

3. 1895-1983, American systems theorists, architect, engineer, author, designer, inventor, and futurist.
4. Businessman, philanthropist and New Thought self-help book author (1902-2002).
5. Writer (1940-).
6. An Egyptian jurist, scholar and reformer regarded as the founder of Islamic modernism. (1849-1905).
7. Teoh Beng Hock, a political aide to a DAP State Assemblyman; date of incident: 15 July 2009.
8. Source: Office of Chief Judge (Malaya).
9. From the first day of hearing until the report was completed (printed). Source: Office of Chairman of Commission of Inquiry.
10. Ahmad Sarbani bin Mohamed; date of incident: 6 April 2011.
11. Source: Office of Chief Judge (Malaya).

**‘The ‘Arab Spring’:
Prospects and Challenges for Good Governance
in the Near and Middle East
(13 February 2012, Thammasat University, Bangkok)**

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This writer delivered a lecture on invitation at the international symposium “The ‘Arab Spring’: Prospects and Challenges for Good Governance in the Near and Middle East.” The one-day event was organised and hosted by the German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG), Faculty of Law, Thammasat University (Phrachan Campus), Bangkok, Thailand. It addressed the series of dramatic events across the Middle East, known as ‘Arab Spring’ in which mass demonstrations against longstanding authoritarian regimes have provoked vibrant discussions on prospects for different forms of governance in the region.

The ‘Arab Spring’ saw an unprecedented number of citizens become directly involved, despite a multitude of motivations, in the dismissal of public figures through means of public protest. As the right to participate in government is a recognised aspiration as declared by regional and international laws alike, what will this mean for future constitutional modeling and law-making in those changing societies in the region? Some have voiced preferences for Islamic-based caliphates, as has been reported in Yemen and Libya, while others, such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, have called for integrative forms of government which seek to combine Islamic values with those forms akin to Western-styled liberal government. Others, meanwhile, call upon states to implement policies more akin to Western-styled secular concepts of political order and society.

The event was made up of two panels – one before and the other after lunch break. The first panel featured Prof. Dr. Henning Glaser (Faculty of Law, Thammasat University), who delivered his introductory lecture, entitled “Patterns and Cleavages

of Governance in the Middle East.” The second panelist was Dr. Sukree Langputeh (Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Yala Islamic University, Thailand) who talked about the “Democratic Recovery Process in the Middle-East.” The first panel was concluded by a lively question and answer session.

The event continued after the lunch break with a second panel which featured two speakers: This writer delivered a lecture, entitled “The ‘Arab Spring’: Struggle for Civil Liberties or Drive Toward Islamist Theocracy?,”¹ which concluded on a somewhat less optimistic tone in terms of the progress of democratic forces in the Middle east, whereas “Arab Spring and the Muslim Southeast Asia” by Dr Imtiyaz Yusuf (Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand) offered his views on possible spillover effects of the events in the Middle East on Southeast Asia. The second panel too featured a spirited question and answer session.

In sum, the event featured a very valuable debate regarding the open future of good governance in the Middle East and the Muslim world at large. The events of the ‘Arab Spring’ were (and still are) diverse, distinct, and complex. Within this context, the scholars present at the event considered whether this collective banner best captures the diverse motivators of change in each respective state. Indeed, “the important story about the 2011 Arab revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya is not how the globalization of the norms of civic engagement shaped the protesters’ aspirations,” writes Lisa Anderson in the *Foreign Policy* magazine. “Nor is it about how activists used technology to share ideas and tactics. Instead, the critical issue is how and why these ambitions and techniques resonated in their various local contexts, [given that] the patterns and demographics of the protests varied widely.”²

There emerge key questions as to the prospects for statehood, political order and governance in the region as a result of the ‘Arab Spring’. How might these events come to influence governance structures in the region? How might governance structures diversify, given the commonality and diversity in each respective state?

Notes

1. Forthcoming in April 2012, *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance* (Germany) 2, no. 2.
2. Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” available online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67693/lisa-anderson/demystifying-the-arab-spring> (accessed on 14 February 2012).