

# WebMemo



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## The “Arab Spring”: Heritage Foundation Recommendations

*The Heritage Foundation*

The “Arab Spring” has targeted several regimes in the Middle East: Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak has stepped down, leaving the future of the country uncertain; Syria’s Bashar al-Assad and Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh cling to power; Libya’s Muammar Qadhafi has vowed to fight to the death despite the United States and NATO lining up against him.

The U.S. needs more clear and prudent policies crafted to deal with the turmoil in particular countries. The Administration should also develop a real strategy designed to protect U.S. interests as world historical change sweeps the Middle East. Right now, White House leadership has been deficient on both counts. Here is what The Heritage Foundation recommends.

### **Time for the Obama Administration to Support Freedom in Syria**

James Phillips

April 8, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/04/Time-for-the-Obama-Administration-to-Support-Freedom-in-Syria>

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s ruthless regime is deservedly threatened by mounting protests organized by long-suffering Syrians fed up with its harsh repression, notorious corruption, and rigid autocratic rule. But the Obama Administration has soft-pedaled its criticism of Assad’s dictatorship, eager to “engage” the stubbornly hostile regime despite its systematic repression of its own people.

The Obama Administration should abandon its wishful thinking about the supposed benefits of good bilateral relations with the predatory Assad regime and mobilize stronger international pressure on Damascus to respect the human rights of its own citizens, stop its support for terrorism, and halt its dangerous nuclear collusion with Iran and North Korea.

### **What the Past Teaches About Arab Revolutions**

Marion Smith

March 16, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Commentary/2011/03/What-the-Past-Teaches-About-Arab-Revolutions>

President Obama’s less-than-penetrating observation last month that the protesters in Egypt wanted “change” is obviously correct. But despite the President’s affection for the word, there is very little assurance of what “change” will bring and whether it will be congruent with American principles and interests.

It is too soon to tell the nature of Egypt’s revolution and what form of government will ultimately emerge. The same is also true in Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, and Libya. As the United States responds

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to these developments, it is useful to consider how America responded to revolutions in Latin America nearly two centuries ago.

### **What the President Must Do About Yemen**

James Phillips

March 24, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/03/What-the-President-Must-Do-About-Yemen>

As turmoil and transformation sweep across the Middle East and North Africa, President Obama cannot afford to dwell on one crisis at a time. In particular, the United States must not neglect the ongoing crisis in Yemen, a country that has served as a base of operations for terrorist attacks aimed at the U.S. and its allies. A double dose of diplomacy and engagement is now vital to ensure that the U.S. can continue to conduct effective counterterrorism operations in the region.

Saleh has been a reluctant ally against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which he perceived to be much less of a threat to his power than a southern secessionist movement or the Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen. If he fights to cling to power, Yemen could dissolve into anarchy, which would greatly benefit AQAP and allow it to function more freely. Washington should work to prevent that from happening by encouraging a peaceful transfer of political power and the establishment of a new government that could be a long-term partner for counter-terrorism cooperation—or could at least avert the risk that Yemen will become a failed state that AQAP can exploit.

### **Aiding Libya More Than Arming Rebels**

James Carafano, Ph.D., and James Phillips

March 31, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/03/Aiding-Libya-More-Than-Arming-Rebels>

Washington was wrong to focus myopically on the decision to intervene in Libya and establish a “no-fly” zone. Long before operations began, it was abundantly clear that these operations would not be militarily decisive. The current situation on the ground now bears out that fact. A more comprehensive strategy is required to deal with the Qadhafi regime, bring liberty to Libya, and make a real and

lasting contribution to protecting innocents rather than just the temporary reprieve achieved by hasty military intervention. Now, rather than dealing with these long-term issues, Washington is compounding the mistake by single-mindedly obsessing on another ad hoc decision: whether arms should be provided to the opposition.

This option, absent an overall game plan for the next steps in Libya, is ill-conceived. Decisions on the way forward should be made in the context of accomplishing three key tasks: (1) keeping Qadhafi isolated until he is brought to justice, (2) establishing a military presence to keep his forces from driving the opposition into the sea, and (3) identifying, supporting, and sustaining a legitimate opposition that brings democracy to the country (rather than letting it become the next terrorist haven) and looks after the humanitarian needs and human rights of the people under its control.

Nations closest to the problem with the capacity to bring freedom, security, and stability to Libya and an interest in doing so should be encouraged to do as much as possible to accomplish these goals. Egypt, for example, could help arm, train, and supply the opposition’s military forces. Other Arab League members, NATO allies, and European Union friends should be encouraged to provide financial backing for the intervention, if not military forces.

Nevertheless, a coherent, constructive assistance program will not happen without effective leadership. This is perhaps the most important contribution the U.S. can make. Certainly, the U.S. should not simply outsource the real heavy lifting to the “international community.”

### **Five Steps to Meeting the Crisis in Egypt and the Middle East**

James Phillips and James Carafano, Ph.D.

February 3, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/02/Five-Steps-to-Meeting-the-Crisis-in-Egypt-and-the-Middle-East>

By exercising energetic leadership now and continuing to engage in the right way in the months ahead, the President can both protect U.S. interests and promote opportunities for liberty, security, and economic opportunity in the Middle East. These

actions would be far more likely to make a positive contribution than trying to appear relevant to the struggle for power in Cairo.

**Much at Stake.** The Arab Spring is the greatest political development in the Middle East in cen-

turies. The U.S. should be careful to play its cards right, supporting the cause of freedom while not allowing extremist, anti-Western elements to fill any power vacuums. Too much is at stake to get the policy decisions wrong.