# Metaphors of the Arab Spring:
# Figurative Construals of the Uprisings and Revolutions

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**Abstract**

This paper presents some preliminary results of a project concerned with identifying and analyzing a number of Arabic metaphors used in political discourse to conceptualize the "Arab Spring." It investigates how Modern Standard Arabic deals with new political and social issues. The study also deals with how particular metaphors were created. This requires examination from two directions: first, what kinds of language resources were used to communicate and evaluate what was happening and, second, what type of knowledge and experience was utilized as a source for the metaphors employed in the texts. Many of the metaphors are strongly connected with specific traditions, the Islamic context, and general cultural experience, and some details concerning these areas are supplied.

*Key words:* Arab Spring, political discourse, metaphor.

## Introduction

Metaphors are of great importance for all aspects of life. This applies in particular to politics, since politics and political discourse are domains of high abstraction and complexity, "and metaphors," as Elena Semino argues, "can provide ways of simplifying complexities and making abstractions accessible."[1] Or as Seth Thompson wittily puts it, "Politics without metaphor is like a fish without water."[2] My study is built on the assumption that political metaphor serves as a link between "the individual and the political by providing a way of seeing relations, reifying abstractions, and framing complexity in manageable terms."[3] On the one hand, for researchers, examining the extensive use of figurative language generally and metaphors in particular in different types of discourse, not only political, is a powerful tool to uncover people's ideas, attitudes, feelings, and values. On the other, for text producers, the use of a certain set of metaphors helps them not only describe an issue in terms of their own way of conceptualizing it but also persuade their readers to see and construct reality in their way. Therefore metaphor (and figurative language) may heavily influence not only people's general perceptions of reality but also impact or manipulate their attitudes, ideas and value systems. This applies even more to politics and political discourse. As Roger Fowler observes,

> News is a representation of the world in language; because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is

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1  SEMINO 2008: 90.
2  THOMPSON 1996: 185.
3  Ibid., 185–86.

> represented; and so inevitably news, like every discourse constructively patterns that of which it speaks. News is a representation in this sense of construction; it is not a value-free reflection of "facts."[4]

Moreover the reader interprets the text in his/her own way because he/she understands it in terms of personal background knowledge and a personal value system. He/she is also influenced by the pragmatic effects intrinsic to metaphor itself and by the connotations that arise additionally due to the context surrounding a particular metaphor.

Analysis of figurative language and metaphors in written discourse may produce valuable insights into social and political phenomena. This is because figurative language, when used in discourse, reflects the "complex dynamics of real-world language use in social situations."[5] Thus if we look at figurative expressions and metaphors specifically from, "a complexity/dynamic systems perspective" that highlights "change and connectedness in social and cognitive systems," we may attain a wide spectrum of interesting findings ranging from the "cultural to the individual."[6] As for the metaphors of "Arab Spring" discourse, they offer new avenues to the social sciences to observe and analyze these social and political developments, since language is such an important indicator of change in many areas of life.[7]

Media played (and still play) a significant or even crucial role in the unfolding of the Arab Spring. They kept people around the world informed about all that was happening "on the ground," and they were also "a major catalyst and tool for those demonstrating in different Arab cities. Social media were used for mobilization, organization and information."[8] As a result they contributed significantly to the success of the movements in Tunisia and Egypt. Moreover, through media the protesters received not only wide national support but also considerable international backing.

My corpus consists of printed political discourse and more specifically of articles published on Al-Jazeera.net. I selected Al-Jazeera.net out of many other news agencies and networks because of its place among the Arab media.[9] Yet another reason for selecting Al-Jazeera.net was that the network was blamed publically for mobilizing "its global resources to cover and support the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria, from the start using terms such as 'revolution' and 'revolutionaries' to describe what was happening."[10]

The authors who contribute articles to Al-Jazeera.net come from various Arab countries, have diverse backgrounds and represent different generations. They are a distinct group who desire to communicate their attitudes to the wide Arab public the network has.

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4  FOWLER 1991: 4.

5  CAMERON / MASLEN / TODD / MAULE / STRATTON / STANLEY 2009: 64.

6  Ibid.

7  Ibid.

8  International Conference: "Covering the Arab Spring: Middle East in the Media – Media in the Middle East," University of Copenhagen, September 1–2, 2011, available on <http://i-m-s.dk/page/covering-arab-spring>.

9  Cf. LYNCH 2006. See also ZWEIRI/MURPHY (eds.) 2011.

10  See, e.g., HROUB 2013.

Despite varying opinions, they are united by enthusiasm for the uprisings, and to some extent by anti-American, anti-Western and anti-Israeli sentiments.

The style of the Arabic on Al-Jazeera.net, while often of a higher standard, is on the whole very similar to that of Arabic political discourse published elsewhere on the net. Reading of other pro-revolutionary news sources, such as the electronic editions of *Al-Nahār*, *Al-Safīr*, *Al-Mustaqbal*, *Al-Quds* and *al-Maṣrī al-yawm*, confirms this. A quick examination of articles in these sources also shows a similar use of figurative language and metaphors in particular. This study does not consider the figurative language used for conceptualizing similar demonstrations and uprisings in non-Arab countries.[11] But the results of the present inquiry can be used in comparative studies in the future.

For the purpose of the present study I have assembled a representative 270.000 word corpus of different texts dealing with the demonstrations and the political unrest in the Middle East, for the most part in Tunisia and Egypt. The corpus consists of texts written between December 17, 2010, and August 1, 2011. It was first assembled by searches on Al-Jazeera.net for words like *muẓāhara/muẓāharāt* (demonstration/s), *thawra/thawrāt* (revolution/s), *rabīʿ al-ʿarab* (the Arab Spring), and *nahḍa* (awakening). The great majority of articles selected were published under the rubric "Studies and Opinions." Subsequently I manually selected a number of metaphors and figurative expressions that are connected directly with the new reality in the Middle East and the two countries mentioned above. Methodologically I employ the principles of the cognitive semantics approach and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA).[12] I build my arguments on Jonathan Charteris-Black's approach to metaphor analysis that "aims to reveal the covert (and possibly unconscious) intentions of language users."[13] This approach is also anchored on Lynn Cameron and G. Low's outline of three stages in the methodology of metaphor analysis: first, "collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic," second, "generalizing from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify," and, third, using the results "to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or contain people's beliefs and actions."[14]

As a working definition to identify metaphoric expressions in the texts I use Charteris-Black's description of metaphor as "a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context or domain where it is not expected to occur, thereby causing semantic tension."[15] This semantic tension is responsible for creating the potential for metaphor to evoke cognitive and emotional responses and to perform the discursive function of persuasion.

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11  There are not many such studies. But see, for example, <http://lch.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/05/1743872113477078.abstract>; <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3044978?uid=3738744&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21102933209777>; <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450101.2011.532657>; <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01440359208586469>.

12  CHARTERIS-BLACK 2004 and 2005. See also KOLLER 2004.

13  CHARTERIS-BLACK 2004: 34.

14  CAMERON / LOW 1999: 88. CHARTERIS-BLACK (2004: 34) mistakenly attributes this quote to an edited collection by CAMERON and LOW (his 1999a) rather than to their common article of the same year (his 1999b). See also for further discussion CHARTERIS-BLACK 2004: 34–43.

15  CHARTERIS-BLACK 2005: 21.

Selecting metaphors from written texts may appear to be highly subjective, and this is indeed the case. The element of subjectivity is present in all practical work with metaphors and figurative language, despite the fact that all researchers try to hold to certain principles.[16] Charteris-Black accounts for this phenomenon, saying that "this is inevitable because it is not possible to predict entirely emotional responses to language and this does not mean that language-based inquiry should be restricted to what is predictable."[17]

The metaphors I have collected form a miscellaneous group, but the expressions can nevertheless be distributed within three main semantic groups. The groups are not always clearly delineated, especially when one sentence or paragraph contains several metaphors "merging" into one another. The first semantic group represents metaphors that were used for describing and conceptualizing the Arab Spring with its different stages. The second group, which in fact incorporates the most significant number of metaphors, can be defined as dealing with the situation that led to the eruption of the Arab masses. This group of expressions vividly presents the realities of life under the old regimes experienced by the common people and the everyday challenges they had to cope with. The third group can be subsumed under the label "What is coming next after the first battle of bringing down the regime has been won?" In this paper I have dealt only with the group of metaphors describing the uprisings in the Middle East and their stages. The other two groups will be left for future studies.

To characterize briefly the corpus of metaphors assembled, it has to be stressed that they not only carry new meanings and convey new ideas but are also loaded with evaluation and emotion. Thus they display, as in other languages, these distinctive and very important characteristics of metaphors. The numerous metaphoric expressions that I have excerpted from the texts are a mixture of easy to understand or well-known conventional metaphors and novel expressions that are new creations employed to represent the new issues at hand. For some of the metaphors it is possible to suggest that they exploit, as Elena Semino puts it, "the vagueness and ambiguity of metaphorical expressions."[18] Others are concrete and explicit. Reinterpretation of particular metaphors and plays on the metaphorical and literal meaning of expressions are also documented. A certain number of metaphors draw upon traditional and religious extensions of known expressions, "thus establishing intertextual chains."[19] Many of the metaphors appear in clusters within the limits of a single sentence or a longer stretch of text. I look closely into the way such cluster metaphors strengthen the author's arguments by increasing the overall persuasive power of the text and generating a variety of specific pragmatic effects. In my analysis I have made an effort to identify the conceptual bases of the metaphors. This has been of great use since it has provided a way of explaining the associations and inferences that a given metaphor creates. It might further reveal the type of knowledge involved in creating certain metaphorical expressions.

The massive peaceful demonstrations (*muẓāharāt*), uprisings (*intifāḍāt),* or revolutions (*thawrāt*) of the Arab Spring are conceptualized by different authors in different ways, but,

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16  Heywood / Semino / Short 2002: 37 (for issues in metaphor identification).
17  Charteris-Black 2005: 29.
18  Semino 2008: 85.
19  Cf. ibid.

as we shall see, they have much in common. The number of different metaphors is great. In order to provide a better overview, I arrange the metaphors into several groups, roughly according to the underlying source conceptual domain or key concept. For example, I indicate how a number of metaphors can be organized under the umbrella of the "spring" metaphor and how the latter, in turn, can be used as a "structural" metaphor[20] in the sense that it can provide a basis for understanding and appreciating certain recurrent notions and their importance for a text's cohesion on the one hand and its pragmatic value on the other. Thus the first set of metaphors based on conceptual domain or key concept comprises:

1. metaphors grounded in the source conceptual domain of "seasons of the year," and especially the subdomain[21] "spring," along with derivative key concepts such as "birth" (*wilāda*) and "labor pains" (*makhāḍ*). To this group belong metaphors constructed on the related conceptual domain of "weather and weather conditions".

The other conceptual domain/key concept sets of metaphors are:

2. metaphors using key concepts such as "to break through," "to cross over," "to open"
3. metaphors based on the concepts of "fire" and "heat"
4. metaphors grounded in the conceptual domains of "movement along a path" or "journey"

Many of the examples clearly belong to or are created using these source conceptual domains and some of their "typical" features. A number of the expressions are connected to other concepts and exploit relations, associations, and extensions that go beyond the limits that are set forth in this list. Discussion of these domains will have to be put off to another occasion.

## 1. Metaphors based on the source domain "seasons of the year," especially "spring," and the related domain "weather"

Let us look first at the metaphors (1) *rabīʿ al-ʿarab* and (2) *al-rabīʿ al-ʿarabī* – both usually rendered as the Arab Spring.[22] They have to be discussed at length since they are the primary metaphors that stand for the new political and social processes in the Middle East. In

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20  LAKOFF / JOHNSON 1980: 61.

21  In order to capture the "level of subdomain conceptual structures" Andreas Musolff uses the category of "scenario," building on Charles Fillmore's notion of a conceptual "scene" as "any kind of coherent segment of human beliefs, actions, experiences or imaginings" that can be associated with an underlying conceptual "frame," as well as on George Lakoff's use of "'scenario' as a subtype of 'idealized cognitive models.'" Musolff characterizes "scenario" as "a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about 'typical' aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the 'dramatic' storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc." MUSOLFF 2006: 27–28. Cf. FILLMORE 1975: 123-31, and LAKOFF 1987: 285-86.

22  The two expressions are almost identical. They have different grammatical structure – the first one is a genitive construct (*ʾiḍāfa*) and is translated literally as the Spring of the Arabs, thus underlining that the spring belongs to the Arabs. The second one is a noun + adjective construction and translates literally as the Arab Spring.

fact, (2) became the label for almost everything political that was and still is taking place in the Middle East. After January 2011, words like social unrest, uprising, revolution, and changes or reforms are often not used; they are simply replaced by "the Arab Spring." Metaphors (1) and (2) make use of a combination of "spring" and ethnic name. Such expressions are not new: they represent a well-established way to name uprisings against dictatorial regimes. "These springtime labels all owe their rhetorical power to a master metaphor that transfers the qualities of seasonal change to political change."[23] This is not surprising because the notion of "spring" is a universal symbol standing for a fresh beginning, new growth, and new life.

The associations are especially positive and optimistic; one envisions, for example, a new blossom that will develop and later give fruit, or as one of the authors put it:

(3) *wa-l-rabīʿu lā budda ʾan yatbaʿahu ṣayfun wa-thimār* – Spring must be followed by summer and fruit.

Consider another example in which "fruit" metaphorically expresses expected positive results, outcomes, or achievements.

(4) *lan taqṭifa l-shuʿūbu wa-l-ʾaqṭāru wa-l-ʾanẓimatu mutafarriqatan ʾaw mujtamiʿatan thimāra rabīʿi l-thawrāti l-ʿarabiyya ... mā lam yatimma ḥasmu hādhā l-khilāfi ʾawi l-ṣirāʿi l-ʾān* – Nations, countries and regimes, separately or together, will not harvest the fruit of the Spring of the Arab Revolutions, … if this conflict or struggle is not resolved now.

The metaphor fulfills its function of communicating information and simultaneously persuading its audience that the uprisings, despite the spilt blood and destruction, are of great consequence and will lead to previously unimaginable prospects. The sacrifices are worth it; revolutions have to be seen as bringing new life, freedom and dignity. In fact, the word *karāma* (dignity) and expressions like *thawrat al-karāma* (the Dignity Revolution) and *jamīʿ intifāḍāt al-ḥurriyya wa-l-karāma al-ʿarabiyya* (all Arab revolutions of freedom and dignity) appear in almost every text and are related in a sophisticated and perceptive way to the spring metaphor.[24] Spring or rebirth comes after winter, with its associations of frost, dormancy, and stagnation.

In fact, example (4) is making use of a new, derived metaphor created some weeks after the Tunisian revolution, (5) *rabīʿ al-thawrāt al-ʿarabiyya* (the Spring of the Arab Revolutions), which is markedly more focused than "the Arab Spring." The implication of more uprisings to be expected in other Arab countries is clear: it is just a matter of time.

Consider also this example that connects the "spring" metaphor of the uprising with the metaphor of "winter" as symbolizing the political and social climate in Tunisia during the twenty-three year dictatorial regime of Ben Ali:

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23  ZIMMER 2011.

24  The word *karāma* expresses not only dignity, but nobility, high-mindedness, noble-heartedness, generosity, liberality, respect, esteem, prestige, honor, and stands thus for very highly valued qualities and virtues in Arab culture. See WEHR / COWAN 1994: 962b. See also JALLAD 2011: 233–39.

(6) *wa-ʾinnahā la-karāmatun kabīratun ʾan yaʿīsha l-marʾu bidāyāti l-rabīʿi al-tūnisiyyi baʿda shitāʾin qad ṭāl* – It is a great honor to live through the beginnings of the Tunisian Spring after a long winter.

The next two examples describe the revolutions in the Middle East within the wider domain "seasons of the year."

(7) *lam taktamil fuṣūlu l-thawrāti l-ʿarabiyyati baʿd* – The seasons of the Arab revolutions are not over yet.

(8) *fa-l-ḥadathu mā zāla fī bidāyātihi fa-lā yumkinu l-takahhunu bi-l-masārāti llatī qad yaʾkhudhuhā mā lam taktamil kullu fuṣūlihi* – The event is still in its beginnings and it is not possible to predict the paths it may take as long as all its seasons are not completed.

The use of the word "seasons" implies that the "spring" is only a beginning and further evolution is to be expected. This metaphor allows the authors to express their enthusiasm and at the same time to communicate the need to be cautious and to take into consideration unavoidable variations in the phases of the revolutionary process. The reader is indeed warned that in the normal order of the seasons some new "winter" has to be reckoned with – political ups and downs, backward as well as forward movement.

The concept of spring is not only used in a broad sense simply as a season with its symbolic meaning; many subordinate details are also exploited. Consider the vehicles or figures of some metaphors grounded in the conceptual frame of "spring" and its "first signs": buds, blossoms, flowers, jasmine, green colors, breezes, winds, and the like. The first signs of spring are always awaited impatiently. Flowers such as jasmine bloom in the spring, grass and leaves are green and fresh in the spring, and pleasant breezes or winds are often associated with spring as well. All these spring-related metaphorical elements are involved in the conceptualization of the uprisings, and this fact reflects the way they were seen and evaluated by the Arab masses as described by Al-Jazeera.

(9) *thawrat al-yāsmīn* – the Jasmine Revolution

(10) *baʿda l-najāḥi l-mudawwī li-l-thawrati l-khadrāʾ* – after the resounding victory of the green revolution

(11) *intishār riyāḥ al-thawra* – the spreading of the winds of revolution

(12) *lam talbath riyāḥu l-taghyīri l-tūnisiyyatu ʾan habbat ʿalā Miṣra llatī kānat taghlī ʾaṣlan mundhu sinīna sabaqati l-thawrata fī Tūnis* – The Tunisian winds of change soon blew over Egypt, which had actually been boiling for years before the revolution in Tunisia.

(13) *wa-fī hādhā l-ʾatūni l-muḥbaṭi l-mudammari kharajat bashāʾiru l-rabīʿi l-ʿarabiyyi min Tūnisa wa-mtaddat li-Miṣr* – In this ravaged, ruined furnace the first signs of the Arab Spring progressed out of Tunisia and spread to Egypt.

(14) *al-ʾafḍalu li-l-jamīʿi ʾan naḍaʿa l-ʾālāfa min barāʾimi ʾazhāri l-yāsmīni tatafattaḥu (ʿalā ʾasāsi l-qiyami l-mushtarakati li-l-tabāduli wa-l-musāwāti wa-l-iḥtirāmi wa-l-*

*tawāḍuʿ*) – It is better for all to let thousands of jasmine buds open (on the basis of the shared values of reciprocity, equality, respect, and humility).

Expression (9) can be considered a typical example of connecting two virtually impossible concepts – jasmine and revolution. Thus what Charteris-Black calls a "shift in the use of a word or phrase" creates here an expressive metaphor. Revolution is associated with rupture of established order, violence, and destruction. Jasmine on the other hand is a flower traditionally associated in Arabic culture, and in other cultures, with pleasant fragrance, beauty, and tenderness. It is the flower symbol of Tunisia and stands for "purity, sweetness of life, and tolerance."[25] Still the combination of the two words with their meanings and connotations is not unacceptable.[26] On the contrary, it creates a metaphor that is widely understood and appreciated as expressing a very clear and explicit opinion together with a positive evaluation of the events in Tunisia.[27]

"Winds" (*riyāḥ*) in (11) and (12), as well as "wind" (*rīḥ*) in (21) below, carry positive associations of freshness, coolness, and a change of air, not least in the springtime. Employed in expressions about uprisings or revolutions, they imply replacement of the old order with something different, something new and better. The contexts in which these metaphors are utilized contribute to pragmatic inferences of progress, development, and great change. The plural form *riyāḥ* can be linked as well with strong and intense power. The expression *rīḥ ṭayyiba* (fragrant breeze), which is often used in Arabic poetry, is also used as one description of a wind or breeze, sometimes also qualified as "chilly" (*bārida*), that according to a number of traditions attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad will seize the souls of every believer at the Hour of Resurrection.[28] In the Qurʾān the singular *rīḥ* and plural *riyāḥ* are clearly distinguished, because the singular form suggests suffering and punishment, whereas the plural form indicates compassion and mercy for God's creatures.[29]

The symbolism of a ruined furnace rekindled after many years in (13) and thousands of jasmine buds in (14) is appealing and bears a potent message to the reader intended to encourage a positive and optimistic response when assessing the events.

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25  LeMonde.fr, "'Révolution du jasmin': une expression qui ne fait pas l'unanimité," January 17, 2011, <http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2011/01/17/revolution-du-jasmin-une-expression-qui-ne-fait-pas-l-unanimite_1466871_3212.html> (accessed September 14, 2011).

26  There are many other "flower revolutions." *Wikipedia*, "Colour Revolution," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colour_revolution> (accessed September 14, 2011).

27  Tunisians do not accept this way of addressing the revolution because the *inqilāb ʾabyaḍ* (white coup d'état) against Bourguiba made by the former president Ben Ali, who was brought down on January 14, was also called a Jasmine revolution (see n. 24). On Al-Jazeera the expression was often used, especially in articles appearing in January 2011.

28  See, for example, <http://www.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?hflag=1&bk_no=579&pid=325259> (accessed 16.09.2011), apparently extracted from Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Taṣḥīfāt al-muḥaddithīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), with the accompanying *takhrīj*. Cf. Ḥammūd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tuwayjirī, *Itḥāf al-jamāʿa bi-mā jāʾa fī l-fitan wa-l-malāḥim wa-ashrāṭ al-sāʿa* (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1414/1993–94), 3: 218–22, "Bāb mā jāʾa fī hubūb al-rīḥ al-ṭayyiba," <http://resaltalislam.net/UserFrontEnd/ReadLibrary/DisplayIndexes.aspx?View=Page&NodeID=12098&PageID=300&SectionID=0&BookID=3&MarkIndex=0&0> (accessed March 15, 2012).

29  Cf., e.g., Sammān 2008.

Example (15), a full sentence, presents a cluster of metaphors – the spring metaphor with its conceptual scenario of blossoms of all colors.

(15) *maʿa ndilāʿi l-rabīʿi l-ʿarabiyyi l-muzhiri bi-kulli ʾalwāni qawsi quzaḥ, raghma talaṭṭukhihi ʾilā darajātin mutafāwitatin bi-lawni l-dami l-ʾaḥmar, tabdaʾu riḥlatu ʾummatinā li-l-baḥthi [ʿani] l-saʿāda* – With the outbreak of the Arab Spring, blooming with all the colors of the rainbow, and despite the fact that it has been soiled to various degrees with the red color of blood, our nation has started its journey towards the pursuit of happiness.

Despite the many bright flowers produced by the "spring," the metaphor is further exploited to point out that a certain price had to be paid for the victory – the red blood of the victims staining the beautiful flowers. Lastly appears the metaphor of a starting point on a journey to a new, happy future. As in (12) to (14), we see attention-grabbing, all-embracing content packed in a convenient form so that it can influence the reader's perceptions and attitudes towards the events.

Connected with the "spring" metaphor and its frame within the "weather" domain are the metaphors of serious and severe weather. They show that the revolutions are conceptualized, on the one hand, as experienced by the regimes and their representatives. On the other hand, they also underline the anger and determination of the Arab people.

(16) *habba shaʿbiyya ghayr masbūqa* – unprecedented popular uprising (gust)

(17) *al-mutarāfiq maʿa thawrāt wa-habbāt "al-rabīʿ al-ʿarabī"* – which coincides with the revolutions and uprisings of the Arab Spring

In examples (16) and (17) the Arabic words *habba* and *habbāt*, respectively, carry the nuances of the primary meaning, "gust" or "breeze." The associations may also extend to "strong wind" or "revolt," a "(desert) storm" with its destructive potential sweeping away hated rulers and regimes. Other collocations with *habba/habbāt* support much more the extended meaning of uprising, revolt. Below are some expressions where the metaphor of a real storm is utilized.

(18) *ʾinnanā mithlu rukkābi bākhiratin kānat taṭfū sākinatan ʿalā saṭḥi mustanqaʿin natin, thumma wajadat nafsahā wasaṭa ʾaʿtā l-ʿawāṣifi wa-lā ʾaḥada qādirun ʿalā l-takahhuni fī hādhihi l-laḥẓati bi-ʾannanā sa-naghraqu jamīʿan ʾam sa-naṣilu barra l-najāḥ, wa-lā ṭabīʿata dhālika l-barr* – We were like passengers on a ship drifting quietly on the surface of a stinking swamp, when suddenly it found itself in the middle of the wildest of storms, and no one could predict at that moment whether we were all going to drown or would reach the safety of land, nor what the nature of that land might be.

(19) *wa-kāna mithla l-qashshati llatī taddaʿī ʾīqāfa l-ʿāṣifa* – He (Qaddafi) was like a straw claiming to be able to stop a storm.

(20) *bi-ʾanna waḍʿahum ghayru waḍʿi l-buldāni l-ʿarabiyyati l-ʾukhrā llatī taʿīshu ʾakbara zawābiʿi tārīkhihā l-qadīmi wa-l-muʿāṣir* – in that their situation is different from that of the other Arab countries that are living through the biggest storms of their ancient and modern history

Examples (18) to (20) are vivid and expressive, giving a condensed report of what was happening. In (19) a pinch of irony is evident. The rich content of the metaphors, particularly in (18), can be considered further as a synergistic blending that makes the most of several conceptual domains at once, namely, stagnation and inactivity as a result of oppression, great danger, and uncertain outcome: stinking swamp, drifting ship, wild storm, and unknown shore.

The next example, although it is a typical instance of metaphors piled one upon the other, would seem to merit a somewhat closer analysis than many of those we have looked at until now.

(21) *wa-lākinnahā thawratu l-jamī‛, ’innahā thawratu “yā mawlāya,” thawratu yāsmīn, rīḥun ṭayyibatun marrat, tasallalat min nu‛ūshin ‛alā marmā bābi l-janna* – But this is everyone's revolution, it is the Revolution of "O Lord, help us!" the Jasmine Revolution, a fragrant breeze that emanated from coffins [lying] within reach of the gates of Paradise.

In (21) the author's exploitation of his considerable arsenal of metaphors reflects his great excitement and his determination to present the revolution (in Tunisia) as an extraordinary event. He promotes his arguments by appealing to logical associations as well as to conscious and unconscious knowledge and emotion. Some of the metaphors have been discussed above, so I will comment briefly here only on the rest. The expression *thawratu l-jamī‛,* "everyone's revolution," is not a metaphor in the strict sense. The words are used in their literal meaning, stressing that the revolution belongs to the masses. The next expression, *’innahā thawratu “yā mawlāya,* "it is the Revolution of 'O Lord, help us!'" is worthy of note because it can have several possible interrelated interpretations. However it is clear the metaphor is to be associated primarily with poor, destitute people deprived of social rights. The vocative phrase addressing God to ask for help, was also used to address the Caliph in the Middle Ages. People who use the expression are in a submissive position, dependent on an outside, superior power to sustain them. Being used after the literal expression "everyone's revolution," I think it should be treated as a kind of repetition and reinforcement of the previous phrase.

The phrases, *rīḥun ṭayyibatun marrat, tasallalat min nu‛ūshin ‛alā marmā bābi l-janna,* which confront the reader with the challenging image of an improbable "fragrant breeze" emanating from "coffins," confirm the already passionate presentation of the revolution as an extremely positive, lofty event. The conceptualization of the nation confined by its rulers in coffins is indeed stunning and compelling. First, it is in line with a great majority of the metaphorical expressions that exploit the concept of confined space, the image of a container that must be broken open, to describe the position of ordinary people during the years before the revolutions. Second, the metaphor of coffins that are clearly breaking open because of pressure from within generates a wide range of connotations and pragmatic inferences. Among these, for example, is the mistaken assumption on the part of the regimes that the bodies, the nations lying in the coffins, were subdued by internal terror and would remain "dead" forever, confined to the space assigned them. The resurrection of a whole nation and the beginning of a new, different life is clearly implied, as is the overwhelming desire to break free and smash the obstacles that prevent the nation from reaching Paradise, which is a powerful symbol of lasting happiness. It is made plain that once freedom is at-

tained the remaining journey is a short one. Paradise is "within reach." This cluster of metaphors is unrestrained in its praise of the revolution. The author addresses simultaneously a panoply of concepts, such as spring, submissiveness, death, new life, and Paradise. His words represent, in my opinion, a skillful attempt to convince the reader that the revolutions of the Arab Spring were necessary and crucial historical events. The mixture of metaphors is not difficult to understand, and it does not create problems on the textual level. It simply fits nicely into the context. Readers of Arabic literature will recognize this manner of putting together many different figurative expressions and compressing many meanings and connotations into just a few phrases.

## 2. Metaphors built on concepts such as "to break through," "to cross over," and "to open"

These concepts are related since they presume getting beyond certain imposed limits or getting out of a restricted space. Some of the most interesting expressions are those that conceptualize the Arab Spring by the metaphor of breaking out from inside, getting out of a jar, more precisely, a jar with a long, narrow neck (*qumqum*), and gaining freedom. There are clear allusions to the famous fable about the powerful jinni locked for hundreds of years in a lamp.[30] The difference is that "the modern jinni," the Arab peoples, can no longer be put back in the jar.

(22) *kasr al-qumqum alladhī wuḍiʿa fīhi* – breaking the jar they [the Tunisian or any people] have been put into

(23) *mimmā ʾaddā ʾilā ʾikhrāji l-māridi*[31] *mina l-qumqumi ʿalā shakli l-iḥtijājāt* – which led to the release of the giant from the jar in the form of protests.

(24) *wa-l-māridu l-miṣriyyu lladhī kharaja min qumqumihi yajibu ʾallā yaʿūd* – The Egyptian giant that escaped from its jar must not go back.

(25) *badaʾati l-shuʿūbu l-ʿarabiyyatu kasra ḥājizi l-khawfi wa-tajāwuza l-muḥarramāti wa-jtiyāza l-khuṭūṭi l-ḥamrāʾ* – Arab peoples began to break the wall of fear, to defy prohibitions and to cross red lines.

(26) *fajjara l-ẓulmu ḍamāʾirahum fa-ʾāwaw wa-ʾaṭraw-i l-ghaḍaba l-ʿārim … ijtamaʿat kalimatu l-jamīʿi ʿalā ʾan yuḥaṭṭimū ṣanama l-khawf, wa-qad ghadā l-mawtu*

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30  The metaphor of the genie (*jinnī*) out of the bottle is used on the English site of Al-Jazeera. See, for example, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2011/02/20112211027266463.html> (accessed November 20, 2011). It could well be interesting to compare the Arabic and English sites of Al-Jazeera and investigate mutual linguistic influence.

31  The meanings of *mārid* include refractory, recalcitrant, and defiant; rebel, insurgent; demon, evil spirit, devil; giant (WEHR / COWAN 1994: 1059b). From the same root *m-r-d*, words like *mumarrid* (rebel), *mutamarrid* (rebel), and *tamarrud* (rebellion) are derived. They are often used in the texts along with other near synonyms. Thus in the expressions cited a play on meanings is intended, the jinni comes out of the bottle and rebels, which suits the context well in both cases. "Giant" best renders the positive sense of *mārid* implicit here.

*qadaran* – The oppression detonated their consciences and they harbored great an-
ger and extolled [its benefits]. … All agreed to demolish the idol of fear, since death
had become a matter of fate.

Examples (22) to (26) are related to (21) in that they also clearly suggest that revolutions
were the only way to break through and get out of the confined space in which the Arab
peoples had been incarcerated by their leaders. People had to fight for their hopes, defying
severe penalties meant to keep them obedient. Interesting and emotionally strong are the
metaphors "to break the wall of fear" and "to demolish the idol of fear." Here the Arab
peoples are personified, their collective acts being treated as those of a single individual.
The connotations generated are of bravery, will to fight, and readiness for sacrifice. The
word *ṣanam*, idol, together with *ḥaṭṭama*, demolish, can be seen as reminiscent of the victo-
ry of Islam over pagan[32] beliefs. It is reported that "when the Prophet entered Mecca in
triumph, he had 360 idols in the Kaʿba immediately destroyed."[33] Thus if something new
and better is to be achieved, one has to go beyond terrifying barriers and destroy the shame-
ful past with its symbols. Significantly in (25) and (26), the abstract concept "fear" is
turned metaphorically in the former into a universally understood material barrier, a wall,
and in the latter a more culturally specific obstacle, an idol. This seems to reflect the wide
range of cruel measures the regimes used in order to keep the Arab nations under control.
But at the same time the act of "breaking the wall" is stressed to praise the Arab masses in
revolt, their determination to get rid of their oppressors, and their willingness to die for
freedom and dignity. The metaphor extols the fact that thousands of common people dared
to defy the harsh oppressive apparatus. The concept of "fear" appears in many other similar
expressions. In all of these the authors reiterate that transcending the fear of repression was
one of the greatest achievements of the Arab Spring. Interesting examples of this "meta-
phoric materialization" of the abstract concept of fear are the broken "wall of fear" that can
only be repaired with difficulty (*ḥājizu l-khawfi qad kusira wa-ṣāra mina l-ṣaʿbi
tarmīmuhu*), "taking off the robe of fear" (*khalʿ thawb al-khawf*), "escape from the phobia
[lit., the arrowheads of fear] of fear" (*al-takhalluṣ min rihāb al-khawf min al-khawf*). Ef-
forts to bring back the old order of fear are called *muḥāwalāt li-stiʿādat al-ṣanam al-
muhashsham* – attempts to restore the "shattered" idol, where the futility of such attempts
is clearly implied by the adjective *muhashsham* (shattered).

To underline the cohesion of the text and how metaphors contribute to reinforce an au-
thor's opinion and beliefs, it should be mentioned that directly after example (26) the au-
thor cites a line from the "golden ode" (*muʿallaqa*) of the highly appreciated pre-Islamic
poet Ṭarafa ibn al-ʿAbd, who is known for his defiant courage.[34] This piece of poetry, by

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32  In the same article from which (26) was taken ("Intifāḍat Sīdī Bū Zīd ʾilā ʾayn"), the author, Rāshid al-
    Ghanūshī, uses "*ṣanam al-ruʿb*" (idol of dread) or "*ṣanam al-ruʿb wa-l-khawf*." He also uses words like
    *ʾithkhān* (exhausting, weakening) and *mutaghalliban ʿalā* (defeating) as synonyms for *ḥaṭṭama*. Later in
    the text the author makes it clear that the "idol of fear" was destroyed like the idols of al-Lāt and al-
    ʿUzzā. <http://www.aljazeera.net/pointofview/pages/2020d33a-5599-4372-93df-fd0d8228a1ec>.
33  FAHD 1997.
34  MONTGOMERY 2000.

appealing to the readers' appreciation of rhymed language and awakening positive feelings of pride and self-respect, strongly supports the author's attitude.[35]

> *fa-ʾin kunta lā tasṭīʿu dafʿa maniyyatī*
> *fa-da'nī ʾubādirhā bi-mā malakat yadī*

> If you cannot prevent my death
> let me confront it with what I now have at hand

The attitude apparent here, which is found in many of the articles, underlines the conviction that the uprisings, despite their often being called *intifāḍāt al-khubz*, bread uprisings, *intifāḍat al-jiyāʿ*, the uprising of the hungry, and *intifāḍat al-ghaḍab*, the uprising of anger, had goals that were considered higher and nobler than merely securing daily sustenance.

The concepts "to break through" and "to open" are related with another key concept often employed to express authors' attitudes towards the Arab Spring and their evaluation of the events. As in examples (27) to (30), the notions of "cast off" and "sweep away" are used as source concepts for metaphors to express the scale of the uprisings and at the same time to demean the regimes and their representatives.

(27) *ghaḍab al-shāriʿ ʾidh yuṭīḥ bi-ʾawwal ṭāghiya* – "The Anger of the Street When It Casts Off the First Tyrant" (title of an article)

(28) *najāḥ al-shaʿb al-tūnisī fī kans al-niẓām al-istibdādī li-bn ʿAlī* – the success of Tunisian people in sweeping away the oppressive regime of Ben Ali

(29) *al-ʾakhṭaru min hādhā ʾanna hādhihi l-majmūʿata llatī naḥatahā lahību l-thawrati ktashafat quwwatahā wa-ʾannahā qādiratun ʿalā saḥqi l-ṭughāti wa-kansihim kamā law kānū kudsan mina l-qādhūrāt* – The most important thing here is that this group, forged by the flame of the revolution, discovered its power and the fact that it was capable of crushing the tyrants and sweeping them away as if they were a pile of rubbish.

(30) *wa-li-ʾinqādhi mā yumkinu ʾinqādhuhu min maṣāliḥihā llatī ʾaṣbaḥat muhaddadatan baʿdamā tamma kansu ʾahammi wukalāʾihā fī l-minṭaqa* – and in order to save what could be saved of their [the USA's] interests that had become threatened after their most important proxies in the region were swept away

The metaphor of "sweeping away" is strong and vivid. It comes as a natural continuation of the previous metaphors of "breaking through," "crossing over." It is also related to the "wind" and "storm" metaphors. The associations with dirt, rubbish or useless things that have to be removed quickly are clearly and directly expressed. Making the metaphor especially striking is the fact that the rubbish being swept away consists of persons, specifically, those persons who have been in power for decades, have had full control over the inhabitants and the resources of the country, and have been feared by all.

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35 To fit his context and strengthen his arguments, the author interprets this piece of poetry, taken out of the context of the ode, in a way different from the traditionally accepted view, according to which Ṭarafa speaks these verses defending a hedonistic approach to life and death. See Iʙɴ ᴀʟ-ʾAɴʙᴀ̄ʀɪ̄ ed. Hᴀ̄ʀᴜ̄ɴ 1963: 193 (verse 55).

## 3. Metaphors based on the concepts of "fire" and "heat"

The concepts of "fire" and "heat" underly many of the metaphors that describe the situation on the ground during the mass demonstrations of the Arab Spring.[36] The concept of fire with its various scenarios and frames is heavily employed to create metaphorical expressions. Fire, heat, flames, and burning can be of different natures and associated with a plethora of sources. We need recall only the fire of punishment in Hell, the fire that purifies metal ore, and forest or bush fires, even when set to clean the way for new growth. These examples are all sensed initially as destructive, or at least in some way dangerous. On the other hand it is important not to overlook the positive effects of fire, and in particular the fires that purify and those that make room for new growth and the renewal of various ecological (and political) systems. The positive aspects of fire are expressed directly and passionately by one of the authors:

(31)  *"al-ḥarīqu" maẓlūmun fī dhākiratinā wa-thaqāfatinā; fa-huwa ramzu l-takhrībi wa-l-tadmīri wa-l-tashwīh, ʾillā ʾannahu yabdū ḥīna tathūru l-shuʿūbu ḍidda ẓālimīhā shayʾan ʾākhara ʾaw ramzan li-shayʾin ʾākhar, wa-huwa "l-taṭhīr," naʿam, al-ḥarīqu ramzun min rumūzi l-taṭhīr, ʾaw hākadhā yajibu ʾan yakūn, fa-huwa yadhhabu bi-l-ghuthāʾ, wa-yuzīlu l-wakhama wa-l-ʿafan, wa-yumayyizu ʾawtāda l-ʾarḍi wa-jibālahā l-shāmikhata min ʾakwāmi l-rimād, wa-yaknusu mina l-ẓālimi l-laḥma wa-l-ʿaẓm, wa-lā yubqī lahu jildan wa-lā shaʿran.* – "Fire" is treated unfairly in our memory and in our culture. It is a symbol of destruction, devastation, and deformation. But when peoples revolt against their oppressors, it seems to be something else or to be a symbol of something else, namely, "purification." Yes, fire is one of the symbols of purification, or it should be. It removes scum, filth, and decay and makes clear the distinction between the heights of the earth and its high mountains and between heaps of ashes. It sweeps away the flesh and bones of the oppressor and leaves him neither skin nor hair.

Among other significant metaphors are those based on the rapid spread of fire.

(32)  *ʿammati l-nīrānu kulla ʾarjāʾi l-bilād, wa-dakhalati l-thawratu kulla bayt, wa-lam tanṭafiʾ ḥattā ghādara l-raʾīsu l-sābiqu l-bilād* – Fire spread to all parts of the country, and the revolution entered every house and did not die out until the former president left the country.

(33)  *fa-sarat ka-l-nāri fī l-hashīmi ntifāḍatu l-jiyāʿ* – The revolution of the hungry spread like a fire in dry grass.[37]

(34)  *ʾanna sharārāti tilka l-intifāḍati ndalaʿat ʿalā yadi l-shaʿbi wa-busaṭāʾihi … wa-qadi mtaddat wa-ntasharat ka-l-nāri fī l-hashīm* – that the sparks of that uprising broke

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36  Cf. KÖVECSES 2003: 87: "In general, we can claim that the [heat-fire] source domain has as its scope any intense situation (actions, events, states)."

37  In the expression in Arabic the subject "the revolution of the hungry" comes after the verb and comparative phrase. This highlights the spreading of the fire.

out with the help of the people, including the most modest of them, … and grew and spread like a fire in dry grass [38]

(35) *huwa man sa-yuḥriqu l-hashīm, alladhī yaqifu ḥājizan bayna l-shuʿūbi l-ʿarabiyyati wa-taṭalluʿātihā naḥwa l-karāma* – He is the one who will torch the dry grass, the one who stands like a fence between the Arab peoples and their aspirations for dignity.

The concept of fire, as it appears in examples (32) to (35), includes the knowledge that fires can spread very quickly and get out of control, especially if the conditions are suitable. The meaning of the metaphors here is that the political situation had reached a climax and that the rapidly spreading, intense discontent of the people could no longer be held in check by the regimes. The speed and dimensions of the events are thus consciously an integral part of the meaning. This meaning is strengthened by the repeated use of *hashīm*, "dry grass" close to *nār*, "fire," or a verbal substitute like *ʾaḥraqa*, "to kindle, torch." The use of these elements together is almost compulsory because the expressions are variants or elaborations of an old idiom that is successfully employed in the modern context. The original is *ʾasraʿ min al-nār fī l-hashīm* – faster than fire in dry grass.[39]

(36) *fa-waqaʿat daʿwatu l-shabābi yawma 25 yanāyira/kānūna l-thānī wuqūʿa ṣāʿiqatin fī l-suhūbi l-jāffati baʿda ṣayfin ṭawīl* – The call of the youth on January 25 came like a bolt of lightning on dry steppes after a long summer.

(37) *lam takun tataṣawwaru ʾan yuṣbiḥa shakhṣun ʾaḥraqa nafsahu – li-ʾasbābin ẓāhiruhā luqmatu l-ʿaysh – bi-mathābati l-ṣāʿiqi yufajjiru makhzana l-makbūti l-siyāsiyyi wa-l-iqtiṣādiyyi wa-l-thaqāfiyyi lladhī tarākama li-ʿiddati ʿuqūd* – They [political regimes] could not imagine that a person who burned himself, for reasons apparently of daily bread, would become tantamount to a bolt of lightning exploding the storehouse of political, economic, and cultural repression that had accumulated for a number of decades.

Example (36) can be seen as an adroit and effective way of joining at least three metaphors that give a creative and imaginative explanation of how and why the revolutions started. The first metaphor is grounded in the image of a sudden wildfire started by lightning. The second alludes to the years under the dictatorial regimes as "dry (fruitless) steppes," while the third points to the excessive length of this period and the damage wreaked during it, elements easily understood from the image of a long, scorching, Middle Eastern summer. (36) implies clearly that the situation could not be tolerated any longer and that broad segments of Arab society were ready to react instantly when the right moment came. The significance of the "summer" here shows this metaphor also to be grounded in the conceptual domain "seasons of the year" discussed earlier. Example (37) uses the lightning image again, this time to set off an explosion of accumulated griefs, but the effect otherwise is

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38  I am aware that in (33) and (34) a comparative phrase is used, but in the wider context it can be treated as metaphorical use of the concept of fire.

39  For *ʾasraʿ min al-nār fī l-hashīm* Google gave 112.000 cases (accessed May 7, 2011). Statistics from Google give only a very general idea of frequency. Often many links back to only one original text or posting considerably reduce their value.

generally more prosaic, the excessive length of time being expressed simply as "a number of decades" rather than as a "long summer" as in (36).

(38) *laysa l-khubzu, bi-l-raghmi min nadratih, huwa lladhī kāna l-ṣāʿiqata warāʾa tafjīri burkāni ntifāḍati l-karāmati wa-l-ḥurriyyati fī hādhā l-baladi l-ʿarabiyyi l-jamīl* – It was not bread, despite its scarcity, that was the lightning bolt that caused the erup-tion of the volcano of the uprising of dignity and freedom in this beautiful Arab country [Syria].

Example (38), which is part of a long sentence, describes the Syrian uprising using the im-age of lightning as the cause of an explosion, namely, a volcanic eruption. The verb used in both (37) and (38) is the same, "to cause to explode" (*fajjara/tafjīr*). However the image of lightning setting off a volcano eruption includes strong inferences about the political and social situation before the uprising. In fact, many of the metaphors conceptualizing the up-heavals in the Arab world, including examples given in this paper, can also be used to ana-lyze the metaphorical representation of the situation before the revolutions. In a number of cases the images are so tightly interwoven that it is almost impossible to study them sepa-rately.

(39) *Tūnis ʿalā ṣafīḥ sākhin* – "Tunisia on Hot Sheet Metal" (title of an article)[40]

(40) *fīmā taʿīshu duwalun ʾukhrā min nafsi l-muḥīṭi ʿalā ṣafīḥin sākhinin wa-ʿalā raʾsihā Lībyā wa-l-Yamanu wa-l-Baḥrayn* – At the same time other countries from the re-gion live on hot sheet metal, first of all Libya, Yemen and Bahrain.

(41) *wa-lākin fī Tūnisa hunāka thawra, hunāka burkān, li-ʾanna l-balada kāna ʿala ṣafīḥin sākhin* – But in Tunisia there is a revolution, there is a volcano, because the country was on hot sheet metal.

(42) *infajara l-tannūru wa-fāḍa l-māʾ* – The oven exploded and the water overflowed.

In examples (39) to (42) the metaphors make use of the concept of "heat", and symbolize mostly the serious confrontations between demonstrators and authorities. Heat designates as well the determination on the part of the common people to stand firmly and eliminate their oppressors. Regarding the situation before the uprisings, it is also easy to infer that the masses were ready to explode. In (39) and (41) the metaphor of being on hot sheet metal is used to express the anxiety of the Tunisian population. While the author of the Al-Jezeera.net article does not mention the source of his title, in an article published nearly three months later in March 2011 under the similar title "ʿĀlam ʿalā ṣafīḥ sākhin (A World on Hot Sheet Metal)," Najīb al-Zāmil expressly mentions Tennessee Williams and his play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (*Qiṭṭa ʿalā [ṣaṭḥ min] ṣafīḥ sākhin*) to elucidate his title.[41] While this cannot prove filiation, it does suggest that the metaphor includes the same sense of utter crisis conveyed by the play. Example (42) expresses the actual occurrence of the an-ticipated explosion. It can be inferred that the dictatorial regimes were not fully aware of

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40  AlJazeera.net,      28.12.2010,      <http://www.aljazeera.net/analysis/pages/3b25c28b-94c2-4ccc-9973-8b18d0613bd0> (accessed April 14, 2012).

41  *Al-Iqtiṣādiyya al-iliktrūniyya,* 21.03.2011, <http://www.aleqt.com/2011/03/21/article_517352.html> (accessed April 14, 2012).

the "smoldering fire" – the deep dissatisfaction, anger, and hatred harbored by their own people – and that they did not expect the demonstrations and later the fights with the enraged demonstrators to last so long and turn out to be so dangerous for them.

The strong dissatisfaction with a situation and the determination to do something about it expressed by the fire and heat metaphors are particularly clear in the following two examples:

> (43 = 32, latter part) *lam tanṭafiʾ ḥattā ghādara l-raʾīsu l-sābiqu l-bilād* – The fire did not die out until the former president left the country.

> (44) *wa-ṣāra mina l-ṣaʿbi l-yawma tawaqquʿu humūdi burkānihā qabla ʾan tuḥaqqiqa ʾahdāfahā* – It has become difficult today to expect that its volcano [that of the Friday of Defiance (*jumʿat al-ṣumūd*)] will cool down before it [the uprising] achieves its goals.

Particularly noteworthy among fire metaphors is the way the authors play on the literal and metaphorical meanings of "fire" and "fuse." There are a number of such examples, and they are grounded in the actual event that is regarded as having started the uprisings: Mohamed Bouazizi's setting himself on fire in an act of public protest.

> (45) *fa-fī l-shāriʿi wulidati l-thawra, wa-law bi-fatīlin min nārin shawā jisma Muḥammad al-Būʿazīzī raḥimahu llāh* – In the street the revolution was born, even if only from a fuse lit by a fire that burned the body of Mohamed Bouazizi, God have mercy upon him.

Here the notion *shāriʿ* "street"[42] is used in its meaning of the common people, everybody, and conveys connotations of positive evaluation, compassion, and pride.

> (46) *Muḥammad al-Būʿazīzī ʾaḥraqa jasadahu fa-ʾashʿala fatīla barmīli bārūd* – Mohamed Bouazizi set his body on fire and kindled the fuse of a keg of gun powder.

In examples (45) and (46) as well in the next two examples, (47) and (48), the concept of fire is represented by more frames and scenarios – nouns such as fuse, spark, gun powder,[43] and verbs like burn, set on fire, kindle. The metaphors are not novel. They are well established and conventional, easy to understand, but they are still able to trigger a wide range of connotations when used in the context of events in the Middle East.

> (47) *ʾiṭlāq al-sharāra al-ʾūlā wa-ʾishʿāl fatīl al-thawra* – to strike the first spark and light the fuse of revolution

> (48) *al-fatīl al-tūnisī wa-l-bārūd al-miṣrī* – "Tunisian Fuse and Egyptian Powder" (a title)

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42 REGIER / KHALIDI 2009.

43 The notion of gun powder can be seen in a wider context as part of the concept of war. The examples cited can easily fit into a framework of starting a war against the Arab regimes. And in fact the confrontations between demonstrators and authorities were very similar to street war between unequal parties.

In the last example one sees, although not very explicitly, the idea of Arab unity, which is present in many texts. The revolutions are expected to bring the different Arab nations closer and create a common agenda of cooperation on a number of vital issues.

(49) *ʾin tamakkanat [laʿbatu l-dīmuqrāṭiyya li-l-ṭughāti] min tahdiʾati nīrāni al-ghaḍabi li-baʿḍi l-waqt, fa-hiya lam tatamakkan min ʾiṭfāʾihā, wa-laʿallahā kānat tusāhimu fī taʾjījihā ʿalā naḥwin tadrījī* – Although they [the oppressors] managed to moderate the fires of anger for some time, they did not manage to put them out; and possibly they were taking part in gradually kindling them.

The extended fire-anger metaphor in (49) is yet another example of how this image is employed to represent the unprecedented outbreak of protests and revolutions that characterize "The Arab Spring." The interwoven metaphors in this example express the utter helplessness of the corrupt regimes confronted by the smoldering anger of the people. Example (49) is in a way an introduction to how the texts in the corpus present the situation in the years before the revolutions. As I remarked earlier, very often there is no clear delineation between metaphors describing the uprisings themselves and those portraying the conditions that led to them. In a great number of expressions presented above there is a allusion to why the demonstrations started and subsequently developed into revolutions. The authors of the texts, being in favor of the Arab Spring, as previously noted, try through their figurative language to persuade the reader that the uprisings were the only honorable alternative.

(50) *al-Būʿazīzī yaḥtariqu li-yakūna shamʿata nūrin li-l-ḥurriyyati wa-l-ʿamal, lam yaʿud bi-wusʿi l-marʾi ʾan yaktub, waḥdahu l-maydānu ʾaṣbaḥa ṣāliḥan li-l-munāẓarati maʿa l-diktātūriyyati l-bārida* – Bouazizi burns and becomes a candle of light for freedom and action. One can no longer write. The public squares alone have become the proper place to debate with the cold dictatorship.

(51) *wa-sa-tusṭaru qiṣṣatuhā bi-ʾaḥrufin mina l-nūri fī ṣafaḥāti niḍāli l-shuʿūbi ḍidda l-ṭughāti wa-l-ḥukkāmi l-istibdādiyyīn* – Its story [that of the Egyptian revolution] will be written down with letters of light in the pages of the struggle of peoples against tyrants and despotic rulers.

I consider (50) and (51) as suitable examples to conclude the discussion of how the concepts of "fire" and "heat" and their semantic frames, represented here by light, are employed in conceptualizing the uprisings. In (50) a beautiful metaphor full of optimism, "a candle of light for freedom and action," is opposed to the metaphorically "cold" dictatorship, a regime detached from its people, insensitive, and dead inside. A violent act of self-immolation is shown (as in other examples) from a new and powerful perspective, one that emphasizes hope and belief in a better future. Suicide is forbidden in Islam, it should be noted, but none of the texts even hints at this fact. In example (51), which like (50) stresses optimism, the historic significance of the revolution is extolled.

## 4. Metaphors grounded in the conceptual domains of "movement along a path" or "journey"

The conceptual domains of "path" or "journey"[44] and their key concepts, frames and scenarios, such as road, map, turn or bend in the road, fork in the road, road crossing, starting point, charting a map, opening a road, travel towards a destination, and dangers along the way are used extensively in political discourse. Since they offer so many possibilities for generating figurative expressions, this is not surprising. It appears natural to resort to this conceptual domain when a major change of political or social character is underway. We note as well that these concepts are strongly related to the umbrella concept of spring as the beginning of an expected natural development, in the case under discussion a development towards a better life with dignity and a brighter future.

Consider the following examples:

(52) *lākinna l-ʾakīda wa-l-musallama bihi ʾanna l-thawrāti l-ḥāliyyata nuqṭatu nṭilāqin li-mustaqbalin mukhtalif* – But it is certain and indisputable that the present revolutions are the starting point of a different future.

(53) *munʿaṭaf fī maʿrakat al-istiqlāl al-thānī* – a turn in the battle for the second independence

(54) *mundhu maṭlaʿi l-ʿām, taḥdīdan mundhu nṭilāqi qiṭāri l-rabīʿi l-ʿarabiyyi min maḥaṭṭatihi l-tūnisiyya* – since the beginning of the year, and more precisely since the train of the Arab Spring started from its Tunisian station

(55) *al-ṭarīqu li-l-intiqāli min makhāḍi rabīʿi l-thawrāti l-ʿarabiyyati ʾilā ḥaṣīlatihi l-marjuwwa* – the road to the transition from the labor pains of the Spring of the Arab Revolutions to its desired results

(56) *fa-taḥiyyatan li-Tūnisa llatī taftaḥu ṭarīqa l-ḥurriyyati fī ʿālamin ʿarabiyyin qatalahu l-intiẓāru ʿalā l-ṭarīq* – Greetings to Tunisia, which is opening the road to freedom in an Arab World slain by waiting on the road.

(57) *istaṭāʿa fī laḥẓatin ʿāṣifatin ʾan yajtariḥa ṭarīqa l-khalāṣi l-ʿarabī* – In a moment of rage he [Mohamed Bouazizi] managed to open the road to Arab salvation

(58) *hākadhā, fa-ʾinna thawrāti l-shuʿūbi l-ʿarabiyyati … ʾaʿādat lahā karāmatahā wa-thiqatahā bi-nafsihā wa-waḍaʿati l-ʿālama l-ʿarabiyya ʿalā sikkati l-ḥurriyyati wa-l-mustaqbal* – Thus the revolutions of the Arab peoples … have given them back their dignity and self-confidence and put the Arab world on the road to freedom and the future.

(59) *ḥaythu saḥabati l-jamāhīru l-hādira fī tadaffuqihā naḥwa l-mayādīni l-bisāṭa min taḥti ʾaqdāmihi [tanẓīm al-Qāʿida, etc.] li-taqūl: min hunā yabdaʾu l-taghyīr, min ṣudūrinā l-ʿāriyati wa-qabaḍāti ʾaydīnā llatī tulāmisu wajha l-samāʾi taṭalluʿan li-l-ḥurriyyati wa-l-karāma* – when the roaring masses, as they poured toward the

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44  See, e.g., LAKOFF / TURNER 1989: 3–4, ABDULMONEIM 2006, SEMINO 2008: 109–17.

squares, dragged the carpet from beneath its [al-Qāʿida's, and like organizations'] feet so as to say: From here begins change, from our naked breasts and our clenched fists that graze the face of the sky aspiring for freedom and dignity

(60) *laqad futiḥa bābu l-ʾamali mujaddadan wa-min ḥaqqinā wa-wājibinā l-ʿawdatu li-ʾaḥlāminā l-ʿuẓmā wa-mashārīʿinā l-kubrā, ḥattā wa-law kunnā naʿlamu ʾanna l-ṭarīqa lā yazālu ṣaʿban wa-ṭawīlan wa-malʾāna bi-l-ʾakhṭār* – The door of hope has been opened again, and it is our right and duty to return to our great dreams and major projects, even if we know that the road is still difficult, long, and full of dangers.

(61) *wa-naḥnu ʾamāma wāḥidin min ʾakhṭari muftaraqāti l-ṭarīqi lladhī tamshī ʿalayhi hādhihi l-ʾummatu l-ʿaẓīmatu mundhu 15 qarnan*[45] – We are standing before one of the most dangerous forks in the road that this great nation has been moving on for the past fifteen centuries.

(62) *Tūnis … khāriṭat ṭarīq ʾilā al-dīmūqrāṭiyya* – "Tunisia … Road Map to Democracy" (title)

(63) *laḥẓa li-kitābat al-khāriṭa al-siyāsiyya al-jadīda li-Tūnis* – a moment to chart the new political map of Tunisia

(64) *ʾaʿtaqidu ʾanna ḥarakata l-shāriʿi l-tūnisiyyi sa-tuʿīdu tartība jadwali l-ʾawlawiyyāti fī khāriṭati l-waʿyi l-ʿarabī* – I believe that the movement of the Tunisian street will reorder the list of priorities on the map of Arab consciousness.

Examples (52) to (61) have much in common because they conceptualize the revolutions by means of notions within the domain of the key concept of "journey" – starting point, road, fork in a road, and turn. Some of the metaphors are lucid and plain, directly stating the author's opinion, as in (52) to (54). In (55) to (61) more elements of the "metaphor scenario"[46] are introduced and additional source concepts are brought in so as to achieve a stronger and more complex presentation of the target concept, the revolution. Thus in example (55), "the road to the transition" is reached through the "labor pains of the Spring of the Arab Revolutions" and is expected to bring the "desired results." In (56) the metaphor gives human agency to Tunisia which "is opening the road to freedom." The political stagnation in the Arab world is represented by the destructive and ironic "waiting on the road." Very similar is (57), where Mohamed Bouazizi "opens" the road to "Arab salvation." Note the forceful and compelling judgment of the author produced by his contrasting a single act of self-immolation carried out in a fit of rage with the salvation of many millions of Arabs it brought about. In example (58) the revolutions metaphorically give back to the Arab peoples an invaluable commodity – their dignity and self-confidence, which sets them on the "road to freedom and the future." Thus the revolutions are agents in two consecutive

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45 After this phrase comes a piece of poetry by Aḥmad Shawqī (called "The Prince of Poets"): *wa-mā staʿṣā ʿalā qawmin manālun / ʾidhā l-ʾiqdāmu kāna la-hum rikābā* "It is not hard for a people to succeed / if courage rides with them". – About Aḥmad Shawqī and his prominent place in modern Arabic poetry and literature in general, see, for example, STARKEY 2006: 45-48); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Shawqi> (accessed September 18, 2011).

46 See footnote 20.

processes. Stirring and dramatic is (59), where the "roaring masses," acting as one unit, take up the initiative for change and "drag the carpet from beneath the feet" of various organizations promising freedom and a better future. Anger, daring, and determination are conceptualized in the initial "roaring" and then in the "naked breasts" and "clenched fists that graze the face of the sky," the latter two images stressing metaphorically the high goals and noble ambitions of the uprisings. Example (60) states clearly that the present situation is a second chance to fulfill "great dreams and major projects" and that the opportunity has to be seized despite the difficulties and the dangers involved. Example (61) emphasizes the significance of the current situation compared to previous crises.

The last three examples (62–64) are grounded in the concept of map as part of the "journey" scenario. Example (62) is perhaps inspired by the "road map for peace" initiative, while (63) and (64) carry the metaphor into the realms of policy and popular awareness, respectively.


## Summary

Example (65) below provides a good starting point for a summation of prominent features we have observed in the metaphors conceptualizing the Arab Spring. The author presents in a concise and picturesque way the Tunisian uprising and his assessment of it.

> (65) *ʾaṣābiʿu tattahim, wa-dimāʾun tasīl, al-shaʿbu qāla kalimatah … katabahā bi-ḥibrin ʾaḥmara lā yumḥā, al-tārīkhu thanā rukbatayhi ḥtirāman, shuʿūbu l-ʿālami tanẓuru ʾilayhi min thuqbi bābihā l-ṣaghīr … Tūnisu ḥulmun yataḥaqqaq, Tūnisu makhāḍun fa-wilādatun jadīda* – Fingers accusing, blood streaming, the people have spoken … they have written (their verdict) with indelible red ink, history has knelt in respect, the peoples of the world look at them [the Tunisian people] through the small hole in their doors … Tunisia is a dream coming true, Tunisia is the labor pains of a new birth.

This passage is another good example of mixing many different metaphors without creating confusion or problems of understanding. The cluster of metaphoric expressions summarizes much of what has been discussed up to now. The metaphors have several conceptual sources, they are not novel or striking, but taken together they describe in an emotional, vivid, and to some extent overstated way reality as seen from the author's prospective. What has to be highlighted here is the assertion by the author that the nation is not only saying what it wants; it has given a record of its demands written in blood. The image of writing in blood is present in many of the texts. The map of the future is charted (written) too. The persuasive power of personification is particularly evident in this example, in which the Tunisian people and the peoples of the world are placed vis-à-vis each other. History is also personified, having knelt out of respect, thus recognizing that the events of the uprising are writing a new page in its long book. The author's purpose is to convince his readers that what is happening is not a simple outburst of anger but something momentous that opens the road to fulfillment of the dream of a new, different future. He presents his arguments in order to legitimize the revolution and thus also to legitimize what is to come. Familiar and readily understood metaphors, casting blame on the authorities and focusing on the sacrifice and suffering of the demonstrators, underscore the negative as-

pects of the uprising at the beginning of the passage. Then the tone of the metaphors and their pragmatic effects change, and a positive evaluation of the same conflict is projected. This is achieved first through the history metaphor, then the dream metaphor, and finally the new birth metaphor.

Based on the analysis of this last complex metaphor and of those we have looked at earlier in our study, it should now be possible to "put the pieces together" and recapitulate our findings. There are several main source conceptual domains and key concepts involved in the metaphors discussed that complement each other and, indeed, grow into each other in a very convincing way. Examples can be seasons of the year and fire, spring, and journey. Often as real masters of the written word the authors of the articles succeed brilliantly in the interweaving of metaphors (and other figurative expressions), thus addressing several layers of our conceptual system as well as stacks of encyclopedic and cultural knowledge. One remains with the impression that the euphoria produced by the unprecedented events in Tunisia and Egypt, and in the Middle East as a whole, contributed to a leap in the use of figurative language.

Metaphors in clusters appear frequently to express in a condensed style why and how the Arab Spring started, to explain what was happening on the ground, and to suggest the objectives of the uprisings. The authors of the texts continue in many ways the traditions of Arabic rhetoric and stylistics built on widespread use of all kinds of figures of speech. They mix them well so as to express their attitudes and views in a way that will win the minds and hearts of their readership. Lines of verse from ancient and modern Arab poets are frequently cited to support ideas and opinions, reflecting the known Arab fascination with poetry. Similarly, allusions to Islam and its traditions are common.

The metaphors employed to conceptualize the upheavals represent a chain of event scenarios that developed over time. It is not surprising to find key concepts like confined space, container, fire, heat, spring, weather, wind, dignity, dream, birth, journey, and road used as source domains to conceptualize the unrest and revolutions in the Middle East. They were, after all, based on real experience. People from "all walks of life" left the walls of their homes, stepped beyond the "barrier of fear," and gathered to express their anger and their demand for major changes. For decades, indeed for centuries, most Arab peoples had been oppressed and were given no arena in which to articulate their aspirations or their dissatisfaction. This did not mean, however, that such feelings disappeared or were never there. Eventually, as Orin Hargraves put it, "people seem to have reached the limit of their patience with and tolerance of repressive nonrepresentative governments,"[47] and they erupted, taking matters to the streets.

All started with peaceful demonstrations, but the demonstrations could not remain non-violent, because the regimes that for so long had been in power were unwilling to accept the huge changes wanted by the masses. Clashes with the authorities became inevitable and left behind great destruction as well as many killed and injured. But the masses, and their dreams of a more dignified existence, survived the ordeal. This was the Arab Spring: (re)birth and development, and the start of a journey on a newly opened road to a different future.

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47 "Translating Democracy," *Language Lounge*, May 2, 2011, <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/ll/2836/> (accessed November 28, 2011).

As was mentioned at the beginning, figurative expressions in general and metaphors in particular are used to put complicated and difficult political or social matters into a simplified and understandable frame. They are also employed to promote specific ideas and the attitudes and stances associated with them as well as to provoke contrasting emotional responses such as antipathy and hate, or excitement, enthusiasm and admiration. The upheavals, uprisings, and revolutions labeled the Arab Spring were unprecedented events both politically and socially and needed to be represented and explained. They had to be conceptualized in a way that would make them easier to comprehend and to endorse (or reject). The metaphors used to describe them add expressiveness and vividness to the authors' arguments and make persuasion easier. Nevertheless the metaphors nearly always have an element of vagueness and ambiguity, and leave enough space, within their general frame, for every reader to understand and interpret them according to his/her cultural background, system of values, and personal way of making associations.

The texts published on Al-Jazeera.net are openly in favor of the Arab Spring and in general of all changes leading to justice, freedom and democracy that would make the Middle East an equal partner of Europe and the United States in this respect. The authors, coming from different Arab countries, show in their analysis deep knowledge and understanding of political and social issues in contemporary Arab societies. In the texts they demonstrate great concern about the future of the Arab nations and are actively involved in discussing possible scenarios for the outcome of the revolutions. The groups of metaphors analyzed are all closely linked to each other. They are all about a new life, a new start, and a new road to dignity.

While many of the metaphors discussed above have undoubtedly been used to describe other upheavals and revolutions, since frustration, rage and desire for change are common elements in all such movements, many are linguistically and culturally specific and could not have arisen in other contexts. Extensive use of Arabic poetry, both classical and modern, allusions to characters and stories from pre-Islamic and classical Arabic literature, and reminiscences of or direct quotations from the Arabic text of the *Qurʾān* and the traditions of the Prophet are elements that separate this group of metaphors from those generally possible in other languages or cultures. The result of the combination of these elements with more universal metaphors is a unique amalgam.

In this presentation of a selection of metaphorical expressions used to conceptualize the Arab Spring, I have explained to some extent how metaphors can influence the readers' perception of reality and their attitudes and opinions. Readers' comments attached to the articles in the corpus, which could be the object of a study of their own, provide further proof of the persuasive power of metaphors. Readers use or extend the metaphors they find, or even add new ones, mostly to express their agreement with what they have read.

To conclude, in line with the positive evaluation of the events found in the corpus of texts from Al-Jazeera.net, I would like to cite a few lines of poetry by the Tunisian poet Abū al-Qāsim al-Shaʿbī. These lines appear several times in the corpus.

> *ʾidhā l-shaʿbu yawman ʾarāda l-ḥayā   / fa-lā budda ʾan yastajība l-qadar*
> *wa-lā budda li-l-layli ʾan yanjalī /  wa-lā budda li-l-qaydi ʾan yankasir*

> If a nation one day wants life / fate must comply
> Night must vanish / and chains must be broken

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