Fadi Elhusseini[*]

Post Arab Spring Thoughts:
The Middle East between External and Internal
Mechanisms (Political Economic & Social Forces)

Abstract

This paper aims to keep readers informed by addressing common views which are widespread not only among academics and politicians, but also amongst the Arab masses which have started to question and lose confidence in the current climate of Arab revolution. The paper will enunciate the term the "Arab Spring" as a phenomenon, examining its contours though practical and theoretically accepted 'norms'. Actual forces, whether internal or external, will be contextualized within a theoretical framework in order to introduce an innovative analysis of the current conditions in the region, in an effort to draw some relevant conclusions and provide a working prognosis of the future course of events.

Introduction

ARABS for years have been divided, dealing with a seemingly endless succession of blows. Arab Nationalism has remarkably transcended boundaries and borders have become a major source of conflicts. Suddenly, an atmosphere of revolution has come to light in this region, which has been described for long time as idle and immune towards transformations, catching everyone off-guard, toppling regimes and shaking the thrones of others; sweeping away the *status quo* and re-gathering all those concerned under one new name: The Arab Spring. This event has made it clear that the borders separating political units are no longer solid.

For almost three years now, the Arab world has been the scene of an epic paroxysm; the greatest wave of empowerment the world has witnessed for many years.[1] Feverish analyses began to mount in an attempt to examine this event: THE ARAB SPRING. Some chose to factor in this context a new foreign conspiracy, aiming at dividing of what is left in the region. Others suggest that the revolution is a long awaited insurrection of dignity, evinced when people have decided to shake the dust of obedience and thus a phenomenon (the Arab Spring) came to pass that was ignited by plain domestic forces. Nevertheless, amidst observers' bewilderment over a fresh set of events, which misrepresented a newly anticipated course of

---

[*] Associate Research Fellow at the Institute for Middle East Studies, Canada; Ph.D. candidate at the University of Sunderland, United Kingdom, e-mail:bg36zm@research.sunderland.ac.uk.

[1] Robin Wright, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011, p. 2.

democracy and transformation in the region, new prospects for scholars to address novel hypotheses and theories have come to light. Events have unfolded which pinpoint five evident cases of the Arab Spring; Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. Demonstrations in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been colored in a sectarian hue and other demonstrations in Algeria, Oman, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, Kuwait and Morocco have not exceeded previous 'regular' protests, similar to many that had occurred in the Arab World before the eruption of the current spate of revolts.

In order to conjure up what has happened in that region, delimiting the scope of our research into well-defined geographical boundaries and well-known geopolitical contours is deemed crucial, especially when adding a brief historical background. In addition, throughout the course of our analysis, the term the "Arab Spring" will be articulated through comparing aspects dovetailing this term into a widely known theoretical framework of revolution. Furthermore, factors (both domestic and foreign) that have inspired, affected and diverted the course of Arab revolution will feature within the course of this paper. Finally, an evaluation and a conclusion of the current status of Arab revolts will be presented in order to give a quasi-accurate prognosis for the future course of events.

The Arab World vs. the Middle East

To start, in today's article we would apply the term the "Arab World" rather than the widespread term the "Middle East". The main reason behind this is to limit the scope of our analysis to specific geopolitical boundaries, due to the continuous disagreements on the exact definition of the Middle East. This fact was clearly referred to by many scholars, like Bernard Lewis who points out the importance of redefining the term the Middle East adding, "we have been always a little vague about the geographical meaning of this expression, which was invented in the west in the early years of this century".[2]

The term the "Middle East" appeared first in 1902 in an edition of the British journal National Review, in an article by Alfred Thayer Mahan entitled "The Persian Gulf and International Relations", in an attempt to delineate a region from the Mediterranean to India.[3] This term was first employed in World War II when Britain established the Middle East Command in Egypt, which had been known previously as the "Near East".[4]

For a time, the "Near East" was the term used for the Levant, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Jordan, while the "Middle East" applied to Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. Some definitions limit the Middle East to the countries bound by Egypt to the

---

[2] 'Rethinking the Middle East', http://www.hmjackson.org/downloads/bernard_lewis.pdf (accessed 18.02.2014).

[3] C. Mohamed, 'Reconsidering Middle East and Islamic Studies for a Changing World', *International Critical Thought*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 2012, pp. 197–208.

[4] Baskın Oran, Atay Akdevelioglu and Mustafa Aksin, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1919–2006*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010, p. 113.

West, the Arab Peninsula to the South, and as an extremity Iran to the East, while others consider the Middle East to be the region to Mauritania in West Africa and all the countries of North Africa and as far eastward as Pakistan. The Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East includes the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus in its definition of the Middle East. A more expansive view of the Middle East include former south and south-western republics of the former Soviet Union, such as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, because of the republics' cultural, historical, ethnic and especially religious over-lapping with countries at the core of the Middle East.[5]

Accordingly, the term the "Arab World" will be applied throughout the course of our analysis, in a way that it would narrow and delimit the research to a specific geographical and political extent. Geographically, this will include Morocco to the West, the Arab Peninsula to the South, Iraq to the East and North Africa to the North. Politically, the term the "Arab World" encompasses all members of the Arab League; excluding observer members such as Turkey. This will therefore originate from the six founding members of the Arab League in 1945: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Other Arab countries joined the league after winning their independence including Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Kuwait, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Mauritania, Somalia, Palestine, Djibouti and Comoros. Five out of the twenty-two Arab League member states experienced genuine uprisings, while ten other countries have shown less pronounced but real enough levels of mass movements.

Historical Background

Arabs have never had one state that has congregated all their peoples. However, as they had common history, language, religion and traditions, they have always felt closer to other Arabs rather than to any other nation. Tribal links remain evident and one family can exist in two or more Arab states. The identity of Arab states (as of today) had never emerged before the Sykes–Picot of 1916, which divided the Arab World into separate states, regimes and nationalities. In this context, Raymond Hinnebusch points out that imperialism fragmented the region into a multitude of relatively weak and, to an extent, artificial states at odds with each other.[6]

It can be argued that the current round of revolts, now termed the "Arab Spring" or "Arab Awakening", does not constitute the first manifestation of Arab mass protests that have led to a change in the social and political structure of Arab societies. In fact it comes as the third wave of Arab mass revolts each possessing their own grounds, circumstances, ideologies, slogans and outcomes.

---

[5] 'What is the Middle East', http://middleeast.about.com/od/middleeast101/f/me080208.htm (accessed 23.06.2013).

[6] Philip Robins, 'The Foreign Policy of Turkey', in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002, p. 3.

The first wave of Arab revolts took place in 1914 and was called "the Great Arab Revolution". What characterizes this wave is that it had a leader, Sharif Hussein, who led the revolution whose main target was ending Ottoman rule in Arabia. This wave coincided with two major events, one global and another regional. World War I was the major global event, while the waning and final collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Pax-Ottoman) was the major regional event.

This wave was externally driven as the revolutions were supported by the British, who were aiming to end and replace the Ottomans presence in the region. For all that, the effect of the revolts was ephemeral as they were bereft of their main goal of independence when colonial powers charted their way into that region. During this period, a number of slogans and ideologies were endorsed through this wave and the main slogan was nationalism. This slogan was deemed important in order to encourage Arabs to get rid of any other subordination, mainly Islamism, which inevitably meant rooting out any connection to the Ottoman Sultan and the warding off of any yearnings for the Ottoman heritage.[7]

The second wave of Arab revolts took place in the 50's and 60's, and the term the "Arab Spring" was used for the first time by a French writer. In his book "Un printemps arabe" published in 1959, Jacques Benoist-Méchin describes the Arab revolts that took place in the "Arab" Middle East, and tries to link them to the European Revolutions of 1848, known as the "Spring of Nations" or "Springtime of the Peoples".[8] Similar to the first wave, the second wave of Arab revolts came after two major events, one regional and another global. The latter was World War II, which had a great impact on the revolts and caused them to be driven by external factors. In other words, foreign powers and forces encouraged and even stimulated these revolts as Communist powers wanted to fight the Western presence and colonization in the Middle East. For that reason, "Fighting Imperialism" and "Progressivism" were among other key slogans and themes of this period.

Yet, the major regional event that occurred during that period was the establishment of the State of Israel in the center of the Arab World. This led to the endorsement of an "Arabism" slogan to counter "Zionism", which attended the establishment of the State of Israel. Arabism was adeptly promoted by the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, as his name was largely aligned with the second wave of Arab revolts. In their analyses of this state of affairs, some scholars see that when the great powers have been divided (as in the Cold War) and hegemonic intervention was thus deterred, the conditions for regional autonomy could have been better and the region was more likely to become united against the outside.[9]

---

[7] Mehmet Sahin, '1950–1960 Arab Revolutions and the 2011 Arab Spring: Similarities and Differences', in *New World Order, Arab Spring and Turkey*, B. Senem Cevik-Ersaydi and Bora Baskak (eds.), Ankara: Ankara University Center for the Study and Research for Political Psychology, 2012, pp. 3–5.

[8] Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Un Printemps Arabe* (An Arab Spring), Paris: Albin Michel, 1959.

[9] Robins, 'The Foreign Policy…', p. 6.

The desire to make Arabism (Pan-Arabism or Arab Nationalism) more influential struck a chord with and inspired other leaders who commandeered revolts in other countries in the Middle East. In effect, Arabism gained popularity in Arab streets, termed at times as "Nasserism", and had an evident influence on many Arab parties like the Ba'ath parties in Syria and Iraq, Gadhafi in Libya as well as others. This wave of revolts did not target Israel, but focused on 'other colonial' presences in the Middle East – deemed to be the real instigators and creators of Zionism and hence the State of Israel. In this regard, a number of kingdoms, condemned by their alliance or reliance on Western "imperialistic" powers, paid the price and were toppled in Libya, Iraq, and primarily in Egypt.[10]

Arab Nationalism, which mainly meant adhering to Arab interests and unity, has gradually declined over the course of the past 40 years. For instance, the position of Arab states was united and remarkably solid facing the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and opposing the UN partition plan. A similar position was upheld in 1973 in what was known as the "oil crisis". However, the signed peace agreement between Israel and Egypt (during the reign of late President Sadat) solemnly announced the decline of Arab Nationalism. A number of Arab states boycotted Egypt and the Arab League headquarters were removed from Cairo, Egypt's capital. A number of incidents followed and bolstered this fragmentation, including the Arabs restrained reaction against the Israeli invasion of an Arab capital, Beirut; the Iraqi--Iranian war which saw Syria in the opposite camp against Iraq; and the US strikes on another Arab capital Tripoli in 1986, with the moderate reactions of Arab regimes, providing another case in point.[11]

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 had serious repercussions and a direct role in the waning of Arab Nationalism, especially that it seemingly divided Arabs into two camps, one of which was willing to invite non-Arab armies to attack their Arab brothers in Iraq.[12] Perhaps the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the death of Saddam Hussein, a staunch advocate of Arab Nationalism, declared the moribund state of Arabism.

What happened in the Arab World in December 2010?

Against this frustrating background, combined with bleak economic conditions and corrupt governments and regimes a Tunisian man "Mohamed Bouazizi", a market trader, set himself on fire in protest against those preventing him from selling his fruit and vegetables. His tragic self-immolation ushered in a point of no return in the region, which started with unprecedented upheaval in Tunisia on 18 December 2010, and galvanized similar events of popular outcry in Egypt (who had Khaled Said as one of

---

[10] 'Another Spring: The Middle East between the History of Revolts and the Future', http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/70bd3afb-a759-4a2b-8b93-0c72019e42a4/another-spring-by-fadi-elhusseinipdf.pdf (accessed 20.10.2013).

[11] 'Rethinking the Middle East', p. 9.

[12] Ibidem.

Egypt's icons of revolution). Other Arab countries followed suit, as they shared and endured similar economic conditions and the spoiled existences of oppressive regimes.

Tunisia's Ben Ali was forced to seek refuge in Saudi Arabia after twenty-four years of rule; Egypt's Mubarak had to abdicate after thirty years in office; Yemen's Saleh was forced to resign after more than thirty three years in power; Libya's Gaddafi, a forty years de facto ruler, was brutally killed, while Syria's Assad, serving as President and ruling Syrian with an iron fist for thirteen years after succeeding his father who led Syria for another thirty years, is still clinging onto power.

Unlike previous waves of revolution in the Arab World, the current wave of uprisings was mainly internally driven. Olivier Roy states, 'For the first time in the Arab world, revolution has not attached itself to some grand, supranational cause … [t]hese movements are patriotic rather than nationalist, taking root in a domestic context and confronting the authorities without accusing them of being puppets of a foreign power'.[13]

Sanguine observers and hopeful people preferred to dub this wave of revolts the "Arab Spring", believing or hoping that it would bring about fruitful results and a new reality to the region. Nonetheless, in a fractious, rife-with-conflict Arab World, earth-shattering events struck the region when a series of quick counter-measures took place in "Arab Spring" countries, leading to a considerable change in the visions and expectations of both people and observers.

In Egypt, after living with the empowering glimpse of a democratic transition, 'a coup' or 'a second revolution' or 'a counter-revolution' occurred as popular protests broke out on June 30, 2013. As a result, the army deposed a president who had been democratically elected through fair elections (the first of its kind in decades in Egypt) after one year in power. A civilian rule was installed by the Army, who retained greater powers.

What happened in Egypt had a direct impact on the situation in Syria. For some time, Egypt has constituted an appealing model for democratic transformation in the Arab World. Egypt's current state of turbulence has flowed in favor of the Syrian regime, who have been trying to show that the alternative to his rule signifies instability, chaos, extremism and a failed state scenario. Add to that the longevity of the conflict, the horrendous death toll and the scale of destruction in Syria, it is clearly apparent that the rebels and their supporters have been absorbing a series of heavy and painful blows against the backdrop of a lukewarm and hesitant international response.

In Libya, wariness and misgivings are being seemingly realized as instability continues to ravage the country. It is true that Libyans succeeded in staging democratic elections, but alas the Libyan society could not overcome its Sisyphean Ordeal of fragmentation and tribalism. In addition to this, militias are still in control of several regions where the central government has no presence and some oil ports are still besieged by militants. Just few weeks ago, the Libyan premier was kidnapped much to everybody's bewilderment.

---

[13] 'Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalization?', http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/02/was-the-arab-spring-a-regional-response-to-globalisation/ (accessed 30.10.2013).

In Tunisia, a bitter and overt struggle between Islamists and secularists has been disrupting any potential for democratic stability in the country. The assassination of some secular figures, terrorist attacks that have targeted police and army officers, and continuous strikes and demonstrations seem to have sparked and highlighted a scenario similar to the Egyptian one.

Finally, in Yemen people began to have doubts and question the goals of the revolution, and many have interpreted the transfer of power from Ali Abdullah Saleh to the new president Abdel Hadi Mansour as a distortion or an abortion of the real goals of the revolution, which has resulted in demonstrations primarily because the desired changes have not happened as was previously hoped. In addition, the country seems on the verge of sectarian discord between Huthi and Salafi, which threatens to put at risk any sense of achievement or progress.

Before going further in analyzing the factors affecting the Arab Spring and its counter-revolutions, it could be deemed necessary to look into the meaning of the Arab Spring.

What is the Arab Spring?

Karen Kaya opts to define the Arab Spring as:

> A complex, rapidly unfolding phenomenon of uprisings, revolutions, mass demonstrations, and civil war, a diverse set of movements with diverse instigators and aspirations, including freedom, economic opportunity, regime change, and ending corruption. It started in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread to the rest of the Middle East throughout 2011. Although it is the most significant event to happen in the Middle East in recent history, we do not yet understand its trajectory and cannot predict its outcome. Despite the fact that the process is apparently advancing the values of freedom, justice, and democracy, it can still produce less desirable outcomes, requiring alternate approaches to standard diplomatic and economic approaches with a long-term view.[14]

Eugene Rogan conversely sees that there is no consensus on what to call, "the revolutionary movements that have spread across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011".[15] Rogan refers to two names for the revolutionary movements that struck the Arab World: the Arab Awakening and the Arab Spring. The latter is a Western reference while Arabs opt to call it an "Awakening". Both expressions deal with social, constitutional and ideological facts. Rogan stresses the fact that, "the Arab world has reached a historic turning point that is unlikely to be reversed".[16] Tariq Ramadan refers to the fact that while some call it the "Arab Spring or Revolutions", other cautious

---

[14] K. Kaya, 'Turkey and the Arab Spring', *Military Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 July–August 2012, p. 26.

[15] Eugene Rogan, 'Regional Overview', in *The Arab Spring: Implications for British Policy*, London: Conservative Middle East Council, 2011, p. 4.

[16] Ibidem.

writers tend to use the term "Arab uprisings", noting that it remains difficult to ascertain and to assess what has happened or actually happening in the Arab World.[17]

Indeed, many believe that economic stagnation has been an important driving force behind the demands for political change. Nitin Bajaj, for instance, argues that the Arab Spring is an economic phenomenon **within** nations before it became a political crisis **across** nations. Therefore it is, according to Bajaj, a story of political terms and economic realities.[18]

Putting it in terms of a global nexus, the current series of revolts might arguably be considered part of an unavoidable trend in states that have either failed or refused to meet their citizens' expectations. This trend has become all the more evident since 1989; in the collapse of the USSR itself, in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), Lebanon (2005), Kyrgyzstan (2005), Moldova (2009) and the Arab Spring (2011).[19]

Conversely, some see in the Arab Spring a fourth wave of democratization (each followed by a reverse one), in accordance to the concept developed by Samuel M. Huntington. According to Huntington, the first wave occurred between 1828 and 1926, with its roots in the recent French and American revolutions. The second wave took place from 1943–1962, and featured coups and the establishment of authoritarianism across Latin America, South and East Asia and allied occupation post-World War II. The third wave between the 1970s and 1980s manifested in the collapse of the former Soviet Union and swept Southern Europe, South America and Africa.[20]

Some scholars, like Ali Sarihan and Klaus von Beyme opted to include the events after the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to democratic transitions of varying success in Eastern Europe, in the fourth wave of democracy. However, Sarihan inserts the current Arab revolts within this framework. He opines that with the onset of the current Arab Spring, the fourth wave of transformation or "Democratization of Communist and Islamic Regimes" began.[21] As per the fact that it has an impact on other regions and inspired revolts and demonstrations in Europe, Asia, Latin and North America, it gained its global contours. According to yet another conceptual notion, Kenan Engin calls the Arab Spring the fifth wave of democracy, begun in 2011 and still ongoing.[22]

---

[17] Tariq Ramadan, 'Egypt: Transition to Democracy', in *The Arab Spring: Implications for British Policy*, London: Conservative Middle East Council, 2011, p. 13.

[18] 'What caused the Arab Spring', http://theindianeconomist.com/what-caused-the-arab-spring (accessed 27.10.2013).

[19] 'The Great Arab Spring of 2011: Causes and Consequences', http://democratist.net/2011/03/28/great-arab-spring/ (accessed 22.10.2013).

[20] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, United States: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

[21] 'Fourth Wave Democratization: Democratization of Communist and Islamic Regimes', http://www.turkishweekly.net/op-ed/2918/ (accessed 12.05.2013).

[22] 'The Arab Spring: The 5.0 Democracy Wave', http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=the-arab-spring-the-5.0-democracy-wave-2011-08-19 (accessed 22.06.2013).

A theoretical backdrop of the Arab Revolutions 'Spring'

In carrying out an assessment of the Arab Spring, it is worth articulating Arab revolutions as a phenomenon. Many efforts were given in order to define a "revolution". Broadly speaking, for Frederick Hegel, revolutions are motivated by ideas (ideals principles); while for Karl Marx revolutions are motivated by material interests (class interests). In other words, the transformation of the political classes into social classes made the class distinctions of civil society into merely social distinctions, pertaining to private life but meaningless in political life. With that, the separation of political life and civil society was completed.[23]

Marx's materialist philosophy rose in direct opposition to Hegel's spiritual one, underpinning the foundations of the class system itself, inspiring revolutions and overturning the established balance of power in many states.[24] One can argue that Marx and Engles (on his account on the German revolution and counter-revolution) have presented most succinctly theories on revolution.

Hannah Arendt, who was much influenced by Marx (even while she criticized him), stressed at one point that a revolution brings something new rather than a restoration of the old. She puts forward the notion that revolutionary movements of the left fight for a radical change in social conditions and the power of the bourgeoisie, but never directly touch political authority and are always ready to submit to governmental guidance in foreign affairs.[25] Similarly, and in his account of the 'Glorious Revolution', Edmund Burke views revolution as a restoration of vanquished liberties. Burke puts forward the revolutionary experience as a kind of restoration, whereby the insurgents attempt to restore liberties and privileges which were lost as the result of the government's temporary lapse into despotism.[26]

Tocqueville (in his study of the French Revolution) defines revolution as an overthrow of the legally constituted elite, which initiated a period of intense social, political, and economic change.[27] Hence, a successful revolution occurs when, as a result of a challenge to the governmental elite, it is able to occupy principal roles within the structure of the political authority.[28] According to Crane Brinton and George Blanksten, revolutions are categorized as a coup d'état (as a simple replacement of one elite by another) and major revolutions (accompanied by social, political and

---

[23] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. Annette Jolin, ed. Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 71–94.

[24] 'Hegel and Marx: Alternative Conceptions of History', http://altman.casimirinstitute.net/hegel.pdf (accessed 18.02.2014).

[25] Hanah Ardent, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958, p. 38.

[26] S. Pincus, 'The Glorious Revolution', *History Compass*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January–December 2003. See also Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France 1790*, London: Pearson Longman, 2006.

[27] R. Tanter and M. Midlarsky, 'A Theory of Revolution', *Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 11, No. 3, October 2011, pp. 264–265.

[28] Ibid., p. 267.

economic changes). Other scholars like Harold Lasswell, Abraham Kaplan and Edwin Lieuwen differentiate between revolutions as 'palace' revolutions, 'political' revolutions, and 'social' revolutions, while Karl Deutsch classifies revolutions according to a number of characteristics which are deemed important to measure the various typologies of revolutions. Deutsch (also supported by Samuel Huntington) proffers that the degree of mass participation, the duration of the revolution, the damage or domestic violence inflicted and the general intentions, are all crucial in classifying the various types of revolutions, as shown in the following table:

Table 1.[29] **Characterstics of four types of revolutions**

Type of Revolution	Mass Participation	Duration	Domestic Violence	Intentions of Insurgents
Mass Revolution	High	Long	High	Fundamental changes in the structure of political authority & social system
Revolutionary Coup	Low	Short to moderate	Low to moderate	Fundamental changes in the structure of political authority & possible some change in social system
Reform Coup	Very Low	Short, sometimes moderate	Low	Moderate changes in the structure of political Authority
Palace Revolutions	None	Very Short	Virtually none	Virtually no change

James C. Davies says:

> Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. People then subjectively fear that ground gained with great effort will be quite lost; their mode becomes revolutionary.[30]

Some scholars propose economic development and levels of education as two possible causes of revolutionary change. Others opt to name and define specific social and economic causes. For instance, poverty according to Plato and Aristotle, produces revolutions, wherein economic depression can be a major reason to trigger revolutions, according to Tocqueville and Crane Brinton.[31] The latter's anatomy of a revolution gives a specific schedule of events in a more process like manner.

---

[29] Ibidem.

[30] J. Davies, 'Towards a Theory of Revolution', *American Sociology Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1, February 1962, p. 5.

[31] Tanter and Midlarsky, 'A Theory of…', p. 269.

In his book *The State and Revolution*, Vladimir Lenin suggests that a revolution only occurs when a number of factors coincide, and is successful only when four major conditions are fulfilled: Firstly, faced with a profound crisis the ruling class is incapable of governing in the old way and begins to split into different wings, each seeking a different solution to the crisis. Secondly, the middle layers are 'in ferment'. Thirdly, the working class seeks a way out, not on the basis of the old society, but in accordance with a new order. Fourthly is the existence of a clear Marxist leadership at the head of a mass workers' movement, with the necessary strategy, tactics, and organization to guarantee victory.[32]

In brief, one can say that a revolutionary idea can be equated with irresistible changes that come as an outcome of historical struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In this vein, a revolution can be defined as operational by domestic violence and a duration that causes the displacement of one ruling group, while achievements and aspirations are defined by the rate of change. Expectations are defined by the drop or reversal in the rate of changes of the level of education and the longer the revolution persists, the greater the polarization continues.

Causes of the Arab Revolutions (Spring)

One can argue that the causes of the Arab uprisings can range between domestic and foreign factors. However, the disagreement among scholars on how to label the causes of Arab revolts results from the inclination to think that Arab states have different societies and polities. Some do not see in the Arab Spring as a homogeneous social movement or a set of national events, as each country has its own domestic causes, unique national issues, different experiences, diversity in living conditions, regimes and ruling systems. Moreover, demands differed from one country to another, outcomes varied as did the diversity of internal dynamics between each country's military and political leadership, as well as between the military and society in general.[33]

Nonetheless and despite all these significant factors, Arab societies and Arab people do indeed have tight interconnections and share important characteristics.[34] Historical, religious and linguistic commonalities provide a solid bases to bring about similar experiences, and hence outcomes. When also considering the similar practices and conditions carried out by the ruling elites, and the similar techniques shared by Arab protesters which ranged from civil resistance and strikes to demonstrations and marches, as well as the use of social media to avoid state repression and censorship; it seems more appropriate to regard this state of affairs as an Arab 'event'.

Both domestic and foreign factors played a role in instigating the Arab Spring. Domestic causes and the dynamics of the Arab Spring can be put into two main

---

[32] 'France 1968 Month of Revolution Lessons of the General Strike', http://www.socialistalternative.org/literature/france68/ch7.html (accessed 22.10.2013).

[33] Kaya, 'Turkey and the…', p. 28.

[34] K. Dalacoura, 'The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications', *International Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 1, 2012, p. 63.

categories: direct and indirect. The latter is more concerned with the tools that assisted, helped and were used by the defiant youth during the revolts. The direct causes of the Arab Spring are primarily founded on core and basic motives, salient and undisputed elements which laid the ground and ignited the people to rise and force significant change.

Direct Domestic Causes of the Arab Spring

Generally, citizens' basic needs may range from physical (food, clothing, shelter, health, security, employment and safety) to social needs (equality, dignity, freedom and justice). The protests were not fuelled by ideology but were mainly driven by domestic grievances and frustrations. In other words, Arab revolts were mainly spurred by a potent combination of economic, social, and political grievances that created "fertile grounds for dissent" and united disparate groups in opposition to their autocratic systems.[35]

Socio-economic conditions

There are multiple and intertwined Socio-economic sources and dynamics that ascribe to the eruption of Arab uprisings. The Arab Spring can be seen as a major revolution for the social, political and economic transformations people longed for. The long--term failure of Arab states to deliver on promises of political freedom, real democracy, freedom of speech, political justice and economic development, along with other innumerable social and economic predicaments such as unemployment, low wages, high prices and general bleak economic conditions were the stepping stone which stirred people- particularly the youth- to move ahead. The level of education was also an important factor in determining the path of Arab revolts, which was directly reflected in the use of social media and the internet in the Arab Spring.

Ali Kadri sees these events as the culmination of decades of under development, and in some cases 'de-development', high rates of unemployment and under--employment especially among the young, all fuelled by failed economic policies and broken institutions. This was accompanied with an increase of inequality within Arab societies, a further squeezing of the incomes of middle-class and working families, blatant corruption and the general lack of democratic legitimacy.[36]

One can say that combined widespread economic problems and profound political and social grievances constituted a common causal thread behind the Arab Spring. Poverty and a clash between expectations and reality played a role. High unemployment and low living standards on an unprecedented scale especially among Arab youths (and an educated youth at that epitomized by university graduates forced to drive taxis to survive); rampant and ingrained institutional corruption; internal regional and social inequalities; disenfranchisement and a further deterioration of

---

[35] 'British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring', http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmfaff/80/8006.htm (accessed 29.10.2013).

[36] 'How the Economic Policies of a Corrupt Elite Caused the Arab Spring', http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/06/economic-arab-egypt-region (accessed 30.10.2013).

economic conditions because of the global 2008 financial crisis; and food price increases were among the several socio-economic reasons that triggered the Arab youths' anger.[37] A nation of 300 million people (which has doubled between 1975 and 2005) was producing an unprecedented youth population surge; two-thirds of the population (in Egypt for example) is under thirty.[38]

In April 2009 (eight months before the first spark of the Arab Spring), the IMF wrote:

> The unfolding events make it clear that reforms, and even rapid economic growth as seen periodically in Tunisia and Egypt, cannot be sustained unless they create jobs for the rapidly growing labor force and are accompanied by social policies for the most vulnerable. For growth to be sustainable, it must be inclusive and broadly shared, and not just captured by a privileged few. Endemic corruption in the region is an unacceptable affront to the dignity of its citizens, and the absence of transparent and fair rules of the game will inevitably undermine inclusive growth.[39]

In a region gripped by economic difficulties, political and economic development in most Arab states could not keep up with the staggering increase in the population. People's demands and expectations kept rising but ageing rulers failed to bolster intermediate associations between state and society to meet grievances and institutionalize contestation. In other words, it can be said that the width of the gap between governments and people in the Arab World has created an unsustainable deficit that led to irreversible disruption between weary people and their vaunted rulers.

With regimes embracing cronyism and nepotism, revolts called on the Arabs to take back their countries from rotten elites, giving rise to a mixture of patriotism and social messages.

Frustration

Wherein sources of Arab revolts cannot be confined to purely socio-economic grounds, other psychological reasons have also played an evident role. Education and the rapid increase in literacy were crucial factors in revealing the concealment of frustrating facts and realities. As stated earlier, the frustration of the Arab people mounted day after day, and stemmed from several reasons, ranging between their dissatisfaction with their economic 'illness' to their discontent of their social conditions. Economic malaise can be tolerated if people believe hardship is equally distributed and if their governments were trying to improve conditions. Neither was the case in the Arab world, where the majority of downtrodden lives were imbued with the painful realities of theft, embezzlement, cronyism and nepotism, which benefited a

---

[37] Dalacoura, 'The 2011 Uprisings…', p. 67.

[38] Bangalore Model United Nations 2013, http://www.bmun.in/bckgrnd%20guides/topic%201%20arab%20league.pdf (accessed 29.10.2013).

[39] 'April 2011 Regional Economic Outlook, Middle East and Central Asia', http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2011/mcd/eng/pdf/menap0411hi.pdf (accessed 12.10.2013).

small segment of society and made for an unbearable social imbalance. In the meantime, there are other reasons behind such frustrations and their effects may surpass previous social and economic ones.

- The Arab youth, the generation that constitutes the majority of the Arab population, inherited anecdotes and stories of glory and a magnificent history of modernity, development, advancement in civilization, arts, science and military might. With the rapid increase in literacy, these stories day after day hit a wall of frustrating reality as they (the Arab youth) found themselves in states dependent on foreign powers who were experiencing successive defeats and living in bleak and difficult economic and social conditions. This was accompanied with the continuation of oppression and subjugation, a lack of democracy and participation and an absence of political dissent and freedom of expression. The 'presidency for life' rulers exaggerated their grip on power and displayed their confidence in the crudest fashion, and their hyperbole made Parliamentary elections a joke and a scene of irony, while their hereditary plans for succession (in "theoretically" Republican regimes) became a mixed material of comedy and bitterness.

- More distressingly, the Arab youth witnessed progress, development and success in other countries, and coveted for themselves the good economic and social conditions other nations experienced. With the assistance of the internet, social networks and communications technology, the new generation started to share their pain and dreams with each other through such platforms. Plagued by more than 25 percent unemployment, the Arab youth, with their diminished dreams and aspirations, faced aging regimes laden with connotations of being backward and underdeveloped.

- Frustration has not stopped at this point; and with every attack on other Arab brothers and nations, accompanied with the passive reactions of their rulers, frustration has grown; and with every defeat of their natural Arab instincts, their feelings that their dignity and sovereignty were being trampled upon has mounted. The Arabs' yearnings to return to the old days of renaissance and glory have been shattered on the rocks of frustration, with a remarkable eclipse of 'Arabism' and a growing feeling that they are falling prey to foreign irredentism. Indeed, Arab rulers had to incur a heavy cost when they fell into the trap of duality; whether to run these countries in the manner of "raison de la nation" (Pan-Arabism) or "raison d'état" (sovereignty)[40]. Tellingly, confusion led to hesitation, which has spawned an Arab loss of trust and confidence in their rulers, who have done little to stop the hemorrhaging of sovereignty, or to at least hide their ostensible dependence on Western or Eastern foreign powers during the Cold War, and chiefly upon the US

---

[40] Bahgat Korany, 'Alien and Besieged, Yet Here to Stay: The Contradictions of the Arab Territorial State', in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, Ghassan Salame (ed.), London: Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 47–74.

afterwards, when the collapse of the former Soviet Union largely reduced the autonomy of most of the Arab states.

The weakening effectiveness of the state and the unpopular ruling elites dwindling levels of control over the Arab general public was referred to by Toby Dodge who describes Arab regimes as "externally imposed, weak and illegitimate post-colonial states".[41] Similarly, Bernard Lewis criticizes "faked" democracy in the Arab political discourse, pointing out the "sham parliamentary regimes that were installed and bequeathed by British and French empires".[42] Bearing this is mind, many see in the elimination of some Arab leaders, like Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein or Gamal Abdel Nassir, part of a conspiracy aimed to get rid of any regional power (leader) who is perceived as posing a potential threat with regards to trying to re-organize the system for more independent policies.[43]

Hinnebusch says that such relatively weak states, have emerged as Western protectorates against potential opposition, and when seek external patrons and resources for their regional power struggle and survival, have remained dependent for their security on Western global powers long after formal independence.[44] Dreading the prospect of coups or revolutions, the pre-eminence of security issues over social issues in the Arab area is given credence by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 2010 figures, which shows that Arab states have spent a total of $117.6 billion in military expenditure, whilst approximately 34.6 million Arabs were living under the two-dollars-a-day international poverty line in 2005, and had to tolerate the reality of double-digit unemployment rates.[45]

– Frustration was not limited to the practices of self-aggrandizing dictators, whose image in the eyes of their people was inculcated as a stooge, or at best hamstrung and too attached to the West, glaringly dependent on the US and also to their regimes and the system at large. A permanent lack of co-operation, a never-ending series of conflicts and enmity among their regimes were among other dispiriting sources. The lack of horizontal ties among Arab states is clearly reflected in the volume of trade amongst each other, compared with foreign states.[46] Being dependent on foreigners, while ignoring Arab brothers has been widely criticized, and regimes and rulers were the ones to blame. Additionally, border disputes have proved to be another source of frustration. Whereas artificial borders were drawn by colonial powers, any subsequent border disputes have been regarded as shambolic and

---

[41] T. Dodge, 'From the Arab Awakening to the Arab Spring; the Post-colonial State in the Middle East', *LSE Ideas*, Vol. SR011, May 2012, p. 5.

[42] 'Rethinking the Middle East', p. 25.

[43] Dodge, 'From the Arab Awakening…', p. 4.

[44] Robins, 'The Foreign Policy…', p. 3.

[45] El Hassane Aissa, 'The Arab Spring: Causes, Consequences, and Implications', in *USAWC Strategy Research Project*, Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2012, pp. 5–6.

[46] 'International Trade Statistics 2011', http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2011_e/its2011_e.pdf (accessed 27.10.2013).

considered as another source of fragmentation of a nation[47]. In this respect, Tarik Oguzlu suggests that the apparent norms of 'interstate and intrastate anarchy' have been a quintessential part of interstate and societal practice in the region since the demise of the Ottoman Empire, stating that rivalries have continued to shape regional politics for decades and serving a reminder of the traditional rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, Iran and the United Arab Emirates and Turkey and Iran. Oguzlu continues suggesting that recent years have witnessed the rise of societal and transnational rivalries and polarizations all over the region that have pitted one particular ethnic or sectarian group against another.[48]

Indirect Domestic Factors

One should take into account other important factors that have duly gone and aided the escalation of the current series of Arab uprisings, but have not caused them. These factors do not constitute and cannot be considered as direct sources for triggering or instigating revolution, but should be regarded as facilitators

First and foremost is that of the contagion effect, when revolts broke the apparent wall of fear. Insurgents steadfastly copied and shared their tactics and challenged their dictators and rulers. Meanwhile, bungled state responses to the mass protests, which ranged from dismissal to brutality and late, hurried, reforms, elicited a widespread and increasing determination to effect change. In his work on the "third wave" of democratization, Samuel Huntington highlights the importance of the demonstrative effect referring to the process as a snowballing effect of earlier transitions in terms of "stimulating and providing models of subsequent efforts at democratization".[49]

Secondly, while many have tried to put Arab revolutions in the channels of Arabism/ Arab nationalism or Islamism, it could be said that current Arab revolts cannot be colored in one specific ideological brand as the uprisings have not sought to impose a particular set of beliefs or order. Islamists, seculars, Arab nationalists, youth, liberals and others have all gathered and united their efforts to remove dictatorships.[50] In this

---

[47] In that region, there are several border disputes: between Bahrain and Qatar, between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, between Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, between Saudi Arabia and Oman, between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, between Saudi Arabia and Jordan, between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, between Iraq and Kuwait, between Iraq and Iran, between Iran and Bahrain, between Oman and Yemen, between Yemen and Eretria, between Syria and Jordan, between Syria and Lebanon, between Syria and Turkey, between morocco and Spain, between Morocco and Algeria, between Algeria and Tunisia, between Sudan and South Sudan, between Egypt and Sudan, between Somalia and Somalia Land, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. For more details, please visit http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/middle_east/7/15/Arab.borders/ (accessed 25.10.2013).

[48] 'Neo-Medievalism in the Middle East and the Challenges Facing Turkey', http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showArticle.aspx?ID=2312 (accessed 28.10.2013).

[49] K. Kirisci, 'Turkey's "Demonstrative Effect" and the Transformation of the Middle East', *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2011, pp. 35–36.

[50] Sahin, '1950–1960 Arab Revolutions and…', p. 9.

respect, it is important to highlight the fact that frustration and disbelieve in regimes, which were regarded as westernized, has spread in favor of other forces and ideologies as they appeared an acceptable alternative. Islamism has been the biggest winner and the use of mosques through Friday prayers to announce rallying calls has proved to be an iconic feature during Arab uprisings.

Mosques became the perfect starting point for mass gatherings and hitherto protests have been largely counting on Friday prayers, naming their campaigns after Fridays: the Friday of Liberation, Friday of Legitimacy and Friday of Salvation. It comes as no surprise to see Islamists; who were previously deprived their rights, expelled and even executed by their own regimes; gaining rising popularity. However it is fair to say that neither Islamism nor mosques caused the Arab Spring although they have helped and in turn benefited from these uprisings.

Thirdly, levels of education have played an important role in Arab revolts, but the degree and the direction of how this education has affected revolution, remains controversial. One group believes that the lower the level of education, the more likely it is to have a long and violent revolution.[51] This analysis can be fully-fledged and accurate when talking about the 1950's and 1960's, whereas in the 21st century, things are different. The second group sees that the chances of a revolution correlate positively with the level of education. This argument is supported with the remarkable advancement in telecommunication technology, social media, satellite and internet. When addressing the level of education from this standpoint, it could be categorized as "indirect" cause – in that it facilitated and was a means of help during the revolts. But, if the level of education is addressed from another perspective, specifically in terms of socio-economic conditions and frustrations, this would categorize it as a "direct cause" of the Arab Spring. Similarly, Emmanuel Todd suggests the rapid increase in literacy to be among the root causes of the Arab revolutions.[52]

Fourthly, communication and digital technology were a crucial element in inspiring people, and henceforth in encouraging them to topple their rulers. The Internet and social media sources have turned an on-line fantasy world into a reality that has ushered in a new era different from the previously distasteful epoch. For instance, the first mass protest in Egypt was announced on Facebook and helped to galvanize thousands of people. Social media sources proved a powerful mobilization tool that helped the activists to outwit the police. Nearly nine in ten surveyed Egyptians and Tunisians said they were using Facebook to organize protests or spread awareness.[53]

With such social networks and the development in communications technology, the Arab youth began to see real democracy, progress, development and success in other countries. They started to share their feelings, concerns, fears, frustration,

---

[51] Tanter and Midlarsky, 'A Theory of…', pp. 271- 273.

[52] 'A Look at the Root Causes of the Arab Revolution', http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/rising-literacy-and-a-shrinking-birth-rate-a-look-at-the-root-causes-of-the-arab-revolution-a-763537.html (accessed 28.10.2013).

[53] 'Facebook and Twitter Key to Arab Spring Uprisings', http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/facebook-and-twitter-key-to-arab-spring-uprisings-report (accessed 30.10.2013).

ambitions and dreams, equipped with their atypical revolutionary tools: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and bloggers appeared as powerful voices, spreading news whilst evading the state-controlled press.

In other words while all aspects of life were state-controlled, including tight controls over areas of political and social life with censorship on forums and cultural and media activities, social media sources and satellite TV bypassed government controls thus enabling activists to avoid conventional techniques of communication. Temporarily at least, aged regimes were still pre-occupied with 'old fashioned' forms of message conveyance which served to further undermine the effectiveness and importance of such technology.

This tool, which is now no longer confined to the domain of the liberal youth, was another way that empowered activists to gather, inspire, encourage, coordinate and communicate with people, revealing brutal regime practices, and finally serving as an efficient and practical media tool. Ramesh Srinivasan suggests that social media sources played a role in the Arab Spring by infiltrating media elites and replacing traditional, biased, state run media sources such as TV and radio, with internet access to everyone thereby linking the street and digital worlds.[54] It is noteworthy again to refer to the fact that Social media sources may have aided but were not the sole cause of the Arab Spring.

Foreign Causes of the Arab Spring

The ignition of events in the Arab World was not merely limited to domestic (direct or indirect) factors, but other foreign causes had a significant impact including the global economic crisis and the effects of globalization, as well as other sources of inspiration.

– One of the most evident causes of the Arab Spring can be attributed to the weakened economies that could be linked with the unsuccessful economic models that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's (WB) austere and stifling policies only served to worsen. The 2008 economic crisis hit the Arab World and played a key role factor in triggering the Arab spring as economic conditions suffered even more.[55]

– Globalization played another crucial role in the Arab Spring. Firstly, the Arab Spring as a phenomenon, which was manifested in concepts of border-transcending and the challenging of political and social differences, cannot in any way be regarded as exempt from the processes of globalization.[56] Within this process and as mentioned earlier, the global recession (specifically the 2008 financial crisis) overshadowed the economic situation in Arab states

---

[54] 'Taking Power through Technology in the Arab Spring', http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/09/2012919115344299848.html (accessed 28.10.2013).

[55] Aissa, 'The Arab Spring: Causes…', p. 2.

[56] 'Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalization?', http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/02/was-the-arab-spring-a-regional-response-to-globalisation/ (accessed 30.10.2013).

and created unavoidable repercussions. Also when talking about the ineffable role played in the Arab revolts by digital media, Satellite channels, and the evolution in telecommunication technology, this leaves us in no doubt that globalization, which made everything available to everyone. People revolted in Tunisia, and on the same day people in Egypt, Algeria, Yemen and Syria were watching these events with bated breath. Globalization made this technology available for all and provided people with unprecedented advantage over their ruling elites. Similarly, globalization made it available for everyone to see and observe the real practices of democracy, freedom of speech, justice, equality and other empowering principles sought after by Arab people.

In this realm and refuting the argument that the Arab World is immune towards global democratic transformations, Marwa Daoudy states that no one can argue anymore that the inherent features of Arab and Islamic cultures make them incompatible with democratic values, and the successful revolutions in the Arab World have been clear rejections of the failed, war-imposed 'democratization' projects which have led to the destruction of a country such as Iraq.[57]

– The blatant interference of Superpowers in the domestic affairs of Arab states was another reason to encourage people to topple their unpopular rulers. Such interference ranged from providing conditional loans and grants to calls on Arab governments to adopt certain political stands (especially related to Israel) to the accompaniment scathing criticism of some domestic policies. In effect, this region stands to be one of the most active regions of foreign interference. Oil, gas, water, natural resources and other geopolitical reasons led many super and regional powers into meddling in the affairs of this region.

Nevertheless, many Arabs still believe that the Arab Spring is a foreign plan, formulated in the days of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to divide the Middle East into smaller rival nations in order to breed discord and facilitate a plundering of wealth. From this perspective, it would not be outlandish to see many Arabs subscribe to the theory that recent events in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria point to a calculated plot to destroy Arab and Islamic countries and wipe out their rich heritage and history.[58]

– Some argue that the Arab Spring has its precursors in Iran's 2009–2010 election protests, and the Green Movement which emerged after the contested re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009 might also have been a factor influencing the beginning of the Arab Spring. It is true that these protests could not achieve their goals, yet they defied the authorities in Iran, and encouraged others to break the wall of fear.[59] In the same vein, Dalacoura

---

[57] M. Daoudy, 'Syria: Revolution and Repression', in *The Arab Spring: Implications for British Policy*, London: Conservative Middle East Council, 2011, p. 20.

[58] 'Is the United States the Cause of Arab Spring', http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2012/09/15/238086.html (accessed 27.10.2013).

[59] N. Rafati, 'Iran and the Arab Spring', *LSE Ideas*, Vol. SR011, May 2012, p. 49.

points out that the Arab Spring has been compared to other historic revolutionary movements, and thus it has been suggested that the events were foreshadowed by the 2009 Iranian Green Movement, or inspired by movements such as the 2005 Prague Spring.[60]

An Evaluation and Conclusion

The Arab Spring is a phenomenon of ordinary citizens rebelling against repression and economic hardships, much like other well-known revolutions. In a quick assessment of the applicability of the Arab Spring (awakening) to the general theoretical framework of a revolution, one can say that the conditions, causes and outcomes of the Arab revolts seem to be in line with such accepted, documented 'norms'. After fleshing out the socio- economic causes of the Arab uprisings, it appears that the contours of the Arab Spring go along perfectly in some aspects with Karl Marx's account on revolutions, as motivated by material (class) interests, and with Edmund Burke's views on revolutions as a restoration of vanquished liberties. Poverty as one initiator of the Arab revolts goes along with Plato and Aristotle's findings, and economic depression and frustration in Arab societies as another reason to trigger revolution matches the argument of Tocqueville and Crane Brinton.

Lenin's account on the factors and conditions of revolutions seem to parallel those of the Arab Spring (a profound crisis the ruling class is incapable of governing using the old 'methodology', the middle classes are in a state of ferment, and the working classes seek a way out, not on the basis of the old society but of a new order). The only difference between Lenin's model and the Arab Spring lies in the fourth condition. The Arab revolts have not been led by any prominent leader or party, while Lenin suggests the existence and necessity of a leadership, with the necessary strategy, tactics, and organization to guarantee victory.

The outcome of the Arab revolts thus far, goes in line with Tocqueville who sees that a successful revolution occurs when, as a result of a challenge to the governmental elite, the major players are able to occupy principal roles within the structure of the political authority; and with Crane Brinton and George Blanksten who see that major revolutions are accompanied by social, political and economic changes. The features of the Arab revolts as mass revolutions go in line with Deutsch and Huntington's opinion as to how the degree of mass participation, the duration, the damage or domestic violence inflicted, and the general and specific intentions are all crucial in classifying the type of revolution.

When analyzing the role of social injustice, lack of freedom, poor human rights conditions and frustration as significant causes of Arab revolts, Frederick Hegel's account on revolutions (motivated by ideas) and Hegel's theory are manifested clearly in the events of the Arab Spring. Historical, political and social conditions in a domestic context, combined with foreign and external factors have interacted in such a way

---

[60] Dalacoura, 'The 2011 Uprisings…', pp. 63–79.

that they have seemingly shaped an idea, which relatively speaking has been translated into actions. Mansoor Moaddel points out in his book *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism* a similar concept. While examining patterns of "stability and change" in the Islamic world from the seventeenth through to the twentieth century, Moaddel offers a notion to "advance the social-scientific understanding of the relationship between the production of ideas and broader social conditions", pointing out that ideas and social structures correspond to each other.[61] The Arab Spring has not hitherto produced an ideology, yet it can be an eventual outcome at a later stage, as Brinton proffers.

Better still, when linking the Arab Spring with Crane Brinton's revolutionary "fever", the same symptoms feature perfectly; people from all social classes are discontented; people feel restless and held down by unacceptable restrictions in society, religion, the economy or government policy; the scholars and thinkers give up on considering the way their society operates; the government does not respond to the needs of its society; the government is unable to get enough support from any group to save itself; and the government cannot organize its finances correctly and is either going bankrupt and/or trying to tax heavily and unjustly.

As stated earlier, Brinton's Anatomy of a Revolution puts it in a process that does not essentially alter much, from the 'pre-'right through to the post-revolution stage. In accordance with Brinton's model, the Arab Spring has passed through Phase One (*Preliminary Stage*); which included: 1. Class Antagonism; 2. Government Inefficiency; 3. Inept Rule; 4. Intellectual Transfer of Loyalty; 5. Failure of Force, and Phase Two (*Characteristics*); which included: 1. Financial Breakdown; 2. Government Protests Increase; 3. Dramatic Events; 4. Moderates Attain Power; and 5. Honeymoon Period. The last two points have not yet materialized clearly, which puts the Arab Spring at this stage in Brinton's model.

If Brinton's model is proved apposite, a working prognosis of the future course of events can be summarized in the last two phases of his model Phase Three (*Crisis Stage*); which includes: 1. Radicals Take Control; 2. Moderates Driven from Power; 3. Civil War; 4. Foreign War; 5. Centralization of Power in a Revolutionary Council Dominated by a Strong Man (somehow applicable in the Egyptian case), and finally Phase Four (*Recovery Stage*); which includes: 1. Slow, Uneven Return to Quieter Times; 2. Rule by a Tyrant; 3. Radicals Repressed; 4. Moderates Gain Amnesty; and 5. Aggressive Nationalism.

Brinton's model may be utilized to explain the current conditions, the counteractions and turbulence that have been occurring in "Arab Spring" countries. In fact, if revolutions are about an intense struggle for profound change, then any revolution should expect a counter-revolution. However, there could be other reasons behind this state of affairs that can be summarized in the following points:

---

[61] 'Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism': Episode and Discourse, http://h -net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Nationalism&month=0703&week=d&msg =d4XTbYQokjdzeJgDTvcUVA&user=&pw= (accessed 28.10.2013).

1. **Counter-revolutions**: According to theoretical frameworks, especially the work of Samuel Huntington, each wave of revolution is followed by a counter--wave or a reverse one. The reverse wave can be carried out by the remnants of the former regime who wish to retrieve power. Other forces who wish to impose their ideas, beliefs or ideologies try to gain power after breaking the wall of fear, and may seek such end. In either way, unsolicited outcomes follow and violence spreads. (Example: Egypt).

2. **Democracy**: each society has to go through specific phases in order to build its own brand of democracy. It is true that democracy has general features and renowned values, yet each society is unique for its history, traditions, practices, and education. As a result of this, copying or emulating other models would only serve in intensifying the degree of disagreements and squabbles among people who have various views that have been oppressed for decades. The disagreement is reflected in the degree of intolerance and rigidity in the positions and affinities of the quarreling parties who have been taking defensive attitudes, unwilling to listen to the other, and are eager to change the new rulers, even though continuous demonstrations may cause further violence, in a clear misinterpretation of democracy. (Example: Tunisia and Egypt).

3. **Education**: after decades of dictatorships, Arab societies have not been exposed to a firm grounding in education, especially on state building, rule of law and democratic values; the following point must be emphasized in that, "Social media [sources] and satellite TV cannot constitute an alternative". After the success in toppling autocratic regimes, many rebels (who are becoming Street dictators) cannot rule out the fact that the power of democracy is not in the streets and the resulting chaos can only bring more anarchy. Hence, masked rebels, tribal militias and other militants are prevailing in several countries across the Arab World, and this limits the ability of any central government to function properly. Any decision by these governments to restore order may instigate a civil war. (Example: Libya and Yemen).

4. **Regional actors**: some regional counties might be stoking the fire of conflicts, adopting disruptive policies and may ignite counteracting waves. Fearing similar revolts within their borders, and limiting any untoward domino effect, these regimes would try to show their citizens that the alternative of their rule is chaos, disorder and violence. (Example: Syria).

5. **Wrong practices**: Newly elected and early transitional governments tend to make major changes in attempts to eliminate the worst manifestations of the dealings that characterized previous regimes. This would more likely cause them to make untenable mistakes, especially when they lack governmental and political experience. Once this occurs, other civil actors (for example, the military) may pounce on the opportunity in order to topple fledgling regimes. For instance, the most striking mistake the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt made, was in hastily passing the new constitution, despite opposition

from Christians and a civil society, instigating unprecedented unrest. (Example: Egypt and Tunisia).

6. **Economic conditions**: the main causes of Arab revolts are a lack of good jobs and the failure of a moribund economic model that did not promote inclusive growth. To date, little seems to have been done on structural reforms and nothing has really improved. Poverty, unemployment, inflation and other poor economic conditions have not changed. Newly elected governments cannot bear the brunt, especially that they inherited economic malaise compounded by the fragility in the banking system which limits any financial reforms. However, those who toppled dictators were too ambitious to think that a sudden improvement can only be realized by the absolute and complete removal of corrupt regimes. (Example: Egypt the most worrisome case).

7. **Political conditions**: In some countries, revolution succeeded in ejecting the head of the state, but not the rest of the regime. This has created frustration as people felt that their revolution was stolen or distorted and has not realized its goals. (Example: Yemen).

8. **Clash of ideologies**: After toppling autocratic rulers, a lot of movements representing various ideologies breathed a sigh of relief. Many thought that they had a unique opportunity for their plans to materialize, and hence crush any opposition. The current strife between secularists and Islamists is a case in point.

However, given that socio-economic and political grievances are nothing new in the Arab World, the question confronting observers now is why Arabs revolted at this particular moment in time?

A number of possible explanations could provide an answer:
  – The exceptional conditions of frustration, discussed earlier in this paper.
  – The fall of the first Arab dictatorship in 2006, after ruling Iraq for twenty four years.
  – Extreme bleak economic conditions after the global financial crisis in 2008,
  – Iran's 2009–2010 Green Movement serving "as a source of inspiration".
  – An unprecedented widespread use of social media sources and other means of communication.
  – Groundwork preparations for rebellion by pre-existing civil society and political opposition groups.

In a nutshell, one can say that the Arab Spring came as a result of an interrelationship between historical, political, sociological and psychological factors on a domestic level and external, foreign factors rooted in the phenomenon of globalization. Thus far, Arabs have only experienced the easy part of their bittersweet journey towards more democratic practices and better lives, albeit on an obstacle-strewn road with no clear route ahead. Whilst upheaval and a lack of systemic transformations are common features of many other revolutions, an uncertainty of the future of the Arab Spring lingers as it remains vulnerable to counteraction and the perils of restoration.

If education, social, political and economic prospects do not brighten, and if religious, ethnic or sectarian violence soars, the masses are susceptible to the return of dictatorships. Therefore, new Arab elites should strengthen democratic and political transitions as they are still undoubtedly reversible. Education must be developed in the Arab World and ignorance has to be fought in order to avoid any attempts to distort the real values of democracy. In fact, fighting the sources of instability and the real causes of the Arab Spring must be a priority, and the gist of any reforms for any new government must go alongside an instilling of confidence between the ruler and the ruled, combined with the creation of proper and direct channels between state and society, all of which are deemed crucial at this stage.

In this respect and inasmuch as the Arab World has been described for an eternity as immune towards transformation; the ongoing developments of the Arab Spring give a stern warning to the *status quo* and theoretical absolutes, underlining the fact that Arab people became a new actor in the region, and their opinions and perceptions matter.

This fact, accompanied with an apparent depletion of popularity regarding the United States and other superpowers, has led to a power vacuum that is expanding and pending other forces, is more acceptable to be taken up and fulfilled by the Arab people. It also appears that the hopes and aspirations of Islamic forces in the region are on the rise, regardless of any ephemeral counteraction.