OIC
Study Guide

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Study Guide

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Letter from the Under Secretary General

In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful

Most distinguished participants of Çapa Model United Nations conference; it is my pleasure to support and guide you throughout this conference as the Under Secretary General of this committee. My name is Eymen Uysal, I am studying in Kartal Anatolian Imam-Hatip High School and I have been participating in Model UN conferences for several years now. I am looking forward to this conference, especially for your Commitment, resolution ideas and unique points of view to the agenda item.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the second largest inter-governmental organisation in the world, is the common voice of the Ummah, around a quarter of the world's population. I expect all the participants to take this fact into consideration while discussing the adequate solutions to the problems caused by the Arab Spring. This will be a great challenge due to various factors such as the socio-political situation and relations in the region, the Conflict of interest possible of the many member states of the organisation and last but not least the chaotic nature of uprisings exacerbated by the popularisation of social media.

I urge the delegates to use this study guide as a starting point for their research and learn the extremely intricate details of the agenda item, especially those who concern their allocations the most. A problem as complex as this will obviously not have a solution that isn't more if not equally complicated as itself. Therefore it is crucial for all delegates to be well-informed of the topic and cooperate in a fruitful debate.

If you have any questions regarding the conference or the agenda item, please do not hesitate to ask me

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Eymen Uysal

Under Secretary General of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Introduction to the Committee

The Arab spring, sparked in Tunisia and quickly spread all over the Arab world, has challenged the longstanding authorities and caused instability in the region. Near the end of the Arab spring, 2013, members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation gathered in an extraordinary Islamic Summit. The decisions that will be made in this summit will shape the future of the Islamic community, and as a result, of the whole globe. With an agenda item that is complex and controversial as this, stabilising the region will not be an easy task. In addition, due to the current instability in the region, expect certain events to take place during the conference.

Introduction to Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the United Nations with 57 member states out of 48 being muslim majority countries. It was founded in 1969 with its aim being "To safeguard the interests and ensure the progress and well-being of Muslims". OIC has, like the United Nations, many affiliated and subsidiary bodies. With its official languages being English, Arabic and French the OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union. With a total population of 1.8 billion of its member states, the organisation accounts roughly to a quarter of the world's population.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation was established in 1969 following an arson aimed at the *al-Masjid al-Aqsâ*. Six months after the first Islamic Summit held in the Kingdom of Morocco in 1969, the first meeting of the Islamic Council of Foreign Ministers was held in Saudi Arabia. The third meeting of the Islamic Council of Foreign Ministers in 1972 the Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation was approved.

The current Secretary General of the OIC is His Excellency Dr. Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen. Former Secretary Generals include His Excellency Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani and His Excellency Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who held the office from 2004 until 2014 in which the Arab Spring took place.

Major bodies of the OIC include the Islamic Summit, Council of Foreign Ministers and the General Secretariat. Establishment of an International Islamic Court of Justice was approved in 1987 but the decision is yet to be implemented. OIC also includes many Subsidiary organisations, Specialised institutions, Affiliated institutions and Standing Committees.

Islamic Summit

The Islamic Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is the highest decision-making body of the organisation and is composed of monarchs, heads of states or governments from all member states.

The Summit is responsible for setting the overall direction of the OIC's activities and policies, and to provide guidance upon the realisation of the objectives provided in Chapter I Article I of the Charter of the OIC, as well as addressing key political, economic, and social issues affecting the Ummah. It provides a platform for member states to exchange views and discuss strategies for advancing the interests of the Islamic community, promoting solidarity among member states, and addressing the challenges facing the Muslim world.

The Islamic Summit also plays a critical role in promoting interfaith dialogue, combating Islamophobia, and advocating for the rights of Muslims around the world. Ultimately, the Summit serves as a key forum for strengthening cooperation and collaboration among member states and advancing the collective interests of the Islamic world.

The Conferences of Islamic Summit aims to write Resolutions, Declarations and a Final Communique upon the Agenda proposed by the Council of Foreign Ministers with the assistance of the General Secretariat. The procedure of the Islamic Summit is recommended by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

Council of Foreign Ministers

The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is Tasked with formulating and implementing the organisation's policies and programs. The Council of Foreign Ministers meets annually and is attended by foreign ministers from all member states. Its main responsibilities include coordinating political and economic cooperation among member states, promoting human rights, enhancing intra-Islamic trade, and fostering closer relations with non-member states and international organisations.

The Council of Foreign Ministers also addresses regional and global issues of concern to the Ummah, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the situation in Syria and Yemen, and the fight against terrorism. In addition, the Council of Foreign Ministers oversees the work of the OIC's specialised agencies and committees and ensures that their activities are aligned with the organisation's objectives.

The Council of Foreign Ministers also plays an important role in advancing the interests of the Islamic world and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The General Secretariat

The Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organisation and ensuring that its objectives are met. The Secretary General serves as the chief administrative officer of the OIC, overseeing the implementation of decisions made by the organisation's various committees and bodies. They also represent the OIC at international events, liaise with member states and other organisations, and work to strengthen cooperation and collaboration among OIC member countries.

Additionally, the Secretary General is responsible for ensuring that the OIC's budget is managed effectively and that its resources are allocated appropriately to achieve its goals. The Secretary General of the OIC plays a crucial role in promoting unity and solidarity among member countries and advancing the interests of the Islamic world.

Key Terms and Definitions

Ummah: Arabic word literally meaning "community" commonly used as a synonym for the Islamic Community.

Al-Masjid al-Aqsâ: A grand mosque in the city of Jerusalem the larger area containing Al-Masjid al-Aqsa named Haram al-Sharif or the Temple Mount is deemed holy by all the Abrahamic religions.

Jasmine Revolution: The civil resistance of the Tunisian people against the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. It resulted in the overthrow of the government and started a period of transition to democracy.

Muslim Brotherhood: officially, Society of the Muslim Brothers, an islamic organisation established in 1928. The organisation has strong influence over a wide region, combined with this, the Salafi beliefs of the organisation caused it to be designated as a terrorist group by several countries.

Live ammunition: cartridge that contains propeller powder and shoots at a high velocity.

Authoritarianism: political system that opposes the multiple decision-making mechanism and political pluralism.It is basically the use of strong central power to maintain the political status quo and the rule of law, separation of powers, and reduction of democratic voting.
Gulf Cooperation Council: a regional union consisting of; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, all being Monarchies.

Introduction to the Agenda Item

The Arab Spring refers to a wave of pro-democracy uprisings and demonstrations that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011. The movement was sparked by the self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor, which led to protests against corruption, unemployment, and authoritarianism in Tunisia. The protests quickly spread to other countries in the region, including Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, where they often escalated into violent conflicts and civil wars. The Arab Spring represented a major challenge to entrenched regimes and longstanding political structures in the region, and its legacy continues to shape politics and society in the Middle East today.

Causes and the Prelude

The Arab Spring was driven by a complex set of factors, including political, social, and economic grievances that had been building up in the region for decades. One of the main drivers of the movement was widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian regimes that had dominated the political landscape in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa for years. These regimes were characterised by corruption, nepotism, and a lack of political and civil rights, which had created a growing sense of frustration and disillusionment among the population.

Another important factor was the economic situation in the region. Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa had been hit hard by the global financial crisis of 2008, which had exacerbated existing economic problems such as high unemployment, inflation, and

poverty. This had created a sense of hopelessness and desperation among many people, especially young people, who felt that they had no prospects for a better future.

At the same time, social media and the internet had become powerful tools for organising and mobilising people, and had helped to spread the message of the Arab Spring across the region. The use of social media allowed activists to bypass traditional media outlets, which were often controlled by the state, and to reach a wider audience with their message of change and reform.

In addition to these factors, there were also broader geopolitical trends at play, such as the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which had fueled anti-American sentiment in the region, and the growing influence of Iran and its allies, which had created a sense of insecurity among many Arab states.

Among all this oppression and unrest, the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor in December 2010 sparked protests against the authoritarian regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had been in power for more than 20 years. These protests quickly spread across the country, and Ben Ali was forced to flee to Saudi Arabia in January 2011. Also known as the Jasmine Revolution, the success of this event acted as a catalyst for the Arab Spring to erupt in the rest of the Arab World.

Events by country

Republic of Tunisia

The Arab Spring in Tunisia, also known as the Jasmine Revolution, was a political and social upheaval that took place in Tunisia in December 2010 and January 2011. The revolution was sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor, in protest against the government's corruption and economic policies. Bouazizi's act of desperation struck a chord with many Tunisians, who were already fed up with high unemployment, inflation, and poverty.

The prelude to the Jasmine Revolution was marked by growing unrest and opposition to the regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled the country for over 20 years. Ben Ali's government was known for its corruption, repression of political and civil rights, and lack of economic opportunities. Protests had erupted in various parts of the country in the years leading up to the revolution, but they had been met with violent repression by the government.

The event itself began on December 17, 2010, when Bouazizi set himself on fire in the city of Sidi Bouzid. His act of self-immolation sparked protests that quickly spread to other parts of the country. The protests were initially small and localised, but they soon gained momentum and spread to other cities. The government responded with violence, using tear gas, water cannons, and live ammunition to disperse the protesters.

The aftermath of the Jasmine Revolution caused a political transition that saw Ben Ali flee the country on January 14, 2011, after weeks of protests and clashes with the security forces. A caretaker government was formed, and the country held democratic elections in October 2011, which were widely hailed as free and fair. The new government has focused on economic and social reforms, including measures to address high unemployment, poverty, and corruption.

The effects of the Jasmine Revolution have been far-reaching, both in Tunisia and beyond. The revolution has inspired similar uprisings in other countries in the region, such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria, and has been credited with starting the broader Arab Spring movement. The revolution has also had a significant impact on Tunisia's economy and society, with increased political and civil rights, greater social mobility, and a growing sense of national pride.

However, the revolution has also faced challenges, including ongoing economic and social problems, and the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS. The country has also faced political instability, with frequent changes in government and a polarised political landscape. Despite these challenges, the Jasmine Revolution remains a symbol of hope and change for many Tunisians and has sparked a renewed sense of optimism for the country's future.

Arab Republic of Egypt

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution was heavily influenced by the Jasmine Revolution that occurred in Tunisia a few weeks earlier. The Tunisian revolution showed the people of Egypt that it was possible to overthrow an authoritarian regime and sparked a wave of protests across the country.

The prelude to the revolution in Egypt was widespread dissatisfaction with the Mubarak regime's corruption, repression, and economic stagnation. The regime's brutal response to dissent, including torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, further fueled public anger.

The event itself began with a large-scale protest on January 25, 2011, organised by various opposition groups and social media activists. The protesters demanded political change, freedom, and economic justice. The protest quickly spread across the country, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets in major cities like Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez.

The Mubarak regime responded with violence, deploying police and military forces to disperse the protesters. The government shut down the internet and mobile phone networks to prevent the spread of information and coordination among the protesters. However, the protests continued, with the protesters occupying Tahrir Square in Cairo, which became the symbolic heart of the revolution.

After 18 days of protests, Mubarak was forced to step down from power on February 11, 2011, and the military took control of the country. The military promised a transition to democracy, and a series of elections were held over the next few years, resulting in the election of Mohammed Morsi as president in 2012.

Morsi's brief reign was marked by political polarisation, economic stagnation, and human rights abuses. His attempts to expand the powers of the presidency and his affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood alienated many Egyptians, and his ousting by the military in 2013 sparked a new wave of protests and violence.

Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who served as the defence minister under Morsi, led a coup against him and assumed power in 2014. El-Sisi's regime has been characterized by authoritarianism, repression, and human rights abuses, including widespread torture, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings.

The effects of the revolution and its aftermath have been mixed. The revolution inspired other protests and uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa region, and resulted in greater political freedoms and civil society engagement in Egypt. However, the political

transition has been unstable, with ongoing challenges to democracy, economic stagnation, and social inequality. The current regime under el-Sisi continues to face international criticism for its human rights abuses and authoritarianism.

Syrian Arab Republic

The 2011 Syrian revolution was sparked by a wave of protests across the Arab world, known as the Arab Spring. However, the Syrian revolution had a unique set of causes and dynamics, separate from those of other Arab Spring uprisings.

The prelude to the Syrian revolution was marked by decades of authoritarian rule by the Assad regime, characterised by repression, corruption, and economic stagnation. The regime's response to protests and dissent, including torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, fueled widespread anger and resentment among the population.

The event itself began with a small-scale protest in the southern city of Daraa in March 2011, triggered by the arrest and torture of teenage boys who had painted anti-government graffiti. The regime's violent response to the protest, including the use of live ammunition and torture, further fueled public anger and led to widespread protests across the country.

The Assad regime responded with a brutal crackdown, deploying the military and security forces to quell the protests. The regime's use of violence and repression only served to escalate the conflict, leading to the formation of armed opposition groups and the emergence of a full-scale civil war.

The aftermath of the revolution has been devastating, with the conflict resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and widespread destruction of infrastructure and communities. The conflict has also drawn in regional and international powers, with various countries supporting different sides in the conflict and exacerbating its complexity.

The effects of the Syrian revolution have been far-reaching, not only for Syria but also for the broader Middle East and North Africa region. The conflict has destabilised the region, led to the rise of extremist groups like ISIS, and created a humanitarian crisis that has had implications for countries around the world.

In conclusion, while the Syrian revolution was connected to the broader wave of protests and uprisings of the Arab Spring, it also had its unique causes and dynamics. The Assad regime's violent response to protests and dissent, and its brutal crackdown on opposition groups, ultimately led to a devastating civil war that continues to have far-reaching effects to this day.

Libya

The Libyan crisis was another result of the wave of protests and uprisings that swept through the Middle East and North Africa region in 2011, known as the Arab Spring. The prelude to the crisis was marked by decades of authoritarian rule by the Gaddafi regime, characterised by repression, corruption, and economic mismanagement.

The event itself began with peaceful protests in February 2011, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The regime responded with violence, using live ammunition and military force to suppress the protests. This led to the formation of armed opposition groups, and the conflict quickly escalated into a full-scale civil war.

The international community played a significant role in the Libyan crisis, with the United Nations Security Council authorising a no-fly zone and military intervention by NATO forces to protect civilians and support the opposition. Despite the intervention, the conflict dragged on for several years, with the opposition forces finally capturing the capital Tripoli in 2014.

The aftermath of the crisis saw a continued instability and violence, with various factions and armed groups vying for power and control. The country remains divided, with two rival governments and a myriad of armed groups controlling different parts of the country. The crisis has also led to a significant humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of people displaced and a breakdown in basic services like healthcare and education.

The effects of the Libyan crisis have been far-reaching, not only for Libya but also for the broader Middle East and North Africa region. The conflict has fueled regional instability and allowed extremist groups to gain a foothold in the country. It has also had implications for Europe, with the crisis leading to an increase in migration and refugees crossing the Mediterranean.

In conclusion, the Libyan crisis was a result of the broader wave of uprisings and protests of the Arab Spring, but with unique dynamics and causes. The authoritarian rule and repression of the Gaddafi regime ultimately led to a violent conflict that continues to have significant implications for Libya and the broader region.

Republic of Yemen

The Yemeni crisis began in 2011 as part of the broader wave of protests and uprisings that swept through the Middle East and North Africa region in what became known as the Arab Spring. Decades of authoritarian rule by Ali Abdullah Saleh, characterised by corruption, economic mismanagement, and human rights abuses were an important factor at play.

The event itself began with peaceful protests in early 2011, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The regime responded with violence, using live ammunition and military force to suppress the protests. This led to the formation of armed opposition groups, including the Houthi rebels, who began to gain significant control over parts of the country.

The conflict escalated in 2015 when a coalition of Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, launched a military intervention in support of the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The conflict has been marked by significant human suffering, including the deaths of tens of thousands of people, widespread displacement, and a humanitarian crisis.

The aftermath of the crisis saw a continued instability and violence, with various factions and armed groups vying for power and control. The country remains divided, with the Houthi rebels controlling the capital Sanaa and large parts of the country, and the government controlling other parts of the country. The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains dire, with millions of people facing food and medical shortages and a risk of famine.

The effects of the Yemeni crisis have been far-reaching, not only for Yemen but also for the broader Middle East and North Africa region. The conflict has fueled regional instability and allowed extremist groups to gain a foothold in the country. It has also had implications for global security, with Yemen becoming a haven for terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

In conclusion, the Yemeni crisis was a result of the broader wave of uprisings and protests of the Arab Spring, but with unique dynamics and causes. The authoritarian rule and corruption of the Saleh regime ultimately led to a violent conflict that continues to have significant implications for Yemen and the broader region.

Kingdom of Bahrain

In Bahrain, the Arab Spring led to widespread protests by the country's majority Shia population against the Sunni-dominated government. The government responded with a crackdown on the protesters, leading to further unrest and violence. The conflict has resulted in ongoing political and human rights concerns, with the government accused of suppressing dissent and violating human rights.

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

In Jordan, the Arab Spring led to calls for political and economic reforms. King Abdullah II responded with some measures to address these concerns, such as constitutional reforms and increased social spending. However, political opposition remains limited, and the country has faced economic challenges, including high levels of unemployment and inflation.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, the Arab Spring had a limited impact, as the country's strict authoritarian regime quickly suppressed any protests. However, the government did make some concessions, such as increased social spending and the establishment of a new anti-corruption agency. The country has also implemented some economic reforms, including efforts to diversify away from its reliance on oil.

Kuwait

In Kuwait, the Arab Spring led to increased political opposition and calls for reforms, including changes to the electoral system. The government responded with some concessions, including a new election law, but political opposition remains limited, and the country has faced economic challenges, including declining oil revenues.

Sultanate of Oman

In Oman, the Arab Spring led to protests and demands for political and economic reforms. The government responded with some measures to address these concerns, including increased social spending and the establishment of a new council to advise the sultan. However, political opposition remains limited, and the country has faced economic challenges, including declining oil revenues.

Aftermath

The aftermath of the Arab Spring has been complex and varied across different countries. While the uprisings led to the overthrow of several dictatorial regimes, they also resulted in significant political, social, and economic challenges in the region. Here are some of the major consequences of the Arab Spring:

Political instability

In many countries, the ousting of longstanding authoritarian regimes led to a period of political instability and uncertainty. New governments struggled to establish legitimacy and maintain control, leading to ongoing protests and violence in some cases. For example, in Egypt, the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime led to a period of political turbulence that has continued to this day, with the country undergoing several changes in government and ongoing protests.

Rise of extremist groups

The power vacuum left by the fall of authoritarian regimes has enabled extremist groups to gain a foothold in some countries, leading to ongoing conflicts and violence. In Syria, for example, the civil war that followed the 2011 uprising has led to the rise of the Islamic State group and other extremist organisations, causing widespread destruction and displacement.

Economic challenges

The Arab Spring had a negative impact on the region's economy, with decreased tourism, investment, and trade. In addition, ongoing conflicts and political instability have made it difficult for many countries to recover. Countries like Tunisia, which were at the forefront of the Arab Spring, have seen a decline in economic growth and high levels of youth unemployment, leading to ongoing social and economic challenges.

Social changes:

The Arab Spring brought about significant social changes in many countries, including greater freedom of expression, increased participation of women in politics, and a shift towards more democratic values. In countries like Tunisia and Morocco, for example, new constitutions were adopted that enshrined greater rights and freedoms for citizens.

Humanitarian crises

The ongoing conflicts and political instability in several countries have led to humanitarian crises, including large-scale displacement, refugee flows, and food insecurity. The Syrian civil war has been particularly devastating, with millions of people displaced both within and outside the country, leading to a massive refugee crisis in neighbouring countries and in Europe.

Overall the Arab Spring has had mixed impact on the region,with significant progress made in some areas but ongoing challenges and instability in others.While uprisings signalled a desire for change and greater democracy among many people in the region,the ongoing conflicts and politics turbulence that followed have led to ongoing challenges and uncertainty.

Controversies

US Intervention

The controversy surrounding U.S. intervention in the Arab Spring has been a subject of much debate since the uprisings first began in 2010. Supporters of U.S. intervention argue that the United States has a responsibility to support democratic movements and human rights, and that the U.S. can play a positive role in promoting political change and stability in the region. Critics, however, argue that U.S. intervention has contributed to instability and violence, and that the U.S. has often supported authoritarian regimes at the expense of democracy and human rights.

U.S. intervention in the Arab Spring is often tied to the role of the National Endowment for Democracy. The NED is a non-profit organisation that receives funding from the U.S. government to support democratic movements and political change around the world. Some argue that the NED has played a positive role in supporting democratic movements in the Middle East, while others argue that it has been used as a tool of U.S. foreign policy to advance American interests in the region.

One of the key controversies surrounding U.S. intervention in the Arab Spring is the question of whether or not it has been effective. Some argue that U.S. support for democratic movements has helped to bring about positive change in countries such as Tunisia and Libya, while others argue that U.S. intervention has contributed to increased instability and violence in countries such as Syria.

Another point of controversy is the role of the U.S. in supporting authoritarian regimes in the region. Critics argue that the U.S. has historically supported authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, and that this support has contributed to the lack of democracy and human rights in the region. Supporters, on the other hand, argue that the U.S. has had no choice but to support these regimes in order to maintain stability and security in the region.

Finally, there is also controversy over the role of the U.S. in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Some argue that the U.S. has failed to follow through on its commitments to support democratic change and human rights in the region, while others argue that the U.S. has overstepped its bounds by intervening too much in the affairs of other countries.

Overall, the controversy surrounding U.S. intervention in the Arab Spring reflects deep and longstanding disagreements over the role of the United States in the Middle East, as well as the broader question of how to promote political change and stability in the region.

Muslim Brotherhood

The role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Spring has been a controversial issue in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamic political organisation that was founded in Egypt in 1928. It played a significant role in the protests that led to the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, and its leader, Mohammed Morsi, was elected as Egypt's first democratically elected president in 2012. However, Morsi's tenure was short-lived, as he was ousted by the military in a coup in 2013.

Supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood argue that it represents a legitimate voice for political Islam in the region, and that its participation in the Arab Spring was an important step towards greater democratic participation and representation. They argue that Morsi's ouster was a setback for democracy in Egypt, and that the military's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood since then has been unjust and undemocratic.

Critics, on the other hand, argue that the Muslim Brotherhood is an extremist organisation that is not committed to democracy or human rights. They point to the group's history of violent attacks and its ties to other extremist organisations as evidence that it is a threat to stability in the region. They argue that the ouster of Morsi was necessary to protect the country from Islamist extremism, and that the military's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood has been a necessary measure to maintain stability in the region.

Sectarian and ethnic tensions

The Arab Spring brought about a wave of social and political changes throughout the Middle East and North Africa, but it also brought to the surface sectarian and ethnic tensions that had long simmered beneath the surface. In countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, these tensions escalated into violent conflicts that continue to this day.

In Syria, the Arab Spring protests quickly turned into a full-blown civil war that has been raging for over a decade. The conflict has been characterised by sectarian tensions between the country's Sunni majority and its Shia Alawite ruling elite, as well as ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds. The involvement of regional and international actors has further complicated the conflict, with Iran and Russia backing the Syrian government and Saudi Arabia and the United States supporting the opposition.

In Iraq, the Arab Spring protests were largely peaceful, but they were followed by a rise in sectarian violence between the country's Shia and Sunni populations. The country has also been plagued by ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds, particularly over the issue of Kurdish independence. The presence of ISIS in the country has further exacerbated these tensions, with the extremist group targeting Shia and Kurdish communities.

In Yemen, the Arab Spring protests led to the ouster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, but they also set the stage for a civil war that has been fueled by sectarian tensions between the country's Zaydi Shia and Sunni populations. The involvement of regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran has further escalated the conflict, which has had devastating humanitarian consequences for the Yemeni people.

The aftermath of the Arab Spring has been marked by ongoing sectarian and ethnic tensions throughout the region, with conflicts in countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen continuing to destabilise the region. The legacy of these tensions underscores the challenges of achieving political stability and social cohesion in a region that has long been characterised by deep-seated divisions.

Islamist Groups

The Arab Spring brought about significant changes in the Middle East and North Africa, including the rise of Islamist groups in several countries. This trend has been a source of controversy and debate, with some seeing it as a positive development that reflects the democratic aspirations of the region's people, while others view it as a threat to democracy and stability.

In Tunisia, the Islamist Ennahda party emerged as the largest party in the country's first democratic elections after the overthrow of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. While the party initially faced criticism from secularists and liberals who feared that it would impose a conservative Islamic agenda, Ennahda ultimately agreed to compromise and work with other parties in a coalition government.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power after the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. However, the group's rule was short-lived, as it faced widespread opposition from secularists and liberals who accused it of trying to impose an Islamic agenda on the country. The military eventually staged a coup and removed President Mohammed Morsi from power, leading to a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups.

In Libya, Islamist groups played a significant role in the ouster of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi. However, the country has since been plagued by instability, with rival militias and factions vying for power. Some of these groups have been linked to extremist organisations such as ISIS, raising concerns about the spread of terrorism in the region.

Social Media

Social media played a crucial role in the Arab Spring, serving as a platform for people to share information, organise protests, and connect with others. However, its role in the events has been a topic of controversy. On one hand, social media allowed for the spread of information and coordination of protests that may not have been possible otherwise. Many argue that it played a significant role in the success of the uprisings.

On the other hand, some argue that social media also played a negative role by spreading false information and propaganda, leading to increased tensions and violence. In addition, some argue that social media's influence was overstated and that it was merely a tool rather than a driving force behind the Arab Spring.

Furthermore, the aftermath of the Arab Spring has also highlighted the negative impact of social media, particularly in terms of online hate speech and radicalization. The spread of extremist ideologies and propaganda through social media has been a significant concern for many governments and organisations, and has led to increased efforts to regulate online content.

It's also argued that the spread of fake news and misinformation through these platforms can be detrimental to democracy. In addition, there is growing concern about the potential for foreign powers to manipulate social media to interfere with the sovereignty of a nation, as seen in the 2016 US presidential election. In the context of the Arab Spring, the use of social media by foreign powers to spread propaganda and sow discord has been a major concern, with some arguing that it has contributed to the continuation of conflict and instability in the region.

Overall, while social media played a significant role in the Arab Spring and its impact cannot be ignored, its role in shaping the events and their aftermath remains a topic of controversy and debate.

Countries' Policies

Turkey

At the start of the Arab Spring, Turkey's response was cautious but generally supported the protesters' demands for more democracy and political reform. Turkish leaders saw the uprisings as a potential opportunity to promote their country's vision of a modern, democratic Muslim state and expand their influence in the region. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his support for the protesters in Egypt and Tunisia, urging their leaders to listen to the demands of the people and resign peacefully.

Turkey's position has been complicated by recent military coups and its ongoing struggle with Kurdish separatists. The country's leaders were also aware of the potential for instability and violence in the region and were concerned about the possible effects of the uprisings spreading to Turkey.

As protests continued and turned into armed conflict in some countries, Turkey's policies became more complex and nuanced. In particular, Turkey became involved in the Syrian conflict by supporting some rebel groups against the Bashar al-Assad government. This policy has caused tensions with some of Turkey's neighbours, especially Iran and Iraq, who support the Assad regime, and Russia, which sees Turkey's intervention in the region as a threat to its interests.

Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict also had consequences within the country. The influx of refugees from Syria strained Turkey's resources and created social and economic difficulties for the country.

As a result, Turkey's policy towards the Arab Spring can be seen as an attempt to strike a balance between its interests in promoting democracy and stability in the region, and its strategic concerns and ambitions for regional power. Turkey tried to maintain good relations with all affected countries while trying to influence the direction of the changes that were taking place. While the outcome of the Arab Spring remains uncertain, Turkey's role and response to the events will undoubtedly continue to shape the political and social landscape of the region in the years to come.

Iran

Iran's response to the Arab Spring has been complex and multifaceted, reflecting a combination of strategic calculations, ideological concerns, and domestic political considerations. Initially, the Iranian government expressed support for the popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, seeing them as a manifestation of the "Islamic Awakening" that Iran had long promoted. Iranian officials described the protests as a reflection of the people's desire for greater democracy, social justice, and economic opportunities, and portrayed them as a challenge to Western-backed autocracies in the region.

However, as the protests spread to Syria, Iran's position became more complicated. Syria is a key ally of Iran, and the Iranian government saw the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad as a threat to its regional interests. Iran provided significant military and economic support to the Assad regime, including weapons, training, and funding, and helped to organise and fund militias loyal to the government. This support has been instrumental in allowing Assad to maintain his grip on power, despite years of civil war and international pressure.

Iran's involvement in Syria has been driven by several factors. First, Syria is a critical node in Iran's strategic network, serving as a key transit point for weapons and personnel to reach Hezbollah in Lebanon, another key ally of Iran. Second, the fall of the Assad regime could potentially lead to the rise of a Sunni-dominated government, which could undermine Iran's influence in the region and threaten the security of its Shia allies. Finally, Iran views its support for the Assad regime as part of a broader struggle against the West and Israel and sees the Syrian conflict as an opportunity to assert its regional power and influence.

In addition to supporting the Assad regime, Iran has also sought to capitalise on the instability caused by the Arab Spring to expand its influence in the region. Iran has provided support to Shia communities in countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, and Yemen, and has sought to increase its influence in Lebanon through its support for Hezbollah. In some cases, Iran's support for these groups has exacerbated sectarian tensions and contributed to conflicts in the region.

Saudi Arabia

During the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia adopted a cautious and conservative approach, focusing on maintaining stability in the region and protecting its interests. It provided financial aid to countries like Bahrain and Yemen to quell protests and increased spending on social programs and infrastructure projects to appease its citizens. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy was heavily influenced by its rivalry with Iran, and it sought to counter Iran's influence by supporting friendly regimes and intervening in conflicts like Bahrain and Yemen. The country also worked to preserve the unity of the Gulf Cooperation Council and coordinate the policies of its member states to prevent any fractures in the bloc.

Saudi Arabia supported General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's coup against the democratically elected government in Egypt in 2013, viewing the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to its own stability. It provided Egypt with financial assistance to stabilise its economy and ensure its continued support for Saudi Arabia. In contrast, Saudi Arabia was critical of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom it saw as a key ally of Iran, and supported the opposition forces in their efforts to overthrow his government. The Saudi government was one of the main backers of the Syrian National Council and provided them with arms and financial support, while also supporting the establishment of a no-fly zone in Syria. Overall, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy during the Arab Spring was driven by its rivalry with Iran and its desire to maintain stability in the region, supporting friendly regimes, and toppling governments that it saw as a threat.

Gulf Cooperation Council(United Arab Emirates,Bahrain,Kuwait,Oman)

During the Arab Spring, the policies of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, excluding Qatar and Saudi Arabia, were largely focused on preserving the status quo and preventing any unrest or political change. For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait took measures to increase social spending and improve public services in an effort to prevent dissatisfaction and unrest among their populations. Oman also responded to the protests with some limited political reforms, such as granting more powers to the country's elected parliament. However, Bahrain's response was the most significant, with the government cracking down on protesters with force and using military intervention to quell the unrest. Overall, the GCC countries were generally cautious and defensive during the Arab Spring, seeking to avoid any instability that could threaten their power and security.

Egypt

During the Arab Spring, Egypt's foreign policy underwent significant changes under the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, who was elected in 2012 as the first democratically elected president of Egypt. Morsi's foreign policy focused on enhancing Egypt's regional and international standing, particularly through the promotion of democracy and human rights. Morsi sought to strengthen ties with other countries in the region, particularly with Turkey and Qatar, which shared his support for the Arab Spring uprisings and his opposition to authoritarian regimes. Morsi also sought to build stronger relationships with African and Asian countries, particularly those that had historically been neglected by Egypt's foreign policy. However, Morsi's presidency was cut short by a military coup in 2013, and his foreign policy was largely undone by his successor, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Under the presidency of el-Sisi, Egypt's foreign policy shifted back to a more traditional approach, with a focus on stability and security. El-Sisi sought to repair relationships with other Arab countries, particularly with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which had been strained under Morsi's presidency. El-Sisi also sought to strengthen ties with Russia, China, and other non-Western countries, in part to reduce Egypt's dependence on Western aid and influence. In addition, el-Sisi's foreign policy focused on countering terrorism and extremism, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula and other parts of the country. However, el-Sisi's approach to human rights and democracy has been criticised by many, with accusations of widespread human rights abuses, repression of opposition, and restrictions on freedom of expression and the press.

Tunisia

Tunisia's foreign policy during the Arab Spring was characterised by a focus on preserving its own stability and security while also supporting democratic movements in the region. Tunisia, as the birthplace of the Arab Spring, played an important role in shaping the events of the period, and its foreign policy reflected this leadership role. The country's main goal was to promote democratic values and human rights in the region, while also strengthening its economic and diplomatic ties with other countries.

During the Arab Spring, Tunisia took a number of steps to promote democratic values and support popular uprisings in other countries. The country provided support to opposition groups in Libya, and played a key role in negotiating the release of hostages in Syria. Tunisia also sought to promote economic growth and development in the region, including through the establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union, a regional trade bloc that includes Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. While Tunisia's foreign policy during the Arab Spring faced significant challenges and obstacles, including a difficult economic situation at home, the country emerged as a key leader in the region and a strong advocate for democratic values and human rights.

Qatar

During the Arab Spring, Qatar's foreign policy was marked by a number of significant diplomatic conflicts and alliances. One of the most notable of these was the ongoing conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which intensified during this period. Saudi Arabia viewed Qatar's support for the Arab Spring uprisings, particularly in Syria and Libya, as a threat to regional stability and its own interests in the region. This led to a significant cooling of relations between the two countries, with Saudi Arabia and its allies imposing a blockade on Qatar in 2017. Despite this, Qatar continued to pursue an independent foreign policy, and maintained its support for popular uprisings and democratic movements in the region.

In addition to its conflict with Saudi Arabia, Qatar also formed new alliances during the Arab Spring. One of the most significant of these was with Turkey, which shared Qatar's support for popular uprisings in the region and its opposition to the Assad regime in Syria. This led to a strengthening of economic, political, and military ties between the two countries, with Qatar providing financial support to Turkey during its economic crisis in 2018. Qatar also formed closer ties with Iran during this period, despite their differences over Syria and other issues. This led to a growing economic and political relationship between the two countries, with Qatar providing a lifeline to Iran during its isolation by the US and other countries. Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist organisation, also played a role in its foreign policy during the Arab Spring, with Qatar providing significant financial and political support to the group during this period. This led to tensions with other Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, which viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to their own regimes.

Questions to be Answered

The events of the Arab spring have put the political stability of the region in grave danger. This situation is not preferable neither by the regional powers or the local people. How will the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Conference act in order to restore peace and order in the region?

The current state of chaos in the region has affected many civilians and caused many sufferings. How will Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, one of its aims being "to ensure the well-being of Muslims",act upon this issue and provide humanitarian aid to the people in need?

The popular demand for reform and revolution by the people have been answered by strict governmental intervention by many authoritarian governments. This has resulted in severe human right abuses in the region. What will be the reaction of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation upon this horrible reality?

The ongoing conflicts in many countries have caused massive amounts of people to be displaced. What is the appropriate action upon this refugee problem that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation recommends?

Success of the Jasmine revolution encouraged many to organise similar protests in their countries. Will this popular call for reform spread to countries outside the Arab world?

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