



RESOURCE 1

The Arab Spring Protests of 2011

The Arab Spring refers to the popular uprisings that spread across the Arab world in 2011, starting in Tunisia and Egypt. The results of these movements have been very diverse across the different countries: while in some cases they led to significant reforms and democratic transition, in others they were met with repressive violence and engendered growing national and regional instability.



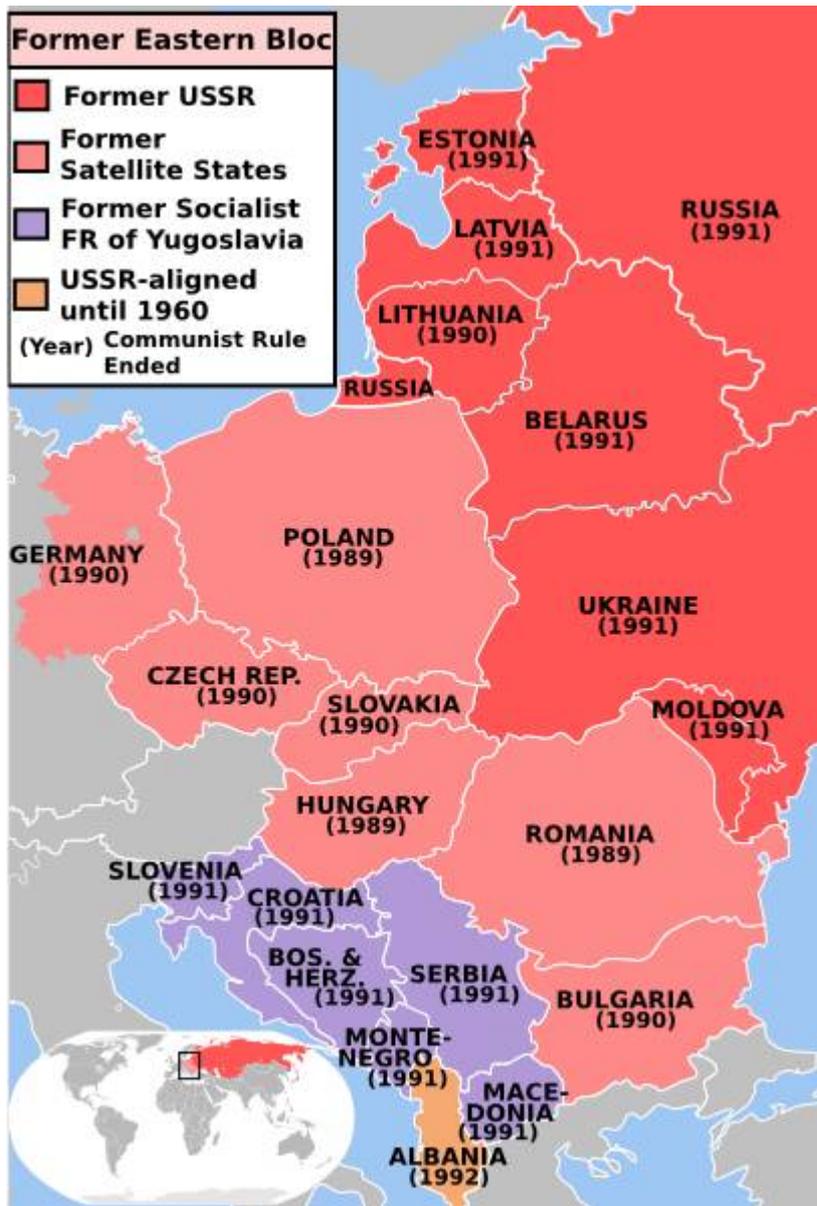
Source: Map made by "NewsMappers" on Tripline



HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

The Revolutions of 1989 in the Eastern Bloc

Undermined by economic and social problems, communist regimes came crashing down in 1989 through mostly peaceful revolutions.



Source: Wikipedia © Public domain





The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe

The Revolutions of 1848, known as the Spring of Nations, were a series of political upheavals that spread throughout the European continent fostered by nationalism, liberalism, social changes and economic crisis.



Source: *Revolution and Reaction in Europe 1815 - 1849*, Atlas of World History, Map 3, p 173 © Atlas of World History, Philips, London, 1999



Extracts from article “The Domino Revolutions: 1848, 1989, 2011”

“(…) The parallels between 1848, 1989 and 2011 are particularly striking because of the very rapidity with which the revolutions spread, the broadly shared aims of the insurgents and protesters from one country to the next and the astonishing speed with which the seemingly brick-built old regime bent to the pressure for change (or appeared to do so). One of the clearest similarities lies in the role of technology in spreading the revolutions – steam power in 1848, telecommunications in 1989 and the internet and mobile phones in 2011. The obvious differences have also been mooted: it has become almost a commonplace among observers of the Arab Spring to express the hope that 2011 will turn out like 1989 and not like 1848. Yet closer investigation is still more instructive about the dynamics of a domino revolution.

(…) in all the domino revolutions, the role of civil society is central in fostering opposition to the old order within a culture of criticism, however narrow a social base that civil society might have.(…)

All the domino revolutions also had long term economic origins: those of 1848 were thrust forward by the onset of a relentless population growth which would not be absorbed by sustained growth in productivity until the later nineteenth century. The Arab Spring, of course, arose in the present atmosphere of global financial meltdown. (…)

Secondly, acts of violence worked either to expose the frailties of the old order or to demonstrate the possibilities which encouraged revolutionary activity to spread. In 1848, 1989 and 2011, different forms of violence gave the revolutions their first martyrs. In France, whose revolution set off the series of other explosions across Europe in 1848, the slaughter of unarmed protesters on the Rue des Capucins tipped a tense situation into open insurrection. In 1989, a resounding sign of the Ceaușescu regime’s bankruptcy was the killing of demonstrators on the steps of the cathedral in Timișoara in 1989. (…)

In Tunisia, the market-seller who set himself alight in 2011 in an act of self-immolation sparked off the uprising not only in his own country, but across the Arab world. (…)

Thirdly, since domino revolutions are trans-national, they resonate in international relations, since the great powers with interests in the region are concerned for its stability and revolutionary ‘contagion’. At the same time, even domino revolutions work within the framework of existing states, and the new regimes often think in terms of national interest.”

Source: Dr Michael Rapport and Dr Kevin Adamson, [History Workshop Online](#), 12/01/2012



The Sprouting of Revolutionary Fists, mural by Zoo Project, Tunis, Tunisia, March-April 2011



Source: Photograph courtesy of Elissa Jobson for the online exhibit "Creative Dissent" by the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and the Arab American National Museum, Dearborn © Elissa Jobson - Bilal Berreni - Zoo Project