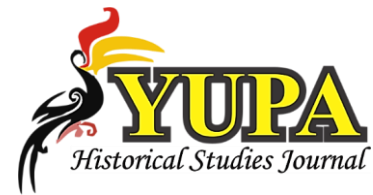


P-ISSN: 2541-6960; E-ISSN: 2549-8754

Yupa: Historical Studies Journal

Vol. 9 No. 2, 2025 (92-101)

<http://jurnal.fkip.unmul.ac.id/index.php/yupa>



Examining the Arab Spring Phenomenon in Descriptive Analysis of Structuralism

Atief Arezal Fatah, Abrar

¹Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

¹aarezalfatah@gmail.com, ²abrar@unj.ac.id

Received	Revised	Accepted
26/12/2024	20/06/2025	29/06/2025

Abstract *The discourse on the Arab Spring is a popular research theme among international geopolitical researchers, especially those who pay special attention to the ups and downs of the crisis in the Middle East & North Africa region. This article tries to examine and analyze the factors that led to the Arab Spring from a Structuralism perspective. There are 3 main discussions, namely: Arab Spring: Arab Revolt Movement, Tribalism, Sectarianism & Authoritarianism of the Arab World, United States GWOT & the Rise of Jihadist Militia after the Arab Spring.*

Keywords: Arab Spring, Revolution, Tribalism

Abstrak *Diskursus mengenai Arab Spring merupakan tema penelitian yang populer dikalangan peneliti geopolitik internasional, khususnya yang memberikan perhatian khusus pada pasang surut krisis di kawasan timur tengah & afrika utara. artikel ini mencoba untuk mengkaji, menganalisis mengenai faktor faktor apa yang mendorong terjadinya Arab Spring dalam perspektif Strukturalisme. Terdapat 3 Pembahasan Utama, yaitu: Kebangkitan Dunia Arab: Pergerakan Revolusi, Tribalisme, Sektarianisme & Otoritarianisme di Dunia Arab, Perang Melawan Terorisme oleh Amerika Serikat & Kebangkitan Milisi Jihadis setelah Kebangkitan Dunia Arab.*

Kata kunci : Arab Spring, Revolusi, Tribalisme



This work is licensed under a
[Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

After entering the 21st century & the end of the Cold War in 1990 (marked by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact & the Soviet Union), Fukuyama revealed that the development of global society would reach its furthest point in the struggle to achieve true expressions of freedom and independence in terms of the struggle of recognition or "struggle to gain recognition" (Jabpar, 2015). If at the end of the 20th century, the world was hit by large-scale wars that occurred in various corners or regions throughout the world, then it is not an exaggeration when the spirit of freedom, justice & the struggle to achieve a decent life expectancy pervades modern society today. The government systems of large countries which are thought to be a form of "modernity" or significant progress for a society & its civilization, often experience miscalculations and even misconceptions, as government systems that impose tight control over civilians or the public, such as authoritarianism, communism or autocracy, reveal weaknesses & shortcomings through overall socio-political economic transformation or reform.

Towards the end of the 20th century, we can see several series of geopolitical ups and downs that changed the landscape of political & social development in developed or developing countries, for example: Berlin Wall & German Reunification (1990), South Korea's June Democracy Movement (1987), Velvet Revolution Czechoslovakia (1990), as well as the dissolution of the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact (1991) marked the crushing defeat of communism ideology as a form of government or foundation of leftist movements in various countries or regions. China, through the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, changed the direction of its economic policy towards a free market ("open door" policy) after considering the impact of adopting a Communism & Closed Economy system which would cause harm to the National Economy (Ndruru, 2024). Deng Xiaoping implemented the "Chinese Economic Reform" policy with the aim of entering the free market and strengthening China's position in global competition after Mao Zhedong's Closed Policy & Cultural Revolution damaged the economic and socio-cultural structure of Chinese society.

A portrait of competition during & after the Cold War in the last half of the 20th century, provides an overview of the prospects for the concept of democratization & economic, social & political liberalism. The bipolarity of US liberalism with Soviet communism ended with many transitions from non-democratic government regimes to a wave of total democratization in Eastern Europe, Asia & Latin America (Sikky, 2022). The development of the influence of democracy, free markets & liberalism provides an injection of enthusiasm for political reform, especially for civil circles who often experience pressure, restrictions and acts of KKN (Corruption, Collusion, Nepotism) which have fatal consequences for the community's economy. The democracy or liberalism movement will live to develop as an "alternative movement" against

the hegemony of authoritarianism in a country. Free markets & globalization encourage cross-border interactions (regional or global), so that the intersection of social conditions in society will meet each other, which culturally is one of the factors that the concept of democratization & liberalism can develop well in various corners.

Interestingly, this wave of democratization gained momentum when it came into direct contact with Middle Eastern and North African countries which was known as the Arab Spring. The wave of the Arab Spring in the early decades of the 21st century, more or less challenged Huntington's thesis regarding Islam which was said to have the potential to be an obstacle to the development of democratization (Rosyidin, 2015). The Arab Spring phenomenon (2011), which was a wave of protests, revolutions and uprisings (culminating in civil war) of Arab civil society in various countries in the Middle East, demonstrated the role and preferences of political ideology in practical terms regarding the posture of democracy which succeeded in overthrowing the autocratic regime in the Middle East which failed to bring country towards progress, justice & prosperity. The emergence of various military groups with different movement patterns and ideologies is one of the major contributions of the Arab Spring events, such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah as proxy groups that played a major role in civil wars in all corners of the Arabian continent.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive analysis approach method, which is a method of presenting descriptions of facts compiled using objective, factual & scientific analysis (Rakhmat et al., 2022). Descriptive analysis is a data processing method using analysis of factors related to the aim or object of research with an in-depth, comprehensive & analytical presentation. The descriptive analysis method attempts to provide a description & interpretation of data or objects according to the conditions as they are.

Furthermore, in the process of reviewing and preparing the article, the grounded theory used was structuralism. Structuralism is a research method that examines the relationship between a language, culture or event by examining the factors (economic, cultural, social, political) that influence that structure. Structuralism sees relations between parts (language, culture & society) as reciprocal relations, as well as factors or relationships that influence each other, including in the context of positive relationships or which can become negative relationships (Manshur, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Arab Spring: Arab Revolt Movement

The Arab Spring or in the Indonesian translation "Arab Spring" is a series of revolutionary events, demonstrations & civil war that occurred in the Middle East (Arab) & North Africa, starting with the self-immolation of a young man named Mohamad Bouazizi in front of the governor's office in the city of Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia on December 17 2010. This action was a feeling of despair for a young man who was crushed by the economic crisis, unfair treatment & the repressive actions of the Ben Ali regime against him and the Tunisian people who have experienced the dictatorship of the Tunisian government for approximately 2 decades (1987 - 2011). After the arson action spread through social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter), this incident sparked anger among the Tunisian people against the Ben Ali regime, resulting in riots and demonstrations, which ended with the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime on January 13 2011 (Muhamad Rauf, 2022).

The "Jasmine Revolution" that occurred in Tunisia was a social movement of the Tunisian people which triggered a wave of revolution in the Middle East and North Africa, where at that time the majority of the country's leadership was led by an oligarchic - autocratic regime (Sajidin et al., 2023). After the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime (Tunisia), this wave of "democratization of the Arab world" spread throughout the Middle East & North Africa, which had the effect of increasing tendencies & responses to the socio-political conditions of Arab society to see a portrait of "injustice" & "backwardness", by chose to take to the streets to challenge their national political leadership. There is a popular slogan that developed during the Arab Spring period which reads "Ash-sha'b yurid isqat an - nizam" which means "The people want to overthrow this regime" at every demonstration & demonstration throughout the Arab region or the Middle East (Jatmika, 2013).

An unfortunate fate befell autocratic - oligarchic regimes in almost all corners of the Middle East and North Africa. After the forced overthrow of Ben Ali from the presidency, Egypt experienced the "revolutionary momentum" of the Arab Spring with demonstrations by the Egyptian people criticizing the leadership of President Hosni Mubarak & his ministers, for approximately 18 days. The "Nile Revolution" movement by the masses of the people of Messiah forced Hosni Mubarak to step down from his position which he had held for 30 years (Herdi Sahrasad, 2014). The same fate was felt by the Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, who was overthrown through demonstrations & civil war (Civil War) by Libyan opposition parties who were members of the "National Transition Council" or NTC (National Transition Council) against Gaddafi's loyalist forces, which resulted in The president died after 2 months of fleeing from pursuing Libyan rebel forces in terrible conditions (Shobib et al., 2023).

Syria also received bitter sap from the Arab Spring wave, after massive demonstrations in 2011 following the Civil War between opposition forces and loyalists of the Al Assad Regime (Ridho et al., 2020). As of 08 December 2024, the Al Assad Regime which had ruled for 50 years in Syria, was overthrown & President Bashar Al Assad fled to Moscow after a joint coalition of Syrian opposition consisting of: Free Syrian Army (FSA), Kurdish Democratic Forces (SDF), The Syrian National Army (SNA) & Hayt Tahrir Al - Sham (HTS) succeeded in defeating government forces, namely the Syrian Arab Armed Forces (SAA) & took control of the capital Damascus after carrying out lightning attacks for approximately 13 days, marking the end of the Civil War in Syria which has been going on for 13 years (2011 - 2024).

The wave of Arab revolution spread to various corners in the Arab & African region, protests & demonstrations appeared in Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Morocco, Yemen and even reached Qatar, Oman, Sudan & Algeria. Various acts of protest, civil disobedience, Civil War & revolutionary campaigns, echoed & forced many regimes in the Arab - North African region to carry out bureaucratic reforms and agree to the demands of the demonstrators in order to calm the civilians as a result of the Arab Spring wave, but many also succeeded in thwarting these effects through soft approaches such as Saudi Arabia which implemented the Arab Vision 2030 modernization policy, or Abdullah II's political steps in Jordan which carried out bureaucratic reform & replacement of the prime minister through the demands of the Jordanian people's demonstrators to respond to the domestic situation after the Arab Spring in 2011.

The landscape of the Arab Spring phenomenon is an illustration of how fragile the Middle Eastern world is caught in the political ups and downs. This latent & massive political turmoil has various factors and causes based on various leading research analyses. The majority of Middle Eastern rulers tend to fail in resolving various domestic social political crises, so that crises of authority, equality (economic - political inequality) & continuity are maintained continuously.

Tribalism, Sectarianism & Authoritarianism of the Arab World

Viewed structurally - sociologically, there are 3 elements that influence the Arab Spring & the Middle East crisis, namely: Elements of Tribalism, Sectarianism & Oligarchy (Abdillah Ihsan, 2024). The first is Tribalism or tribal identity, one of the factors that has contributed a lot to political, social and influence issues in the Middle East & North Africa region. The concept of Assabiyyah, Sheikh & ethnicity in Arab nationality is an important bond that can transcend any differences in aspects of religion, national identity & ideology. The Hashimiyyah dynasty, for example, in its tribal approach and claims of closeness to the figure of the Prophet Muhammad, who is a major figure in the Islamic & Arab world, has become an important factor in political affairs in several Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria and Jordan.

Before & after the Arab Spring phenomenon, the issue of tribal affiliation was one of the main targets in the "Arab revolution" agenda, but several countries such as Saudi Arabia or Jordan chose to strengthen their political position by placing several Sheikh figures who had strong tribal coalitions to be embraced & involved in government (political, security or military aspects). In some cases, national identity in the Middle East is nothing more than a form of sublimation between tribes as political legitimacy for their power within a country (Bar, 2020). The same thing happened in the case of the Civil War in Syria, when political tensions increased as a result of pressure from the Al Assad Regime & led to armed conflict between the Syrian population and loyalists of the Al Assad Regime, many tribes in Syria had good relations with the tribes in Iraq (Al Jabbur, Aqaydat, & Aneza tribes) aroused sympathy in supporting resistance against the Al Assad Regime (Dukhan, 2014).

The second is sectarianism or group exclusivity behavior based on identity, religion or belief. The Middle East is certainly no stranger to the issue of sectarianism & polarization between Sunnis & Shiites, two groups that have competed with each other since 657 AD until now, competing to spread & strengthen influence in the Arab region and beyond. In the Arab Spring phenomenon, especially in Yemen, the issue of sectarianism is very acute considering that after the overthrow of President Ali Abdul Saleh in 2014, he was replaced by his deputy, Abdurrahuh Manshur Hadi (Ahmad Masyhur, 2021). However, much research shows that the development of the Arab Spring around sectarianism itself is experiencing a natural downward trend. Even in the perspective of the conflict after the overthrow of Ali Abdul Saleh in Yemen, the civil war between the Houthi group (an Iranian proxy) and the Yemeni government supported by the Saudi Arabian Coalition, tends to move away from the narrative of a Sunni versus Shiite race for influence (Rahman, 2019). Research in 2019 shows that the popularity of the issue of sectarianism as a factor in the Arab Spring phenomenon has decreased significantly (Gengler, 2020).

Next is the Authoritarianism factor which is the "biggest factor" of the Arab Spring phenomenon. The constant political tension of the Arab world in maintaining strong influence & control in controlling, supervising and limiting public activities in the Middle East & North Africa region, illustrates how deeply authoritarian values are maintained in various angles, including information media issues, political, economic & social issues. In these autocratic conditions, the attraction of KKN (Corruption, Colution, Nepotism) practices is very strong & quite significant in the Arab or Middle Eastern regions (Janah, 2022). Economic disparities, high prices of basic commodities, increasing unemployment rates, and limited freedom of the press are a chemical mixture that has become a "burning ember" of hatred and anger among the Arab public at the immoral behavior of the leaders of countries in the Middle East. The wave of protests & demands

for accountability along with the desire for political reform has become pressure coming from various angles for autocratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (Erwina et al., 2025).

United States GWOT & the Rise of Jihadist Militia after the Arab Spring

After the end of the Cold War period between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (Russia) as an "evil empire" which lasted for 45 years (1947 - 1991) (Bakry, 2022), the world shifted from a unipolar to a multipolar condition where countries developing in the third world, playing an important role in international geopolitical stability as well as the global or regional free market race (Gunawan, 2023). If previously during the Cold War, superpower countries played an important role as proxies or strategic support in maintaining the sovereignty of "satellite countries" through the grip of economic and military political authority, then in this multipolar era, the grip & influence of these big powers is starting to fade, and then something happens. a fundamental 'transition' process which is motivated by public movements due to the opening of global connectivity through various factors such as transnational policy factors, the development of social media, waves of pop culture which force various countries to adapt as quickly as possible.

10 years after the Cold War, the international world was shocked by a major phenomenon that marked the entry of a new chapter in the multipolar era, namely the '11 November 2001 or 911' incident, the attack on the WTC & Pentagon twin buildings through the hijacking of 4 civilian planes by the "Al-Qaeda" terrorist group. led by Osama Bin Laden, shook the Government of President George W. Bush so that the US carried out a large-scale operation through the US foreign policy Global War on Terror (GWOT) which gave birth to US military action across country in hunting down jihadist/Islamist groups in the Middle East. Through this policy, the US government's dual role in hunting down armed militias, supporting authoritarian regimes & carrying out proxies in various regions in the Middle East became the "catalyst" for the Arab Spring phenomenon in 2011. Bush emphasized that these efforts would target various aspects such as counter-terrorism operations, political diplomacy, intelligence and even economic & cultural aspects (Saputra, 2018).

The actions of superpower countries playing the role of "just queen" or "big ally" in political, social & security dynamics is a familiar phenomenon, especially for the Middle Eastern world which is always shrouded in war and conflict in various corners. Wars of interest wrapped in power, groups, religion or ethnic tribalism have enveloped the turmoil of Arab society since the Middle Ages until now. The United States military actions in various regions of the Middle East have had a major impact on the destabilization of Arab countries through the GWOT project, which is a foreign policy response to the WTC attack on November 11 2001 (Crenshaw, 2017).

This act of hunting down transnational terrorist groups has demonstrated the destructive power of the United States military & provoked the resentment of the Arab community who feel "harassed" by the presence of foreign countries operating as they please in their homeland.

Through these "cowboy" actions, the involvement of the United States in various domestic political ups and downs in the Middle East region as well as civil wars in various regions, also reaped the impact of the post-Arab Spring with many activities of tribal-based military factions, which built coalitions to prevent the United States' influence from expanding through various proxies (Dekhakhena, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Based on various literature findings and analytical studies, it shows that there are many factors that contributed to the spread of the Arab Spring to various regions, such as: corrupt practices, issues of tribalism, sectarianism and the involvement of external parties such as the United States which became the "catalyst" in the Arab Spring phenomenon. Thus, the internal and external factors that occurred around the Arab Spring showed significant impacts ranging from socio-political reform, the forced overthrow of autocratic regimes, civil war & the rise of military factions after the Arab Spring to enter the vacuum of power in various regions of the Middle East and Africa. This article tries to provide a new perspective in interpreting the Arab Spring events from a broader, objective & analytical point of view. It is hoped that this article can contribute to scientific literature related to the Arab Spring phenomenon in the future.

REFERENCES

- Abdillah Ihsan, M. (2024). Beyond The Arab Spring: Flakes Of Pre-Nation-States Historical Heritage Of The Arabs. *Darul Ulum : Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan*, 15(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.62815/darululum.v15i1.161>
- Ahmad Masyhur. (2021). Yemen'S Post-Arab Spring Conflict and Its Relationship With the Economy, Politics, and Saudi Arabia'S Influence in the Middle East. *Jurnal CMES*, 17(2), 105–116. <https://doi.org/10.20961/cmcs.14.2.51777>
- Bakry, U. S. (2022). Studi Keamanan Internasional Pasca Perang Dingin. *Jurnal Alternatif: Jurnal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional*, 9(1), 356–363. <https://doi.org/10.31479/jualter.v13i1.15>
- Bar, S. (2020). The re-tribalisation of the Middle East. *COMPARATIVE STRATEGY*, 39(2), 128–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1718984>
- Crenshaw, M. (2017). Transnational jihadism & civil wars. *Daedalus*, 146(4), 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00459
- Dekhakhena, A. (2019). The 9/11 Events: A Precursor to the Arab Spring. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 28(2), 351–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12190>
- Dukhan, H. (2014). Tribes and Tribalism in the Syrian Uprising. *Syria Studies*, 6(2), 1–28. <http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/syria/article/view/897>
- Erwina, M. A., Erwan, & Hasnah, R. (2025). Negara islam demokrasi sampai otokrasi. *Jurnal*

- Multidisiplin Ilmu Akademik*, 2(1), 202–210. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jmia.v2i1.3220>
- Gengler, J. (2020). Sectarianism from the Top Down or Bottom Up? Explaining the Middle East's Unlikely De-sectarianization after the Arab Spring. *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 18(1), 109–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2020.1729526>
- Gunawan, I. (2023). Dinamika politik global dalam era multipolar: tantangan dan peluang bagi negara berkembang. *COSTING: Journal of Economic, Business and Accounting*, 6(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.31539/costing.v7i1.12943>
- Herdi Sahrasad. (2014). Pergolakan Mesir: Dari Revolusi ke Transisi Demokrasi. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi Dan Perubahan Sosial*, 1(2), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v3i2.62>
- Jabpar, A. (2015). The End of History and The last Man (Sebuah Studi Deskriptif atas Pemikiran Francis Fukuyama). *An-Nûr Jurnal Studi Islam*, VII(2), 121–145.
- Janah, R. (2022). a Krisis Politik Arab Spring Di Timur Tengah. *HISTORICAL: Journal of History and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.58355/historical.v1i1.31>
- Jatmika, S. (2013). The Arab Spring 2010: Puncak Gunung Es Krisis Politik di Kawasan Timur Tengah. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 2(2), 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.18196/hi.2013.0037.157-166>
- Manshur, F. M. (2019). Kajian Teori Formalisme Dan Strukturalisme. *SASDAYA: Gajah Mada Journal of Humanities*, 3(1), 79. <https://doi.org/10.22146/sasdayajournal.43888>
- Muhamad Rauf, H. (2022). Arab Spring: Gejolak Revolusi Yang Serentak Terjadi Di Tunisia, Mesir Dan Libya Tahun 2010-2011. *Jurnal Sejarah Dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, 12(1), 125–138. <https://doi.org/10.17509/factum.v12i1.25705>
- Ndruru, K. P. (2024). Perspektif Sejarah Reformasi Ekonomi China. *Humaniora Dan Sosial Sains*, 1(1), 3032–5463.
- Rahman, S. (2019). Tensi Sektarianisme dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Timur Tengah Pasca Arab Spring : Kasus Tunisia dan Yaman. *Jurnal ICMES*, 3(1), 101–121. <https://doi.org/10.33477/dj.v12i2.1116>
- Rakhmat, M., Wachyudin, & Iskandar, R. A. (2022). Metode Deskriptif Analisis Dalam Kajian Nilai Perjuangan Sebagai Alternatif Bahan Ajar Modul Teks Novel Sejarah. *Al-Afkar Journal For Islamic Studies*, 5(2), 245–267. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v5i2.316>
- Ridho, M., Yani, Y. M., & Sudirman, A. (2020). Analisis Konflik Arab Spring di Suriah. *Jupiis: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 12(1), 113. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jupiis.v12i1.16058>
- Rosyidin, M. (2015). Konflik Internasional Abad ke-21 ? Benturan Antarnegara Demokrasi dan Masa Depan Politik Dunia. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Ilmu Politik*, 18(3), 223–236.
- Sajidin, M., Hafidz Adi Wardana, D., Lita Sareong, E., Risnawati, Sasmiarni, U., Wahyudi, D., & Nurul Taqwin, M. (2023). Analisis Gerakan Sosial Revolusi Melati Tunisia (2010). *MANDAR : Social Science Journal*, 2(1), 34. <https://doi.org/10.31605/mssj.v2i1.2841>
- Saputra, K. D. (2018). Kekerasan Objektif dalam Narasi Global War on Terror (GWOT) Analisis GWOT dengan Teori Kekerasan Slavoj Zizek. *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 18(1), 79–96. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol18.iss1.art5>
- Shobib, M. I., Baidhowi, M. K., & Amrosi. (2023). Revolusi libya tahun 2011 dan dampak pemakzulan muammar khadafi terhadap libya dan negara arab lain. *At-Turost: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10(2nd), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.52491/at.v10i2.111>

Sikky, R. (2022). Analisis Kebijakan Demokratisasi sebagai Instrumen Kekuasaan dalam Politik Luar Negeri Amerika Serikat. *Journal of Integrative International Relations*, 7(November), 156–174. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jiir.2022.7.2.156-174>