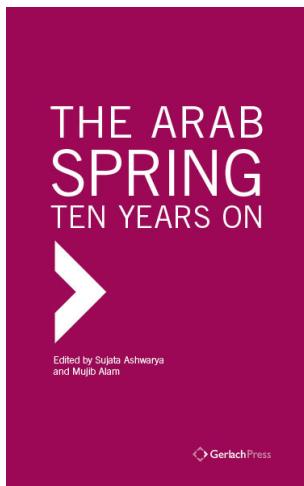


Sujata Ashwarya; Mujib Alam (eds.)

THE ARAB SPRING: TEN YEARS ON



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It has been a decade since people across the Arab world rose up in revolt against their governments in 2010/11, demanding political empowerment, social reform and economic improvement. Pro-democracy protests, as they were called in common parlance, which spread rapidly through the mobilisation of social media calls, ended up overthrowing long-standing authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya.

That gave rise to hope for a more representative future, as well as economic reforms, after decades of mismanagement and stagnation. However, such hopes were quickly dispelled, as the political vacuum created by the elimination of regional dictatorships deepened fractures in many of these societies along ethnic, religious and tribal fault lines.

As Islamists and secularists jockeyed for power, Egypt's brief alliance with democracy was halted by a neo-militarist, counter-revolutionary takeover. Tunisia is a notable exception, where both factions in political society have resolved to settle their differences through dialogue and set the tone for democratic politics, while the country is struggling with economic growth and transformation.

Very little if anything, has changed in Yemen, Libya and Syria, where long-drawn and bloody civil wars are raging. The monarchies of the Gulf have not been untouched, but remain markedly unchanged.

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About the Author(s)/Editor(s)

Sujata Ashwarya,
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Mujib Alam,
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi