

A Slimbook by Abul-Hasanat Siddique and Casper Wuite  
in partnership with Fair Observer

Foreword by Atul Singh

**THE ARAB**

**UPRISINGS:  
AN INTRODUCTION**



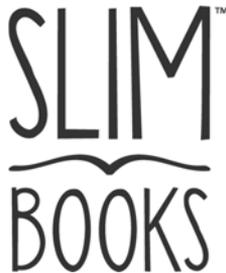
SLIM  
BOOKS

# The Arab Uprisings

*An Introduction*

A SlimBook by **Abul-Hasanat Siddique and Casper Wuite**

Foreword by **Atul Singh**



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*“The Arab world was considered a stagnant pond of retardation and tyranny, inhabited by what appeared to be a complacent populace toiling fatalistically under the yoke of their dictators. Most observers thought this status quo to be stable, if not permanent. What’s worse, many Arabs thought so too.*

*Boy, look at us now.”*

***Iyad El-Baghdadi***

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## Foreword

There are times when the ground beneath our feet shakes, and the world as we know it changes forever. In 1776, America declared its independence, and in 1789, France had its revolution. Both events continue to echo in our daily lives. In 1885, drawing inspiration from the Americans, Indians got together to form the Indian National Congress. In 1947, India attained independence. The great European empires started crumbling and countries such as Indonesia and Kenya were soon independent too.

The Arab Uprisings are a seminal moment in world history. For years, Arab regimes have expropriated power and wealth from their people. In the age of the Internet, exploding populations, and greater aspirations, these regimes have been increasingly incongruous. People, regardless of their race, religion, gender or culture, do not want to live in fear. They do not want a midnight knock on their doors. They want basic freedoms, education for their children, decent jobs, peace, and prosperity. In short, people everywhere want a life of dignity, and the Arab Uprisings are the Arab people's struggle for such a life.

Authoritarian regimes that remain unresponsive to the aspirations of their people have been bound to crumble. History is replete with examples of revolutions such as in the US and France, struggles for independence as in India and Kenya, and transitions to democracy as in Brazil or South Korea. Since the end of apartheid in South Africa, nothing has been as momentous as the Arab Uprisings. We will look back to them as a time when a whole region was reborn.

The Arab Uprisings will cause each country to change differently. The entire process will be messy, protracted, and painful. Many fear destabilization, chaos, and violence. That fear is justified, but irrational. The status quo is untenable and no one can turn back the clock. It is painfully apparent that the Arab Uprisings have already seen their share of

bloodshed, and might see more. However, the future of the region holds immense promise because the people have finally spoken. The rules of the game are being rewritten and we are fortunate enough to see the changes taking place before our eyes. Eventually, the Arab Uprisings will lead to modern democratic states and more dynamic societies. The fear mongering of alarmists who opposed the uprisings will seem eerily similar to the sentiments of imperialists who saw the collapse of empires as harbingers of chaos and decay.

The Arab Uprisings are a complex phenomenon, much talked about, but little understood. At [Fair Observer](#), our goal is to help you make sense of the world. This book is our enterprise to ensure that you understand the uprisings better. Abul-Hasanat Siddique and Casper Wuite, the authors, seek to explain what happened, why it happened, what is different, what lies ahead, and what can be done.

Here is to hoping that you enjoy reading the book half as much as I did.

**Atul Singh**

Founder & Editor-in-Chief, Fair Observer  
Washington DC, USA

*November 2012*

# Introduction

The Arab Uprisings have been some of the most significant events of the last decade. Their impact can be felt today and will continue to be felt for many years. Few within the international community anticipated the magnitude and impact of the revolts.

Since Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation set off a sequence of events, a body of literature on the Arab Uprisings has been produced. Most of this analysis has been thoughtful and thorough, covering everything from the Islamist upsurge to the economic downturn. The Arab Uprisings: An Introduction provides an accessible overview for the curious mind. We set out to explore what happened, why it happened, what is different, what lies ahead, and what can be done.

This book starts off by asking, "What are the Arab Uprisings?" The first chapter provides salient features of each uprising and details of the most important events.

The second chapter asks, "Why did the Arab Uprisings happen?" It examines root causes of the revolts in different countries and demonstrates that conditions for popular uprisings had been in place for many years.

The third chapter describes the new realities in the region. We discuss aspects such as the rise of Islamism, sectarianism, security challenges, and the shifting balance of power in the region.

The fourth chapter then examines what ought to be done and offers concrete suggestions for policy makers.

The final chapter discusses the role of the international community. For years, many foreign countries have had important stakes in the region's affairs. We discuss how the Arab Uprisings have affected their interests in the Middle East and North Africa, and offer suggestions for them to act going forward.

We have chosen to use the term "Arab Uprisings" instead of "Arab Spring", "Arab Revolution" or "Arab Awakening" because we believe it does more justice to the nature of the events that have transpired over the last two years. While political unrest continues to be felt in relatively unaffected countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, we have focused on the countries where the uprisings were especially notable: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Smaller bouts of unrest in Algeria, Morocco, and Jordan are treated as a separate category. At the time of writing, the situations across the region, particularly in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan, remain fast paced.

We thank the team at Fair Observer, including Atul Singh, for his valuable advice and guidance, Manuel Langendorf, for his research assistance, and the Business Development team, for their creative and sustained marketing efforts. We are grateful to SlimBooks for publishing this book. We remain accountable for any clerical, factual, or prescriptive mistakes within.

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*November 2012*

## Key Events

**December 17, 2010** - Mohammed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in front of the local municipal office of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia.

**December 29, 2010** - Protests in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, break out over lack of housing.

**January 14, 2011** - President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali and his family flee Tunisia by plane and are eventually hosted by Saudi Arabia.

**January 14, 2011** - Tunisian street protests, which ousted Ben Ali, inspire similar demonstrations in Jordan.

**January 25, 2011** - Thousands of anti-government protesters gather in Cairo's Tahrir Square for the "Day of Rage", calling for the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. Protests erupt all over Egypt.

**January 27, 2011** - Protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh begin in the capital of Yemen.

**February 11, 2011** - After 18 days of protest in Egypt, Mubarak stands down as president, transferring power to the military.

**February 14, 2011** - Thousands of protesters gather in Manama, Bahrain's capital, to demonstrate against the government. A security crackdown results in the death of several protesters.

**February 15, 2011** - Protests erupt in Benghazi, Libya's second largest city. It leads to several days of fighting as hundreds of people are killed. Eventually, anti-Muammar Qaddafi fighters seize control of the city.

**February 20, 2011** - Thousands of protestors demonstrate throughout Morocco, calling for reform and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy that curbs the powers of the king.

**February 27, 2011** - The National Transitional Council (NTC) is formed to act as the political face of the Libyan revolution.

**March 14, 2011** - The Bahraini regime invites troops from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), mainly from Saudi Arabia, to quell the growing unrest.

**March 15, 2011** - Activists organize a “Day of Rage” in Syria. Coordinated protests break out after a spate of sporadic demonstrations that have been taking place since January.

**March 19, 2011** - Following a United Nations Security Council vote on March 17 to impose a no-fly zone, NATO starts bombing Libya.

**June 3, 2011** - President Saleh is injured in an attack on the presidential compound and is taken to neighboring Saudi Arabia for medical treatment.

**June 19, 2011** - Syrian opposition activists meet in Istanbul to form a unified opposition, the Syrian National Council.

**July 1, 2011** - Morocco's king wins a landslide victory in a referendum on modest constitutional reforms, which he proposed to appease the protesters. Activists continue to demonstrate and call for greater reforms.

**August 20-23, 2011** - The Battle for Tripoli commences as opposition groups launch an uprising with the support of NATO. After three days of fighting, Libyan rebel fighters take the capital.

**October 4, 2011** - Russia and China veto a UN resolution condemning Syria.

**October 20, 2011** - Rebels capture Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown, after a two-month siege, killing Qaddafi in a shootout. Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the leader of the NTC, declares Libya to be liberated.

**October 23, 2011** - Tunisia holds its first elections since Ben Ali's ouster. The Islamist party An-Nahda wins a plurality.

**November 23, 2011** - Two months after returning from Saudi Arabia, Saleh finally signs the GCC-backed deal to transfer power and steps down. In return, he is granted full immunity. Protests continue with many citizens demanding that Saleh face trial.

**November 23, 2011** - A state-backed inquiry concedes that "excessive force" was used by security in Bahrain against pro-democracy protesters.

**November 25, 2011** - Following modest constitutional reforms, Morocco holds its first parliamentary elections. The Justice and Development Party, an Islamist party, wins most of the seats.

**November 28, 2011** - Egypt hosts its first parliamentary elections since Mubarak's departure. The three-phase process ends in January with the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party winning a majority of the seats.

**December 19, 2011** - Syria agrees to an Arab League initiative that allows observers into the country. The League suspends its mission in January because of escalating violence.

**February 4, 2012** - A draft UN resolution on Syria is blocked by Russia and China.

**February 14, 2012** - Police prevent the Bahraini opposition from protesting on the anniversary of the 2011 crackdown. Protests resume throughout the spring.

**February 21, 2012** - Presidential elections take place in Yemen. Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, the only candidate running for office, wins.

**March 21, 2012** - The UN Security Council supports a peace plan drafted by Kofi Annan aimed at ending the violence in Syria.

**May 10, 2012** - Algeria holds early parliamentary elections. The FLN, the ruling party, wins by a large margin.

**May 23-24, 2012** - Egypt holds its first presidential elections since Mubarak. After the first round of voting, the two frontrunners are the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi and former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq.

**May 27, 2012** - The UN Security Council condemns the Syrian government's use of heavy weaponry and militia after the Houla massacre.

**June 14, 2012** - Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court orders parliament to disband, as the ruling military assumes full legislative power and curbs the power of the incoming president.

**June 24, 2012** - Following the second round of voting on June 16-17, Morsi is sworn in as Egypt's new president, the first time a democratically elected leader will rule the country.

**July 7, 2012** - Libya holds elections for a General National Council to replace the NTC. The National Forces Alliance wins.

**July 18, 2012** - The opposition Free Syrian Army increases pressure on the Assad government as it kills three security chiefs, including the president's brother-in-law and his defense minister, in a Damascus bomb attack. The opposition also seizes Aleppo, the main city of the north. The Syrian government launches a massive offensive to recapture the city, but makes little headway.

**August 2, 2012** - Annan, the UN-Arab League Special Envoy, resigns in frustration at the lack of progress regarding the resolution of the conflict. He is succeeded by veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi.

**August 12, 2012** - President Morsi forces Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, the head of the military, into retirement following attacks by Islamist-militants on Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula.

**October 3, 2012** - Turkey strikes military targets in Syria after a mortar attack from Syrian territory kills five civilians inside Turkish territory.

**October 4, 2012** - King Abdullah dissolves parliament amidst continuing political uncertainty in Jordan. Elections are due in January 2013.

**October 19, 2012** - A bomb blast in Lebanon kills Wissam Al-Hassan, the country's internal security chief. Clashes erupt between armed gunmen throughout the country, including Beirut and Tripoli.

**October 26, 2012** - A four-day UN-brokered ceasefire in Syria is broken by a bomb attack in Damascus. Violent clashes continue throughout the country. Opposition activists claim that over 35,000 people have died since the start of the uprising.

**November 12, 2012** - Israel's army fires shells into Syria in response to a Syrian mortar shell that hit the Occupied Golan Heights.

**November 14, 2012** - Protests erupt in Jordan after the government cut fuel subsidies.

# Chapter 1

## *What are the Arab Uprisings?*

On December 17, 2010, a tragic incident occurred in Tunisia. Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor, set himself alight in Sidi Bouzid, a small village. Bouazizi acted out of desperation. He was protesting the confiscation of his wares by local police and the constant harassment by municipal officials. He ended up in a coma and eventually died, triggering off a wave of protests that have since been termed the Arab Uprisings.

The uprisings that followed Bouazizi's death were part of a larger pattern. Tunisia, and indeed the entire Middle East and North Africa, had been seeing "an increase in protests, strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of social protest"<sup>1</sup> over the last decade. High unemployment, poverty and, rising living costs had been creating resentment against the authoritarian governments in the region since the early 2000s. For years, those in power had ignored the discontent of the people. Bouazizi's self-immolation acted as the spark that finally converted collective frustration into mass action, leading to the downfall of the Tunisian regime.

The success of the Tunisian uprising "ignited" protests across the region. People from Morocco to Bahrain took to the streets to demand "Freedom, Bread, and Dignity".<sup>2</sup> The uprisings in various countries have been markedly similar in their declaration "against dictatorship, against corruption, and for independence".<sup>3</sup> However, the path they have followed and their outcomes have been widely divergent. Below is an account of what happened in each country, and why some uprisings succeeded while others did not.

## Tunisia: A Model for the Region?

**Result:** President Overthrown

### *Essential Features of the Tunisian Uprising:*

- Protests originated in rural regions before spreading to the capital.
- Strong field leadership and social media footprint.
- Peaceful character of the protest movement.
- Popular and broad support for the revolution.

### **Key Facts: Tunisia**

**Capital:** Tunis

**Population:** 10.7 million

**Main Ethnic Groups:** Arab

**Main Religion:** Sunni Muslim

### **The Uprising**

Tunisia's revolt began on December 17, 2010, with the self-immolation of Bouazizi. Initially, local demonstrations broke out in the rural governorate of Sidi Bouzid, where Bouazizi used to live. Violent clashes broke out between protesters and police following the demonstrations, which "spiraled toward the capital from the neglected rural areas, finding common cause with a once powerful, but much repressed labor movement."<sup>4</sup> Large protests were organized all over the country with students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, trade unionists, and opposition politicians joining the protesters.

On January 7, 2011, clashes between protesters and the police in Tunisia's most restless towns left dozens of protesters dead. In the most violent week of the uprising yet, demonstrations broke out against the regime all across the country. President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali deployed troops to quell the uprising, but the army refused to intervene, allowing the demonstrations to gain further momentum. On January 14, 2011, Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi appeared on state television to

announce that he was assuming the role of interim president. A day later, Saudi Arabia announced that it was hosting Ben Ali for an unspecified amount of time.

### **Government Response**

To quell the unrest in Sidi Bouzid, the Tunisian government announced a \$10 million employment program. When protests continued unabated, the government decided to crack down. It unleashed state security forces on the crowd, arrested activists, and even shut down the Internet. None of the repressive measures worked. Ben Ali then vowed not to seek re-election, to institute widespread reforms and to hold investigations into the killings by the regime. In a last ditch effort on January 13, 2011, he imposed a state of emergency, dissolved the country's government, and promised fresh legislative elections within six months. When this failed, he stood down and fled the country.

### **International Response**

When the first wave of protest erupted in mid-December 2010, it did not solicit much international attention. When protests spread, the statements made by foreign powers were cautious and were not backed by a coherent strategy. They supported the right of the Tunisian people to protest peacefully but were deliberately vague on regime change. Much ire was directed at France because its foreign minister suggested that French police armed with teargas be sent to Tunisia to help crush the uprising.<sup>5</sup>

### **Why was the Tunisian Uprising Successful?**

- Mobilization of middle-classes across the country with broad support of all opposition groups and labor unions.
- Role of social media in organizing protests on the one space that the regime could not control – cyberspace.
- Military's refusal to intervene directly in protests.

## **Egypt: Stories from Tahrir**

**Result:** President Overthrown

### *Essential Features of the Egyptian Uprising:*

- Protests organized by cosmopolitan young people in the major cities.
- Revolution without self-proclaimed revolutionaries, but with strong field leadership and social media footprint.
- Peaceful character of the protest movement, although violent clashes and looting occurred at times.
- Broad support for the demands of the revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood notably absent as an organization.

### **Key Facts: Egypt**

**Capital:** Cairo

**Population:** 84 million

**Main Ethnic Group:** Arab

**Main Religion:** Sunni Muslim (90%), Coptic Orthodox Church (9%)

### **The Uprising**

Similar to Tunisia, social unrest in Egypt had been flaring up since 2005. It was the death of 28-year-old Khaled Sa'eed in June 2010 after being arrested by the police that became the rallying point for Egypt's activists. Plans for a nationwide protest on January 25, 2011, were made on Facebook. On Egypt's "Day of Rage", millions protested in cities across the country.

Tahrir Square in Cairo remained the scene of protests over the following days and after violent clashes with protesters, the police decided to withdraw. The military intervened and successfully prevented protesters from reaching government buildings and stopped the violence from escalating further. However, as the scale of the protests continued to grow, pressure kept rising on President Hosni Mubarak to resign.

With many apolitical Egyptians showing signs of fatigue at the massive disruption of daily life, Mubarak initially opted to play the long game in the hope that the protests would run out of steam. This did not happen and he finally resigned on February 11, 2011, transferring power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which was to lead the country through a transition period.

### **Government Response**

Like its Tunisian counterpart, the Egyptian regime initially took a hard stance towards the protesters by employing riot-control tactics and shutting down communications. When this failed, on January 28, 2011, President Mubarak declared that he would not stand for re-election and would institute political reforms. He also appointed Omar Suleiman as his new vice president.

Though many expected the announcement of his resignation in his last televised statement on February 10, 2011, Mubarak remained spirited and said that he would penalize those responsible for the violence and would steer the country out of the crisis. He also announced that he would remain president until the end of his term in September 2011. His announcement backfired and he was compelled to resign the following day.

### **International Response**

Countries such as the United States supported peaceful democratic development, but had concerns about the fall of a regime they deemed crucial to stability in the Middle East and to the security of Israel. They preferred political reform and dialogue instead of revolution. Countries opposed to the United States, such as Syria, supported the protesters and declared that mass demonstrations represented a “new era” that would force local and foreign powers to change the way they related to the citizens of the Middle East.

## Why was the Egyptian Uprising Successful?

- “President Mubarak provided the grievances, Tunisia gave the inspiration, Facebook set the date, and the Egyptian people did the rest.”<sup>6</sup>
- Mobilization of the middle-class across the country with broad support of all opposition groups and labor unions.
- Role of social media in organizing protests.
- Military's refusal to intervene and suppress the protests.

## Libya: A Troubling Legacy of Violence

**Result:** Ruler Overthrown and Killed

*Essential Features of the Libyan Uprising:*

- Demonstrators in the eastern provinces ignited the protests, leading to armed clashes.
- Tribal and regional cleavages that have beset the country for decades are revealed.<sup>7</sup>
- Revolution with a self-proclaimed political leadership, the National Transitional Council.
- Militarization and internationalization of conflict.

### Key Facts: Libya

**Capital:** Tripoli

**Population:** 6.5 million

**Main Ethnic Groups:** Arab and Berber

**Main Religion:** Sunni Islam

### **The Uprising**

The uprising in Libya was very different from those in Tunisia and Egypt. It was lengthy and violent. A military conflict broke out between forces loyal to Libya's ruler Muammar Qaddafi and forces loyal to the opposition, the National Transitional Council (NTC). For the first time since the start of the Arab Uprisings, the international community decided to intervene militarily after the uprising turned into a civil war.

The uprising began in the city of Benghazi in east Libya when riots broke out against the arrest of Fethi Tarbel, a human rights activist. Subsequently, protesters and army defectors gained control of the city. This invigorated the uprising, and rebel groups together with the newly formed NTC quickly moved west towards the Libyan capital, Tripoli. However, troops loyal to Qaddafi halted this offensive and pushed the rebels back east. By March 2011, the conflict was in deadlock and civilians were suffering high casualties. This led to international intervention and on March 19, 2011, the United Nations initiated a NATO enforced no-fly zone over Libya.

In August 2011, backed by NATO airstrikes, the rebels captured Tripoli and set up an interim government. Qaddafi fled the capital and hid in the last strongholds of forces loyal to his regime. On October 20, 2011, the Libyan ruler was captured and killed when NTC fighters captured Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown.

### **Government Response**

Qaddafi's regime reacted violently to the uprising. His troops used live ammunition instead of rubber bullets against civilian protestors. When the civil war erupted, he made no concessions to the rebels. In various TV appearances, Qaddafi declared that foreign forces were behind the uprising and he promised to hunt the rebels down "house by house".

### **International Response**

With the conflict between Qaddafi and the rebels turning into a humanitarian disaster, the NTC, the Arab League, the United Kingdom, and France started pushing for a no-fly zone over Libya. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council Resolution approved a no-fly zone over Libya. NATO's mission ended only on October 31, 2011.

### **Why was the Libyan Uprising Successful?**

- Local and military structures of authority were based on tribal allegiances and prone to defection.
- Foreign intervention by NATO air forces.

### **Yemen: Saleh's Dragging Feet**

**Result:** Transfer of Power

#### *Essential Features of the Yemeni Uprising:*

- Protests became part of a larger national struggle between various Yemeni tribes.
- Later developed into an international struggle between the United States and Al-Qaeda.
- Mediation by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) resulted in a power transfer.

#### **Key Facts: Yemen**

**Capital:** Sana'a

**Population:** 25.6 million

**Main Ethnic Group:** Arab

**Main Religion:** Sunni and Shi'a Islam

#### **The Uprising**

By February 2011, anti-government demonstrations broke out in Yemen, inspired by demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt. In May 2011, when the GCC's efforts to mediate between the opposition and President Ali Abdullah Saleh failed, the powerful Hashid tribe declared its support for the opposition. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda had been gaining strength in the Arabian Peninsula and started carrying out attacks as the uprising headed for a full-blown conflict. An attempt to assassinate Saleh at the Presidential Palace wounded him and forced him to undergo medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. Upon his return, and under strong international pressure to step down, Saleh signed a deal brokered by the GCC to transfer power to his vice-president.

## **Government Response**

Initially, Saleh made concessions to the opposition by indicating that power would not be handed down as an inheritance. He promised to form a national unity government to solve the crisis and to hold a referendum on constitutional amendments. However, he subsequently delayed all power transfer deals and backpedalled on multiple occasions.

## **International Response**

The response of the United States was largely focused on the terrorist threat in Yemen. On the other hand, the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia were primarily interested in maintaining stability in the region. From the beginning of the uprisings, the GCC played a strong mediatory role and eventually brokered a transfer deal that resulted in Saleh handing over power in exchange for immunity.

## **Why was the Yemeni Uprising Successful?**

- Foreign mediation by the Gulf Cooperation Council.
- Local and military structures of authority are based on tribal allegiances, and therefore, are prone to defection.
- Strategic importance of Yemen in the fight against terrorism facilitated constant international attention.

## **Bahrain: Kingdom of Silence**

**Result:** Ongoing Protests

*Essential Features of the Bahraini Uprising:*

- Protests largely by the Shi'a majority.
- Brutal crackdown by the Sunni regime on anti-government protesters.
- Strong support from the US and Saudi Arabia to the ruling Sunni monarchy.

### **Key Facts: Bahrain**

**Capital:** Manama

**Population:** 1.4 million

**Main Ethnic Groups:** Arab and Persian

**Main Religion:** Sunni and Shi'a Islam

### **The Uprising**

On February 14, 2011, thousands of people participated in demonstrations and political rallies throughout Bahrain, particularly in the capital Manama. Anti-government protesters immediately met resistance from security forces. Protests continued into March 2011, but were crushed by the regime with support from the Peninsula Shield Force, which consisted of troops deployed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Renewed protests broke out in June 2011 that led to the cancellation of the Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix. It was re-held in June 2012, and large anti-government rallies in the capital marched against the regime during the event.

### **Government Response**

The government responded harshly, deploying troops to the center point of the demonstrations. The ministers from Al-Wefaq, the largest opposition bloc, resigned in protest. A harsh crackdown followed with hundreds of protesters, opposition leaders, activists, and journalists incarcerated and tortured. The protests continued unabated and they overwhelmed the Bahraini government, forcing the government to request help from neighboring countries. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa also declared a state of emergency. In June 2011, he reached out to the opposition by establishing the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). This commission was supposed to look into the incidents that had occurred during the uprising.

In November 2011, the BICI submitted a report on its investigation into human rights violations committed in connection with the anti-government protests. "The report concluded that the authorities had committed gross human rights violations with impunity, including

excessive use of force against protesters, widespread torture and other ill-treatment of protesters, unfair trials and unlawful killings.”<sup>8</sup>

### **International Response**

The international response has been largely influenced by the fact that the Bahraini government is a key ally of the European Union and the United States. More importantly, it is regarded as a bulwark against nearby Iran. Therefore, Bahrain is treated more magnanimously than other regimes accused of violating human rights. Saudi Arabia has been actively involved in curbing the uprising because of its own large Shi'a minority in its oil-rich East.

### **Why has the Bahraini Uprising Not Succeeded Yet?**

- Makeup of the Bahraini security forces, along sectarian and tribal identities, did not tempt soldiers in Bahrain to defect.
- Bahrain's position as an ally of the United States against Iran and as the home of the 5<sup>th</sup> US Navy Fleet.

## **Syria: Gridlock**

**Result:** Ongoing Civil War

### *Essential Features of the Syrian Uprising*

- What started with small, local protests turned into a sectarian, violent conflict - “popularized, professionalized, militarized, and internationalized.”<sup>9</sup>
- Cohesion of the regime has contributed to the prolonged nature of the conflict.
- Impasse in the United Nations Security Council on a resolution.
- Grassroots nature of the popular movement but the incompetence of the traditional political opposition.

## **Key Facts: Syria**

**Capital:** Damascus

**Population:** 21.1 million

**Main Ethnic Groups:** Arab, Kurdish, and Armenian

**Main Religion:** Sunni Islam, Alawite, Christianity, and Druze

## **The Uprising**

Public demonstrations in Syria began in January 2011. By the end of March, these protests had escalated into a revolt. President Bashar Al-Assad's regime sent its forces to crush the revolt by laying siege to a number of cities. In June and July 2011 respectively, the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) were formed to increase the political and military clout of the uprising. Numerous officers and soldiers defected to the opposition over the following months. However, the core of the regime stayed largely intact and the conflict escalated into a civil war with sharply increasing casualties. In early 2012, the FSA opposition gained momentum with high-profile defections, armed offensives, and tacit international logistical support. The battles over Aleppo, Syria's economic capital, and Damascus, the capital, started in the summer of 2012 and continue to this day.

## **Government Response**

Assad's regime reacted with force. It violently cracked down on demonstrations, arrested protesters and opposition figures, and cut down communication lines. In his few televised speeches, President Assad framed the conflict as an attempt by foreign funded gangs and terrorists to overthrow the government.

## **International Response**

Within the Middle East, there is a clear division. Sunni countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, advocate Assad's departure. They support the rebels financially and logistically. Unsurprisingly, Iran and Hezbollah support Assad's Alawite regime.<sup>10</sup> The international community has tried to find a solution. The most prominent effort was a plan by Kofi Annan, the

former Secretary-General of the United Nations. However, none of these efforts have succeeded. Currently, there is a deadlock in the UN Security Council. Russia and China oppose efforts led by the US. They stress the internal nature of the conflict and recommend solving the war through dialogue and negotiations. The US and other members are increasingly in favor of military intervention. The UN appointed two special representatives — Annan and then former Algerian Foreign Minister, Lakhdar Brahimi, to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict — but so far, neither have succeeded.

### **Why is the Syrian Uprising Still Ongoing?**

- Core of the regime is not defecting and has support military and sectarian groups
- Divided opposition
- International impasse on military intervention

## **Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan: Protests Contained**

**Result:** Ongoing Discontent

### *Essential Features of the Uprisings:*

- Protests local and small
- Swift and cosmetic political reforms pushed through by the regime
- Berber minority leading many protests (Morocco and Algeria)

### **Key Facts: Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan**

**Capital:** Rabat (Morocco), Algiers (Algeria), Amman (Jordan)

**Population:** 36 million, 32 million, 6.1 million, respectively.

**Main Ethnic Groups:** Arab and Berber (Algeria and Morocco), Arab (Jordan)

**Main Religion:** Sunni Islam (Algeria, Morocco, Jordan), Christianity (Jordan)

## **The Uprising**

In Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan, protests began in February 2011 and continue in some form or another today. For all three countries, the protests peaked in the spring of 2011. In Morocco and Algeria, they were strongly supported by Berber minorities. Political unrest in Jordan has further increased since November 2012 after the government cut fuel subsidies.

## **Government Response**

In all three countries, a finely tuned combination of crackdown and cosmetic political reforms in the manner of elections, constitutional changes, and new governments worked very well for the governments. In the case of Algeria and Jordan, an increase in government spending played an important role in containing the protests. Berber was made an official language in Morocco to appease the Berber minority.

To contain the continuing political instability in Jordan, King Abdullah dissolved parliament yet again in October 2012. New elections are expected in January 2013.

## **International Response**

In the case of Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria, the international response was torn by two competing instincts. On the one hand, there was a commitment to the values of the Arab Uprisings, but on the other hand, there was recognition of geopolitical imperatives such as demand for oil and fear of terrorism.

## **Why Have the Protests Been Contained So Far?**

- Small protests generally without popular support beyond youth and Berber minorities
- Gradual reform and a discourse of stability resounds with citizens (Algeria)
- Monarchy in Morocco and Jordan retains significant popular support

- No foreign pressure in a volatile, oil-rich region threatened by terrorism and migration (Algeria and Morocco)
- Reliable pro-American government (Jordan) that facilitates regional stability

## Chapter 2

### *Why did the Arab Uprisings happen?*

The revolts were caused by socio-economic problems and widespread political grievances. Beyond this lies a greater demographic trend, however. "In 1920, for every Arab in the world, there were 13 Europeans. The population of the Arab countries at that time was just 42 million, the same as that of France. Today the figure is 350 million, equivalent to the whole of western Europe."<sup>11</sup>

### **What Were the Causes?**

Rapidly increasing populations with a large youthful component historically tend to be restless. They have raised expectations, especially in the era of mass media and the Internet. At the same time, socio-economic issues such as rapidly increasing populations, high unemployment, poverty, and food inflation helped trigger the revolts.

Political issues also played a key part in causing these uprisings. Arab populations were fed up with longstanding dictatorships that were both corrupt and inept. Repression and human rights abuses by these dictatorial regimes led to simmering resentment. Eventually, all these factors snowballed into the Arab Uprisings.

### **Autocratic Regimes**

The countries throughout the Arab world have experienced oppressive dictatorships for decades. Many of these autocratic regimes have been in power since the end of colonial rule, such as Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN).<sup>12</sup> In Tunisia, former President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali ruled for over 23 years after acquiring power through a *coup* against Habib Bourguiba, the nation's first president who himself ruled with an "iron-fist". Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was at the helm for nearly 30 years and Syria's Al-Assad family continues to rule the country after over 40 years.

As noted in Fair Observer:

*“What [has] followed under the hand of [autocratic rulers] in each country [has been] a period of repressive and authoritarian rule, high rates of corruption, human rights abuses, mass poverty, large-scale unemployment, a lack of political freedoms, increasing food prices, and other atrocities.”<sup>13</sup>*

As Al Jazeera’s Marwan Bishara notes, these regimes range “from open authoritarian regimes to terribly closed totalitarian autocrats”.<sup>14</sup> What these regimes have in common is severely limited freedom of expression, often with a muzzled opposition, and the absence of free and fair elections. Despite the occurrence of elections, it is clear that electoral laws and guidelines favor the ruling party. This has allowed each country’s president or leader to remain in power unchallenged. Egypt witnessed clear fraud when Mubarak’s National Democratic Party won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections of 2010. It was inevitable that at some point people would rise up against such regimes.

### **Poor Economic Growth and Inequality**

Many analysts believe the region’s poor economic growth to be the fundamental reason for the uprisings. While other countries have made the transition from rural economies to industrial and information based ones, the Arab world has been slow to react.<sup>15</sup>

As noted by Foreign Policy’s Blake Hounshell:

*“Besides oil and natural gas, the Arab world today exports little economic value. Its public sectors are inefficient, bloated and rife with corruption. Unemployment rates are well into the teens. For the last three decades, the region has experienced hardly any economic development.”<sup>16</sup>*

Dr Ali Kadri, previously of the United Nations’ regional office in Beirut, sees the revolts as the end result of years of under-development caused by poor economic policies that ended in failure.

As Matthew Partridge observes:

*"Inequality has [also] increased, further squeezing the incomes of the middle-class and working families. Although most Middle Eastern countries attempt to hide the extent of these problems by refusing to carry out the necessary surveys, unofficial reports suggest that the region is more unequal than even Africa or Latin America."<sup>17</sup>*

Arab countries continue to see a significant divide between working class families and the elite. The working class struggles to survive on substantially low incomes while the elite have increasingly vast financial resources at their disposal. Under Mubarak, half the Egyptian population was living on \$2 or less a day.<sup>18</sup> Such dire economies led to resentment on the proverbial "Arab Street" and were a principal cause for the protests.

## **Unemployment**

Stagnant economies tend to lack jobs. Most parts of the Arab world suffer from high unemployment. The International Labor Office estimates that less than half of the working age population is employed, with youth unemployment being over four times the adult rate. Even in oil-rich Saudi Arabia, 30.2 percent of the population between 20 and 24 are unemployed.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the lack of jobs, a dysfunctional labor market ensures that the education and skills of university graduates do not match the jobs that are available. Those who have not gone to university face an even more uphill battle finding jobs that pay enough to live on.

Mass unemployment and underemployment are endemic. A lack of foreign investment in industries other than oil and gas resources, and low international trade levels make it hard for these countries to generate jobs.<sup>20</sup> The tying up of capital within inefficient and corrupt state-owned enterprises starves good businesses of funding and does the economy no good. With no prospects for the future, it is not surprising that populations are fractious and prone to revolt.

## Poverty

Failed economic policies, corruption, and most recently, the global economic crisis, have led to increased poverty levels. The last straw was food price inflation that hit the poor hard. Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world; Bilal Ahmed argued in an article for Fair Observer that the Yemeni government's neglect of peripheral areas, which suffer from severe poverty, has led to popular support for militant groups because the people have not been able to meet their needs through state institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Most Arab states fail their people when it comes to providing services such as reliable healthcare. This exacerbates the poverty in the region, and in countries such as Palestine, Somalia, Mauritania, Yemen, and Sudan "a majority of the population suffers from poverty; many of them even fall within the classification of extreme poverty. The ratio of poverty in Egypt is 21 percent; it is 10 percent in Syria, Iraq, Tunis and Algeria."<sup>22</sup> Poverty leads to desperation and desperate people tend to protest.

## Corruption

Corruption is endemic in Arab countries. Mubarak was tried on multiple corruption charges, including profiteering and economic fraud, while his sons are currently facing further charges. During their time in power, the family stole billions of dollars from the Egyptian people. As per Jack Goldstone of Foreign Affairs, "Mubarak and his family reportedly built up a fortune of between \$40 billion and \$70 billion, and 39 officials and businessmen close to Mubarak's son Gamal are alleged to have made fortunes averaging more than \$1 billion each."<sup>23</sup>

The state in these countries had become an instrument of oppression and expropriation run for the benefit of kleptocratic elites. "In the Arab autocracies, the poor, the working classes, and the middle classes met only callous indifference, corruption, and humiliation when they sought redress from their governments. Indeed, the massive, bloated, corrupt government bureaucracies did nothing to alleviate the suffering of their people."<sup>24</sup> Such widespread corruption fed growing waves of resentment.

## Human Rights Abuses and Discrimination

The people of the region are often violently oppressed, humiliated, imprisoned, and even tortured for opposition to the state. Human rights abuses are rife. Various segments of Arab society such as Islamists, secularists, religious minorities, and women, have been subject to persecution. The police often abuse their powers and there is widespread judicial malpractice. As noted eloquently by Katerina Dalacoura of Chatham House: "More than anything else, the rebellions were a call for dignity and a reaction to being humiliated by arbitrary, unaccountable and increasingly predatory tyrannies."<sup>25</sup>

In the Arabian Peninsula, greater affluence and better living conditions meant that the protests occurred due to political rather than economic grievances. Bahrain, in the Arabian Peninsula, has a majority Shi'a population led by a minority Sunni monarchy. The Al-Khalifa regime, notably supported by the United States, has repressed the Shi'a majority. Many of the Shi'a Bahraini population complain of being treated as third-class citizens after the ruling Sunni Bahrainis and Sunni expatriates from South Asia.

As noted by Corinna Mullin and Azadeh Shahshahani in an article for Fair Observer, the Bahraini regime's policy has included:

*"Institutionalized discrimination against the Shi'a in jobs, housing, and education. They also include the systematic political discrimination against the Shi'a both via their exclusion from positions of power in government and defense institutions, and through the practice of sectarian-based gerrymandering of electoral districts and manipulation of Bahrain's demographic makeup through political naturalization of foreigners and extension of voting rights to Sunni citizens of other countries."*<sup>26</sup>

The discrimination against the Shi'a populace was a key reason for the Bahraini uprising. It is important to remember that the Arab Uprisings began because Mohammed Bouazizi, the young Tunisian, was no longer willing to live a life of constant abuse. The political movements were

indubitably fuelled by a desire for greater human rights after decades of repression.

## Why Did Citizens Revolt Now?

Given that the reasons for these uprisings had been present for many years, why did they happen only now? The global economic crisis, rising unemployment, food inflation, increased political activism, and greater connectivity through social media and the Internet came together to create a domino effect that swept through the entire region.

### Global Economic Crisis

Political demonstrations have broken out all over the world since the global economic crisis. The US has seen "Occupy Wall Street", India has seen an anti-corruption movement, and Europe is still seeing protests in many countries. The Arab people had a litany of grievances against corrupt authoritarian regimes and the price of bread acted as the tinder that set the region alight.

During the global economic crisis, life has become significantly worse for the Arab public. There has been a sharp rise in unemployment, poverty and, as mentioned before, food prices.

As noted by Chatham House:

*"The longstanding structural problems afflicting the Arab world came to a head prior to 2011 through a combination of persistently high unemployment, especially among youth (and educated youth at that), rampant corruption, internal regional and social inequalities, and a further deterioration of economic conditions because of the global 2008 financial crisis and food price increases."<sup>27</sup>*

The Arab world suffers from water shortages and imports large proportions of its food. A rise in global food prices, therefore, has an immediate impact on the working class.

As noted by Lester Brown in The Guardian:

*"Thus in the Arab Middle East, where populations are growing fast, the world is seeing the first collision between population growth and water supply at the regional level. For the first time in history, grain production is dropping in a region with nothing in sight to arrest the decline. Because of the failure of governments to mesh population and water policies, each day now brings 10,000 more people to feed, and less irrigation water with which to feed them."*<sup>28</sup>

The French revolution kicked off because people could not afford bread. A little more than two centuries later, the Arab world is seeing turmoil for the same reason.

## The Youth

In the region, the youth population, aged 15 to 24, is growing explosively — it increased by nearly 44 million between 1980 and 2010.<sup>29</sup>

As noted by the Carnegie Endowment:

*"In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), two-thirds of the population is under 18. Recent political turmoil in the Arab world has put these youth at the forefront of the political and economic debate. They suffer from high unemployment — the MENA region ranks among the worst in the world for youth unemployment, which approaches 30 percent — high demographic growth, and poor education."*<sup>30</sup>

Outdated education systems are ill equipped to impart the skills necessary to compete in the global workplace, and jobs are excruciatingly scarce. An article in Fair Observer noted that Egypt under Mubarak had failed to update its curriculum in all levels of education since the early 1980s.<sup>31</sup>

Arab economies suffer both from a demand and supply problem when it comes to employment. Due to poor foreign investment in fields other than oil and gas, and little internal entrepreneurial activity because of the heavy hand of the state, there is little demand for labor. At the same time, the

demand that does exist cannot be met despite the huge labor supply.

Moreover, given the youth population explosion, there is simply not enough affordable housing for working class and middle class people. Young people without jobs and places to live tend to protest, so it was only a question of time before flames of discontent swept the region.

### **Political Activism**

Activists throughout the Middle East and North Africa have been campaigning for political and economic change for many years. Underground political groups such as *Kefaya* (enough), the grassroots political activist coalition in Egypt, campaigned heavily for reform in the past.

Industrial workers have often campaigned for change, particularly over the last decade. Egypt's Nile Delta saw workers strike over bonuses in 2006. The subsequent "victory inspired thousands of Egyptian workers, from railway engineers to cement workers, to take collective action."<sup>32</sup> Youth movements have also been emerging and allying with industrial workers. Egypt's now famous April 6<sup>th</sup> Movement started on Facebook. Other countries in the region also have their own youth movements, such as the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement in Morocco, which is still demanding a constitutional monarchy and end to corruption.<sup>33</sup>

Over time, activists have been acquiring critical mass and they clearly reached a point where they could multiply their campaigns and reach a wider public.

### **Media**

Tariq Ramadan points out that over the past decade, Arab youth activists have travelled abroad to seek training in political mobilization.<sup>34</sup> Arab youth learnt how to utilize social media to mobilize activists across their respective countries. The rise of social networking outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has assisted political activists in their

quest to call for “million-man marches” and civil disobedience in opposition to autocratic rule. A video showing the aftermath of Bouazizi’s self-immolation in Tunisia was uploaded to YouTube and subsequently sent to Al Jazeera, the Qatari-owned international news broadcaster, and touched a chord with long-repressed populations in the region. Sadek al-Azm notes: “[The youth have relied] on mobile phones, laptop computers, satellite television, the Internet, or more specifically, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, technologies geared to monitoring events moment by moment, around the clock.”<sup>35</sup>

The media term the “Facebook Revolution” was rightly discredited. Nevertheless, the combined use of social media and real-time satellite television is a key reason why the Arab Uprisings happened now and not ten years ago. Just as the telephone was a key instrument for the 1979 Iranian Revolution, social media has been a key instrument for the Arab Uprisings that began in 2010.

### **Domino Effect**

Most analysts failed to predict the Arab Uprisings. Hardly anyone thought that they would develop the way they did or that they would spread so fast. The “Domino Theory”, the term used by Dwight Eisenhower to explain communism, is a useful explanation. When one country rises up to depose its dictator, others get enthused, unleashing a wave of protests and revolutions. As Matthew van Dyke, the journalist-turned “Libyan freedom-fighter,” notes: “[With Tunisia] the first domino had fallen. Inspired by the protests in Tunisia, Egyptians overthrew President Hosni Mubarak after two weeks of an intense standoff between the people and the regime.”<sup>36</sup>

While the Domino Effect does not explain everything, it does explain how people in the Arab world saw the successful overthrow of the longstanding dictator Ben Ali as an example that they could emulate.

## Chapter 3

### *What are the new realities?*

The Arab Uprisings are the most significant events to occur in Middle East and North Africa over the past few decades. So far, the change that young protestors called for has been slow to materialize. Either new elites have acquired political power or old regimes still survive.<sup>37</sup> A report by the London School of Economics and Political Science concluded, “Uprisings across the Middle East have not led to any significant shifts towards permanent democracy even where they have toppled dictators.”<sup>38</sup>

There are a number of new realities on the ground though, including the rise of Islamists, the specter of sectarianism and security, and the changing balance of power in the region.

### **The Rise of Islamists**

Islamists did not play a key role in any of the Arab Uprisings. Yet, they have reaped the benefits in the aftermath of the revolts. Islamist parties have received the highest number of votes in elections held since the uprisings.

Parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have long been the key opposition to the ruling regimes of the past. Through their underground network and as providers of welfare services, Islamists are more organized than the new secular and liberal parties or the still evolving revolutionary youth movements. After years of repression, Islamists are now in the best position to fill the power vacuum. They are winning power not because of their religious agenda but because they are best placed to exploit the social, economic, and political grievances against former dictatorships.

As Rami Khouri notes:

*“Islamists winning free and fair elections in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco is no surprise, because of their massive followings in Arab countries for different*

*reasons; in large because they offered the only feasible outlet for any Arab who was unhappy with prevailing government policies or socio-economic conditions.*<sup>139</sup>

The victory of Islamists in elections brings into question the role of Islam and democracy. For some, Islam will always be incompatible with democracy. Under Islamic law, governance is to be carried out as per the laws of God and not the democratic mandate. For others, Islam is compatible with democracy because they believe that Islam can be placed within the current societal context and adapt to the demands of a modern democracy.

Nader Hashem makes this argument forcefully:

*"The claim, therefore, that Islam is not subject to evolutionary transformation and development – like all religious traditions obviously are – ignores what really matters: the changing socio-economic and political context, which is all important in shaping how Islam/religion manifests itself in different regions of the world, at different moments in time."*<sup>140</sup>

Over the last few decades, there has been a resurgence of Islam as a political ideology in parts of the Muslim world. Islamic societies have arguably become more religious, raising questions about the public role of religion. For instance, will Islamists let others compete freely and fairly in elections once they have power? How do they intend to deal with socio-economic problems? How will they cater for the wider society that includes secularists, liberals, religious minorities, and women? Will *shari'a* (Islamic law) form a basis for new constitutions? The answers are yet unclear but how political Islam and democracy interact will be a key feature in the post-uprising world.

### **Tunisia and Ghannouchi**

Tunisia was the first nation to oust its dictator and the first to hold new elections following its revolution. The Tunisian elections of October 2011 were the first free and fair elections in the country's history, and were

deemed transparent by international observers. An-Nahda (the Renaissance Party), a once banned and brutally repressed Islamist party under the regime of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, won.<sup>41</sup> Notably, An-Nahda is widely regarded as a moderate Islamist party. As noted in Fair Observer: "Today, An-Nahda's electoral program spells constitutionalism, separation of powers, citizenship-based rights, and the preservation of women's rights."<sup>42</sup>

Tunisia is often praised for its commitment to women's rights and for its secularism. Notably, An-Nahda's founder, Rachid Ghannouchi, returned to Tunisia in 2011 after spending over 20 years in exile, most of it in the United Kingdom.

In an interview with Foreign Policy, he declared An-Nahda's priorities as: "*[To] guarantee that dictatorships will not come back to Tunisia. We are for a parliamentary system that no longer gives us a person with concentrated powers. Our utmost priority is to guarantee freedoms: personal freedoms, social freedoms, and women's rights. We did not ask to add anything to the first article of the old Constitution, which says that Tunisia is an Arab and a Muslim country. And everyone seems to agree on this in Tunisia.*"<sup>43</sup>

However, for An-Nahda's secular and liberal opponents, the party represents an Islamist movement with a hidden agenda, adamant on implementing a conservative interpretation of Islam on Tunisia. For them, An-Nahda's soft-stance towards the country's Salafists<sup>44</sup> is a cause for concern. Ghannouchi recently vowed to crackdown on the country's Salafists following the US Embassy attacks, however. Although An-Nahda states that its policy is not *Islam deen wa dawla* (Islam is religion and state), the vagueness of the role of religion and state in the new constitution being drafted is a cause of concern for some opponents.

## **The Brotherhood and Egypt**

Egypt held its first election since Hosni Mubarak's ouster at the end of 2011, as Islamist parties won nearly three-quarters of the seats in

parliament. The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, outlawed under Hosni Mubarak and previous presidents, won most seats, along with An-Nour, a Salafist party. Significantly, the acquisition of power in Egypt by the Brotherhood has led to debate both within and outside Egypt.

As noted in Fair Observer:

*"There are those commentators that perceive the Brotherhood as a moderate political force, stressing the centrist position it has taken after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, and a force for good, pointing to its record of providing social services for Egypt's population. Other observers hold a markedly different view and regard the organization as the emblem of Islamic tyranny, underlining its anti-Western and anti-secular rhetoric, and drawing parallels between its political platform and that of Iran's theocracy."<sup>45</sup>*

In the 2012 Egyptian presidential elections, Mohammed Morsi of the FJP beat Ahmed Shafiq, a former prime minister under Mubarak. This is the first time a civilian has become president in Egypt and the first time an Islamist is holding that position.

Notably, the parliamentary and presidential results have made many secularists, liberals, and religious minorities, especially Coptic Christians, fear an Islamist takeover. Opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood fear that *shari'a* will eventually be enforced, along with curbs on social and religious freedom. They argue that Egypt will become a theocracy, something that Morsi and the Brotherhood deny.

Prior to the presidential elections, the Islamist-dominated parliament was dissolved following a high court ruling which declared that a third of parliament was elected illegally.<sup>46</sup> New parliamentary elections are expected in 2013. Secular and liberal parties are attempting to unite in a bid to beat the Islamists.

The power-struggle between Morsi and the military has proven that

politics in the post-Mubarak Egypt is fractious.

*"Egyptians are as polarized today as they were during Mubarak's decades-old rule. The old regime, with its links to the military, has served the interests of many people who continue to support it. The Brotherhood relies on a wide base of staunch supporters and members linked in a web of complicated shared interests as well."*<sup>47</sup>

Egypt is witnessing a power struggle with different groups ferociously competing to acquire control of the state.

### **The King's Morocco**

Morocco's King Mohammed VI introduced constitutional changes in response to protests. The reforms were modest and included the handover of some rights from the king to the prime minister. In parliamentary elections held in November 2011, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), comprising of moderate Islamists, won the most seats and formed a coalition with secularists and liberals.

As noted in Foreign Policy:

*"The Moroccan case challenges conventional wisdom about contemporary Islamists and contextualizes qualms about what they might do next. The PJD originated as an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. But while the Brotherhood only formed an official political party in 2011, their Moroccan brothers have been contesting elections and navigating party politics since 1998. Far from being revolutionary or even incendiary, Islamists of the PJD rose to the top not by challenging the status quo, but rather by skillfully and pragmatically abiding by it, even at times bolstering it. Their rule will likely be no different."*<sup>48</sup>

Morocco's situation notably differs from Tunisia and Egypt. While Tunisia and Egypt held elections after a mass uprising that led to a change in leadership, in Morocco, King Mohammed VI still holds most of the power. Morocco is still an absolute monarchy and the PJD is making concessions in

order to participate in the political process. Nonetheless, Abdelilah Benkirane was appointed Morocco's first Islamist prime minister by the king, in accordance with the constitution according to which the prime minister has to command a majority in parliament.

As in Tunisia and in Egypt, Moroccans did not elect the PJD out of religious reasons. The PJD came to power because the people were dissatisfied with corrupt, secular, and liberal politicians who had failed to deliver on their promises.<sup>49</sup> The PJD stands in marked contrast to these politicians, and Samia Errazzouki clearly spells out why they are a compelling alternative in Moroccan politics:

*"Commentators have been quick to draw assumptions regarding [the] PJD's position as an Islamist political party, but it is [the] PJD's transparent system in selecting candidates and its overall organization that has produced the presumed support. Unlike other major parties in Morocco who choose a candidate based on their influence and personal wealth, the PJD institutes a three-step process: a commission proposes candidates, a second commission chooses one through a secret ballot, and a third commission works with the candidate to specify his or her position."<sup>50</sup>*

### **Algeria: Apathy and Paralysis**

Algeria has a history of violence between Islamists and the ruling elite. In the recent legislative elections, Islamic parties were expected to gain seats in parliament.

As noted by Kal Ben Khalid in Fair Observer:

*"[Boudjerra] Soltani told reporters that, based on the performance of Islamist parties in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, he anticipated Islamist gains in Algeria's upcoming parliamentary election in May 2012. In November [2011], Abdallah Djaballah formed a new party called the Justice and Development Front whilst also predicting Islamist success."<sup>51</sup>*

Instead, the result saw a near landslide victory for the National Liberation

Front (FLN). It appears that the country is in a state of political paralysis as a result of state corruption and exhaustion from the civil war of the 1990s.

As noted in Fair Observer:

*"The recent elections resulted in a splintered parliament dominated by the FLN, the party that has ruled Algeria ever since its independence in 1962, and have left little hope for such reform. Call it apathy, or call it paralysis. The fact remains that the grave consequences of Algeria's first free elections in 1991 are engraved in the public's memory."<sup>52</sup>*

Like others in the region, Algerians want political reform. However, they know that it is unlikely to happen given the entrenchment of the ruling elite. They also fear the consequences of an Islamist electoral victory because in the 1990s it led to a brutal civil war, the scars of which still remain on the Algerian psyche.

Political parties, including Islamists opposed to the regime are pessimistic about an alternative to the current government. People have lost faith in the political system because of widespread corruption and a multitude of failures over the past years. Consequently, the Algerian public and political parties are undecided over whether they should demonstrate on the streets or simply hope that the FLN concedes power over time. For now, Algeria remains in a state of political paralysis.

## **Sectarianism and Security**

Sectarianism and security are two other issues that have risen to the fore in the aftermath of the uprisings. Old enmities and feuds simmering for decades have bubbled to the surface. Different groups are jostling to control the levers of the state. There is a threat of war and chaos in societies where scarcity is rife, youth populations are high, and the political situation highly volatile.

## Syria's Spiraling Civil War

The Syrian uprising began as a peaceful call for freedom and dignity by protestors of all hues and sects with even some Alawites participating. Alawites are an offshoot of Shi'a Islam and form the core base of support for President Bashar Al-Assad because he is one of them.

The uprising by now has degenerated into a bloody civil war. The long history of sectarianism has reared its head again in Syria. The opposition consists mainly of Sunni Syrians while Assad's Ba'athist regime relies on Alawites.

A Fair Observer article summarizes the Syrian situation:

*"Syria's descent into drowning bloodshed, lulled by political oppression and the siren song of deeply-felt sectarian affiliation, is an echo of the Lebanese Civil War... Like Lebanon, Syria's antiquated political system and the decision-making of its leaders combined with a foundering and inefficiently corrupted (some would call it mortally wounded) economy, has exacerbated underlying sectarian, ethnic, and tribal tensions into outright warfare."<sup>53</sup>*

The fallout from the war has even affected the Sunni and Alawite communities in Lebanon's Tripoli. The recent assassination of Wissam Al-Hassan caused widespread fighting throughout the country between armed militia. The murder of the intelligence security chief is widely seen as fallout from the Syrian conflict. Nicholas A. Heras describes the situation by remarking, "For better, or for worse, Lebanon is now a front-line in the Syrian uprising."<sup>54</sup>

Lebanon has a history of political violence, particularly during the Lebanese Civil War and the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination in 2005. This makes it vulnerable to fallout from the Syrian conflict. Lebanon's Shi'a community, "led primarily by Hezbollah, is allied to Iran and Syria, while the Sunnis are [mainly] aligned with the West and Saudi Arabia."<sup>55</sup> Sectarian war in Lebanon is always possible. Balancing the political role of its different sects was always difficult and now becomes

near impossible given the pressures exerted by the ongoing civil war in neighboring Syria.

### **Bahrain's Hostility**

For Bahrain, the ongoing political unrest highlights clear grievances of the Shi'a majority that feels discriminated against by the Sunni ruling monarchy. Notably however, the opposition in Bahrain was not initially based on sectarian grounds. It was simply opposed to the ruling Al-Khalifa family. The intervention by Sunni, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members who sent soldiers to Bahrain to quell the uprising, fuelled anger amongst the country's marginalized community. At the same time, Iran's backing of the Shi'a opposition made the ruling Sunni elite nervous. National and regional sectarian divisions have come to the forefront and the situation is potentially explosive.

As Marc Lynch notes:

*"The response of the Bahraini regime has implications far beyond the borders of the tiny island kingdom — not only because along with Libya it has turned the hopeful Arab Uprisings into something uglier, but because it is unleashing a region wide resurgence of sectarian Sunni-Shi'a animosity. Regional actors have enthusiastically bought in to the sectarian framing, with Saudi Arabia fanning the flames of sectarian hostility in defense of the Bahraini regime and leading Shi'a figures rising to the defense of the protestors."*<sup>56</sup>

Both Syria and Bahrain highlight the wider regional sectarian divide. In Syria, Sunni Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, support the opposition, while Iran supports the government. In Bahrain, the situation is reversed. Sunni Arab states support the government while Iran supports the opposition. The Syrian and Bahraini uprisings have both become battlefields for the wider struggle between Sunni and Shi'a powers for regional dominance.

### **From Sana'a to Tripoli**

In Yemen, armed rebel tribes and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

(AQAP) have presented a regional security issue in the Gulf. For some time, terrorism has been on the rise in Yemen. It is being countered by a US-Yemeni military offensive. "Exacerbating economic and political crises"<sup>57</sup> have increased the violence between different factions vying for power since the beginning of the uprising. This violence involving the Yemeni regime, AQAP, and armed tribes threaten to destabilize neighboring countries and bolster extremist entities.

Libya faces a similar threat and became an issue in the US presidential race after the assassination of the American ambassador on the anniversary of September 11. The wide availability of arms following the civil war and the jostling for power by different tribes, religious fundamentalists, federalists who want an autonomous region in the east, and Muammar Qaddafi loyalists, present a major security threat to the region.

Libya is emerging as a possible base for Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and is spreading in neighboring countries such as Niger and Algeria. Its vast oil reserves, particularly near Benghazi in the east, exacerbate its security threats. Libya's federalists have caused oil terminals to shut down in the past. The "disruption of oil supplies... has been the most serious economic threat"<sup>58</sup> as it can lead to an immediate hike in global oil prices.

## **Regional Balance of Power**

The Arab Uprisings have fundamentally altered the balance of power in the region. Traditionally, the main powers in the Middle East have been Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. Now, there are new actors vying for a greater role in the region. Qatar is looking to play a greater diplomatic role in the Middle East and beyond, while Turkey has been touted as a role model for Arab countries embarking on the long road of democratic reforms. Because of the resurgence of sectarianism, Shi'a Iran still remains a key power in the region.

## **Qatar's Riches**

Qatar is a small nation in the Arabian Peninsula with the third-largest natural gas reserves in the world and a superb infrastructure. It is the richest country in the world in terms of per capita income, thanks to its low population and a GDP swelled by an abundance of natural resources.<sup>59</sup> Qatar's wealth has ensured that there have been no uprisings in the country despite the fact that it continues to be an absolute monarchy, albeit one that supports democratic reform abroad.

Qatar has played a key diplomatic role in various uprisings, particularly in the Libyan and Syrian civil wars. It has sought to reinvent itself as the key diplomatic player by outdoing its neighbor, Saudi Arabia.

As The Guardian observes:

*"Qatar has attempted to position itself at the forefront of the transformation of the region, giving military support to the opposition to Colonel Muammar Qaddafi in Libya as well as backing key players in the country's fractured post-revolutionary politics through tactics – some diplomats have alleged – that have included weapons shipments. More recently, it has been accused of funneling arms to Syria's opposition groups – a claim the prime minister denies, despite the fact that Qatar vocally supports the arming of that country's opposition."*<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, Qatar's support of pro-democracy movements in the Arab world while remaining an absolute monarchy itself, has led to questions about its motives. With a population of less than 2 million, most of who are not native Qatari citizens, the country has sought to establish closer allies in the region and beyond. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani recently visited the Gaza Strip. It was the first visit to Gaza by a head of state since Hamas came to power. Significantly, the Emir pledged \$400 million for construction projects in the Palestinian territory. Jane Kinninmont of Chatham House observes: "There is a feeling that it needs a lot of allies. So Qatar pursues alliances both with larger countries and smaller ones that it can rely on in places like the UN General Assembly."<sup>61</sup>

Qatar's allies in the region are largely the Sunni Arab countries. Significantly, the country has allowed the Taliban to open an office on its soil, courted Israel, maintained contact with Hamas, remained a key US ally, called for direct dialogue between the US and Iran, and maintained economic relations with Tehran.

Samir Boutamdja astutely notes:

*"Sheikh Al-Thani understood the [uprisings] as an opportunity to compete for regional supremacy. Turkey, Iran, and Qatar are now jockeying for power. The Emir [of Qatar] is doing everything he can to support the freedom aspirations of the Arab Street. However, this does not make him a democrat, but instead a pragmatic politician who understands the importance of being on the right side of history... the Emir has turned his tiny and politically insignificant Emirate into a diplomatic titan."*<sup>62</sup>

Alongside Saudi Arabia, Qatar is at the forefront of a regional power battle between Sunni and Shi'a nations, with the two GCC countries and Iran vying to be the region's biggest player. The diplomatic rise of Qatar is shifting the regional balance of power, especially given that it controls the discourse in the region through its ownership of Al Jazeera, the media organization credited with playing a crucial role in the uprisings.

### **Erdogan's Turkey**

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is considered by many to be a model for Arab Islamist parties participating in new democratic processes. According to many, Erdogan, with his Islamist past, has transformed Turkey into a key economic power in the Muslim world. He has reconciled political Islam with democracy and has led Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's highly secular Turkey into a more conservative direction lately. In many ways, Erdogan is trying to reclaim the legacy of the Ottoman Empire as a natural leader of the new Middle East but this time as a leader of a modern Islamic democracy that acts as a bridge to the West at the same time.

*"Supporters of Turkey's 'demonstrative effect' argue that the country's regional charisma derives from its remarkable achievements in terms of sustained economic growth and trade expansion, democratization, and political stability. While most observers acknowledge that the Turkish democracy is still a work in progress, they also see its shortcomings as the key element that makes the Turkish model relevant for the other countries of the region."<sup>63</sup>*

Turkey maintains good relations with most countries including the US, while remaining a key member of NATO. The country has long sought European Union membership but has not been successful so far. Some Arab countries see Turkey as a key non-Arab Sunni Muslim player in the region. Erdogan is widely admired for his tough stance towards Tel Aviv. Israel and Turkey were long-term allies, although relations have crumbled over the last few years following the 2008/09 Gaza War and the 2010 flotilla raid by Israel on Turkish ships attempting to break the blockade on the Strip. Turkey continues to maintain a pragmatic relationship with Iran, and has sought to play a mediatory role in the ongoing Iranian nuclear crisis to bolster its diplomatic credentials. Ankara's previously good relations with Syria have deteriorated following Damascus' response to the uprising.

Turkey has largely supported pro-democratic reform in the region and has encouraged Islamist governments to create secular civil states instead of theocracies. Nevertheless, many view Turkey's role in the region with suspicion and consider it to be a rather imperfect model for the Arab world.<sup>64</sup>

## Chapter 4

### *What needs to be done?*

To many, the Arab Uprisings represent the re-awakening of a region characterized by prolonged economic and political stagnation. With the clouds of revolutionary dust settling in some countries, a more democratic political order needs to be built and economic reforms implemented. Countries where rebels and regime are still in deadlock and where uprisings have turned into full-blown civil wars (such as in Syria) need speedy political resolutions to prevent further bloodshed and chaos.

Two years after the start of the Arab Uprisings, the challenges of consolidating democracy, building good governance, and fostering prosperity while maintaining peace and regional stability are daunting. Citizens and states have to work together to create accountable government, promote popular equality, control corruption, create jobs and reduce poverty, and reform the judiciary and law enforcement. The biggest challenge that all newly elected governments in the region face is managing expectations. This will prove to be a difficult task but realistic expectations are essential for creating stable democracies.<sup>65</sup>

### **Politics and Society**

Many countries in the region are evolving from one political system to another. Even regimes that have managed to stay in power are making concessions and introducing political reforms. With its historic relationship to power changing rapidly, society must try to forge a new kind of politics, leading to greater accountability and more equality.

### **Accountability**

In modern democracies, those in power have to be accountable to those who elect them. Accountability is the defining feature of democracy. It makes the abuse of political power less likely. Constitutions are important

instruments for creating institutions, forging rule of law, and enforcing accountability. They enshrine basic freedoms and guarantee rights of remedy to citizens in case their rights are violated. Three challenges are of particular importance in Arab countries.

***Balance between the two traditional mandates of Arab constitutions (Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan)***

Traditionally, Arab constitutions had two major features. "First, they generally detailed the aspirations of the state, for example, to be part of the Arab *Umma* (nation) and uphold the principles of Islam. Second, like Western constitutions, Arab constitutions tended to be laden with strong guarantees for civil and political rights."<sup>66</sup> The most important challenge for Arab countries is to ensure that individual rights are not trumped by the aspirations of the state. Basic freedoms such as those of speech, assembly, association, expression, and access to information need to be guaranteed.

***Presidential versus parliamentary system (Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt)***

Choosing the right political system ensures a more stable democracy with sturdier individual rights and lesser likelihood of abuse of power. If power is centralized in the executive branch of government, especially in the head of state, then a democracy can turn authoritarian and even dictatorial. "By adopting constitutional systems that are designed to decentralize power; manage ethnic, sectarian, and other social divisions; and generate incentives for accommodation among varying interests"<sup>67</sup> countries can create stronger and more long lasting democracies.

***Pacification through constitutional reform (Morocco, Jordan, and Algeria)***

Some regimes have chosen to address the grievances of protesters by introducing gradual political reforms. The most important challenge for these countries is to pacify opposition forces. In Morocco and Jordan, the demands for popularly constituted governments could be met by transitioning to a constitutional monarchy. In Algeria, the lack of faith in the current political system renders the process of constitutional reform

much more vulnerable but there are little viable alternatives going forward.

## **Equality**

Equality is an essential democratic principle. The idea that people not only “have a right to a controlling influence over public decisions and decision makers [but] that they should be treated with equal respect and as of equal worth in the context of such decisions”<sup>68</sup> has to be a core principle for the emerging democracies across the region. Two key challenges will need to be addressed for some form of equality to be a reality.

### ***Inclusive politics (Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen, and Libya)***

Arab countries have so far had some of the most exclusive political systems in the world.<sup>69</sup> Regimes have been based around ethnic, sectarian, tribal, or clan loyalties. From now on politics has to be more inclusive. Authoritarian rule by a dictatorial regime cannot be replaced by tyrannical majority rule without adequate minority rights or access to an independent judiciary that safeguards both minority and individual rights. Africa’s experience can serve as a guiding light for the region.

As Rothschild has noted:

*“Wherever Africa’s ruling elites have encouraged inclusiveness or diffused power by means of electoral fine-tuning or territorial decentralization or have applied positive principles of proportionality and reciprocity in four key areas – political coalitions in central government politics, elite recruitment, public resource allocation, and group rights and protections – they have managed to reduce the intensity of state-ethnic conflicts.”<sup>70</sup>*

### ***Citizenship and women’s participation (all countries)***

Women’s rights will determine the future of democracies in the Arab world. At the moment, women’s rates of participation in economic activities in the Arab region are the lowest in the world.<sup>71</sup> The proportion of women representatives in Arab parliaments is also the lowest in the world.<sup>72</sup> This has to change through a provision of new opportunities, both

professional and social, to women. Greater political and economic participation by women must be a goal in itself but it will also lead to more prosperity and lower population growth in the region.

## **Statehood and Institutions**

For decades, elites have captured the state to serve their interests in the Arab world. Institutions and rule of law have been lacking. Transparency in government procedures and political pluralism has been absent. In Libya, “informal ties and a lack of institutions”<sup>73</sup> have impaired the functional capacity of the state completely. Institutions are urgently needed in Libya but throughout the Arab world, major challenges in governance need to be addressed to create an effective state. This will only be possible if the different factions within each country come to an understanding with each other and compromise individual interests for the collective good of the country.

### ***Civil control over the military or militias (Egypt, Libya, and Yemen)***

In many regimes, the military has acquired a certain “political pivotalness”<sup>74</sup> such as in Egypt and in Yemen. “The very resources and privileges that enable soldiers to suppress the regime’s opposition also empower them to act against the regime itself.”<sup>75</sup> As such, in many countries, control over the military by civilian governments has been weak. In Libya, after a period of civil war, many militias are still operating outside government control. Reforming the state must mean restoring civilian authority over the armed forces.

### ***Reform of the justice system (all countries)***

The hegemony of the executive over the judiciary and the establishment of special and military tribunals have eroded individual rights, destroyed due process, and eliminated a fair trial in criminal, civil, and administrative matters. A new justice system is urgently needed along with law enforcement reform. The police have long been an instrument of oppression and their powers have to be trimmed drastically. Detention, torture, arbitrary arrest and exemption from the rule of law have to be

consigned to the dustbin of history. New transparent systems based on protecting individual liberties have to be created. The culture of wielding power with impunity and immunity has to end, and those who have committed human rights violations have to be held accountable.

## **Economic Development and Social Welfare**

The most important challenge for the region is fostering economic growth that leads to employment generation and poverty alleviation. So far, “ruling elites in the region have captured key segments of the economy and created an entrenched rent seeking system of crony capitalism.”<sup>76</sup> The state has smothered entrepreneurship through corruption and regulation. It has also neglected public services such as healthcare, education, and housing.

At the same time, “rapid demographic growth over the past three decades, in combination with a dramatic increase in the number of educated job seekers, has imposed critical challenges on Arab regimes”<sup>77</sup> that they have been unable to deal with.

High unemployment, rampant poverty, and lack of public services in fast growing urban settings have created widespread discontent especially among a growing youth population. The World Bank estimates that the region will need to create 50 million jobs over the next decade to ensure social and political stability.<sup>78</sup> The new governments are racing against the clock and will have to start reforming their economies as soon as they assume power.

The task for newly elected governments will be to create economic systems that are more efficient, dynamic, and equitable. Sound macro-economic policies have to be combined with employment generation policies, especially for the youth. Regulatory reforms have to be implemented through political will, rather than technical zeal. Corruption has to be reduced and a bloated public sector has to be trimmed. Governments will have to improve the provision of public services. The

inefficient patronage model of the past is no longer tenable and provision of education, health, and housing will have to improve along with a radical improvement of a creaking infrastructure.

## Chapter 5

*How do the Arab Uprisings affect the international community?*

The Arab Uprisings have changed the political landscape in the region and created a new reality for the international community. Earlier, “a soft bigotry of lowered expectations in the West and among Arab elites,”<sup>79</sup> assumed that democracy was not possible in the region. Stability was championed over democracy using the specter of an Islamist threat as an excuse to promote strategic interests. Arab countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to popular aspirations. Arab populations, in turn, saw their governments as corrupt, secular puppets of Western power. Anti-Western sentiments were rife.

The Arab Uprisings will herald a more equal relationship between Arab countries and the West. Regardless of whether regimes have changed or not, Arab countries will reflect popular sentiment to a greater degree and will be more aggressive in asserting their sovereignty.

### **Implications for the International Community**

After two years of uprisings, the emerging political order in the Middle East is marked by considerable shifts of power both within individual countries as well as at the regional level. Some old actors remain, some new actors are emerging, and some others are fading away.

#### **The US**

The United States face a situation where some of its key allies in the Arab world have been ousted. Their influence and position in the region is being reevaluated. “The dilemma for the United States and its allies has been and is to maintain existing working relations with the Palace for shared concerns on trade and security while recognizing that they will have to pay homage increasingly to citizen movements, which at their core demand more influence on the affairs of the State.”<sup>80</sup>

Core US interests in the region are threefold: natural resources; security for Israel; and counter-terrorism and regional security measures.<sup>81</sup> US interests in natural resources are largely unaffected. Oil-rich Gulf kingdoms remain intact. "So far the [uprisings have] caused minimal disruptions of the oil market because Gulf producers, principally Saudi Arabia, have made up for supply losses from Libya... Nonetheless, these events pose the question of how much disruption from such events can the market absorb before the repercussions are widespread."<sup>82</sup> If political upheaval spreads and affects the Arabian Peninsula, the global markets for natural resources could turn highly volatile.

Israel's security is a core concern for the US. The election of an Islamist Egyptian president backed by the Muslim Brotherhood puts into question the US relationship with Egypt. It also creates uncertainty over the Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

*"The [uprisings have] called into question Israel's relative stability of the past several years. In Egypt, the prospect now is for a popular government more critical of Israel. There is no question that the Egyptian public is hostile to Israel, believing that Israel has not maintained its part of the treaty."*<sup>83</sup>

The US faces a dilemma with a new Egyptian government that will not be as compliant as the Hosni Mubarak regime. The diplomatic relationship with Egypt has been thrown into question. As President Barack Obama declared: "I don't think that we would consider [the new Egyptian government] an ally, but we don't consider them an enemy."<sup>84</sup> The relationship between the US and Egypt has so far not faltered and it is in the best interests of both countries to maintain stable diplomatic ties. However, as stated by former Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amr Moussa, "the era of 'yes sir' has to come to an end."<sup>85</sup>

Counterterrorism in the region is an ongoing policy goal for the US. Drone attacks targeting Al-Qaeda members continue in Yemen. Bahrain is a key

ally for Washington because it allows the Washington to counter Iranian influence. It is for this reason that, for all the talk of supporting democratic reform, the US continues to support the Bahraini Sunni monarchy despite its repression of the Shi'a population.

## **European Union**

Similar to the US, European countries have historically had close ties with autocratic Arab rulers. Over the course of the Arab Uprisings though, these ties weakened. French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron increasingly voiced support for the demands of demonstrators. Due to its close proximity to North Africa and its large immigrant population from the region, the European Union (EU) closely monitors related developments. The EU is concerned with the region's stability; it desires strong economic and trade relations; and wants to ensure that security issues do not spill over to Europe or lead to mass migration to its member states.<sup>86</sup>

In 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process) was created to boost trade between Europe and North Africa, and to promote democracy. The Barcelona Process led to an agreement according to which human rights violations justified a freeze in trade. This mention of human rights was lip service though as the EU took no action in spite of mass human rights abuses by Arab regimes.<sup>87</sup> Given the changed realities in the Arab world, the EU has no choice but to reevaluate its policies for the region.

EU states are largely dependent on natural resources from North Africa, including gas from Algeria and oil from Libya. According to reports, British and French energy firms such as BP, Total, and Shell acted speedily to negotiate new oil exploration deals with Libya after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi.<sup>88</sup> France and the EU have also signed a €940 million deal with Egypt to fund a new metro extension. As a neighbor, the EU will remain a key economic and trade partner for the region as an energy importer, an infrastructure builder, or exporter of goods and services.

The big fear for EU states with stagnant economies is the specter of mass Arab immigration in the aftermath of the uprisings in North Africa. Already, states in the EU are struggling to deal with large Arab minorities. In particular, France with its ghastly immigrant *banlieues* and memories of the riots of 2005 is particularly concerned. The EU has already increased its economic assistance and cooperation via the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to reduce the risk of immigrants flooding its borders.

EU states have the same concerns as the US regarding extremism and, especially, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Southern Europe in particular is in close proximity to the *Maghreb*, a term used to describe North Africa. In Libya, arms are widely available following the civil war. There is further risk of drug smuggling, especially through Algeria, Mali, and Morocco. The EU has to work with new and interim regimes in a period of uncertainty to help the countries in the region become more democratic, foster economic growth, and attain stability.

## Russia

Moscow's interests in the Arab world do not pertain to energy. "Unlike most other major powers, [Russia] has no stake in the oil supplies from the Gulf and actually benefits from climbing oil prices caused by regional instability — it even gains in reputation because European energy consumers now see it as a more reliable source."<sup>89</sup> Given its authoritarian government and suspicion of Western interference, Russia views the political upheaval in Arab countries with utmost pessimism. Moscow was uncomfortable with NATO's military intervention in Libya, a country that it has long regarded as an ally. Russia believed that NATO had gone beyond the mandate of the UN resolution. With its own "corrupt bureaucratic superstructure,"<sup>90</sup> Moscow fears that the Arab Uprisings might trigger revolts in the Caucasus and Central Asia, something it wants to avoid at all costs.

Both Russia and China have been criticized strongly by the international community for vetoing a number of UN resolutions on Syria. Russia is a long-standing ally of the Ba'athist regime in Damascus and has been particularly vocal in its opposition to any intervention in Syria. The country is a de facto client state of the Soviet era and one of Russia's last remaining allies in the Arab world. The naval base in Tartus is "the only Russian military base outside the former Soviet Union"<sup>91</sup> and gives Russia a chance to counter US presence in the region. Russia also has entrenched economic interests in Syria. "Syria became the fifth largest buyer of Russian weapons in 2011, with contracts of up to \$3.8 billion. From 2007 to 2010, arms exports to Syria doubled from \$2.1 billion to \$4.7 billion... Russian investments in the Syrian economy were at around \$19.5 billion in 2011."<sup>92</sup>

The fall of the Bashar Al-Assad regime will be particularly disastrous for Russia because the fragmented opposition in Syria is largely hostile to Moscow. Nevertheless, Russia "can expect to gain some influence in the wider Middle East"<sup>93</sup> because new Arab regimes might seek closer ties with Moscow to counter the US.

## **China**

As stated above, China's stance on Syria is similar to Russia's. It held and still holds close ties with a number of autocratic regimes in the region. In Egypt, Beijing had strengthened ties with the Mubarak regime and was not pleased when he was ousted unceremoniously. It has since been quick to establish relations with interim governments in Cairo and Tunis.<sup>94</sup> The Asian giant has ever-growing interests in the region. "China's increasing dependence on energy imports from the Middle East, its central role in the financing and development of major oil fields in the Persian Gulf, and the heightened investment of Chinese multinationals across the Middle East and North Africa all reflect the expanding scope of its interests."<sup>95</sup>

Upheaval in the Arab world has put Chinese investments at risk. However, Arab countries such as Libya are rebuilding their state both when it comes to infrastructure and to institutions. Already, Beijing is playing a key role in

sub-Saharan Africa where it is involved in building roads, railways, power plants, and more. With its massive foreign reserves, Beijing has deeper pockets than both the US and the EU. It can invest massively in infrastructure and forge strong relations in a region where regimes will be focusing on generating economic growth and developing infrastructure.

At the same time, the Arab Uprisings worry China because of the potential implications they have for China's own domestic situation. China's Communists want to continue their control over the country. They are paranoid about stability and fear mass protests. While China is still witnessing strong economic growth, "political grievances continue to fester, even as anxious leaders seek to repress pressures from below."<sup>96</sup> A Chinese version of the Arab Uprisings is Beijing's worst nightmare, which explains why China has censored coverage of developments in Arab countries in its domestic media.

### **Brazil, India, and South Africa**

Among the countries popularly known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), Brazil, India, and South Africa are democracies. Russia and China are authoritarian regimes and their response to the Arab Uprisings is understandable. However, Brazil, India, and South Africa have been unexpectedly hesitant about the uprisings. Their key concern is stability in the region. Furthermore, all three countries are led by left-wing governments that have traditionally had close ties with the authoritarian regimes of the Arab region. With their history of colonization, these countries fear Western interference and often suspect the West of installing pliant regimes under the guise of introducing or supporting democracy. Iraq has left a bitter aftertaste for Brazil, India, and South Africa because it was seen as a neo-imperialist enterprise and stoked fears that the West might interfere in their own internal matters.

It is therefore unsurprising that Jacob Zuma led the African Union's attempts to negotiate peace during the Libyan Civil War by opening dialogue with Qaddafi.<sup>97</sup> At a summit in New Delhi, Brazil, India, and South

Africa joined Russia and China to declare that dialogue was the only method to solve the Syrian conflict, staunchly opposing intervention.<sup>98</sup> India's stand on both Libya and Syria echoed that of Russia and China, because of its longstanding relationships with both authoritarian regimes. In particular, India's paranoia over Kashmir has tempered its response to the idea of foreign intervention in Syria.

Despite their cautious approach, Brazil, India, and South Africa have an opportunity to establish closer ties with new regimes that may see these three powers as non-Western democratic exemplars. The new Arab regimes might also seek closer ties in investment and trade to counter the influence of the West, and to foster the high economic growth that they desperately need.

## **How can the International Community Help?**

While it is clear that national interests dictate the response of each major power, there is no lack of expressed commitment by the international community to the plight of the region. Everyone recognizes that the Arab Uprisings are a watershed moment and Obama captured the international mood best when he said that "for six months, we have witnessed an extraordinary change taking place in the Middle East and North Africa... and though these countries may be a great distance from our shores, we know that our own future is bound to this region by the forces of economics and security, by history and by faith."<sup>99</sup>

Throughout the Arab Uprisings the international community has intervened. Some countries are now firmly on the road to transition, others have governments that are clinging on to power while some others are witnessing power struggles. In such a fluid situation, should the international community play any role, and if so, what should that be?

### **Interventionism**

The idea of intervention is fiercely debated. Scholars dispute its legal and

moral foundations. Nevertheless, the last twenty years have been an age of interventionism with Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and most recently Iraq and Afghanistan providing examples of this philosophy at work.<sup>100</sup> From the start of the Arab Uprisings, the humanitarian and military aspects of interventionism have been debated. On the one hand, countries such as Russia and China argue that the role of the international community is to facilitate a domestic-led inclusive political process that reflects the legitimate aspirations of all walks of society. On the other, powers such as the US and the EU argue that at some point humanitarian concerns and the threat of a wider regional crisis make military intervention inevitable.<sup>101</sup>

When it comes to intervention two key questions arise. First, is a “humanitarian intervention” really humanitarian? Interventions are rarely altruistic. Great powers tend to act in their self-interest. It is alleged that a no-fly zone over Libya was only instituted to further strategic interests. If the international community is serious and strict about the “responsibility to protect”, the main thrust of external action would have to focus on assistance and relief efforts. No-fly zones would ensure the safety of civilians in these zones and not enhance the military clout of the opposition.

Second, in light of the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, can intervention lead to an improvement of the status quo? Or as posed eloquently by Gerard Knaus in his book *Can Intervention Work?* Can intervention stop wars and genocides and get rid of dictators? What are the human and financial costs of intervention? What is the risk of backlash and instability as a result of the intervention? Can those who intervene then build modern, democratic states that thrive in their wake? The fallouts of Iraq and Afghanistan have led to much introspection and created doubts about the morality and practical undertaking of intervention.

### **Foreign Assistance**

All aid organizations have hailed the Arab Uprisings as a renewed

opportunity to achieve sustainable development. Central to international efforts is the Deauville Partnership, focusing on four key priority areas — stabilization, job creation, participation/governance, and integration. Countries such as Egypt and Tunisia have been the particular focus of efforts by international financial institutions. These countries face faltering socio-economic circumstances and lack the windfall revenues of natural resources to battle economic hardship. Nevertheless, financial and other assistance programs have been an issue of debate over the last decade.

*"Some such as Jeffrey Sachs argue that foreign aid is a critical way for communities and countries to escape the poverty trap. [William] Easterly dismisses the notion of a poverty trap and argues that aid, at least as it is conventionally practiced, has largely failed because, in addition to corruption and bad governance in recipient countries, bureaucratic interests and top-down planning overwhelm markets and fail to encourage effective antipoverty solutions. Collier attempts to split the difference, asserting that geography, conflict, and bad governance are the primary traps contributing to keeping poor countries poor. Aid is not a panacea, he claims, but certain kinds of aid, delivered in certain ways, can help combat poverty."<sup>102</sup>*

Democracy-assistance efforts are often hindered by a lack of legitimacy and neutrality. They are seen as foreign interference in the internal sovereignty of a nation. In early 2012, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) cracked down on foreign non-governmental organizations. For the international community there is also the tough choice between what Thomas Carothers calls the political and developmental approach. The former envisages aid to be funneled to core political processes and institutions — especially elections, political parties, and politically oriented civil society groups. The latter pursues incremental, long-term change in a wide range of political and socioeconomic sectors to improve governance and build a well-functioning state. Under this approach, aid could be used for literacy efforts, training of state personnel, and reforms of the judicial system.

The international community has to decide upon the appropriate approach on a case-by-case basis. Each state has a different set of needs and foreign assistance has to be tailored according to the facts on the ground. Finally, after years of authoritarian rule, it is for the Arab people to decide if they want foreign assistance and, if so, in what form and to what extent. Foreign aid can develop the region but should be neutral, legitimate, and with regard for local political conditions.

## Epilogue

As the Arab Uprisings enter their third year, the face of the region, marred by political and economic decay, is slowly changing. What is most surprising about the revolts is that the protests had no leaders, no real agenda other than the overthrow of the existing regimes, and only a vague aspiration for economic and political reform. "Mobilization and communication took place in diverse ways through the Internet and cell phones, not through political manifestos."<sup>103</sup>

The ultimate success of the Arab Uprisings will be determined by whether a new balance of power between the government, the army, and different sectarian and ethnic groups can bring such economic and political development. So far, progress is hard-fought, and tensions have flared up easily, Egypt being a point in case. However, if expectations are not managed and socio-economic grievances not addressed, a new political crisis is not unfathomable, not only in Egypt but also in surrounding countries.

Many commentators have pointed to the Arab monarchies who have fared considerably better in the face of protests than their republican counterparts. "In reality, however, the political and economic structures that underpin these highly autocratic states are coming under increasing pressure, and broad swathes of citizens are making hitherto unimaginable challenges to the ruling elites."<sup>104</sup>

Jordan presents a pressing issue, with the recent wave of political unrest being directed at King Abdullah. Although it is unlikely that Amman will follow the path of its neighbors, the position of Jordan is vital for actors in the international community. As the international community has so far failed to halt the violence in Syria through diplomatic efforts, the civil war could potentially last for some time. With violence spilling over into

Lebanon, regional stability is at stake. Notably, at the time of writing, the Israel-Palestine conflict is also coming to the fore again in Gaza.

Aside from the violence, however, the Arab Uprisings represent a profound moment where leaders have been ousted and political dynamics are changing. The long journey towards an inclusive democratic system will not happen overnight, but will take decades to fully achieve. One thing is for sure though; the Arab Uprisings have been a remarkable feat of collective people power. The "Arab Street" has spoken; change is inevitable.

## About the Authors

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