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Arab Coverage of the 2011 Uprisings: Anti-Colonial Nostalgia and "the New Generation"

Abstract:

This paper examines the Arab media coverage of the Arab uprisings of 2011. It analyzes more than 50 press articles and opinion pieces from Arabic-language newspapers and online news sources from across the Arab world, which were published between 15 January and 15 April 2011. The paper argues that in the initial coverage of the uprisings Arab media nostalgically emphasized collective memories about past anti-colonial struggles and constructed a new collective identity based on the notion of a young Arab generation. Both these themes underplayed the significant differences between Arab countries’ histories and current political and economic contexts and collapsed them in the unified journalistic narrative of the “Arab Spring Revolution.” The paper contends that this narrative flattened temporal and spatial complexities and as a result contributed to how the protests spread across several Arab countries in a remarkably short period of time.