures and the pro-nounced bias towards major corporations at the expense of ordinary people (e.g. the youth, disabled, and workers), in the Arab Middle East it has been directed at autocrats and the abuse of human rights. The former (in the West) has borrowed greatly from the latter (Arab Middle East) in mounting challenges to authorities in a variety of ways such as occupying physical spaces. In the same vein, the youth of the Arab Middle East deploy Western music and technology to mount challenges against the status quo.

Civilization in IR has recurred in studies as a unit of analysis in the post-Cold War milieu. 'Clashes' and rivalries, rather than cooperation, are the norm. This chapter has sought to challenge this idea and provide an alternative reading of the regional and global politics of the Arab Middle East, instead stressing the exchange of ideas and practices.

The Arab Spring has a charisma of its own—that is, a 'faceless charisma' or 'leaderless charisma'. Although post-revolutionary Iran has witnessed the institutionalization of charisma, that of Khomeini, it has experienced difficulty capitalizing on his legitimacy and this may expire. The Arab Spring seems to have democratized charisma and the likes of al-Sisi have encountered problems in generating charismatic authority. What keeps him in the seat of power, right now, are the tactical manoeuvres of the Western chancelleries of power. However, there is no guarantee of long-term survival in the age of the Arab Spring. The interim game is that states rule the region in consortium with Western powers. The endgame, however, will be what Arab youth will craft out of their dream to have dignity and freedom.

Key events

Year	Month	Day	Events	Details
2010	December	17	Tunisia spark the flame	In Sidi Bouzid Mohammed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in an act of protest against humiliation by local police for not having a permit to sell vegetables. The act is followed by mass young Tunisians protesting.
2011	January	14	Fall Ben Ali	Ben Ali bows to the protesters' pressure and announces his resignation. He flees to Saudi Arabia, opening a new page in Tunisia and the region: The Arab Spring begins.
		25	Egypt: Day of Revolt	Egyptians take to the streets in the first coordinated mass protest called 'day of rage', demand for Mubarak to step down after three decades in power.
		27	The spark moves to Yemen	Protests erupt in Yemen: call for Ali Abdullah Salih to stand down after three decades in power.

February	11	New era in Egypt	Vice-President Omar Suleiman appears on TV announcing Mubarak's resignation.
	14	Protests erupt in Bahrain	Thousands take to the streets across Bahrain demanding deep reforms.
	15	Battle against Gaddafi starts	Protesters take to the streets in Benghazi in East Libya followed by bloody Thursday on 17 February.
	20	Morocco takes part	Thousands of protesters take to the streets demanding a new government and reforms including reform of the constitution.
	15	Revolt in Syria	Protesters demonstrate against the country's hard-line and dictatorial Baath regime.
	20	Gaddafi killed	Gaddafi is captured and killed by rebels in the city of Sirte: first and only head of State killed during the Arab Spring.
	23	Tunisia votes	Tunisians vote in the first free election of the Arab Spring.
November	23	Salih steps down	The Yemeni President, Salih, is finally pressured to transfer power to his Vice-President, Abd Rabbu Mansour Al-Hadi, under an agreement brokered by the GCC states.
	28	Egypt votes	The first free parliamentary election in the post-Mubarak era takes place: second election of the Arab Spring.

	16	**Muslim Brotherhood in power**	Mohamed Mursi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, wins the second round of the presidential elections against Ahmed Shafiq.
	7	**Libya's first elections**	The National Transitional Council supervises democratic elections, the first in more than 40 years, for 200 members to form the General National assembly.
July	15	**A Syrian civil war declared**	The International Committee of the Red Cross issues an official declaration confirming the Syrian uprising to be a civil war.
July	3	**Army ousts Egypt's President**	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) member and Egypt's defence minister Field-Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi removes the country's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Mursi.
			Al-Sisi suspends the constitution and installs an interim government. This is the Arab Spring's first military coup and first democratic breakdown.
August	14	**Rabaa massacre**	Thousands of Mursi's supporters killed by Egyptian police and Army.
			There is no precise figure of those killed in Nahda Square and Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square.

	21	**Syrian chemical attack**	Government forces carry out a chemical attack near Damascus which kills hundreds of Syrians.
September	23	**Egypt's Brotherhood banned**	An obscure Egyptian court outlaws the Muslim Brotherhood.
December	18	**Mursi charged with terrorism**	Mursi appears in court to face charges of terrorism.
January	14 and 15	**Egypt's third constitutional referendum**	The new ruling power, after the overthrow of the first elected president, holds a constitutional referendum and gets 98.1% yes votes. Anti-coup Alliance boycotts the vote.
February	14	**Libya's chaos starts**	A retired Major-General, Khalifa Haftar, appears on Al-arabia TV announcing suspension of the General National Assembly, the government and the constitutional Declaration: As in Egypt, Arab Spring setbacks for democratic transition are recorded in Libya
	26, 27 and 28	**Al-Sisi in power**	A presidential election in Egypt takes place between only two candidates in which General al-Sisi wins 96.1% of vote. Voter turnout: 38%, lower than the 52% voter turnout in the 2012 presidential election that brought Mursi to power. Thus al-Sisi, youngest SCAF member, becomes Egypt's 6th president since independence.

		23	**Tunisia holds presidential elections**	The leading candidates are: Beji Caid Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes), incumbent Moncef Marzouki, NCA Speaker, Mustafa bin Ja'afar, and former judge and anti-Ben Ali dissident Kalthoum Kannou, the only female to contest the presidential race.
2015	February	6		Houthis issue a constitutional declaration, dissolve the parliament and form a presidential council, as they enable the 'Revolutionary Committee' led by Mohammad Ali al-Huthi to lead the country on a temporary basis.
	March	26		A coalition led by Saudi Arabia hs launches air strikes against Shia Houthi rebels in Yemen, saying it is 'defending the legitimate government' of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.

Further reading

Buckner, El and Lina, K. (2014) 'The Martyrs' Revolutions: The Role of Martyrs in the Arab Spring', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 41(4): 368–84
This is an insightful article, which evokes Qur'anic motifs of struggle against oppression.

Dabashi, H. (2012) *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (London: Zed Books)
This is a concise book, which stresses the idea of the end of postcolonialism, noting that the Arab uprisings result from a synergy of the national and the transnational.

Hatem, M. (2012) 'The Arab Spring Meets the Occupy Wall Street Movement: Examples of Changing Definitions of Citizenship in a Global World', *Journal of Civil Society*, 8(4): 401–15
This article provides an interesting argument, focusing on collective agency—the 'multitude' or 'global actor'—via the local experiences of the Arab Spring.

Howard, M. and Walters, M. (2014) 'Explaining the Unexpected: Political Science and the Surprises of 1989 and 2011', *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(2): 394–408
This article's approach goes beyond the formal façade of authoritarianism, by exploring popular mobilization.

Howard, P. N. and Hussain, M. (2013) *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring* (New York: Oxford University Press)
    This is a good source for starting reflection on possible linkages between cyber activism and political change in the context of the Arab Spring.

Kassab, E. (2014) 'Critics and Rebels: Older Arab Intellectuals Reflect on the Uprisings', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Politics*, 41(1): 8–27.
    This article provides a unique analysis of the intellectual dimensions of the Arab Spring, capturing Arab thinkers' readings of the uprisings.

Questions

1. How does the Arab Spring challenge current IR thinking in the context of the Middle East?

2. To what extent have peoples impacted on international relations of the Middle East?

3. How did local and external states react to the Arab Spring?

4. Has the Arab Spring precipitated a crisis within the Arab state system or has the crisis of the Arab state system precipitated the Arab spring?

5. What aspects of the Arab Spring caution against 'exceptionalism' when thinking about the Middle East?

Notes

1. M15 refers to 15 May the first day of the 2011–2013 Spanish protests.

2. ATTAC was originally a single-issue movement demanding the introduction of the so-called Tobin tax on currency speculation. ATTAC now devotes itself to a wide range of issues related to globalization.

3. The celebrated Lebanese-American author, Nassim Taleb, considers Saudi Arabia to be the most fragile country in the world (Taleb 2012).

4. Ulf Laessing, 'Saudi king back home, orders $37 billion handouts', *Reuters*, 23 February 2011.

5. The rise of grassroots organizations committed to the cause of social justice is not new. The Zapatista movement in Mexico and the Solidarity movement in Poland illustrate the point.

6. Rap music is a universal genre ranging from pop to conscious in various locales. It is a cultural expression for the youth, by the youth, exhibiting a no-nonsense attitude towards authority, at times anti-racist, also seeking liberation in culture and politics. It has 'travelled' across the world from its humble origins in the inner cities of America, mainly among black youth, reaching the refugee camps of Gaza and cities of Tunisia. Inclusion of culture in IR theorizing, hugely neglected, music, and art (graffiti) are part of the Arab Spring repertoire. See chapters on poetry, music, and graffiti as mediums of expression and protest in the Arab Spring in Sadiki (2015).

7. 'ISLAM WILL NEVER BE TOLERATED Bernard Henri Lévy / Tzipi Livni'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWnr27FvNhs (Retrieved: 12 March 2015).

8. However, it must be noted that some Arabs also feared the rise of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia and elsewhere (such as in Libya and Syria), a backlash against them disguising a deeper disdain for democracy, mainly by so-called *azlam* and *fulool*, that is remnants of the ousted regime. Islamic law or *Shari'ah*-phobia in the Arab world is prevalent among these publics as well liberals and leftists, including women. See testimony by former NED President, Carl Gershman, in 'The National Endowment for Democracy in 1990: Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs', US House of Representatives, 28 September 1989, 31.