



# Combating Terrorism Center at West Point



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## The 'Arab Spring': Investing in Durable Peace

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# The ‘Arab Spring’: Investing in Durable Peace

## Executive Summary

The United States has much to gain from the success of the ‘Arab Spring’ and much to lose if it fails. **Failing to engage the ‘Arab Spring’ at the appropriate level and invest in the youth-led movements at this critical juncture in the history of the Arab world, the United States risks positioning itself as a Moscow watching and lamenting the fall of the Berlin Wall.**

This new political era demands a holistic and empathetic approach to security. It requires investing in human capital and human security. Thus, patience and tenacity are imperative to addressing root causes, possible opportunities, identification of risks, and realistically achievable outcomes. For decades, the United States has been ill at ease with the **freedom deficit** in the Arab world and has struggled to address the **symptoms of this deficit**, most notably **the emergence of either sub-state (Hizbullah, Hamas) or global actors (al-Qa’ida)**. **The ‘Arab Spring’, however, is radically changing the landscape of activism and ideas. Far from calling for violent resistance or jihad, the new actors are weary of violence and are demanding nothing less than political reform enshrined in positive law.** In the long term, if successful, the ‘Arab Spring’ could lead to diminishing local support for sub-state and populist actors and to countering violent extremism by rendering the jihadist narrative obsolete. In the medium term, even if not all the countries that are undergoing unrest fully democratize, the likely potential for Egypt, Tunisia and perhaps even Libya to do so would constitute a critical mass in the Arab world and **the pendulum of change will have been put in motion.**

As the United States shapes its policies to assist countries going through unrest to transition into stable democracies, the **U.S. Army should play a key supporting role in this process to prevent conflict and enhance stability.** This should primarily be through **expanding its existing International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs and other assets aimed at investing in human capital and human security** to assist in the **professionalization of the armies in the region.**

This professional focus entails shifting the U.S. Army’s emphasis from kinetic to non-kinetic programs, while remaining **ready and effective across the entire spectrum of operations to meet unforeseen security threats.** Building military-military relations with the armies of countries undergoing transition is a powerful signal to the people in the region that the United States is supportive of their democratic aspirations and ready to partner with them.

### *Programs Supporting the Professionalization of Armies*

- **Increase support for IMET programs that bring Arab soldiers into prolonged contact with U.S. military culture and performance standards. These have arguably had a direct influence on the outcome of the ‘Arab Spring’.** For example, programs like those offered by the **Army War College** and **International Cadet Program** provide long cultural immersion for personnel of allied militaries and serve to build enduring relationships and mutual trust.

- Given that the ‘Arab Spring’ is predominantly a youth-led student movement, the U.S. Army should invest in pre-commissioning programs that further the awareness of its own personnel, developing their **cross cultural competence, to include language, and expanding the Army’s understanding of working** with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These programs provide direct cultural exchange at the student/youth level; as such, they would have both a direct effect on the segments of society that are producing agents of change as well as a long-term generational effect towards strengthening U.S. ties in the Arab world. Moreover, **other opportunities such as Olmsted Foundation scholarships would enhance educational and interpersonal exchanges at the mid-career level, as would Fulbright scholarships for Arab civilian scholars at U.S. Service Academies and Senior Service Colleges.**
- **The U.S. Army should extend military-military relationships to non-combat arms branches**, especially those that can achieve economies of scale for military investment such as TDY assignments for **Civil Affairs personnel or through a task force like that of CJTF HoA, which maintains a small footprint yet holds a great capacity for providing civil affairs support and kinetic support when needed.**
- The U.S. Army must continue to **develop and expand its Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) and be more creative in making effective use of them in non-combat zone situations.** HTTs have the necessary skills to understand the nuance, body language, and meta-messages unique to the culture/situation/individual that help facilitate productive engagements and help anticipate second and third-order effects of both non-kinetic and kinetic actions.
- In post-conflict situations, preparing to partner U.S. Army’s non-kinetic capabilities, such as **expeditionary economics** with local armies in support of local businesses, when or if appropriate. This could prevent the local economy from deteriorating and leading to additional internal conflicts.
- **The U.S. Army must be ready and effective across the entire spectrum of operations to meet unforeseen security threats.** Where conventional U.S. forces cannot or should not be deployed, **the U.S. Army must maintain both an intelligence infrastructure and Special Operation Forces (SOF) that are capable of prosecuting targets that represent a threat to U.S. interests.**
- When military action is required in the Arab world, the U.S. Army should act as part of a **multilateral coalition.** Not only would this ease the burden on our resources, but it would also divide the burden of responsibility and legitimacy of intervention on the shoulders of the international community as a whole.
- Further research is needed to **evaluate the types of IMET programs and other assets that contribute most to the professionalization of armies and increase support of such programs accordingly.**

# The ‘Arab Spring’: Investing in Durable Peace

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this White Paper is to offer a strategic analysis that could form the basis of the U.S. Army’s engagement strategy in response to the ‘Arab Spring.’ To help appreciate the complexities of the rapidly unfolding events and the type of engagement required, the strategic direction proposed is presented against the background of pre-Arab Spring U.S. policy and Army engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. The White Paper consists of four sections: **Section I** is an overview of the main developments in the countries at the center of the ‘Arab Spring’, namely, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria. It explains the different manifestations of the ‘Arab Spring’ in each of these countries, discusses their significance and identifies the importance of the U.S. Army’s role in influencing its counter-parts in the region through its education and training programs (primarily IMET). **Section II** examines the short-term challenges posed by the ‘Arab Spring’ and the long-term opportunities to which it could lead. Short-term challenges include concerns over how to limit the level of violence during the process of political transition and maintaining the stability of the new political order. Long-term opportunities include forging alliances with political actors who share our civil and political values, and countering violent extremism by rendering the jihadist narrative obsolete. **Section III** provides an overview of the U.S. Army’s engagement in the Middle East prior to the ‘Arab Spring,’ enumerating and assessing the value of existing IMET programs. This section highlights that the Arab countries that are highly represented in IMET programs have been the most stable, or have exhibited the most peaceful transitions from dictatorship during the ‘Arab Spring.’ **Section IV** outlines recommendations on how best the U.S. Army might adapt its engagement in the Middle East. It argues that the main effect the Army seeks is to both **prevent conflict and enhance stability** by focusing its efforts on the professionalization of armies in the region; this entails shifting its focus from kinetic to non-kinetic programs.

## I. The ‘Arab Spring’, Why it Matters and the Army’s Role

### WHAT IS THE ‘ARAB SPRING’?

‘I want to particularly say this to young people of every faith, in every country – you, more than anyone, have the ability to reimagine the world, to remake this world,’<sup>2</sup> said President Obama in his Cairo Speech in June 2009. In December 2010, young people in **Tunisia** decided not ‘to reimagine’ their world but to launch directly into ‘remaking’ it. They took to the streets demanding political change and, within a month, their unrelenting determination forced Zein al-‘Abidin bin ‘Ali, who had presided over Tunisia for longer than two decades, to yield to their demands, fleeing to Saudi Arabia. It is estimated that 219 people died during this period of unrest. An interim government of technocrats has been set up until the elections in July 2011. This historic event has been dubbed by the people of Tunisia as their ‘Jasmine Revolution’. It was not the outcome of a process of deliberation; rather, it was a spontaneous and collective act that began a day after Muhammad Bouazizi, a young vendor, set himself on fire outside his local municipal office when his fruit and vegetable cart was arbitrarily confiscated by the police.

Inspired by the Tunisian example and believing that political change is feasible through peaceful protest, people in **Egypt** took to the streets on January 25, 2011, demanding nothing less than the fall of the Mubarak regime. For almost three weeks, protesters persisted in their peaceful demonstrations despite the regime's various means of physical coercion and intimidation tactics. It is estimated that 846 people were killed and more than 6,400 injured during the unrest. Eventually, after three decades of presiding over Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, was forced to resign. The military has assumed charge of overseeing Egypt's transition until elections are held in September 2011, with Issam Sharaf, a former transport minister who showed solidarity with the protesters, appointed as caretaker prime minister.

Simultaneously, and with the same hopeful spirit and collective spontaneity, mass protests swept across different parts of the Arab world, taking different forms and varying levels of persistence. The month of January witnessed the beginning of mass peaceful protests in **Yemen**. A 'Day of Rage' was held on February 3 demanding the overthrow of 'Ali 'Abdallah Saleh's regime; it was followed by a series of intermittent demonstrations and on February 20, the parliamentary opposition joined the rank of the protestors. The unrest took an escalating turn when on March 18, people leaving Friday prayers in Sana'a were shot at by snipers believed by local residents to be police in plainclothes, killing more than 40 and injuring hundreds. When President Saleh, who has been in power since 1978, repeatedly failed to sign a deal brokered by Gulf states to hand over power to his deputy, violence escalated further. Hundreds of people have been reported killed since the beginning of the unrest. The youth-led protest took on a tribal significance when the powerful Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar joined the protestors. It was reported that fighters loyal to al-Ahmar were behind the attack on June 4 on the Presidential palace that left Saleh injured, seeking treatment in Saudi Arabia. On June 13, a reconciliation agreement between Vice President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi and the parliamentary opposition was reached, possibly averting a civil war.

In **Libya**, the 'Day of Rage' on February 17, 2011 saw demonstrations across different cities, quickly escalating into a bloody conflict. On February 28, government forces resorted to airstrikes against the protestors. In response, the UN passed Resolution 1973, imposing a 'no-fly zone' over Libya's airspace and authorizing 'all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory'.<sup>3</sup> On March 20, and under the UN mandate, the United States and European forces began a military air campaign against Libyan government targets and on March 31, NATO assumed full command of the military operation. A Provisional Transitional National Council has been set up and declared itself to be the legitimate government of Libya. Thus, what began as 'unrest' between 'protestors' and 'government forces' has now turned into a war between 'rebel forces' and 'Gadhafi loyalists.' At the time of writing this White Paper, Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gadhafi, who has been in power since 1969, is still holding on to his reign. It is estimated that several thousand people have been killed and thousands more injured. It is also estimated that 335,000 people, including foreign nationals, have fled Libya since the conflict started.

In February, unrest reached the island of **Bahrain** in which the Shi'ite majority is governed by the Sunni minority. Though demonstrators were predominantly Shi'ites, the focus of their protest

centered on lack of economic opportunity and political freedom, chanting the slogan 'No Sunni, No Shi'ite - Just Bahraini'. The unrest, however, has since assumed a sectarian dimension, with mounting accusations that the protestors are the proxies of Iran. When the concessions King Hamad initiated did not meet the demands of the demonstrators, he imposed a state of emergency and called on the assistance of Saudi and UAE forces to put an end to the protests. The measures adopted by the Bahraini government against the demonstrators have been condemned by the United States, with international rights groups accusing the Bahraini authorities of having 'detained more than 400 people - including human rights activists, doctors, bloggers and opposition supporters - since the unrest started.'<sup>4</sup>

In view of its history of repression, it is not surprising that protests in **Syria** took longer to erupt. It was in mid-March when people took to the streets in the city of Deraa, calling for political change. Foreign journalists have had either very limited or denied access altogether to the Syrian scene; not enough reliable information is available as to the true nature of the protest and the government's reprisal. The protests reached the cities of Homs, Baniyas, Rastan, Damascus and beyond, with the government accusing demonstrators of mounting an 'armed insurrection.' The regime is reported to have resorted to extreme measures of retaliation such as shelling residential areas and using snipers against protestors. In June, the official Syrian media reported that 'mutineers' were behind a 'mass grave' of security forces in the town of Jisr al-Shughur, justifying the army's takeover of the town. Many Syrians have since fled to Turkey and Lebanon, escaping what they describe as the brutality of the regime. Bashar al-Asad, who has presided over Syria since the death of his father Hafez in 2000, is refusing to yield to international pressure in his crack-down on the protestors. It is reported that Syrian unrest has resulted in more than 1,300 deaths to date.

While the intensity of the youth-led protests has been felt mostly in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria, **demands for political change are being voiced elsewhere in the Arab world. Protests have erupted in Oman, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and even in Saudi Arabia** where small demonstrations by the Shi'ite minority were organized to display solidarity with Bahrain. The entire Arab region is therefore facing unrest, some countries more than others. As Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton remarked, 'the region is being battered by a perfect storm of powerful trends', warning that 'leaders in the region may be able to hold back the tide for a little while, but not for long.'<sup>5</sup>

**The 'Arab Spring'** then consists of a combination of uprisings, revolutions, mass demonstrations and in some places (Libya) a civil war. In essence, it **represents a spontaneous and collective youth-led movement seeking to bring about a dream of political freedom to a region that has long been suppressed by authoritarian regimes.** In the words of President Obama (May 19, 2011), 'the nations of the Middle East and North Africa won their independence long ago, but in too many places their people did not.'<sup>6</sup> Yet, **the obstacles the protestors are facing are such that, without the support of the international community, their dream could turn into a nightmare.**

## **WHY THE ‘ARAB SPRING’ MATTERS?**

The unrest and uncertainties that characterize what has been termed as the ‘Arab Spring’ are clearly evident, but so are the long-term benefits these events could potentially yield if the protestors’ voices succeed in being translated into meaningful political change, by transitioning into a stable political process (Section II). **Failing to engage at the appropriate level and invest in the youth-led movements at this critical juncture in the history of the Arab world, the United States risks positioning itself as a Moscow watching and lamenting the fall of the Berlin Wall.**

The United States has much to gain from the success of the ‘Arab Spring’ and much to lose if it fails. For decades, the United States has worked on forging security between states in the region, with due attention and consideration to different geographic zones that are of concern to U.S. interests and to those of key partners in the region, namely, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Section II). But the United States has not been blind to the **freedom deficit** in the region and different administrations have repeatedly encouraged Arab leaders to pursue meaningful political reform. Some U.S. alliances with authoritarian regimes have led people in the region to assume wrongly that our interests are irreconcilable with their democratic aspirations. The consequences of partnering with authoritarian regimes that do not enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of their people have fueled resentment against the United States, emboldening our enemies and threatening our domestic security. Former President George W. Bush illustrated our dilemma in succinct terms when in 2003 he remarked that ‘sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe’.<sup>7</sup> More recently (February, 2011) and in a similar spirit, Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton urged leaders in the region to address the needs of their people ‘for their sake and for ours’; ‘the status quo’, she added, ‘is not sustainable’ and meeting the aspirations of the people ‘is not simply a matter of idealism. It is a strategic necessity.’<sup>8</sup>

**In view of the pro-democratic desires that are being voiced across different parts of the Arab world, the United States has a unique opportunity to begin forging relationships with allies who share our civil and political values:** commitment to the rule of law, accountable government, the right of assembly, association and free speech, and political contestation through the electoral process. As the United States shapes its policies to assist countries going through unrest to transition into stable democracies, the **U.S. Army should play a key supporting role in this process to prevent conflict and enhance stability.**

## **THE U.S. ARMY’S ROLE**

The institution of the Army in each of the countries undergoing unrest has conditioned the degree of turmoil that has resulted thus far. The role of the armies in Egypt and Tunisia was critical in guarding the people against what has been termed as the ‘thuggery’ of the police and security forces. General Rashid Ammar of Tunisia took an admirable stance when he assured the Tunisian people that ‘our revolution is your revolution’; it is believed that it was because he refused to give orders to fire against the protestors, Bin ‘Ali realized that his time was up. Similarly in Egypt, the army refused to do the bidding of the Mubarak regime.

Though Egypt and Tunisia may so far be considered as the success stories in this political transition largely thanks to the stabilizing role their respective armies played, serious concerns have been raised as to alleged infringements of people's civil rights by their armies since Mubarak and Bin 'Ali were deposed. There are doubts as to whether the Tunisian army will continue to allow people to demonstrate peacefully if their demands are not met. In Egypt, as the Department of State highlighted, there are reports that 'dozens of people are in prison after being arrested at or near the site of peaceful protests,' and that 'military courts have tried protestors in proceedings that have sometimes taken less than an hour, with limited or no access to counsel.'<sup>9</sup>

**The U.S. Army has a key non-kinetic role to play in the political transition of these countries and in the future of the Arab region to reinforce U.S. policies.** Through our military-military relationships, we could influence our counterparts, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, with whom we already have a solid relationship. The unfolding events necessitate that the Army's role be utilized not through boots on the ground but through influencing our counterparts in the region either through existing military-military relationships or through forging new ones where such relationships are weak or non-existent.

The U.S. Army's assets and capabilities in the region are extensive in some countries but more limited in others. As discussed in Section III, **the Army should expand its existing International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs to make visible our non-kinetic engagement and investment, thereby credibly signaling to the people of the region our serious interest in their successful transition towards a brighter and prosperous future.**

## II. Challenges and Opportunities

### CHALLENGES

The rapidly unfolding events of the past six months present both the countries undergoing unrest and the United States with short-term challenges and long-term opportunities. Notwithstanding the basic and rightful demands that embody the spirit of the 'Arab Spring', **the very spontaneous nature of this historic event means that the new political voices are not based on careful deliberations nor have the new actors had the time to organize politically or to articulate or agree on a road map for their future.** In the words of President Obama, 'it will be years before this story reaches its end. Along the way, there will be good days and bad days.'<sup>10</sup> It is for these reasons and more that the U.S. government is keen to devise policies that would prevent the emergence of an outcome that neither represents the aspirations of the people nor protect U.S. interests. Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton articulated this concern when she remarked that 'there are risks with transition to democracy. It can be chaotic. It can cause short-term instability. Even worse – and we have seen it before – the transition can backslide into just another authoritarian regime. Revolutions have overthrown dictators in the name of democracy only to see the political process hijacked by new autocrats who use violence, deception and rigged elections....'<sup>11</sup>



**The short-term challenges presented by the ‘Arab Spring’ are of two kinds. The first requires limiting the level of violence and other coercive means aimed at the general public, political activists and opposition leaders during the transition into a new political order. The second involves the necessity to ensure the durability and effectiveness of the new governments/political orders once they are in place.** Clearly, these challenges have a direct impact on the countries undergoing political change; but they also pose a set of challenges to the United States as to the kind of intervention, if any, is required. Should an intervention become imperative in the case of rapid de-stabilization (e.g., Libya), domestic and/or international resistance may lead to varying levels of pressure on the United States.

### *Challenges Associated with the Process of Transition*

Transitions in political power are invariably accompanied by some level of violence, unless they are pacted by virtue of a consensus between a substantial segment of the political, economic and military elites. This is especially true when the transition is from an authoritarian regime into a pluralistic political system. Authoritarian regimes that seek to resist change can resort to a plethora of mechanisms of intimidation and coercion to control their populace and preserve their regimes when they deem them to be threatened. Indeed, recent events in Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, and to a lesser extent in Egypt, represent clear examples that authoritarian regimes will rarely disappear without putting up a fight.

When this happens, the level of violence is largely dependent on the military capabilities of the opposition. In cases when the opposition has substantial military capabilities, there is a greater chance that the escalation in the violence of the regime could lead to a civil war, and potentially mass atrocities. Based on the violent dynamic between the regimes and the opposition, a civil war is already in progress in Libya and another is looming in Yemen. However, when opposition forces do not enjoy meaningful military capabilities, the regime’s use of violence will lead either to a backlash and expansion of spontaneous mass protests, as in the case of Syria to date, or eventually to the decline of the political protest, as was the case with Iran following the 2009 elections.

The dynamics that condition the level of violence present the United States and the broader international community with a delicate situation as to the kind of intervention that is effective and lawful under international law. With respect to regimes that are traditionally more hostile and less dependent on Western influence (Syria, Libya), some level of kinetic intervention may prove to be necessary. As we discuss in Section (IV), we believe that kinetic interventions are more constructive when they are conducted under the multilateral umbrella of the United Nations. This should be followed by adequate non-kinetic programs to ensure that the transition is not hijacked by sub-state actors. But when the regimes are traditional allies and dependent on Western support and legitimacy, as in the cases of Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain, then diplomatic, economic, political and military-military pressure could constitute an effective intervention.

**The role of sub-state actors during these transitions is difficult to predict. These have traditionally included leftwing, nationalist and religious groups (or some combination of the three) and they have for long dominated the political scene of the Arab world. The first**

challenge in this context is assessing the role of some sub-state actors, whether parties, social movements or violent groups, towards the political transition. The new actors behind the ‘Arab Spring’ are unknown quantities and their links, if any, to existing sub-state actors cannot be ascertained. In Libya, after almost four months of fighting, it is still unclear whether some of the groups involved in the struggle against Gadhafi’s regime are genuinely interested in establishing an open and pluralistic political system. To a lesser extent, the same doubt may be raised with respect to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt. The MB is one of multiple groups that will be running for elections in September; it is important to consider its commitment to a pluralist regime because it enjoys a longer history (since 1928) than all the political actors on the current Egyptian scene and may stand to gain electorally more than others. In Syria, the situation is even more uncertain; little is known about the political vision guiding the protestors and their leaders.

All these examples show that the formulation of a response to the involvement of different sub-state actors requires a concentrated effort to understand their political tendencies and long-term objectives. This would enable us to appreciate which sub-state actors represent an asset to the democratization process and which ones might pose a threat. The fall of the Shah’s regime in **Iran** exemplified the peril of how the desire for political reform by the people may be manipulated and hijacked by a highly organized and determined radical group in order to promote a ‘new’ oppressive political order. Hence, **while democratization has the potential to undermine the position of (existing) radical sub-state actors as the only viable alternative to the authoritarian regime, at the same time the volatile nature of ‘transitional’ periods also provides a conducive environment for radical sub-state groups (new or old) to mobilize support.** Under such conditions, radical sub-state groups could enhance their political influence and, once in power, institute new oppressive mechanisms.

#### *Challenges Associated with the Consolidation of a New Political Order*

There is a wide gap between the **formation of ‘democratic’ institutions** and the consolidation of a stable democratic political system. The latter demands not only **the existence of political structures premised on processes compatible with democratic liberal principles**, but also on a **political culture reflected in an ongoing commitment** to these principles and **to free and fair political competition**. Both conditions **are lacking in the context of the ‘Arab Spring’**; this is not to suggest that they will not develop but simply to warn that the formulation of a democratic political culture is usually a product of long term political, social and economic processes.

At the heart of building and sustaining democratic institutions is the extent to which the political elites are committed to the democratic idea; their support is essential for a successful transition to a democratic form of government. While most segments of the elites (military, political and economic) in Egypt and Tunisia appear interested in promoting a democratic and open political system, the same is not as clear with respect to Yemen, Syria, Libya and Bahrain. Adopting an open system of government entails allowing political rivals the freedom to pursue their political agendas, including challenging the new elites/governments. Considering that some of the challengers of the new regimes could be groups loyal to the old elites/regimes, it is not unreasonable to question whether we can expect the new rulers to remain loyal and committed to open and free political competition; will they resist the temptation to resort to the practices of

their predecessors? This is especially true in a region where violence and oppression have always been considered a significant tool in the arsenal of political leaders. These challenges are in no way unique to the Arab world. The example of Eastern Europe is a case in point, as some of the new elected rulers during the transition to democracy in the late 1980s and 1990s eventually reintroduced many of the oppressive and undemocratic practices which were utilized by their communist predecessors during Soviet hegemony.

Another concern facing the consolidation of the political regimes relates to legitimacy. New political regimes are inherently vulnerable in terms of legitimacy. One of the main challenges of the new Arab regimes (in Egypt and Tunisia so far) will be **how to manage people's high expectations**. This refers to expectations for dramatic changes in law and order practices, expansion of political freedom and civil liberties, as well as economic reforms to provide more space for private initiatives. The inability of the new regime to provide these could lead to a dramatic decline in its legitimacy, which could be utilized by loyalists to the previous regime, or actors interested in undermining the 'democratic' alternative. To tackle this challenge, the international community needs to engage not just in intensive (but limited footprints) economic assistance and political support but also in guiding the regimes to construct effective channels of communication with the populace in order to convey the necessity for patience and that progress will be gradual. Another related obstacle is associated with the sensitive interaction between the governmental bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies with the civilian population. While restructuring the legislative framework to promote democratic practices is a relatively easy task, **instilling new norms and practices among governmental agencies is challenging and could potentially undermine the attempts of the new regime to convey the message of a 'new era' to the people**.

An additional challenge facing transitioning countries in the Arab world concerns regional interests. The transition of some Middle Eastern countries to a more open and democratic form of government could potentially heighten the tension in the region on two levels: first, in relation to countries which will view the 'new democracies' as another mechanism utilized by Western powers to enhance their influence in the region, as well as a direct threat to their values (and the traditional order). For example, will Saudi Arabia attempt to undermine the stability of the new regimes as a result of perceived threats to the stability of its own? Some analysts have suggested that its intervention in Bahrain can be explained along these considerations.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

**While the road to a stable and durable democracy is undoubtedly a long one, the long-term opportunities the 'Arab Spring' foreshadows are worth the United States' investment.** These opportunities are of two types: the first relates to how the United States could restructure its policies towards the region, using the 'Arab Spring' to diminish the gap between our commitment to democratic values on the declarative level and the realpolitik approach on the practical level; the second pertains to **addressing the root causes of problems that have long troubled the Arab region and threatened our own domestic security**.

## U.S. Policies

Following the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, the United States was able to expand its influence over Arab countries which were previously under the Soviet political umbrella. Rarely, however, have the relations we forged been based on shared political norms and values. Rather, U.S. policies in the region consist of several policy ‘zones’ of engagement. These zones represent the regional states in the orbit of key U.S. allies, namely Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey and Egypt. For example, Saudi Arabia has contentious relations with Iran which it views through the prism of a Sunni-Shia contest. This power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran manifests itself in several countries in the region; e.g., in Lebanon (by influencing different factions in Lebanese politics) and more recently in Bahrain (by sending troops at the request of the Bahraini government to quell the protestors calling for civil rights). Similarly, conflict and distrust between Israel and Iran and between Israel and Syria have also been acted upon in different regional zones (e.g., 2006 Lebanon war; Gaza 2009) where Hizbullah and Hamas are perceived to be the proxies of Iran & Syria.

**These complex interactions between our key allies in the region have made blanket policies impossible and explain seemingly inconsistent U.S. policies.** The United States has thus been juggling and balancing its political norms and values to accommodate the interests of its key allies in the region. In essence then, U.S. policies in the region are based on shared interests, cooperation, and political and economic tradeoffs with exclusive elites in their respective countries, whether these elites are monarchs and their associates in the financial establishment (Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco) or the military/security establishment (Egypt and Turkey). The standing of these elites does not stem from popular support but from the authoritarian political systems they maintain.

This case-by-case basis of U.S. policies has fostered cries of ‘double standard’. Thus, it is not surprising that many of the civil society groups, opposition political parties and social movements in the Arab world have perceived the United States as a collaborator in the oppressive mechanisms they experience and therefore hold that the United States is not genuinely committed to promoting universal human rights and civil liberties. In addition to being perceived as the supporter of undemocratic regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the United States’ stance in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also frequently cited as yet another illustration of ‘American hypocrisy’. Many in the Arab world have difficulty comprehending how the leader of the free world is willing to tolerate the ongoing military occupation of more than three million Palestinians— lacking any significant basic political or civil rights – by its closest ally in the region.

**The U.S. policies in the region have then suffered from a deficiency of credibility. In addition to juggling the interests of U.S. key allies in their regional zones of interest,** this deficiency is also the result of the U.S. concern over the stability of pro-American regimes in the region. Thus, for years the United States has been perceived to have pursued policies that called for stabilizing authoritarian pro-American regimes at the expense of pushing regimes to respond to their populations’ basic political and human rights. This perception created a false dichotomy that it was ‘either stability or democracy’ but not both. A more democratic regime in Egypt, the

argument unfolded, would propel into power a group such as the Muslim Brotherhood which would be less disposed to follow U.S. interests.

Few states abandon realpolitik for moral principles, but when a state's interests and values are understood as one and the same, the perception of policy inconsistencies diminishes. **If the United States adheres to its overarching strategy of supporting democratic movements and explains that democratic growth is a strategic imperative, the inconsistency gap will diminish and the credibility of the U.S. commitment to democratic values and practices will increase in the eyes of Arabs calling for political change.** In the words of President Obama, 'the region will be watching carefully to make sure we're on the right side of history.'<sup>12</sup> As Michael Singh of the Washington Institute contends, President Obama 'can assert that our democratic values and our interest in stability are not in conflict, but mutually reinforcing over the long-term.' The pro-democracy calls that are being voiced as part of the 'Arab Spring' present the United States with a unique opportunity to restructure its policies in the region and clearly and visibly invest in the new democratic actors that will shape the region for years to come.

At this critical juncture in the history of the region, the United States should not be looking for immediate dividends. Who would have thought at the end of World War II that sixty-six years later the U.S. Secretary of State would be singing the praises of the Euro-Atlantic community in Munich as an example of the kind of durable alliance the West must forge with the countries of the Arab world. 'The alliance of the Euro-Atlantic community has stood the test of time', Secretary Clinton remarked. This formidable alliance did not happen overnight; indeed, it took significant political and economic investment on the part of the United States that helped Europe emerge out of the abyss that was WWII and democratize. 'Democracies with vibrant and truly representative institutions', as Secretary Clinton added, 'resolve differences not in the streets, but in city halls and parliament buildings.'<sup>13</sup> There is an extensive academic literature that supports Secretary Clinton's assertion and it deals with what is termed as 'democratic peace theory'. This literature argues that **consolidated democracies are less inclined to engage in full scale war to solve bilateral conflicts with each other**; this is 'one of the strongest nontrivial and non-tautological generalizations that can be made about international relations'.<sup>14</sup> The nature of the democratic form of government, based on the power of the people, demands greater accountability, responsibility and **long term vision** from the political leadership as the transition will be challenging and possibly dangerous. In turn, all these factors usually translate into a more calculated response to internal and bilateral conflicts.

In the medium term, even if not all the countries that are undergoing unrest fully democratize, the likely potential for Egypt, Tunisia and perhaps soon Libya to do so will form a critical mass for change in the Arab world. In other words, **even if not all current 'battles' are 'won', the pendulum of change will have been put in motion.** Further, the formation of a 'democratic' coalition in the region could lower the tendency of countries to see a violent solution as the preferable or only viable option for solving bilateral or internal conflicts. As Sean M. Lynn-Jones notes, 'if the number of democracies in the international system continues to grow, the number of potential conflicts that might escalate to war will diminish.'<sup>15</sup>

## Addressing Root Causes

For a long time, the United States has known that the troubles, especially terrorism, that have plagued the Arab world, and which have also threatened U.S. domestic security, will not be resolved without addressing the **root causes** driving them. It is not simply because of U.S. emphasis on stability over political reforms that it did not seek to address these root causes, but also because their most assertive symptoms **manifested themselves in the emergence of either sub-state (Hizbullah, Hamas) or global actors (al-Qa'ida) whose ideologies and programs neither promised stability nor articulated political values the United States could stand for.** Rightly or wrongly, these actors have narrowed U.S. past approaches to the region, thereby reducing our thinking to binary dyads, such as 'we-they', 'us-them', 'peacekeeping-counterterrorism', and 'military-non-military'. The actors driving the **'Arab Spring'**, however, **represent a manifestation of root causes with which the United States can engage because they are peaceful and are expressing political aspirations the United States cherishes. The 'Arab Spring' therefore is yet another opportunity that allows the United States to address root causes not by imposing American values on the region but by responding to local demands that are organic to Arab societies. In doing so, the United States would become a genuine partner with new democratic actors; indeed, it would be inexcusable if we fail to do so.**

**Political dignity and human security** lie at the heart of the root causes from which the Arab world suffers. The authoritarian regimes in the region have denied both dignity and human security to their populace and on the basis of which they are losing their legitimacy. Understanding security from the individual's point of view opens up the security aperture in important ways. And as we have witnessed in our increasing global world, these insecurities frequently have diffuse global effects, such as migrations, reverberations in Diaspora communities, environmental impacts, and even the exportation of terrorism.<sup>16</sup> **The human security perspective should remind strategists that they must approach issues holistically and empathetically; this painstaking analysis, patience, and tenacity is imperative to develop an understanding of the problem, possible opportunities, identification of risks, and realistic, achievable outcomes.**

From this holistic perspective, the new understanding of **stability** the United States should look for is one that Ralf Dahrendorf explains as the **sum of two key components: effectiveness and legitimacy.** 'Effectiveness', he explains, 'is a technical concept. It simply means that governments have to be able to do things which they claim they can do...they have to work. Legitimacy, on the other hand, is a moral concept. It means that what governments do have to be right....A government is legitimate if what it does is right both in the sense of complying with certain fundamental principles, and in that of being in line with prevailing cultural values.'<sup>17</sup>

**One of the extreme and destructive ways the denial of political dignity and human security manifested themselves in the Arab world was through the rise of al-Qa'ida and other jihadist groups.** The jihadist phenomenon has plagued people in the Arab world long before 9/11 (or even 1998 against U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar al-Salam). Among their victims were religious scholars, such as Muhammad al-Dhahabi, the Egyptian Minister of Waqf

(Religious Endowment), who was assassinated in 1977 or Muhammad al-Misri the Director of Waqf in Aleppo, in 1979, and thousands of Muslim and non-Muslim civilians as a result of the jihadists' indiscriminate attacks. For decades, these groups have argued that it is jihad and not democracy that is the solution to uprooting their dictators and bringing about genuine change in the Arab world. Usama Bin Ladin famously put it that democracy is for 'the white race only,' the rest of the world has to suffer the United States' 'monstrous, destructive policies and governments,' otherwise known as 'friends of America.'<sup>18</sup> To gain credibility in the eyes of Muslims, jihadists have selectively appropriated Islamic teachings of social justice to justify their militancy and to reject the legitimacy of positive law and the democratic process.

For decades, **the United States has struggled and indeed failed to counter effectively the jihadist narrative. That is because the United States has been committed to democratic principles that were impossible to translate in reality in view of our key allies' resistance to political reform, while the jihadists articulated real grievances and championed principles of social justice that they were never expected to deliver.** Now, the drivers of the 'Arab Spring' are radically changing the landscape of activism and ideas. Far from calling for jihad, the new players are weary of violence and are demanding nothing less than political reform enshrined in positive law. The jihadist narrative clearly enjoyed greater credibility under authoritarian regimes since the jihadists could claim that jihad is the only path to ousting their autocratic rulers. Now that these authoritarian regimes are falling, not through jihad but through peaceful protest, the jihadist narrative is struggling to redefine its role. In some respects, this is similar to the case of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain. Spain's continuing adherence to democratic principles allowed it to contain and marginalize ETA, while furthering the state's legitimacy.<sup>19</sup>

The 'Arab Spring' caught the jihadists off-guard: the fall of the dictators is the very dream that set them on the path of jihad; yet they are not active players in the realization of this dream, nor can they be, as long as they stick to their jihadist principles of calling for jihad and rejecting positive law. If successful, the 'Arab Spring' is sure to make the jihadist narrative obsolete since it would cease to speak to people's genuine grievances. **In short, the success of the 'Arab Spring' would amount to countering violent extremism.**

### **III. U.S. Army Engagement in the Middle East before the Arab Spring**

The U.S. Army has an extensive network of contacts in the region, established largely based on pre-Arab Spring assumptions of security concerns and regime stability. Those networks remain in place to varying degrees, but the events of the past six months necessitate that we make effective use of them. While further research is required as to the content and quality of the courses undertaken by military personnel, given the professionalism the Egyptian and Tunisian armies displayed during the 'Arab Spring', an initial assessment suggests that **IMET programs have proven to be our most valuable asset in recent months.** To adapt its role to meet the unfolding new realities of the Arab Spring and to support the U.S. policy direction in the region as articulated by President Obama and Secretary Clinton, the Army's IMET programs must enjoy more visibility and should be expanded to build trust with the new political actors. In this section, we outline the balance of U.S. military programs in the region, the number of personnel

participating in U.S.-run military education programs, followed by an assessment of the data. We also include education programs aimed at developing U.S. military personnel's language and cultural expertise.

### **BALANCE OF U.S. MILITARY PROGRAMS**

No single measure can give an accurate comparison of the relative weights of Army programs in the Middle East prior to 2011. The data below compare U.S. spending on various programs, foreign spending on those programs and number of people involved. Table 1 compares major funding categories for U.S. Foreign Aid to select recipient countries. Iraq is not included because the nature of program funding differs from that in other countries, essentially because U.S. combat units continue to be deployed there. These numbers also do not include programs paid for by the recipient country, primarily in the Persian Gulf. Most of the programs considered are joint, often run through 'Land Forces' directorates overseas, which are not exclusively Army-run. In many cases, funding comes through the Department of State.

The clear conclusion from Table 1 is that investment in equipment-oriented programs (primarily FMF) far outweighed that dedicated to training and education (primarily IMET); indeed, **IMET funding accounts for less than 1% of total aid**. As discussed below, **training and education, particularly programs that bring Arab soldiers into prolonged contact with U.S. military culture and performance standards, were, arguably, greatly influential on the outcome of the 'Arab Spring'**. During a recent visit to West Point in Spring 2011, General Ward, former AFRICOM Commander, emphasized the value of establishing good military-military relations. He remarked that militaries with established ties to the U.S. military were more professional in their response towards societal unrest as compared to those who lacked these ties and whose response was often brutal. The impact of military materiel sales which make up the bulk of U.S. military aid, however, is less clear in the long term. Most of the equipment cannot (or certainly should not) be directly used in dealing with the uprisings. At best, this would taint the credibility of the President's Middle East and North Africa policy as articulated in his May 19 speech; at worst, it will be exploited for anti-U.S. propaganda by extremist groups in the region and by al-Qa'ida.



**Table 1 - U.S. Foreign Aid Programs to Middle Eastern Countries, FY 2011 Request****(in million \$US)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>FMF</b>	<b>IMET</b>	<b>ESF</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Israel</i>	3,000.00			25.00	3,025.00
<i>Egypt</i>	1,300.00	1.40	250.00	6.60	1,558.00
<i>Jordan</i>	300.00	3.70	360.00	19.00	682.70
<i>Lebanon</i>	100.00	2.50	109.00	34.80	246.30
<i>Yemen</i>	35.00	1.10	34.00	36.50	106.60
<i>Morocco</i>	9.00	1.90	3.00	28.60	42.50
<i>Bahrain</i>	19.50	0.70	-	1.50	21.70
<i>Oman</i>	13.00	1.60	-	1.50	16.10
<i>Tunisia</i>	4.90	2.30	-		7.20
<i>Algeria</i>	-	0.90	-	1.70	2.60
<i>Libya</i>	0.25	0.35	-	0.28	0.88
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	-	0.01	-	0.36	0.37
<i>UAE</i>	-	0.01	-	0.23	0.24
<i>Kuwait</i>	-	0.10	-	-	0.10
<i>Qatar</i>	-	0.10	-	-	0.10
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,781.65	16.67	756.00	156.07	5,710.39
<b>TOTAL (%)</b>	83.74 %	0.29 %	13.24 %	2.73 %	

\*Source: Congressional Research Service, 2010

**Abbreviations:** FMF – Foreign Military Financing, IMET – International Military Education and Training, ESF – Economic Support Fund; Other – includes Counter-terrorism, 1206 funds, Development Assistance

**Table 2 – Participation by Middle Eastern military personnel in U.S. military courses in FY2009**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Value (Thousands U.S.)</b>
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	1,392	56,795
<i>Jordan</i>	708	7,528
<i>Egypt</i>	658	12,439
<i>Israel</i>	650	1,788
<i>UAE</i>	628	21,652
<i>Lebanon</i>	599	6,574
<i>Yemen</i>	424	2,063
<i>Kuwait</i>	309	12,025
<i>Bahrain</i>	299	7,282
<i>Morocco</i>	294	3,846
<i>Qatar</i>	266	5,678
<i>Iraq</i>	225	2,977
<i>Oman</i>	196	2,764
<i>Tunisia</i>	100	2,640
<i>Algeria</i>	61	1,969
<i>PA</i>	21	278
<i>Libya</i>	2	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	6,832	148,327

\*Source: U.S. Department of State, Foreign Military Training and Engagement Activities of Interest 2009-2010

**Table 3 – Military Academy International (4-year) Cadets Admitted from Mid-East Countries**

<b>Country</b>	<b>West Point International Cadets (Admitted between 2000-2010)</b>
<i>Tunisia</i>	5
<i>Jordan</i>	5
<i>Egypt</i>	1
<i>Iraq</i>	1
<i>Kuwait</i>	1
<i>Lebanon</i>	1
<i>Qatar</i>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	15

**Table 4 – Mid-East Participants in Army War College FY2011**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Participants in Army War College</b>
<i>Jordan</i>	1
<i>Egypt</i>	1
<i>Israel</i>	1
<i>UAE</i>	1
<i>Lebanon</i>	1
<i>Yemen</i>	1
<i>Bahrain</i>	1
<i>Morocco</i>	1
<i>Qatar</i>	1
<i>Iraq</i>	1
<i>Algeria</i>	1

**IN-DEPTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Tables 2, 3 and 4 expand on the comparison laid out in Table 1 and examine the total number of military personnel participating in U.S.-run military education and the total value of the programs. The content of these courses ranged from ones that were technically oriented to others that dealt with issues of law, administration and management. The value of these courses is not just the content they conveyed, but even more importantly, the professional and personal interactions among U.S. and non-U.S. military personnel as a result of this socialization. The

enduring relationships and mutual trust as well as the sharing of professional values, norms, and behaviors are significant outcomes.

Quantitative measures do not reflect the real value of education programs. Rather, **education programs often translate in actions and behaviors, rarely recorded in the annals of history, but rooted in values, norms and practices that are formed over years of in-depth education and character building.** Looking at our own cadet education at West Point, we are cognizant that the education we provide the future leaders of our nation is not just measured by winning wars but also by securing the peace; it is not just measured in training cadets to command the use of weaponry when they are in battles, but even more importantly in the ethical values that are inculcated in their minds and hearts about what constitutes just wars and the lawful conduct of soldiers during war. As BG George ‘Abe’ Lincoln profoundly remarked, **‘only the engraving on the character and competence of our cadets and our young officers counts towards fulfillment of our mission.’**<sup>20</sup>

It is sharing this character building spirit that forms the basis of the Army’s education programs with other armies, including those in the Arab world. In this respect, the Army has several important education programs that are designed to have a deep and lasting impact on current and future senior military leaders. For example, the **Army War College provides a year-long cultural immersion for senior leaders of allied militaries and serves to build strong relationships between future key leaders of the United States and allied Armies.** The **International Cadet Program** at the Service Academies is another program that aims to have a profound competence and character-building impact on military leadership in allied nations. These cadets participate in all aspects of the normal cadet program, are held to the same standards as U.S. cadets, but return to serve in their national militaries. Past graduates often hold the highest positions in their national militaries; some have gone on to become presidents. As one example, General (later elected President) Fidel Ramos of the Philippines was a 1950 graduate of this program and played the key role in the removal of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and in the installation of President Corazon Aquino in 1986. General Ramos is perhaps the best example of the type of influence the U.S. military seeks in shaping relations with the Arab states.

Given the depth of **the International Cadet Program**, the level of cultural immersion, and the very competitive admissions process, this program **offers arguably the best avenue to shape future military leadership in the region.** A total of 60 cadets from foreign militaries are present at West Point for the full four-year degree program. This averages to 15 admissions per class year. Considering the long duration of the program and relatively small number of slots available, Table 3 above offers a long-term view, showing the number of cadets from Middle East countries over the 2000-2010. While it is difficult to ascertain at this stage the direct effects of this program on the ‘Arab Spring’, it is worth highlighting that **the Arab countries represented in this program have been the most stable, or have exhibited the most peaceful transitions from dictatorship during the Arab Spring.**

## **‘IMMEASURABLE VALUES’: IMET PROGRAMS IN PERSPECTIVE**

### *Arab Military Personnel Studying in the United States*

A comparison between two of the most encouraging countries in the ‘Arab Spring’—Egypt and Tunisia—helps illustrate the importance and possible impact of U.S. military education programs on the ‘Arab Spring’. The scope of interactions is vastly different, with total aid to Tunisia at less than 1% of that to Egypt, yet both armies rely almost entirely on U.S. support and both played a key, if not decisive role, in the peaceful outcome of the uprisings in their countries.

#### *Egypt*

U.S. military support to **Egypt** provides a useful example of pre-revolution priorities. In FY2010, Egypt received \$1.56 billion in aid, of which \$1.3 billion came in the form of Foreign Military Financing (FMF). About 30% of that amount went toward new equipment purchases, the remaining two-thirds to upgrades and maintenance of existing equipment, to include equipment training. By contrast, **only \$1.4 million went to International Military Education and Training programs, slightly over a tenth of a percent by comparison. Nevertheless, these military training programs afforded significant opportunities to influence the Egyptian military.** In 2009, 658 Egyptian personnel participated in U.S. military courses, to a total value of over \$12 million, funded by both FMF and IMET funds.

The value of many training programs goes well beyond the technical skills imparted. While the majority of the 658 students were in technical or mechanical fields, 173 were English language training programs in the United States and in Egypt, which include a strong cultural component and formalized orientation to American society. For example, the course to train English language instructors who hold positions of great respect in the Egyptian Ministry of Defense system and will play a significant role in shaping future officers, costs approximately \$15,000 and allows the Egyptian officer to live in the U.S. for 3-4 months. An additional 85 students attended Army Captains Career Courses, primarily for the Infantry, Military Intelligence, Engineer and Aviation branches. **These courses not only include a strong foundation in Military Law, Ethics and cross-cultural communication throughout their activities, they also serve as important social networking hubs for developing long-term personal relationships.** While these represent a tiny portion of the total Egyptian military student population, their newly acquired skills will be of tremendous value in the period of government transition.

In Egypt, as in many countries, officers chosen to attend U.S. schools are usually those with the strongest potential for senior leadership, and indeed, a diploma from Fort Leavenworth or Fort Benning is a sign of prestige in Egypt. On a less direct level, it is reasonable to assume that the continuing relationship of U.S. and Egyptian military leaders provided an important stabilizing influence. For example, **when the January 2011 protests broke out, the Egyptian Chief of Staff and his senior staff members were in Washington, D.C. attending a conference with the U.S. military. During the visit and after their return to Egypt, civilian and military diplomats kept in constant contact with senior Egyptian leaders, urging the Army to exercise restraint. These lines of communication, which are strong in an allied country like**

## **Egypt, but weak in Syria or Libya, are built on years of personal interaction between leaders.**

In viewing the impact of military aid on the Egyptian revolution, the value of education programs is unquestionable and immeasurable. Possession of heavy weapons like AH-64 attack helicopters and M1A1 tanks and the ability to employ them played little direct role. The professionalism of the Egyptian army played the decisive factor in the resolution of the uprising. Called in to replace a discredited and largely undisciplined police force, the military prevented a complete dissolution of security. In the words of Nabil Fahmy, former Egyptian Ambassador to the United States, in an interview said: ‘The minute the army hit the street, it was clear that the demonstrators had won, because the Egyptian army does not shoot at Egyptian civilians. It has never done it and its code of honor is that it will not...it was always the army and the people and that’s a continuous message.’<sup>21</sup> In this regard, education programs that expose army personnel to the U.S. Army’s professionalism and values may well have had a direct influence on the professional and admirable conduct by the Egyptian army.

An assessment of the long-term impact of major weapons programs, however, is less clear. The Egyptian military’s large-scale dependence on U.S. aid in general may have helped prevent a violent crackdown as occurred in Libya. U.S. military aid covers up to 80% of Egypt’s weapons procurement and may pay as much as a third of the military budget, from which the senior leaders benefit. For example, the co-production of the M1A1 main battle tank, which began in 1988, has been a major source of pride for the Egyptian government. The components are manufactured primarily in Michigan, although some parts are made in Cairo and the final assembly accomplished in Egypt. This program offers an economic benefit to Egypt as well as a sense of prestige for the Egyptian Army and industrial complex as final producers of a top-of-the-line tank. Egyptian intellectuals and activists have long claimed that U.S. weapons sales actually hurt Egypt, since the money eventually goes back into the U.S. economy; their arguments, rightly or wrongly, resonates with many.<sup>22</sup>

It is clear that the presence of heavy American military hardware has much less appeal for the generation of Tahrir Square than it did for the Mubarak regime. In the context of the ‘Arab Spring’, overt U.S. military presence can create significant popular unease. Reliable polling conducted by the Pew Research Center after the January 2011 uprising shows that a majority of Egyptians still perceive the U.S. as a threat, virtually unchanged from the previous two years. Over two-thirds still oppose the U.S. war on terror, and believe that the United States does not consider Egyptian interests in its policies.<sup>23</sup> In annual polling of Arab opinion by the Zogby Institute and the University of Maryland from 2008-2010, the three primary perceived U.S. interests in the Middle East were supporting Israel, controlling oil and ‘weakening the Muslim world,’ while no more than 5% perceived the United States to be interested in promoting Democracy.<sup>24</sup>

### Tunisia

Tunisia, in contrast to Egypt, has a far less visible, yet very deep, connection with the American military. Total U.S. military aid projected for 2011 came to only \$7.2 million, of which \$2.3 million, or nearly a third, was IMET funding. This was a major drop from previous years, as Tunisia received \$15 million in FMF funds in 2009. The numbers, however, mask the Tunisian

dependence on U.S. materiel support. As the majority of the Tunisian army's equipment is of much older vintage than Egypt's, the cost of maintaining its fleet of 1980s-era equipment is less costly. Nonetheless, Tunisia relies on U.S. support for up to 70% of its military equipment. The common factor between Tunisia and Egypt is the military leadership's dependence on U.S. support, rather than the quality and amount of equipment.

Moreover, **military interaction with Tunisia has been heavily grounded in strong, in-depth education and training programs. Tunisia is one of the top 20 IMET recipients; it received 100 training slots in 2009, the majority being in Army Captains Career Courses and English language courses.** Of 100 seats, 10 were for four-year students in service academies in addition to two Command and Staff and a War College student. Historically, Tunisia has been one of the leading participants in the four-year service Academy program, with five West Point admissions in the last ten years. Before the uprising, two of the three military service chiefs had a U.S. – provided training and approximately 40% of the mid- and senior officers had some exposure to American military standards and values through training. Similar to Egypt, the Tunisian military has maintained strong senior-level coordination. A joint Tunisian-U.S. military commission meets annually. The Tunisian leadership participated actively in seminars sponsored by the Marshall Center and Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies.

While the Interior Security apparatus and ruling political party were main targets of protestors' anger, the military was largely spared, and as in Egypt, played a pacifying role in the uprising. Scenes of protestors kissing soldiers were widely distributed during the uprising as a sign of the differing perception the protestors held for the military as opposed to the police forces. The Chief of Staff ultimately convinced President Bin 'Ali to step down. Notably, Ben 'Ali's power base was in the Tunisian Army, and when the senior generals lost faith in him, his position became untenable.

U.S. IMET programs are likely to yield positive dividends outside the events of the 'Arab Spring', most notably with respect to Lebanon. Though not yet a major theater in the Arab Spring, Lebanon offers another example of the positive impact of U.S. Army interaction where the focus is on high-level coordination and training, rather than heavy weapons. **The renewed U.S. support for the Lebanese Armed Forces since 2006 has aimed at building the credibility, competence and professionalism of the Lebanese army as a national institution; the more respect the Lebanese people develop for their army, the less support they will likely display for populist forces or sub-state actors, most notably Hizbullah.** This program has a strong focus on training and education, with 599 Lebanese personnel participating in U.S. courses, only slightly below Egypt's participation. A rare exception to the norm in the region, **IMET funding to Lebanon exceeds FMF funding.** On average, graduates of U.S. military schools hold higher positions than those who have not attended American schools.

It is also worth highlighting the military-military relationship the U.S. Army has with Qatar. It is outside the events of the 'Arab Spring', but Qatar is nevertheless playing a strong and constructive diplomatic role in the region, including a military role in Libya. Though its share of Foreign Aid did not exceed \$100,000 (FY 2011), 266 Qatari military personnel attended U.S. military courses (FY 2009), a significant number in view of its modest military force (12,000 men, including an army, navy, and air force).<sup>25</sup>

By contrast, the armies in **Syria** and **Libya** have little connection to the United States and little incentive to respond to American pressure. Total Defense Security Cooperation with Libya amounted to two students at a total of \$29,000 in 2009 and none in 2010. Syria counted for one participant at a regional center at no cost. **Iran** also had two participants in a U.S. security course at no cost. Instead of being open to U.S. leverage, **the military leaders in these countries are entirely dependent on sustenance from their regimes and have performed as such; it is unlikely that the U.S. Army could exert soft pressure on these armies to push them to play a stabilizing role during this period of unrest.**

## **U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL STUDYING IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

### *Developing Cultural and Language Expertise*

**‘Cultural awareness is a force multiplier’**, recognized General Petraeus during his service in Iraq. He came to realize that ‘knowledge of the cultural “terrain” can be as important as, and sometimes even more important than, knowledge of the geographic terrain.’<sup>26</sup> This observation is equally true in non-combat zones. Indeed, the effectiveness of the U.S. Army interactions in the Middle East is also affected by the degree of cultural and language competence of Army personnel at all levels. In 2005, recognizing the need for greater abilities in these areas, the Department of Defense launched the **Language Transformation Roadmap. This multifaceted strategy brought together many separate programs under a coordinated umbrella.** It provided the framework for dramatic increases in language and culture skills, including the accession of more native speakers (the 09L and MAVNI programs), unit level training, mobile training programs reaching over 60,000 soldiers, a dramatic increase in institutional training (an increase of \$198 million in the DLI budget and of \$6million annually for West Point language and culture programs), free online training materials for soldiers.

**Study Abroad Programs have served as a critical platform to develop U.S. Army personnel’s cultural awareness.** The U.S. Army programs in the region exist at a much less overtly ‘military’ level. In addition to developing valuable language and culture skills in U.S. personnel, student exchanges are one of the strongest Public Diplomacy tools available. While we have focused above on Arab military personnel studying in the United States, American military personnel studying in the Middle East also have a strong positive impact on forging trust with the local populations. University students and faculty were arguably the most influential group in leading protests in the Arab Spring and often among the most critical of U.S. military interests in the region. Giving U.S. Army personnel opportunities to interact in positive discussions with this segment of Arab society, building friendships based on mutual respect, and developing social networks, is of tremendous value during this time of transition.

**The Conflict and Human Security Studies (CHSS) program at USMA was developed with similar aims**, that is, to increase USMA and ROTC cadets’ cross cultural competence (CCC), which essentially refers to demonstrating interpersonal skills across cultures. CHSS also aims to expand cadets’ understanding of working with civilian organizations, specifically non-governmental organizations (NGOs). **Research has shown that one of the best means of developing these cultural skills in cadets is through relatively short, summer, cultural immersion experiences with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the non-Western**



**or developing world.<sup>27</sup> These immersion experiences are designed to ensure that junior officers would not simultaneously experience culture shock and combat shock upon their first deployment.** Moreover, the experiences provide an opportunity for cadets to develop professional relationships with NGO members who they may meet again in future operations. Reflecting on the value of this program, one alum (now officer) remarked that the ‘Army should use the [cultural immersion] program to develop well rounded, internationally literate, and globally attuned citizens who have an understanding of the world that allows them to bridge the divide between the U.S. and the world, and between the military and the civilian world. It should be used to grow leaders who can explain the world to the Army and who can explain the Army to the world.’

The value of exchange language and cultural programs has been noted at the most senior and junior levels of the Army. General Petraeus, for example, observed that, in Iraq, those who ‘mastered some [even] “survival Arabic” – were, not surprisingly, the most effective in developing productive relationships with local leaders and citizens and achieved the most progress in helping establish security, local governance, economic activity, and basic services’.<sup>28</sup> A similar spirit is expressed at a junior level through the experiences of our cadets in the Arab world; time and again, their reflections suggest that cultural and language awareness is an asset for the Army. A cadet who studied Arabic at the Daraya Language School in Cairo and at the University of Jordan remarked on his return that by the end of his stay in the Middle East, ‘I could do more than simply not offend people – I could actually build constructive relationships based on mutual respect.’ Crucially, he observed that ‘when people learned that I spoke Arabic, understood their culture, and shared a genuine interest in the topics with which they were concerned, their demeanor and attitude towards me almost universally improved.’ Another cadet (now officer) who studied in Egypt related on his return that ‘the absence of uniforms, weapons, and official titles allow the cadets to experience an authentic and unaltered portrait of the Arab world, which is often unseen.’

Semester-long study abroad participation by West Point Cadets increased from two cadets studying in France in 2001 to 147 cadets studying in 14 different countries in seven languages in 2010. Of these, 30 cadets per year studied in Arab countries (Morocco, Jordan and Egypt). The cost, at approximately \$10-14K per student, is relatively low when compared to military hardware programs, and the effects on political transitions like the Arab Spring far greater. One cadet (now officer) who was studying in Egypt from August through December 2010 related how he ‘interacted with many individuals who, a few months later, became actors in the Egyptian revolution.’ Other West Point cadets were studying in Cairo during the January 2011 Tahrir Square protests, and had personal contact with many of the Egyptian participants in the protests through their university studies. After leaving Egypt, they have maintained these personal contacts. Over 500 cadets per year participate in shorter-term immersion programs in 60 countries in all regions of the world, often in humanitarian projects, including volunteering at orphanages, teaching English, medical assistance and water purification. As noted earlier, many of these programs are run in conjunction with NGOs in the region, helping future U.S. Army officers build relationships not only with the host nation population but also influential private agencies. At very low cost, these provide valuable cultural and humanitarian skills for the officers as well as valuable Public Diplomacy outreach programs.

**Given that the ‘Arab Spring’ is predominantly a youth-led student movement, an effective strategy of engaging the U.S. Army in the region would be to bolster the pre-commission semester abroad and cultural immersion programs, most notably at USMA and ROTC. These programs provide direct cultural exchange at the student/youth level that have both a direct effect on the segments of society that are producing agents of change as well as a long-term generational effect towards strengthening U.S. ties in the Arab world.**

## **IV. Implications/Recommendations**

In a speech he delivered at the Wilson Center (June 3, 2011), Admiral Mullen noted that ‘the so-called Arab Spring is the most significant change afoot in the world today.’<sup>29</sup> He went on to highlight that ‘being mindful of history now is probably something that would be very instructive for all of us; what are the characteristics of the [revolutions] that succeeded, and what are the characteristics of the ones that have failed .... But being precise about how this is going to come out is going to be very difficult.’<sup>30</sup>

How then might the U.S. Army adapt its role to the ‘Arab Spring’ by heeding the lessons of history to help us avoid mistakes in our current complex political environment? Beyond avoiding mistakes, how do ‘we protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others’, as President Obama noted in his ‘Way Forward’ Remark on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>31</sup> What are the effects the U.S. Army should seek to support this goal, and which programs would enable these effects?

The **main effects** the U.S. Army must seek is to PREVENT conflict and enhance stability by focusing its energy on **professionalizing the armies in the Arab world**. The overall strategic engagement in response to the ‘Arab Spring’ entails **shifting the U.S. Army’s emphasis from kinetic to non-kinetic programs, while remaining ready and effective across the entire spectrum of operations to meet unforeseen security threats**. Professionalization of the army is a cornerstone of stable societies; it is a decisive factor in stabilizing societies during periods of transition in the short-term while essential to creating a democratic political culture in which the military serves civilian authorities in the long-term. In addition to being militarily competent, **a professional army is able to transcend differences between political factions; its loyalty is to higher ideals that rise above parochialism and partisanship**. A professional army is also one that is **valued by the society**, where civilians respect not fear the uniform and where the **military respects the society it serves**.

### **PROGRAMS SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ARMIES**

- **Building military-military relations with the armies of countries undergoing transition is a powerful signal to the people in the region that the United States is supportive of their democratic aspirations and ready to partner with them**. In view of the mistrust of the United States in the Arab world, **the U.S. Army’s engagement must shift its emphasis from kinetic to non-kinetic programs and therefore increase the visibility of its IMET programs**.

- **Building trust with the new political actors requires more than military-military relations.** Admiral Mullen's June 3<sup>rd</sup> speech spoke of 'the world of NGOs', of 'public-private opportunities', of addressing 'education, financial or agricultural' necessities. **The U.S. Army should engage in outreach programs and make available its assets and capabilities in the service of building human capital and human security.**
- Careful consideration must be paid so that the U.S. Army's programs are in tune and coordinated with those undertaken by the U.S. government. On the government side, support for democratic transition should be **focused on supporting institutions, embracing the democratic and liberal norms voiced by the new actors, rather than supporting specific parties/actors.** This will counter the 'conspiracy' narrative that portrays 'foreigners' to be behind the transition to democracy and discredits claims that democracy is yet 'another ploy by the West'. To avoid unnecessary duplications of programs or indeed of corruption in the nation undergoing transition, the U.S. Army must invest its resources by coordinating its efforts with different U.S. governmental agencies involved in the region. This requires developing reliable frameworks for interagency collaboration and trust on the U.S. side, a framework that even the host nation could adapt to meet its own requirements.
- **The U.S. Army needs to increase its investment in human capital. This begins 'at home', by investing in the U.S. Army's own cultural awareness. This includes developing cadets' cross cultural competence (CCC) and expanding their understanding of working with civilian organizations, specifically non-governmental organizations (NGOs); a core of language and cultural specialists who can translate specific cultural or social conditions into clearly understood analysis. Complimentary steps include opening U.S. academic military institutions to civilian scholars from the Arab world under the Fulbright program to invest in mutual cultural awareness; expanding educational and exchange pre-commissioning opportunities such as semester abroad and cultural immersion internships; expanding existing opportunities at professional military educational institutions, such as the War Colleges; and making other scholarship opportunities such as those afforded by the Olmsted Foundation more accessible to enhance greater interpersonal exchanges at the mid-career level.**
- **The U.S. Army should increase support for programs that bring Arab soldiers into prolonged contact with U.S. military culture.** For example, programs like those offered by the Army War College and International Cadet Program that provide long cultural immersion for personnel of allied militaries serve to build enduring relationships and mutual trust between future key leaders of the United States and allied Armies.
- Although it is a war-fighting institution, the U.S. Army is also an effective humanitarian force, and has proven in numerous locations that its personnel have the ability to create and improve infrastructure that improves the lives of many. The U.S. Army could make its assets available to **build human security and human capital elsewhere.** For example, partnering U.S. Army's **expeditionary economics** capacity with local armies in support of local businesses, when or if appropriate, could prevent the local economy from

deteriorating and paving the way for unforeseen internal conflicts.<sup>32</sup> The same may be done along social structures, informal leaders, formal leaders, etc... highlight existing power structures that may help with transitional efforts to alleviate human insecurities while addressing alternative ways forward. **The U.S. Army should also extend military-military relationships to non-combat arms branches**, especially those that can achieve economies of scale for military investment such as TDY assignments for **Civil Affairs personnel or through a task force like that of CJTF HoA, which maintains a small footprint yet holds a great capacity for providing civil affairs support and kinetic support when needed.**<sup>33</sup>

- The U.S. Army must continue to **develop and expand its Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) and be more creative in making effective use of them in non-combat zone situations.** HTTs do not rehash and repackage existing social networks and cultural information; rather they are credited for discovering original information and creating new knowledge. **They have the necessary skills to understand the nuance, body language, and meta-messages unique to the culture/situation/individual that help facilitate productive engagements and help anticipate second and third order effects of both non-kinetic and kinetic actions.**<sup>34</sup>
- The effects of the ‘Arab Spring’ vary between the countries undergoing unrest and not all the armies in the region have played a stabilizing role as the armies of Egypt and Tunisia. Where turmoil results in the lack of government control, it has the potential to create safe-havens from which terrorist groups can threaten not only the country from which they are operating, but U.S. interests and domestic security as well. **The U.S. Army must therefore be ready and effective across the entire spectrum of operations to meet unforeseen security threats.** Where conventional U.S. forces cannot or should not be deployed, **the U.S. Army must maintain both an intelligence infrastructure and Special Operation Forces (SOF) that are capable of prosecuting (or finishing) targets that represent a threat to U.S. interests.**
- **When military action is required in the Arab world, the U.S. Army should act as part of a multilateral coalition.** As President Obama noted, ‘when innocents are being slaughtered and global security endangered, we don’t have to choose between standing idly by or acting on our own. Instead, we must rally international action.’<sup>35</sup> **Not only would this ease the burden on our resources, but it would also divide the burden of responsibility and legitimacy of intervention on the shoulders of the international community as a whole.**
- **Recognizing the stabilizing role of armies, the U.S. Army should not shy away from engaging military personnel of countries we may consider to be our adversaries.** A strategy of isolation cuts both ways; but since the United States is the leading military power and the U.S. Army brand enjoys an unassailable standing in the world, engaging the armies of our adversaries would not weaken us, it could only make us stronger.
- **Further research is needed to evaluate the types of IMET programs that contribute most to the professionalization of armies and increase support of such programs accordingly. This research could include a comparative military study, network**

**analysis, effects on jihadist ideology, and other political, economic, and societal analyses of the region. With this in mind, further support, beyond the IMET programs discussed could easily include conferences that bring together U.S. and non-U.S. military, non-military scholars, and other civil society actors to enhance and deepen ties and build trust between the United States and the Arab world.**

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 'No Fly Zone' over Libya. March 17, 2011, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm#Resolution>.

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<sup>5</sup> Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton, 'Munich Security Conference Plenary Session Remarks', Munich, Germany, February 5, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156044.htm>

<sup>6</sup> President Barack H. Obama, 'Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa', May 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

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