THE DISORDERED ARAB WORLD VS. THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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**The Disordered Arab World vs. the International Order**   
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Officials from the Bush administration are cheering the uprisings in the Arab world. They argue that the Freedom Agenda advanced by President Bush was bearing fruit and the U.S.A. must, at all costs, associate itself with the people's thirst for freedom and dignity.  However if we are to quote Edmund Burke ("Good order is the foundation of all things"), this means that chaos is the enemy of liberty, justice, and prosperity. The rule of law, property rights, respect for the rights of minorities, and an independent judiciary do not spring fully formed from popular uprisings.

Post-Mubarak Egypt is a reminder of the dangers of chaos. During the Tahrir Square demonstrations in February, religious differences were invigorated. Though demonstrators chanted we are all one: Muslims and Christians are one. That spirit hasn't lasted even a season. In the course of the uprising, repeated clashes have erupted between Copts and Muslims in Egypt. Two enormous Coptic churches have been torched, and dozens of people have been killed and wounded in street battles. A Muslim crowd estimated at 15,000, armed with Molotov cocktails, clubs, and guns, attacked a much smaller group of Copts who were demonstrating outside a Cairo television station. The police were absent as usual. The violence was belatedly halted by the army.

Intra-Muslim violence has erupted as well. Salafists have attacked Sufi mosques and shrines as well as Coptic churches, and the small Shiite community has suffered violence and intimidation. The Muslim Brotherhood, which had spoken soothingly of its willingness to let others lead during the Tahrir Square days, has now alarmed secularists and Copts in a very diplomatic way by suggesting that Islamic law is the goal after all. Although directly concerned, the foreign policies of the U.S.A. and most major powers are seemingly indecisive and, to mildly put it, in confusion with regard to the new systems alterations in the Arab world. The Middle East at large is forcing America and all other major powers to seek new alignments in a time of economic crisis and change in the global balance of power. The USA and most of the European countries independently and through the European Union and NATO are in the hunt for friendships and new alliances among the popular uprisings in the Arab world. Most scholars on Middle Eastern Affairs are asserting that talk of new Iranian like Islamic revolutions sweeping Arab countries is still yet premature. In Iran, there were a lot of different forces fighting the Shah, secularists, communists, socialists, Islamists, and all of them were of course nationalists. Some believed in armed protest, some believed in clerical rule, some believed in peaceful transitions of power. deplorably, a cycle of escalating violence, often centered around funeral processions for “martyred” protestors, something The Arab World apparently is presently witnessing, created a critical mass of people who refused anything less than the overthrow of the detested Shah Pahlavi.

Ayatollah Khomeini became the figurehead of the revolution, but even when he returned to the country in triumph, it wasn’t clear that Iran would become a theocratic Islamic Republic. That was the product of a number of decisions within and without the country, which were fueled by paranoia, suspicion and grievous misunderstanding. Iranians were rightly furious about the U.S.A. assistance in overthrowing their democratically elected government in 1953. The USA, on the other hand, was afraid that Iran was going to try to export its revolution, and Iranian rhetoric indicated a fierce desire to overthrow American allies across the region. The USA threw its support behind Saddam Hussein and his invasion, and the result has been years of mutual animosity, suspicion and even violence. Is the case of Iran to be repeated by the U.S.A. foreign policy in similar cases in the Arab world? Egypt doesn’t have to go that way, but there are mild indications to suspect it will, but a big part of that depends on how the U.S.A. retort stage by stage.

Third World nations generally push in one of three sometimes overlapping directions: they emphasize popular, often social democracy, they emphasize economic growth at the expense of popular participation, or they construct a narrative of resistance, of us against the world (in addition to Iran, we can think of Cuba, Venezuela, and North Korea in this league). Such resistance narratives are harder to fight against, because they do echo a deeply felt sense of national pride.

Iranians find it harder to fight the regime because they are not just fighting a figurehead; they are also fighting an idea: revolution for Iran’s true independence after decades of colonial and capitalist humiliation. As a storyline, it’s not easy to push back against, especially because Iran did experience a century of manipulation by foreign powers. In Egypt, the ideology was merely the pragmatism of rule to benefit from the rule. In Tunisia, it was the same. People were behind Ben Ali (and Mubarak) out of a mix of fear and bribery, until they weren’t.

In trying to read the Arabs diversified minds distinctions do need to be made. In the Arab world, there are republics and then there are monarchies. Surprisingly, the monarchies tend to be more durable and more stable than republics. Republics have often featured messy transitions of power, exceptional brutality, and strange ideological proclivities (Qaddafi says it all) that have only recently exhausted themselves.

The shift towards more democratic politics in many Muslim countries is to be carefully studied which is not an easy task. In countries like Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, and even Pakistan and Bangladesh, despite all their imperfections, democratic policies and procedures are taking root. There is a long way to go in some of these countries, and with no doubt the way is not perfect or even secure. But now that the Arab world is joining along, the push towards democracy could unleash serious economic questions of a meaningful kind. These are generally very young countries, with rapidly growing populations, and could become tremendous engines of economic progression.

Though Israel is not an Arab state it has had a pretty tough years. Of course, over three decades ago, Israel lost a close ally in Iran. In the last few years, Israel has gone to war inconclusively with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel has lost the closeness of its relationship with Turkey, and is now in danger of losing its close alliance with Egypt (Iran, Turkey, and Egypt are by far the most military powerful countries in the Middle East). Israel is still skeptical if democratic governments will be better for its security. It is out on the look to see if there are other options?

With destabilizing protests in Yemen, a country that seems to be ever on the verge of splitting up, popular discontent throughout the region could turn repulsive, or at least strongly unfavorable for Israel and for the west. In trying to draw a new map of political tendencies in the Arab World scholars need to rethink who they are dealing with in the region, what are the short and long term goals, and is there a new vision/s in the Middle East. The desire to create democracy, an explanation only introduced after the fact of war, didn’t do very much for Iraq. While there is a coalition government in Iraq, it came at the expense of massive violence and the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Conversely, governments that the USA and for long was allied with and supported have been overthrown in the past, popularly and indigenously, and it seems the same is happening in Egypt right now, another ally, and another shortcoming of USA foreign policy. The new Middle East that observers thought would come from Iraq and Lebanon is instead coming from North Africa, Yemen and Syria. Would the new Arab World be able to stand up and tell the USA when it is moving in an unwise direction similar to what took place in the Turkish parliament’s 2003 refusal to endorse USA invasion of Iraq? Who else other than the West are the people of the Arab world going to turn to in friendship? Would they choose to ally themselves with non-Western states like China, Russia, India or Brazil to redraw the map of international balance of power?

During the cold war the international system was characterized by a bipolar structure and an ideologically driven basis of enmity and rivalry between the two major power blocs. By the mid 1990s a number of competing images had emerged to describe the new configuration in international relations. These images are not necessarily discrete; indeed, each may capture one aspect of the evolving new set of realities. But one way or another, the nature of the new international system will have a major impact on the Arab World. Each of these competing images is rooted in geography and can be related to the basic issues of traditional geopolitical theory.

Some analysts see a competition developing among three major economic blocs: a U.S.A. led bloc based on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a Germany led European bloc centered on the European Union, and a Japan led Asia bloc. Such blocs competition is predicted to be primarily economic in character, that is, without a security dimension (no arms races and potential warfare). In a broader sense, some analysts see geo-politics being superseded as the main focus of international relations by geo-economics.

This geo-economics model is related to another image, that of the "zones of peace-zones of turmoil" theme propounded by Aaron Wildavsky and Max Singer.[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn1" \o ") According to this thesis and the related theme of the "end of history,"[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn2" \o ") there will likely be a permanent peace among the industrialized democracies of Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania juxtaposed against increasing chaos, bloodshed, and ethnic-racial fragmentation within what used to be called the third world. This model accepts the idea central to the three-bloc configuration of evolving, peaceful economic competition among the major power regions.

Others have a more traditional outlook. They regard the current period of cooperation among the major powers represented in the Group of Seven (G7), United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan, as a temporary interregnum reminiscent of the periods after the Congress of Vienna (1815)[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn3" \o ") and after the Paris Peace Conference (1919)[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn4" \o "), and anticipate the eventual resumption of a multi-polar, balance of power global competition, including a strong national security dimension. These "realists"[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn5" \o ") see the United States, Russia, the European Union, China, Japan, and perhaps India forming the poles of such a system, with various possibilities for shifting alliances among the major powers.

Still others, however, see an emerging uni-polar system rooted in American hegemony. They reject the declinist perspective on the United States popularized by Paul Kennedy in his book, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers***[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn6" \o ")***, and see the United States as the only superpower at the first rank of both military and economic power. American technological and economic power is now seen to be on the rise vis-vis Japan and Europe as "Rising Sam" regains the lead in many high-technology endeavors after a period of seeming stagnation. Further, the United States is seen as having a marked and growing lead in the new military technologies associated with the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn7" \o "). In short, the United States is seen as still well established in a "long cycle" of commercial and maritime dominance, the perpetual heir of the British Empire, maybe only decades later to be challenged by China, Japan, the European Union, or a resurgent Russia or Federation of Russian states.

Still another relevant image of the emerging international system, at least one worth commenting upon as it applies to the evolving role of the Arab World in that system, a brief sketch of geopolitical theory in this century would go as follows. U.S.A. admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan and British geographer Halford Mackinder[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn8" \o ") advanced what appeared to be contrary views on the relative importance of sea-power and land-power for global dominance, the strategic importance of different geographical areas; the reshuffle of geostrategic relationships by technological innovations in warfare and transport . . . or the debate between the Blue Water school of strategists and the advocates of vast continental areas as the strategic key to world power.

Nicholas Spykman[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn9" \o ") further developed the "rimland thesis" in contrast to Mackinder's heartland doctrine. Both believed that at given times certain geographical regions become pivotal in relation to global power. Mackinder saw the Russia-Eastern Europe area as pivotal. Spykman contended that considerations such as population, size, resource availability, and economic development all combined to make the rim-land (peninsular Europe and the coastal Far East) the most significant geopolitical zone, which if dominated by one power would translate into global hegemony. American interests then dictated the prevention of the unification of the European or the Far Eastern coastland by any hostile coalition.

James Fairgrieve and Cohen, saw the Arab World and Southeast Asia as the primary shatter-belt regions, and they say that "the shatter-belt appears to be incapable of attaining political and/or economic unity of action," and that whereas some parts of the shatter-belt may be committed to neutrality, others are enmeshed in external ties. Hence, too, referring to the Arab World, they say that "it is because internal differences are so marked, and because they are found in a region that is crushed between outside interests, that we have defined the Arab world as a shatter-belt. That was, of course, during the cold war and it looks like history is reproducing itself during the last uprising in many Arab states.

In stating that "fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the cold war as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed, now scholars are beginning to focus particularly on the cultural lines of demarcation between Western Christianity and Orthodox Christianity in Europe and between the latter and Islam in the Arab world. They point out that conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years, with the Arabs and Moors having reached as far as Tours in 732 and the gates of Vienna in the seventeenth century, after which there was the reversal that led in the twentieth century to European domination over the Middle East and North Africa[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn10" \o "). Some openings in Arab political systems have already occurred. The principal beneficiaries of these openings have been Islamic movements. In the Arab world, in short, Western democracy strengthens anti-Western political forces. This may be a passing phenomenon, but it surely complicates relations between Islamic countries and the West.

In terms of great power competition, the United States continues to have vital interests in the Middle East and specifically in the Arab world, including the survival of allies, especially Israel, and the denial of control of Persian Gulf energy resources to hostile powers. To secure these interests it must be able, in the last resort, to project military power over great distances and ensure access to forward bases and facilities in the region. In this regard Egypt which has changed its figures of rule, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are especially important. The challenges to American power projection capabilities will grow if the proliferation of advanced weapons to regional adversaries accelerates.

While the argument above confirms the enduring importance of the Arab World strategic geography, it provides entry to the dynamics of the new rapid changes in the regional balance of power in the Middle East. How have key variables, including changes in technology and the demand for resources, affected the relative importance of specific geographical features of the region at different times? Today it is the Middle East's energy resources that command attention but in the past it was its grain and timber and the routes from Asia that carried silks and spices that were at issue. As technologies of transportation have changed, so has the strategic value of specific trade and military access routes. With the coming of steam- and nuclear-powered ships, airpower, and the missile and space age, the geographical dynamics of the military balance has changed once more.

To fully explain the magnitude and direction of the changes currently taking place in the geopolitical configuration of the Arab World two additional, very significant, factors have to be taken into account: Changing political ideologies and population dynamics. In the past fifty years the relative influence of nationalism, communism, and religious radicalism has changed with dramatic consequences for regional political alignments and military alliances. Similarly, the migration of people and the increase in the population of the region have had a profound impact on economic growth and expectations.

One way to think of the greater Middle East region that incorporates the Arab world is as a vast quadrilateral, a geographic center-point and crossroad where Europe, Russia, Asia, and Africa intersect[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn11" \o "). Within this region lie many intra-regional geographic barriers, numerous ethnic and religious groups, and sovereign states as well as an abundance of important natural resources, especially oil and natural gas.

**Arab System 1945-1996**  
The Arab system, from 1945-1996, has been plagued by two ambiguities, which have not yet been dealt with. They are: The conflict between the *raison d’état*, and the *raison de la nation*: the leaders speak in the name of an Arab nation but act in a territorial context, i.e., in the name of a state. The debate over the Arab World versus the Middle East, i.e., two notions, one from inside and one from outside. The term ‘Middle East’ is used to describe a geographical entity, one that was intended to withstand a possible Soviet threat and that included both Arab and non-Arab countries (Iran and Turkey). The term ‘Arab World’ describes a solid entity, one nation with a common culture and heritage and with common interests and priorities. This debate reflects the fact that the question of how to define the region still exists.

Events have shown that, in the Arab World, progressiveness is slow. The Arab system is also characterized by the phenomena of Arabization and Islamization. Arabization came with colonialization, and was based on the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Started by Christians, it protected their Arab identity against the system of the Turkish Caliphate[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn12" \o ").

With the relative demise of Arab Nationalism among most of the new Arab generation a sudden phenomenon shocked all expectations and here as scholars say, it is important not to mistake the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt for 1978 Iran. But that doesn't mean that U.S. diplomacy in the Arab world is going to be any less complicated going forward. The most telling aspect of the anti-regime demonstrations that have rocked the Arab world is what they are not about: They are not about the existential plight of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation; nor are they at least overtly anti-Western or even anti-American. The demonstrators have directed their anger against unemployment, tyranny, and the general lack of dignity and justice in their own societies. This constitutes a sea change in modern Arab World history. In none of these Arab countries exist a charismatic Islamic hero who is the oppositional focal point, like Ayatollah Khomeini was; nor are the various Islamist organizations in the Arab world as theoretical and ideological in their anti-Americanism as was the Shiite revolution in Iran. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt functions to a significant extent as a community self-help organization and may not necessarily try to take control of the uprising to the extent as happened in Iran. And even Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who quite often disputed with Obama is not quite so identified with American interests as was the shah[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn13" \o ").

Furthermore, whatever the outcome of these uprisings in the Arab World, it seems clear that Arabs and their new leaders will be focused for years to come on the imperfections within their own societies than that of designing a hostile strategy against the U.S.A and the West. Indeed, in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, the demonstrations were partially spurred by the Wiki-Leaks cables that showed American foreign policy deeply ambivalent about these regimes and not likely to stand with them in a crisis.

However, the U.S.A. state department is deeply concerned with what comes next in the Arab world. Were demonstrations to spread in a big way to Jordan and Saudi Arabia, a catastrophe could be looming on its interest. A more pro-American regime than the one now in Jordan is hard to imagine. Same goes for the Saudi royal family. All the uprisings in the Arab World, so far, look somewhat the same, as they did in Eastern Europe at the threshold of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. But like in Eastern Europe, each country will end up a bit differently, with politics reflecting its particular constituency and state of institutional and educational development. Poland and Hungary had relatively easy paths to capitalism and democracy; Romania and Bulgaria were sunk in abject poverty for years; Albania suffered occasional stretch of anarchy; and Yugoslavia descended into civil war that killed hundreds of thousands of people. The Arab world is in some ways more diverse than Eastern Europe, and therefore, the uniqueness of each country's political and historical situation should be carefully calculated before casting judgments.

In Libya, the West including the U.S.A. is coming apart over what to use as a strategy, tactics, and objectives in an optional, low-grade intervention in a largely oil-exporting country. The U.S. secretary of state is forced to make public pleas for the arrogant commanders of the coalition to get their acts together, while on the ground the weakened forces of the isolated Muammar al-Qaddafi seem to be holding the mega power of military manipulation. It is important to take intangibles as important factors like knowing what you're fighting for and political will are as important to any battle as the hardware being brought to bear by each side on the other.

China, Brazil, Russia and India (BRICs) welcomed South Africa into their little club, and they underscored that they are taking coordination among their countries very seriously and seeking to deepen their ties. The BRICs summit resonates with the Libya follies because the original four BRICs voted as a bloc to abstain during the Security Council vote on the imposition of the no-fly zone in Libya and within days of its initiation were publicly speaking out against it. That they were joined in the vote by Europe's most powerful country, Germany, also sent a message that the opposition to the initiative was meaningful and suggested that future votes in international institutions might see the BRICs (or the BRICS, if the final "S" is for South Africa) emerge at the core of a potent new alternative coalition to the traditional Western or developed powers.

NATO is at a turning point. Libya as a case which President Obama and others wanted to offer up as an example of a new robust, American-led multilateralism, is revealing a demonstration of NATO's weaknesses. America wants to be accorded the respect of being the leader but is constrained by domestic problems and a lack of strategic clarity. France and Britain seem willing to grasp the opportunities but others won't follow. Germany seems increasingly uncomfortable with the burdens placed on it as Europe's de facto leading power, However it is recently conferring to the wish of its neighbors. The military alliance is overly dependent on U.S. power. There are too many chefs. There is not enough overall mission clarity.

Meanwhile, even if the BRICS are a long way from being politically cohesive, they are rent with divisions over important issues, and they have zero aspirations to anything as formal or as action-oriented as an alliance, they do have a few things going for them that make them powerful. For one thing, these five countries nearly total half the planet's people, and if you add in the other countries that have much greater affinities with their views than they do with the Western alliance, it becomes by far the bulk of the world's population. The Atlantic alliance may be where much of the money and power has been. The "BRICS Plus" represents not only the bulk of the world's people and resources but also where the fastest growth is[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn14" \o ").

Does this matter if even the BRICs themselves are hardly a coherent operating unit? Well, of course, because as the Libya vote hinted, they are an emerging international grouping of significance lately posing stand with regard to Syria. The BRICS gather to say we are powers in our own right and do not require the blessing of others. They vote their interests in the U.N. without apology. They seek to find solutions to problems like the Iranian nuclear arrangement [on their own](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/17/world/middleeast/17iran.html). Apparently the BRICs have a common interest in coordinating their affairs with regard to the revolutions (political uprisings) taking place in the Arab world that could herald a new international order and change the relations between countries. It is becoming obvious that the Arab world is in transition and the future has not been determined yet. As Al Ghannouchi, president of the Al Nahda Party said the revolutions (political uprising) had changed the image of the entire Arab nation, who had been branded as passive and backward.

On the other hand, New Delhi hosted a foreign minister-level meeting with Brazil and South Africa during the plight for intervention in Libya, which was to have been an innocuous occasion for some rhetorical “South-South” cooperation. On the contrary, the event soared into the realm of the troubled world order and shaky contemporary international system. The meeting took a clear-cut position of big no with regard to the growing Western design to impose a “no-fly” zone over Libya. All indications are that the United States and its allies who are assisting the Libyan rebels politically, militarily and financially were successful in extracting a “request” from the Libyan people to approach the United Nations Security Council for a mandate to impose sanctions under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Libyan rebels indirectly are welcoming the Western interference though they are a divided house: nationalist elements who previously opposed outside intervention and the Islamists among them are ideologically against any form of Western intervention.

Equally significant was the fact that the foreign ministers of (BRICs) also noted a joint statement on the overall situation in the Middle East. Dubbed as the “IBSA Declaration[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_edn15" \o ")”, it reiterated the three countries’ expectation that the changes sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa should “follow a peaceful course” and expressed their confidence in a “positive outcome in harmony with the aspirations of the people”.

A highly significant part of the statement was its recognition right at the outset that the Palestinian problem lay at the very core of the great Middle Eastern alienation and the “recent developments in the Region may offer a chance for a comprehensive peace … This process should include the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict … that will lead to a two-state solution, with the creation of a sovereign, independent, united and viable Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully alongside Israel, with secure, pre-1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as its capital.”

Russia claims to have a foreign policy that opposes the US’s “unilateralism” and which strictly abides by the canons of international law and the UN charter. China insists that it represents developing countries. Now, the IBSA stance makes it virtually impossible for them to enter into any submissive deal with the U.S.A. and Western powers over The Arab World affairs within the givens of the veto-holding powers of the Security Council – commonly known as the P-5. Therefore, the IBSA joint statement, much like the Turkish-Brazilian move on the Iran nuclear problem, is virtually sarcastic at the moral hypocrisy of the P-5 and their secretive ways.

Iran and India on the other hand, are both independent countries and they will play significant roles in shaping up the future of the international developments and especially the new balance of power in the Arab World. The relations between Iran and India are historic and sustainable. Iran and India due to being benefited from humanitarian viewpoints towards the international relations, will try to shape up the future world system especially at a time when the current wave of change in the Arab world, unequalled in geographic scope and intensity since the first Arab revolt in the early 20th century, has led many analysts to reconsider prevailing theories on the region (see 'Revisiting assumptions, old and new', Al-Ahram Weekly, March 31, 2011). Yet there is only rudimentary understanding of the new dynamics propelling Arab countries, as observers follow the rapidly unfolding events. Some elements of these changes are: The dramatic shift in the culture of several significant members of the regional order towards applying new standards of political performance, particularly respect for human rights, building democracy, and ending tolerance of dictatorships, corruption and attempts at building political dynasties. This movement, admittedly incomplete, may well have regional implications, allying democratic regimes against closed governments, redefining the role of the Arab League, and opening new possibilities for international realignments. To state only one option; redesigning the Euro-Mediterranean concept to find better conditions for common grounds between both shores of the Mediterranean.

Another trend is the re-emergence of political Islam as a force to be reckoned with, placing all players on notice (states, competing political forces and external parties) that they will need to redefine their expectations, future plans and language to accommodate this new reality. At one level this poses a key challenge to the ideology of Arab nationalism based on a secular, modernizing concept that opposes defining the region's identity in terms of religion. Practically speaking, some have argued that the resurgent role of Islam in government may lead to the formation of new alliances with Turkey or Iran, or even with sub-national actors, like Hamas or Hezbollah, thus adding to the resistance facing Western initiatives and interventions. Others have made the point that Arab nationalism, at least at the cultural level, has been proven alive by the rapid interaction between the recent uprisings in several member states of the Arab system.

In the same reasoning, as the members of the Arab system, particularly those facing internal changes, inevitably turn inwards to put their houses in order, their attention may well be distracted from wider regional and international issues. At the same time, following Fukushima, the importance of oil to the global economy appears reasserted. Taken together, these twin factors may open more space for the influence of non-Arab regional actors (Turkey, Iran, Israel), while allowing a continuation of higher levels of Western intervention in the system, particularly on its periphery.

But the continued importance of oil money also reflects Saudi Arabia's staying power, in terms of status and influence, together with other Gulf oil and gas exporters. This sub-regional gathering prefers slower, more orderly reform processes, and may feel uncomfortable with the wave of change coming from their western edge. The international system, as well, favors stability related to the free flow of energy and supplies. In this context, Egypt's possible return to providing a democratic model for other Arab countries (see 'Return of the Egyptian model', Al-Ahram Weekly, 10 March, 2011) may lead to a new level of competition with more traditional forces in the system.

While the Arab system is continuously unfolding new surprises, its immediate neighbors are a strong potential to alter the emerging new Arab order. Turkey's newfound dynamism, Iran's audacious revisionism, Israel's intransigence, and the threats to Nile water supplies, demand new perspectives of the future. NATO actions in the Mediterranean theatre and EU policies towards their southern neighbors are not the sole factors to be taken into consideration. While there is international consensus that settling the Palestinian question needs to be at the heart of any move forward, the regional order demands agreements on issues ranging from establishing a nuclear-free zone to new, more inclusive, structures for economic, humanitarian and military relations.

Far from reflecting stagnation and resistance to change, the Arab World and the Middle East region at large are experiencing transformations into a new system of states, challenged by supra-national and sub-national forces as well as major powers. The spontaneous challenges to existing rulers throughout the Arab world, collectively known as the Arab Spring,  set a momentous transformation in how Arabs will govern themselves in the 21st-century. Yet the pace of events is so swift, the weaknesses of besieged state institutions so great, the rules governing the relationship between the state and its citizens so unclear, that every day in this unfolding revolution (political uprising) brings something new.

Trying to sum up into a conceptual package this popular explosion, whose energies are far from being spent, it is very much like the French revolution; that "it is still too early to tell". However certain observations about the character of the new world emerging seem in order: George W. Bush's model for building democracy in Iraq, pursued at such cost in blood and funds, has proved to be no model at all. Indeed, American-led regime change in Iraq is viewed by those challenging the existing order, as well as those defending it, as a fruitless example to be avoided rather than a model to be embraced. Iraqis themselves are observers rather than participants in the home-grown revolts than are coursing throughout the region, with nothing to offer other than warnings about the perils of sectarianism.

One significant outcome thus far is that the contest between Saudi Arabia and Iran has moved to a new level surface. The Saudi intervention in Bahrain was a bold, successful, and unprecedented assertion of Saudi domination of the Gulf nations and its commitment to preserve the regimes of Sunni monarchies. Both Washington and Teheran opposed the move, exacerbating a deep split in US-Saudi relations on how best to manage the Arab Spring and heightening the stakes of a Saudi-Iranian cold war. Again, the question of Palestine has not been a central facet of the revolt, but in an era of empowered civil societies Palestine will emerge as a critical test of the popularity of the new regimes and the United States. Newly constituted and democratically elected assemblies in Cairo, Amman, or Sana'a, elected by mobilized constituencies, will not be able to avoid addressing the recomposed question of Palestine, particularly in an atmosphere of diplomatic stalemate and continuing occupation. Indeed, the absence of a credible negotiating framework is already producing radical and unexpected challenges to Israel, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in an address to the Knesset on the eve of his departure for Washington, proposed that Israeli unite in defense of the Iron Wall, a notion made as a result of breaches of Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon by former refugees.

Will the Arab Spring mark the dawn of a new age of Arab community especially that the Arab League decision to request a Western attack against fellow, if unloved, Arab League member Libya is a component part of the process? This extraordinary request in the formation of new political reality in Arab politics makes observers wonder at the absence of a strategic rationale driving the component leaders of the Arab League. Is there estimation what the U.S.A. wants in return? Washington's tremendous expenditure of blood, funds and energy in the Middle East region are being invested, is there a request by some Arabs to invest more? These issues in the application of American power abroad are not one-off aberrations. Some Arabs may not realize it but there are consequences to be reflected in the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It does matter when decisions are made to invest trillions in Iraq, other Arab states and Afghanistan.

[1]Max Singer, senior fellow of the [Hudson Institute](http://www.hudson.org/) and author of [The REAL World Order: Zones of Peace/Zones of Turmoil](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0934540993/qid=1014895426/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/103-7057483-9913401/nationalreviewon) (with Aaron Wildavsky), March 7, 2002.

[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref2" \o ") *The End of History and the Last Man* is a 1992 book by [Francis Fukuyama](http://www.answers.com/topic/francis-fukuyama), expanding on his 1989 essay "The End of History?” published in the international affairs journal [The National Interest](http://www.answers.com/topic/the-national-interest). In the book, Fukuyama argues that the advent of Western [liberal democracy](http://www.answers.com/topic/liberal-democracy) may signal the end point of humanity's [sociocultural evolution](http://www.answers.com/topic/sociocultural-evolution) and the final form of human government.

[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref3" \o ") The Congress of Vienna, 1 November 1814, 8 June 1815. [Marjie Bloy](http://www.victorianweb.org/misc/bloy.html), Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow, National University of Singapore.

[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref4" \o ") The Paris Peace Conference was the meeting of the Allied victors following the end of [World War I](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/World_War_I) to set the peace terms for Germany and other defeated nations, and to deal with the empires of the defeated powers following the Armistice of 1918. It took place in [Paris](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Paris) in 1919 and involved diplomats from more than 30 countries.Paris is the capital and largest city in France. It is situated on the river Seine, in northern France, at the heart of the Île-de-France region...

[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref5" \o ") Stephen G. Brooks, "Dueling Realisms (Realism in International Relations)," International Organization, Vol. 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997).

[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref6" \o ") *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000*, by [Paul Kennedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kennedy), first published in 1987, explores the politics and economics of the [Great Powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Power) from 1500 to 1980 and the reason for their decline.

[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref7" \o ") [Is Weapon System Cost Growth Increasing? A Quantitative Assessment of Completed and Ongoing Programs](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG588.pdf). Obaid Younossi et al. RAND, 06 September 2007. [Six Decades of Guided Munitions and Battle Networks: Progress and Prospects](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20070301.Six_Decades_of_Gui/R.20070301.Six_Decades_of_Gui.pdf). Barry D. Watts. Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, March 2007.

[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref8" \o ") Geoffrey Kemp and Robert Harkavy. From Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East 1997 Brookings Press.

[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref9" \o ") *The Geography of the Peace*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company. Reprinted in articles 2011.

[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref10" \o ") *Mark Glenn is an American and former high school teacher turned writer / commentator. He contributed above article to*[Media Monitors Network (MMN)](http://www.mediamonitors.net/). Reproduced2010.

[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref11" \o ") Iran's place in the new Middle East, By James Reynolds BBC Iran correspondent, London4 May 2011.

[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref12" \o ") Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair, Adeed Dawisha, 2005, 352 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4008-2566-0.

[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref13" \o ") MIDDLE EAST REVOLUTIONS OFF THE RAILS, CHRISTOPHER DICKEY. APRIL 10, 2011.

[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref14" \o ") [Is this the ‘BRICs Decade’?](http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/brics-decade.html) GLOBAL INVESTMENT RESEARCH - May 2010.

[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order" \l "_ednref15" \o ") IBSA Declaration on the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa

The Ministers of External Relations of India, Brazil and South Africa,

gathered in New Delhi, on March 8th 2011, for the VII Ministerial Meeting of the

IBSA Dialogue Forum, closely attentive to the present political unrest in several

Middle Eastern and northern African countries, stressed their expectation that the changes sweeping the region follow a peaceful course. They expressed their confidence in a positive outcome in harmony with the aspirations of the peoples.

**الخلل في العالم العربي مقابل النظام الدولي**

يعالج الباحث في دراسته التحول نحو الديمقراطية في بعض البلدان العربية وصولا إلى إندونيسيا ونيجيريا وتركيا وحتى الباكستان وبنغلادش.

وعلى الرغم من كل السياسات والإجراءات تترسخ الديمقراطية وبدون شك طريقة ترسيخها ليست مثالية أو حتى آمنة وتطلق أسئلة اقتصادية خطيرة.

تقع هذه البلدان على مفترق طرق مع أوروبا وروسيا واسيا. يتطرق الباحث في معالجة بحثه إلى العديد من القضايا والحواجز الجغرافية التي تعترض أنظمة هذه البلدان وكذلك إلى التعددية العرقية والدينية والمذهبية، فضلا عن وجود الموارد الطبيعية المهمة وخصوصا النفط والغاز الطبيعي.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/disordered-arab-world-vs-international-order#sthash.ITiBQUAQ.dpuf