ARAB SPRING: POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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**Arab Spring: Political Psychology Perspective**
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I write as a political and social scientist and accordingly this article is within this contour. What follows does not support any political trend and is free of intentional propaganda orientation. The objective is an attempt to utilize the diverse components of human fear and anxiety as a conceptual framework within the academic disciplines to explain revolutionary change and crucial political dimensions unfolding recently under the title of Arab spring in the Middle East region. Although the concept of fear is used without difficulty in everyday language, problems arise both when it is used as a guide to explain stability and instability on the one hand, and as a force used by political elite in the domain of political arenas.

In this context, political studies as a discipline, if not associated with the learning of psychology is not pertinent to recognize and subsequently employ the concept of fear. The prevalent social and psychological norms that obscure the hidden impact of fear complicate any study involved in the description and analysis of the relationship between the drives for change manifested in the Arab Spring and political processes.

Observations derived from upheavals, disorder and turmoil in most Arab societies allows me to assert that the Arab people are specifically influenced and moved by fear and anxiety[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1%22%20%5Co%20%22). Even when their fear is not justified, they nonetheless, in some instances, alarm the immediate political reality. Definitely, the intensity of their overall anxiety upset basic elements of their thinking and minds in all proceedings. What does this indicate to political processes having people living under this feeling of continuous fear? As usual in psychology, there is the persistent but less detectable in the so-called normal circumstances. So under extreme stress of anxiety, the in-built consistency of anxiety is reflected either in violence or reduction in differentiation, realization, and strong tendency to altruism[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2%22%20%5Co%20%22). The latter explains Arabs reluctance to cooperate with their perceived antagonists and their dependency on the «other» perceived as similar. Most often, the «other» is the religious leader or groups from within or outside the state.

With the unfolding of new and inharmonious social development in the Arab world, political systems have become increasingly perceived as deficient in responsibility to addressing individual’s needs for safety, order, better standard of living, meaningfulness, and well being. With the steady penetration of western influence bringing about instrumental modernization, Arab political regimes have become responsible in the eyes of their subjects to find solutions and remedies to all forms of grief and for managing fears of cultural and social deprivation and denial as well. Given the contemporary political involvements with technical freedoms, tension prevention, warnings of economic depression, and the risks of high speed economic inflation, it should be evident that polities have become responsible for preventing most forms of premature, man-made and hence avoidable threat to death. Political responsibility of the existing regimes in the eyes of Arab subjects now extends to protection from death by the natural order as well. In other words the Arab state now is alleged in the mind of Arabs to substitute the role of the parents and it is becoming the legal custodian of all subjects. If the state is perceived as such, then, any failure in meeting expectations will result in alienation and the labeling of the state as being dreadful guardian. To use psychological theories as an implement feature to political science[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3%22%20%5Co%20%22), we have to realize that; public opinion, violence, stability, decision-making, conflict resolution, socialization, social and political identity, and leadership employ psychology to better enlightenment of hard-core political issues[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4%22%20%5Co%20%22), notwithstanding, and as Greenstein observed, political scientists examine «aspects of the political psychology of revolutions that are revolution-specific», whereas psychologists are more likely «to deal with the psychology of the rebels as a general phenomenon[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Undeniably, recent political trends and the emerging and reemerging of new political and confessional movements in the Arab world are alarming events. They are a manifestation of new reasoning in the mind of Arabs, which in turn have consistently set up new profile to their identities, memories, stereotypes, beliefs, discourse, emotions, and actions. With the impact of new values resulting from the new global order, and the new political reality of Arab regionalism, the state is perceived as a rootstock of two contradicting feelings. On the one hand it offers Arabs a stronger sense of security, belonging or affiliation, and even personal identity, than does any alternative universal assemblage. On the other hand it is a source of fear and insecurity to Arabs under the strains and shocks of new regional mobilization and alienation from current domesticated political environments. The greater is the fear of people the greater becomes the potential power of the nation-state to channel both their longings and resentments and to direct their lives and fate. However, uncontrolled fear could undermine stability in society and put the state at stake.

Though we speak of human fear from a group perspective, we should not disregard its individualization and that it is a perpetual enigma. People try to hide their fears behind the fears of others and/ or try to hide their fears in a group[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6%22%20%5Co%20%22). Whether it is realistic and justified or not, fear plays a major role in most political and social disorder and has a major impact on progress. If it prevails among forces of change (political parties, minorities, religious groups) in societies, it undermines the ability of plural and mixed political entities to survive a long and durable stability. For this reason, it is a subject that should occupy more attention among political scientists and sociologists to understand the Arab Spring and the sweeping violence in the larger Middle East. The factor of fear needs to be exclusively acknowledged as important, and then in association with other factors to better understand political predicaments in their durability and potential reoccurrence. Once this is done, then, attempts at finding techniques to reduce the fear and anxiety in the individual and among the different communities could lead the way to modify the putative underlying causes of the fear or anxiety that bring about miseries, upheaval and destabilization of political order.

Although fear pressures human beings to conglomerate, act cooperatively and thus to originate order in society, by the mere fact of its social intensification in the same place sets off a new dimension of social, economic and political struggle creating a tense situation that could result in violence[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn7%22%20%5Co%20%22). Organized societies inevitably produce institutionalized governments through elite that emerge to control the instruments of these governments. In Arab societies where proper education of liberty and the true controls of democracy are lacking, the rulers, out of fear, develop a need to reproduce themselves as incumbents in authority. Rulers mostly fear the sectors in society that painfully endured their oppression, they perceive them as potentially dangerous, and thus the oppressed must be controlled. Incumbents in power balance their own fears with that of the fear of their subjects (this is to explicate only one trend among many). They impose an equal size of fear on what is perceived as the source of their fears and in this case it is their subjects. They attempt to subdue crowds by deliberately fostering an atmosphere of fear around the machinery of law and justice. They dramatize imprisonment and executions and establish a highly visible landscape of punishment.

Following any given insurgency in the Arab world, the state is blamed for not being able to predict it before it happens and for not being able to provide sufficient salvation. Most Arabs now no longer appeal to God, as did Moses, Job, or the rest of the Prophets to provide rescue but rather call on the government for relief. Even the contemporary manifestations of civilizing death ultimated in fears becoming politicized, including not only the politically sponsored military weapons, but fears of disease and unpredicted misfortune as well.

In the rise and relative demise of all nationalistic and sectarian trends in the Arab world, and the Arab Spring success and demand for political participation, Arab political systems and surviving regimes are perplexed on how to respond to a «climate of expectations», which includes the public’s needs for reassurance, sense of progress, action, and legitimacy. So far this «climate» featured disenchantment, disconnectedness, and cynicism, leading to the lowest public confidence in the Arab leadership and the state[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn8%22%20%5Co%20%22). A further dilemma of Arab government in our time arises from the fact that techniques for appealing to sub-rational and even to sub-conscious levels of human motivation are still in their infancy when applied to politics. Most political leaders have in this respect assumed Arab rationality and discounted the passions; but psychologists and social scientists no longer believe that men are ruled and lined by reason, a very well asserted notion by advertisers and professional military men.

Arab states propagate forcefully that their central function is the maintenance of order. Routinely, this has been achieved through their monopoly over the use of force. If modern Arab governments cannot control their people by direct force then they must control their fears, how they think, particularly if controlling people’s mind is cheaper to attain and more long-lasting. There is a slender tendency in this direction through the establishment of public relations industry and developing political socialization of the young in their schools’ curriculums. However, these programs require big budgets and can be paid for only if the economy is dynamic and the government cuts waste, corruption and unnecessary bureaucracy, conditions that only few Arab states could afford[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn9%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Most Arab individuals are depicted as being selfish and aloof from social and political responsibilities towards their societies. It is natural not to help those that contribute to a state of affairs you perceive as a threat to you. The Arab mind escapes such feeling of responsibility by depicting of oneself as being not-ready-yet (under-age) towards his/ her custodian the state; yet, Arabs’ expectations of their societies and state are high. Narcissistic withdrawal was the most common answer to escape the overwhelming fear and tension in the political reality in the Middle East, i.e. the perception of being under-age child-citizen permit individuals within the state-family to place themselves outside the dilemma. Throughout the horrible and terrifying time of massive bombardments on civilians during the civil strife in Lebanon, people over-passed this traumatic situation by forcing themselves to believe that what is happening to others does not concern them, even if they are relatives. The logic is that if they are not concerned then no harm is going to strike them. This denial of danger together with the personality splitting mechanism employed by individuals when too much anxiety besets on them is a common phenomenon well recognized during military and police crushing of demonstration, bombardments of cities and villages in many Arab states swept with the Arab Spring. In summary, the individual denies the danger and becomes less human and civilized to others.

Individuals in the Arab World and in the Middle East in general struggle throughout their lives with the tension inherent in a desire for security (domestic and regional security). This struggle most often culminates in submission to the existing authority. The submission to authority counterpoints the drive for avowal of freedom and sharing in decisions affecting their destiny. Based on this, one could understand the Arab regimes continuity until ousted by outside powers as in Iraq, Libya and Yemen, and the survival of the still unyielding Arab regimes.

Though sharing a similar cultural heritage, Arabs, have had a history of ruthless struggle among each other, of unpleasant confessional and ethnic hatreds and rivalries. Their recent memories of bloody conflicts regionally and domestically where they lost family members, close relatives, friends, their dignity, and their status in the world community is still vibrant. Promoters of Arab unity claim that tension in their region is due to misperception of one to another among the diverse Arab communities and at the same time to their distrust of the incumbent regimes. This misperception ignites old wounds casting further obstacles onto the pathway of mutual cooperation. Whether it is a misperception or not, past history is still influencing current-day plans and strategy of politics. From a political psychology understanding, this displacement of perceptions is a familiar phenomenon. The state in the West through its different institutions of propaganda and indoctrination has played the role of the psychotherapist and allowed for minimizing fears emanating from the memory. Unfortunately, nothing of the sort has been palpable in the Arab World and the Middle East at large.

If groups are like individuals, then in an analogous fashion, a group will enshrine with bitterness the memory of a hurtful event that occurred at a crucial time of its development. For example, the on-going watchful position that the different minority groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Yemen etc. tend to take due to the repeated bloody clashes that they had to encounter with one another. Another example, though it sounds remote, but nonetheless it is real and it exemplify how the power of old hurts and unhealed wounds have their impact on current events, can be found in Shiite Moslem history. If we are to trace the wrath of Shiite Moslems to the 680 AD, death of the Ali Bin Abi Talib’s son, Hussein, in battle on the desert at Karbala in what is now Iraq, there is the understanding that these incidents of killing Hassan and Hussein crystallized a schism between the followers of Muaawuyah who became caliph and the Shiia (partisans of Ali). These incidents gave the Shiite their emphasis on suffering and martyrdom[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn10%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Let me take this issue further to say that, it is indeed a powerful and frightening lesson to witness how rigidified anger of 14 centuries ago can be unleashed in our times to threaten the present domestic and regional order. The manifestation of the Shiite wrath is a convincing testimony that a group’s anger or frustration cannot and should not be ignored, even when it has lain dormant for centuries. Indeed, on other grounds, Arabs anger and resentment have simmered for years over the status of dependency on major powers. They fear that, once again, their region is the arena for the most deadly confrontation between Western culture and Islamic faith. The aftermath of September 11, 2002 attack on the USA is a reviving memory for the Arab and Middle Eastern people. Adding fuel to fire, being unable to identify or relate to one another, Arabs feel a continuous loss of control over events and concerns of vital importance to them.

In their studies of individual fears, psychologists suggest that fears decline (become less rigid) as a result of repeated exposure to the frightening situation[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn11%22%20%5Co%20%22). Is it relevant to utilize this theory in explaining the relative diminishing of fears from one community to another because of repeated exposure and thus with the subsiding of fear, reconciliation becomes an easier task to achieve? The tendency to habituate to stimulation is a universal characteristic, but there are instances where habituation fails to occur. Arab communities’ fears fall into this category of exception and are therefore considered to be unusual in the restricted sense of undue persistence despite repeated exposures. They may be regarded as unusual, if the fearful reactions are also disproportionate and, to some extent, fall in vicious circuit of self-reproduction.

Arabs have been witnessing substantial development when it comes to the new materials and technology acquired and used including sophisticated massive destructive weapons. However, tribal mentality has not changed significantly. In other words, the psychology of the Arab individual in appreciating moderation has not changed. The acquiring of new advanced weapons has given individuals and groups controlling the instruments of the state stronger potential for destruction compared to their previous commandership of the family, tribe, and village. The bloody clashes in Libya, Syria; Egypt and not long ago in Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, and Yemen are onlooker to that. Political settlements, or more precisely non-settlements, in the Middle East are vivid proof that the Arab psychology has not changed much from the tribal instincts. They are anxiously paranoid in their thinking, readily given to projection, splitting into good and bad, chronically dependent on externalization processes such as «it is the enemy out there». Though what is so called Arab modern anxiety is not easy to articulate, nevertheless, it is a constant reality of the region in its socio-cultural climate, and in that sense it undertakes a special layer in the political developments of stability and instability of the region.

Individuals in the Arab world are often obscure about whom to blame as a source of evil and as responsible for the political, social and economic retardation that has befallen them. Fear, quite often, drives individuals to enlarge the circle of those who are, directly or indirectly, involved in a plot against them. They accuse them of being either instigators or perpetuators of a secret plot aimed at undermining their national subsistence, or at the very least of developing a hostile purpose against them[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn12%22%20%5Co%20%22).

People in the Arab world have so many different fears general and specific and do not seem to differentiate between the two, that is why, they are driven by group memories. President’s Bush violent verbal and actual reaction to the terrorist attacks on the USA reinstated Arab’s fear of the other who is out there to get them. The other is hostile by nature and different in what is considered to be important values. Because of that, individuals in the Arab world are afraid of the future, their future and the future of their children, the uncertainty and insecurity of tomorrow, afraid of the bullet that at any time might hit them. This is by no way an attempt to rationalize fear. It is really hard for anyone to rationalize fear. But as a general observation, individuals in the Arab world are afraid of the past, of today and of tomorrow. Former times, the present and future fears are implicated in their day-to-day social and political behavior.

None of these problems of fear can be resolved through will, by saying to oneself, I will not be afraid. Such acts of will have no meaning and could not have substance, for fear is not a substance. Fear in the Arab world is a very serious problem to which political scientists and Arab scholars should give serious attention. One could not negate the existence of fear in individuals by simply interpreting their conscious alleges or their contrast translation of what they feel. Fear is one of the hidden emotions. There are strings connected to the conscious fears of which one is aware, those strings are deep down in the transitional memory, undetectable with simple methods and techniques. How is one to deal with conscious fears as well with those that are hidden? This is not a simple task, because fear in the social sense is to be afraid of «what is» as understood through the eyes of the fearsome individual. To listen to someone who is living in a state of fear implies that one gives the explications a serious attention. This should not mean that one agrees or disagree with what is being said. There is no agreement or disagreement when we are exploring an individual’s fear.

It eventuates that hidden fears are exposed through their manifestation in attitude, actions and behavior. If we analyze the reasons for fear and we come to understand them and undermine them, would this free the mind of those analyzed from fear? All analyses that undermine the impact of fear on politics in the Middle East are inclined for the objective of conditioning. If Westerners analyze Arabs’ specific fears by comparing them to their general fears, the analysis will imply the analyzer, who is the sensor, and he/ she is going to analyze fears that he/ she has created. The specific fears of the Arab people are regionally unique and are related to the pain that they have experienced yesterday and the possibility of its repetition tomorrow.

The mind recalls and thinks about the pain of yesterday, thus, it is the thinking that involves the memory of yesterday’s pain. It is the thinking that projects the fear of having pain again tomorrow. It is the thinking that can help me in providing ways to avoid pain in the future. How can I be sure that my thinking is producing the best means for avoiding pain? How am I going to be sure that when my thinking produces the plausible strategy of avoiding pain, others are going to allow me to execute my strategy? So it is history, thought and the obstacles for satisfying solutions that perpetuate fear in the Arab world.

While some human being have developed networks of escapes from fear through amusement, drink, and sex, large group of people in the Arab world surrender to God and religion ultimately becoming involved in radical religious tendencies. Living in fear, conscious or unconscious is creating tremendous inward conflict and resistance. The greater the fear the greater the tension, consequently, the greater the neuroticism, the greater is the urge to escape and at times the greater is the potential for violence[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn13%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Arab societies, now, are immensely in need for something they lack and that is a strong, comforting and unifying ideology. Only such ideology could energize the Arab people to actively respond to those at the echelon of power. But what is an ideology? In part, it is an interpretative framework that integrates and gives consistency to individuals’ wide-ranging experiences, beliefs and values, and organizes their social fears and drives. Ideology is the manifestation of the wishful philosophical understanding of the mind collectively and individualistically.

To illustrate on these points through a simple and limited example, I postulate the traditional religious leaders and specifically Islamic fundamentalists logic; the latter being based on male’s sexual fears. To them, working females have contributed to the moral breakdown of the Arab society that in turn, is the cause of social demoralization, moral and ethical retardation, children alienation and increasing disbelieve in Arab society. This comes as psychological fear of individuals who are afraid that their wives will be sexually attracted to other males if they leave the house to a workplace. This objection to working-women comes at a time when the state is strongly advocating the enlargement of the labor force to remedy the shattered economy.

In the category of making females free and equal to males, it has been implied that the majority of Arabs are willing to give up some economic revenues to avoid fear resulting from such equality. They are willing nonetheless to give up a few of their civil liberties in order to avoid anxiety. This kind of relinquishment of freedom and liberties are usually preamble to surrender other freedoms to the state. Notwithstanding, a growing fundamentalist movements believe that the law enforcement authorities are not fit, corrupt, and incapable to fight against the social causes of fear, they drive to capture the instruments of power to achieve their anticipated aspirations.

As for the majority of the Arab people who are not hostage to fundamentalism, there is this feeling of resignation and this comes as a response to staggering expectations. They feel less secure compared to when they were less dependent on the state. With the development of modern insecurities, their innocence has gone away in the sense that Arab people have developed far more needs and expectations in life than ever before. Yet as that sense of tribal security has eroded, the Arab states has grudgingly begun to believe that it will have to relinquish some more freedoms in the name of political stability. The state wants some peoples’ support against other people’s uprising and wants free hand in increased government intrusion into private lives. There is an assumption that some Arab people have been unwillingly disposed to give in to those restrictions to enhance the socio-political system of safety and to avoid fear.

It is anticipated that at times too much anxiety among people lead to uprisings and riots. In dealing with domestic stability against uprisings, there’s a recurrent issue concerning the use of violence. If we are to exercise theories of psychological fear, then we ask does the government do better to engage in so-called «surgical strike» operations so that only demonstrators and their supporters are hurt. Or does purposely causing so-called «collateral damage» lead to other population segments turning against the demonstrators and their supporters without whom there would be no crack down. Or does this same collateral damage induce homogeneity out of heterogeneity, in the process, resulting in a massive opposition surge sweeping the government from power? These questions merit not only theoretical reflections but also practical research identifying salient and concealed variables of fear and anxiety affecting the consequences of the use of violence.

It is a common sense among academicians that «real world» events are themselves natural experiments that only need to be collected and analyzed to yield empirically based postulates. One problem with this approach, however, is that, as with research on the political psychology of deception, the very knowledge of the outcomes of such a study, meaning, on who benefit from violence can affect reliability and validity for both insurgents and governments alike. From the perspective of political psychology, it is recognized that fear is a powerful mechanism used to make people cope and adapt in totalitarian and other oppressive environments. What is not recognized is that, fear generates in some individuals fear of fear, thus, degenerating within their minds the impact of that fear. In doing this, they act outside the limits of fear achieving by that more personal and individual freedom than formally allowed. This means that they can only lead a freer life through exploiting gaps in the policy making and its implementation. Such individuals take pride in being outside the circle of fear to act corruptly in society. This is typically the situation in the Arab world. However, with such individuals around, they fit to best facilitate dynamics for desired change on and throughout the polity.

Individuals, who play outside the established circle of fear, justify their actions by make believe for revolution and major changes in the political systems as opposed to committing to it. As an example, many Marxists, Progressive and Leftists leaders, not to exclude Islamic fundamentalists, in the Arab world, by acting as if they are revolutionaries, justify their corruption. They create and nurture images of themselves in fantasy. They protect these images from outsiders through extensive ego investment in other players. They often collect funds thrown to them as «chump change» by the people and others.

Again, there is the fear among individuals who can be many different types of personalities and play inconsistent roles in different situations. The same physical person may become many different psychological and social persons. He/ she could be religiously inclined in political orientation, Arab nationalist, humane, brutal, charismatic, schizoid, the «New Man» and the common man. These persons may be accurately diagnosed as manifesting traits of a diversified fear personality. They do not necessarily possess a suspected learning or conditioning inconsistency. They merely leap from one personality to another to protect themselves against the immediately perceived threat[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn14%22%20%5Co%20%22).  However, in all cases complex fear is one basic essence in the foundation of these personalities.

There is fear among individuals who are clinically «acting out» (in the psychodynamic sense) an intra-psychic conflict on the external, political stage. These individuals are best described as prisoner of their internal psychological dynamics than the usual external cues that often can be used to reinforce, punish, model, mediate, moderate, and otherwise condition behavior[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn15%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Although any study on the psychology of fear is subjective for it reflects the researcher’s mode of thinking, this article tries to avoid that by benefiting from other scholars’ viewpoints, and especially Freud’s perspective on fear and history. To Freud, fear among individuals comprises choices in matching elements of the past with the present and future and in differentiating commonalities and unique aspects of stories that have been passed down, are being passed down, and have yet to be initiated. Who learns something, is doomed to repeat what he learns, and most importantly learning is instigated by fear of timeless concerns[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn16%22%20%5Co%20%22). To stick to the core of this contest lays the notion that in the process of leaping away from fear, individuals hold a hierarchy of needs. Once basic needs of a physiological and economic nature are satisfied, fear would leap to produce other needs of a social and psychological nature. The leaping of fear comes to occupy a new place in the mind and to motivate individuals on a new trend of attitudes and behavior. Accordingly, individuals may display value priorities that put the emphasis on materialistic goods (so-called «materialist values”), such as physical and economic security, or on psychological contentment and self-actualization so-called «post-materialist values».

As part of the Arab world relatively witnessing economic stability by relying on the petrodollars and other parts are moving towards economic instability due to a proclaimed on-going Arab Spring revolution, one expects to find evidence of a process of value differentiation across individuals from one region to another. This makes Arab unity a hard objective to achieve, especially, as improvement in communication and on social mobility has been a visible feature of progress in the last two decades. These differences in the respective socialization environments of classes translate into value cleavages[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn17%22%20%5Co%20%22).

It is obvious in the Arab world that oil exporting countries harbor at the present, completely different from the past, cohort that tend to display post-materialist values in a more intensive manner than those at the other less fortunate Arab countries. This is manifested in the individuals’ fear of what is there after death and their striving to be religious and to meet God expectation of them. This explains the consecutive reproduction of the Islamic regimes in the Arab Gulf oil exporting states and the reviving of something similar in the once progressive Arab states.

Claiming a religious identity specifically in the Middle East is one way to avoid the fear of being nobody. It is fear of being nonentity that drives people to choose a religious identity. Identity usually provides an effective basis for mobilizing increased support to the individual, thus encouraging him/ her to hold on to this inclination. That is why fear is the most effective engine that provokes individual identity of one form or another to legitimize support for reducing one’s fears. The establishment of an identity requires that the extremes of psycho-social fears be overcome, that is why psycho-social and political conflicts can undermine inclinations to one identity or another even when final choices appear seemingly resolved. Whenever elements of fear stemming from social and economic conflicts are settled, the factor of psychological satisfaction sought from identity come to play a major role of group solidarity. In this context, Arabs now are different from how they were 25 years ago. They are changing now under the impact of affluence and new technologies. While I stress the role of the socio-political factors, these Arab Springs’ changes are the result of a confluence of factors, no one of which is fully determinative[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn18%22%20%5Co%20%22).

[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Alford, Melanie Klein. Benjamin, «**The Bonds of Love**», Bion, «**Experiences in Groups»**, Brown, «**Life Against Death**», Chodorow, «**The Reproduction of Mothering»**, Deleuze, and Felix, «**Anti-Oedipus**», Dinnerstein, «**The Mermaid and the Minotaur**», Flax, «**Thinking Fragments**», Foucault, «**Madness and Civilization**».

[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Laing, R. D. 1967, «**The politics of experience**», New York, Ballantine.

[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref3%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Wituski, Deborah M. 1998, «**Bridging a disciplinary divide: the Summer Institute in Political Psychology**», Copyright 1998 American Political Science Association in association with Gale group and LookSmart.

      Wolin, Sheldon, «**Democracy, Difference and Re-Cognition**», Political Theory 21 (August 1993), 467.

[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref4%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Hermann, Margaret G. 1997, «**An Interdisciplinary Adventure: The Research Training Group on the role of Cognition in Collective Political Decision Making**», Mershon Center, Ohio State University. Hermann, Margaret G. General editor, 1986, «**Political Psychology**», San Fransisco, Jossy-Bass.

[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref5%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Greenstein, «**Political Psychology: A Pluralistic Universe**», 457.

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**الربيع العربي  وجهة النظر علم النفس السياسي**

يبدأ هذا المقال بالافتراض أنه من خلال دراسة مخاوف الشعب يمكن فهم دوافع السلوك البشري في الحياة العامة والخاصة إضافة إلى السياسة، كما يمكن فهم سبب تمرد الناس ضد بعضهم البعض وضد أنظمتهم السياسية. إن هدف هذا المقال هو محاولة فهم هذه الأسباب إنما من دون اّدعاء الفهم التام لأنها تسعى حصرًا إلى تتبّع الصلات القوية بين المخاوف وفهم السياسية. إنني أقوم بهذا بمحاولة مني للربط بين مفهوم الخوف مع الفهم الأفضل للربيع العربي.
في المجتمعات حيث يدرك الناس التأثير الكبير للسياسة عليهم من الصعب التمييز بين الخوف والقلق. الخوف يُستخدم للإشارة إلى مشاعر تفهّم القرارات والأعمال الملموسة من قبل السلطات وينتج عن ذلك مخاطر واقعية مهيمنة. أما القلق فهو يستخدم للدلالة على مشاعر تفهّم التجارب السابقة في المجتمعات التي يصعب عليها الترابط مع مصادر التحفيز الملموسة. إن صعوبة وعدم قدرة الربط بين التجارب الماضية المريعة والمؤشرات الحالية لحصول ضرر محتمل تعتبر عادة الصفة الرسمية للقلق الاجتماعي والسياسي.
من المهم فهم التقلّبات بين الخوف والقلق وخاصة عند بروزها خلال الأجواء السياسية المتوترة (فتنة مدنية) يتبعها تراجع نسبي لحدة الأوضاع حين يبدو الحل النظري للصراع السياسي مقبولاً.
التزايد والتراجع النسبي للمخاوف وتفسيرهما للسلوك البشري في صنع السياسة يطرحان أسئلة عن الارتباط بين المتغيرات والمسببات.
هل تنشأ الأوضاع المتوترة بين المجتمعات المختلفة نتيجة وجود خوف من الطرف الآخر أم أن الخوف ينشأ نتيجة للوضع المتوتر؟ السؤال النسبي هو «لمَ تتراجع المخاوف في وقت من الأوقات في مجتمع معين وتصبح نائمة؟» «ولمَ تستيقظ هذه المخاوف في أوقات أخرى وتصبح مرعبة؟»
ومع ذلك فإن الفكرة هنا لا تبطل التأكيد بأن تفاعل الناس يختلف كثيرا في التعاطي مع الخوف والشعور به. الكائن البشري هو كائن متعدد الأشكال. بعض الأشخاص خجولين عفوياً فيما البعض الآخر جريئين في اللاوعي.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/arab-spring-political-psychology-perspective#sthash.ryfuNipV.dpuf