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Arab World

# Order Prevails in the Arab World

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**Through butchery and sectarianism, the autocracies of the Arab world have survived this round. But in the long run, any order dependent on murder and bloodshed is doomed to collapse.**

Egyptian men take part in midday prayer during a demonstration in Tahrir Square on January 25, in Cairo, Egypt, the second anniversary of the overthrow of former President Hosni Mubarak's regime. Ed Giles / Getty

The beginning of this new year in the Arab region looks remarkably like that of past year. 2018 started with social turmoil and protests in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Sudan – even Iran seemed to catch up with the Arab upheaval. [1] [2] [3] [4] One year later, in this beginning of 2019, the social earthquake is still shaking an Arab region characterized by its high density of volcanoes, whether active exploding ones or dormant ones ready to erupt at any time.

Tunisia, the epicenter of the big earthquake that started on December 17, 2010 in the town of Sidi Bouzid in the country's impoverished center – the country that inaugurated the Arab Spring, the most exhilarating chapter of Arab modern history (until the next "spring") – is still going through one explosion after another. [5] [6] The most recent local uprising erupted in the town of Kasserine, in the country's same impoverished central region, and extended to other areas in the vicinity of the two major cities of Tunis and Sfax.

In Sudan, whose people joined the 2011 Arab Spring early on and were met by harsh repression from Omar al-Bashir's despotic regime, the popular movement has gone back on the offensive again and again, relentlessly. [7] Like a tempestuous sea whose gigantic waves are knocking at the walls of a huge prison, the people's movement is gathering momentum, strike after strike, until the day when the Sudanese Bastille will crumble – a day that will come inexorably despite all the efforts deployed by the Sudanese despot's "brothers" among the Gulf monarchs to rescue him.

The Arab Old Regime is now coming together again, and the region's counterrevolutionary forces are reuniting, overcoming the religious sectarian divisions that they exploited for a while in striving to push the Arab Spring off its course towards democracy and social equality into the filthy swamp of sectarian hatreds. How telling that the man who first reembraced Bashar al-Assad – the Syrian symbol of the despotic order that held out against the sweeping revolutionary wave that began in Tunisia eight years ago – is none other than the head of what is presently the weakest link of the chain of Arab regimes: Omar al-Bashir himself, who made a surprise visit to Damascus by the end of last year.

How telling likewise that one of the regimes leading the way in bringing the Syrian government back into the stinking fold of Arab despotic regimes – the fold from which Damascus was excluded temporarily, paradoxically due to the convergence of its own effort with that of its "brothers" in sinking the Syrian revolution in the murky waters of sectarianism – is none other than Bahrain's monarchy, the Syrian regime's counterrevolutionary lookalike. Both regimes, in Damascus and Manama, exploited sectarianism in consolidating their power, even though the elite's sect in one is the majority's sect in the other and vice-versa. Both the Syrian and the Bahraini regimes were rescued from the Arab uprising by foreign intervention, even though the latter was salvaged by the Saudi monarchy whereas the former was rescued by Iran's "mullarchy," the Saudis' sworn enemy, later joined by neo-tsarist Russia.

The Arab regimes are now busy restoring their broken links and preparing an Arab Summit of reconciliation. They are breathing deeply, trying to persuade themselves that the Arab revolution is dead and things are back to the normal

repressive order. [8] In so doing, they remind us of the eloquent words that the great revolutionary leader and thinker Rosa Luxemburg wrote at a time when Europe's reactionary regimes were breathing deeply, reassured by the failure of the revolutionary wave that had swept the continent in the aftermath of the First World War. [9] On January 14, 1919, the day before she was assassinated in Berlin by counterrevolutionary thugs a century ago, Rosa wrote those eloquent words: "â€œOrder prevails in Warsaw! â€œOrder prevails in Paris!â€œ Order prevails in Berlin!â€œ Every half-century that is what the bulletins from the guardians of â€œorderâ€œ proclaim from one center of the world-historic struggle to the next."

It is as if we are hearing today the echo of these jubilant bulletins from the guardians of Arab "order": "Order prevails in Manama!" "Order prevails in Damascus!" "Order prevails in Cairo!" And here comes Rosa's biting comment: "And the jubilant â€œvictorsâ€œ fail to notice that any â€œorderâ€œ that needs to be regularly maintained through bloody slaughter heads inexorably toward its historic destiny; its own demise." The Arab rulers likewise do not realize that their despotic "order" that needs to be maintained in permanence by way of murder and slaughter is doomed to collapse.

However hard they try to persuade themselves that their despotic "order" is back to normal, they won't be able to shut out the revolutionary din arising from Tunisia and Sudan today, Cairo and Damascus tomorrow. For what started in Tunisia eight years ago is indeed a long-term revolutionary process that won't stop while the Arab Old Regime is still standing up. In Tunisia or Sudan today, and in all the region's countries potentially, "the revolution is still in the square!" as the young Egyptian rebels used to chant before they were forced into temporary silence by brutal repression â€œ until the next explosion that will come inevitably.

Adapted from original Arabic published in Al-Quds al-Arabi.

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[1] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/07/morocco-rif-protests-censorship-monarchy>

[2] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/02/tunisia-next-revolution>

[3] <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/06/jordan-protests-middle-east-arab-spring-working-class/>

[4] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/01/iran-protests-hasan-rouhani-green-movement>

[5] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/02/tunisia-revolution-ben-ali-austerity>

[6] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/09/arab-spring-syria-egypt-war-imperialism-revolution>

[7] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/achchar-arab-spring-tunisia-egypt-isis-isis-assad-syria-revolution/>

[8] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/10/syria-assad-yemen-saudi-arabia-arab-spring/>

[9] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/rosa-luxemburg-paul-buhle-clr-james-reform-revolution-german-spd/>