
ARAB SPRING AND ITS ROLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP: AN ANALYSIS

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The academic scholarship on understanding Arab Spring and its role in constructing citizenship has been little. In this context, the paper will endeavor to study the Arab Spring in the light of its contribution to the civic empowerment of the Arab world. The argument is that one of the most effective ways to understand political contestation in the Middle East is through the lens of citizenship. Ultimately, politics revolves around the scope, nature, and depth of citizenship. This has become even more evident since citizenship rights have emerged as the primary concern in the region during the past three decades due to the enormous political expansion. A new social contract based on rights is the only way to fill the void left by the breakdown of the authoritarian bargaining contract. This paper will analyze how this Nahda (Renaissance) played its part in the debate of citizenship in the Arab world and how the debate of citizenship evolved during the Arab Spring and afterward. The paper has theoretically and analytically found that the Arab Spring was the immediate outcome of various factors particularly the long-overdue demand for citizenship rights in the contemporary political landscape.

Keywords: *Al-Nahda, Muwātana, 14th February Revolution, clientelism, authoritarianism, Jasmine Revolution.*

1. Introduction

The Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in December 2010 with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions across the Arab world. This event catalyzed nationwide protests in Tunisia, leading to the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. Inspired by Tunisia's success, similar movements erupted in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain, where citizens sought political reform, social justice, and economic opportunities (Anderson 2011: 2). In Egypt, mass protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square led to resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 after 30 years in power (Ottaway

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