Contemporary Arab Revolutions:
A Comparative Study[*]

Dr Seyed Amir Niakouie
Assistant Professor, University of Guilan

Abstract:

The present article intends to explore the reasons for different political outcomes of protests in the Arab world. This study covers six countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain which have undergone greater political upheavals than other countries in the region. In this article, Goldstone's theory of revolutions has been used to examine the factors underpinning the failure or success of revolutionary movements in mentioned countries. Accordingly, the hypothesis of the paper is that the different political outcomes of the protests are due to a combination of factors including the political legitimacy of governments, the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements and, the responses of national militaries and international powers. Different configurations of these components in the crisis-stricken countries have led to different political outcomes.

Key words:
Protests, Legitimacy, Political crisis, Social mobilization, military

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Introduction:

On December17, 2010, a policewoman confiscated the unlicensed vegetable cart of a young street vendor, Mohammad Buazizi, in the small Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid. Humiliated by his abuse and exasperated by his inability to get redress, Buazizi went to a local governmental building, doused himself with gasoline, and lit himself on fire. This event was the spark of extensive political protests which finally led to the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia. This occurrence had a deep effect on other Arab societies, so that after some time, Mubarak fell in Egypt as well and a range of revolts engulfed different countries such as Bahrain, Yemen, Libya and Syria. Some protests were also held in other countries such as Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In terms of the nature and model of the recent revolutions, a range of views have been put forward; Some observers see them as postmodern revolutions, diffused and leaderless, with no fixed ideology; Others view them as the next wave of democratic and liberal revolutions; Most commonly, they are described as youth revolutions, since young people played a key role in initiating them; Still others argue that they may be Islamist revolutions and will turn the region into a theocracy resembling Iran (Bayat:2011). In terms of the social origins of these developments, some scholars have focused on political factors such as a lack of democracy and liberty in previous regimes, while others have highlighted economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and discrimination; some have also attempted to present integrated theoretical frameworks which

incorporate a range of different factors in order to explain these developments. A brief overview of the mentioned theories demonstrates that in most studies, there is an attempt to organize the huge public blast in the Middle East and North Africa as a neat conceptual package (Aronson:2011) and less comparative studies have been done on the crisis-stricken countries, For example there has not to date been a comprehensive study on the reasons for the different political outcomes of the protests in the Arab world; in particular, there has been no significant examination of " why the rulers of Egypt and Tunisia fell rapidly while the government of Libya collapsed after months of resistance, and why the governments in Bahrain and Syria have shown considerable resistance, while, in Yemen, only superficial changes have occurred." Given the mentioned research gap, the present article attempts to answer the following question: Why have recent protest movements in the Arab world resulted in different political outcomes? This study covers six countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain which have undergone greater political upheavals than other countries in the region. The research methodology is analytic-descriptive. To answer the research question, Goldstone's theory of revolutions has been used to examine the factors underpinning the failure or success of revolutionary movements in mentioned countries. Accordingly, the hypothesis of the paper is that the different political outcomes of the protests are due to a combination of factors including the political legitimacy of governments, the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements and, the responses of national militaries and international powers. Different configurations of these components

in the crisis-stricken countries have led to different political outcomes. This paper begins by presenting the theoretical framework of this study; then examines the components of the theoretical framework in relation to the countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain; and finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the political futures of the crisis-stricken countries.

Theoretical Framework: causes of failure or success of revolutions

One of the most important topics in the field of political science understands the formation and success of revolutions, and different, competing approaches and theories have been put forward to do this over time. In general, the comparative and scientific study of revolutions started after the Great Russian Revolution and, from then on, theories of revolution have experienced four main faces. In the first generation, authors tried to identify common patterns of occurrences. The scholars of the second generation attempted to use general theories to explain political violence, coups d'état and revolutions. In the third generation, researchers concentrated on the structure of different governments and agricultural relations in comparative and historical perspective and argued that governments have different structures. The thinkers of the fourth generation also examined factors such as agency, ideology and the process of revolutions and concentrated on the origins, and outcomes of revolutions. One of the significant topics investigated by the thinkers of the third and fourth generations is that why some revolutions succeed while others fail. In a comprehensive study, John Foran has explained the victory or failure of different

revolutions considering the combination of the following factors: 1) dependent development; 2) A repressive, exclusionary, personalist state; 3) The elaboration of effective and powerful political cultures of resistance; and a revolutionary crisis consisting of 4) An economic downturn; and 5) A world systemic opening (a let–up of external controls). Dependent development and repressive, exclusionary, personalist state create political, social and economic grievances among diverse sections of population and make a formation of a broad, multi-class alliance against the state. Political cultures of resistance and opposition also insists on the irreducible role played by human agency and meaning in the making (or not) of revolutions. The final element is the emergence of revolutionary crisis which has two determinants, one partly internal and the other external. Economic downturns on the eve of revolutions sharpen existing grievances past the breaking point. When this factor is combined with a world-systemic opening for change, a powerful conjuncture arises for revolutionary movements to succeed. (Foran: 228-230). Goldstone is another political scientist who has examined the conditions under which revolutions succeed. In Goldstone's view, for a revolution to succeed, a number of factors have to come together. The government must appear so irremediably unjust or inept that it is widely viewed as a threat to the country's future; elites (especially in the military) must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself. Revolutions rarely triumph because

these conditions rarely coincide. (Goldstone :2011) A brief overview of the theories of Goldstone and Foran reveals similar factors with regard to why some movements succeed and others fail; for instance, both theories have considered the formation of a broad, multi-class alliance against the state and the reaction of foreign players. In this study, the general view of Goldstone has been applied for investigating why some movements succeeded and others failed. Accordingly, the political legitimacy of the governments, the social mobilization of the opponents and, the reaction of elites, especially armed forces, and foreign powers in the mentioned countries have been examined.

Tunisia

In general, the fundamental characteristics of politics in Tunisia during the Ben Ali period, which mostly continued from the Bourguiba period included:

1-Party dictatorship: In a comprehensive research on the party systems of Middle Eastern societies, Blaydes has categorized the Ben Ali regime among the single-party regimes with limited contestation (Blaydes, 2011: 226). In that period, Tunisia continued to be dominated by a president who faced no serious institutional constraint and who directed a ruling party that remained virtually indistinguishable from the organs of the state. That party enjoyed such strong advantages that it did not need to be the only legal party in order to remain dominant. (Alexander 2010:36)

2-Authoritarianism and personalized power: Oppressing political dissidents, constraints on press freedom, torture of opponents,

extensive government control of media, and violation of human rights were the most important political characteristics of the Ben Ali period (Penner Angrist :2011). Moreover, authoritarian growth during the Ben Ali period was such that some argued that Tunisia was more authoritarian in the first decade of the twenty-first century than it had been thirty years ago. (Alexander 2010:3) Personalized power was another character of the Ben Ali government. Similar to Bourguiba, in the Ben Ali period, a president was governing, who did not face any institutional constraint.

 3-Widespread corruption: widespread corruption was undoubtedly the most evident character of the Ben Ali government. The American ambassador in Tunisia in 2006 reported that more than half of Tunisia's commercial elites were personally related to Ben Ali through his three adult children, seven siblings, and second wife's ten brothers and sisters. This network became known in Tunisia as "the Family" (Anderson: 2011). According to another report, Ben Ali's extended family was often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption. Often referred to as a quasi-mafia, an oblique mention of "the Family" was enough to indicate which family you meant. Ben Ali's wife and her extended family -- the Trabelsis -- provoked the greatest ire from Tunisians. Along with the numerous allegations of Trabelsi corruption were often barbs about their lack of education, low social status, and conspicuous consumption. Beyond the stories of the First Family's shady dealings, Tunisians reported encountering low-level corruption as well in interactions with the police, customs, and a variety of government ministries.(wikileaks:2010)

From the socio-economic perspectives, tremendous progress has been made in Tunisia after the independence. In this country, 95 percent of the population has access to potable water and electricity. Enrolment in primary schools is very close to 100 percent which shows the advanced educational system. Moreover, in 2000, the World Bank declared that Tunisia had sustained the best economic performance in the Middle East and North Africa region since the late 1980s. (Alexander: 2010:85) The Tunisian regime under Ben Ali, had privatized state enterprises, encouraged foreign investment, created incentives to kick-start the private sector, and cut subsidies and state expenditures that previously consumed government budgets. (Gause: 2011) Although the above-mentioned reforms may reveal a great picture in a brief overview, a more accurate examination of the economic situation of Tunisia suggests major challenges. In fact, these measures exacerbated inequalities and made life more difficult for the poor. In the Ben Ali regime, due to the absence of a system of checks and balances, economic reforms had gone to an elite few and ordinary citizens gained nothing (Dadush, Masood@Michele:2011). In practice, economic inequality was one of the most fundamental social and economic challenges in Tunisia. Moreover, unemployment was another challenge in this country. Unemployment rate in Tunisia continued to hover stubbornly around 14 percent. Although Tunisia made great investments in education, it could not provide sufficient number of young people with the specific technical skills that employers need in a rapidly changing economy. (Alexander :2010:86) Goldstone, has argued that college enrollment has soared in Tunisia in recent decades more than tripling, it would be difficult, if not impossible,

for any government to create enough jobs to keep pace. In fact, Educated youth and workers in Tunisia have been carrying out local protests and strikes for years to call attention to high unemployment, low wages, police harassment, and state corruption. This time, their protests combined and spread to other demographics. (Goldstone: 2011) Generally speaking, the authoritarianism of the regime along with characteristics such as personalized power, party dictatorship and widespread corruption laid the ground for grievances and formation of multiple crises such as participation crisis and legitimacy crisis in Tunisia. Meanwhile, socio-economic advances of Tunisia were affected by widespread corruption and lack of regulatory mechanisms which exacerbated class division and resource distribution crisis. Growth in population and unemployment, especially among university graduates, worsened the mentioned crises. In fact, the density of crises like legitimacy crisis, identity crisis, participation crisis and resource distribution crisis created explosive conditions in the Tunisian society and alienated a range of social classes and groups including workers, students and middle and low classes from the Ben Ali regime; thus, the conditions of the country only required a little spark. In this situation, Mohammad Buazizi's self-immolation acted like a spark and triggered a revolution. The following points are worth considering with regard to the model of Tunisian revolution and the social forces participating in it: 1) The demonstrations in Tunisia spiraled toward the capital from the neglected rural areas, finding common cause with a once powerful but much repressed labor movement.(Anderson :2011) 2) Since Tunisia's protests initiated the wave of unrest in the Arab world, they were more spontaneous

and less well organized than subsequent campaigns in other nations.(Ibid) Also, as protests extended, no powerful social forces, which could change the social balance, supported the Ben Ali regime. 3) Political parties and charismatic leaders did not have dominant roles in the Tunisian revolution and the protest movements practically had no leaders; in fact, even famous parties like Al-Nahda did not have an influential role in this revolution due to being severely oppressed during the Ben Ali period; only after the fall of Ben Ali and return of Rashid Al-Ghannushi, Al-Nahda has grown with astonishing speed (Lynch :2011) 4) From the political sociology viewpoint, the youth who were suffering from unemployment, corruption and despotism, and used new communication technologies had an influential role in managing and guiding the protests and practically triggered the revolution. The joining of opposition parties which occurred later was also a result of the youth movement. However, opposition parties attempted to ride the waves of protests to ascend power. Meanwhile, the joining of syndicates and workers had a determining role in balancing the power in favor of revolutionaries. 5) The Ben Ali regime mainly relied on police and security forces and, with the expansion of protests, the military, as an institution, sided with the protesters. George Gause has argued that high social homogeneity in Tunisia, which is overwhelmingly Sunni, and also the existence of professional army were the most important factors explaining the political behavior of army. In Tunisia, army did not act as the personal instrument of the ruler. (Gause: 2011)

In general, the Ben Ali regime lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces like workers, students, villagers and middle and low classes in major cities, who actually constituted the whole nation of Tunisia, were against the regime and no significant social force supported it. Foreign countries also did not have any benefits in supporting Ben Ali and accepted the transformations; it is worth mentioning that Tunisia did not have much strategic importance for the west compared with countries like Syria, Egypt and Bahrain and it was far away from the central interests of America and Britain in the Arab world. Finally, The Tunisian army was unwilling to defend the regime and fire on its own people. Considering the combination of the mentioned factors, early fall of the Ben Ali regime can be explained.

Egypt

There are considerable similarities between the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia; first of all, the political regimes in both countries before the revolutions were sultanistic regime. (Goldstone: 2011) In general, the most evident characteristics of Mubarak's regime which created profound crises in Egypt were as follows:

1- Regime exhaustion and lack of circulation of elites: One of the evident characteristics of Egyptian regime which led to the people's dissatisfaction was regime exhaustion and lack of circulation of elites. Three unquestioned decades of Mubarak's rule caused many people to consider him responsible for their problems and sufferings. Many writers, whether prominent in leading opposition newspapers or anonymous in student magazines across the country,

accused him of being the cause of 'our backwardness' and 'the protector of the powerful and corrupt'. Eighty two year old Mubarak spent most of his time in Sharm Al-Sheikh which was away from polluted, crowded and arguably dangerous Cairo; he was a symbol of aging and exhaustion and most people considered him inefficient and energyless for solving the problems of their country. (Osman 2010: 186-187)

2-Personalized power: personalized power was another character of Mubarak's regime which became more evident over time so that gradually, all power was concentrated in Mubarak's hand and political institutions including the institution of the presidency had no performance. Tarek Osman has argued that, by the 2000s, the institution of the presidency, had long ceased to be (as under Naser and Sadat) a vibrant nerve centre of governance, full of notable advisor's and intellectuals, with links to most of the country's think thanks, and acting as a laboratory of ideas; instead it became a mere administrative structure around the president. That dilution could have been welcomed had it been combined with a strengthening of democratically elected institutions and a new balance between presidency and government. What happened in Egypt instead was that the (undemocratic) parliament, the government and the presidency had become varied representations of the president's will-executive bodies, rather than the pillars of a balanced political system. (Ibid: 187-188)

3-Sham democracy and political suppression: The political system of Egypt during Mubarak's regime was sham democracy. The façade of elections, a multi party political environment and the

existence of upper and lower houses of parliament allowed the regime to claim progress and some political development, and to diffuse some of the masses' anger. The sham democracy was never a threat to the regime. (Ibid: 190) In fact, the competitive nature of electoral competition in Egypt was only a strategy of regime maintenance. (Blaydes, 2011: 226) and authoritarianism completely continued in this period so that the Mubarak's regime strongly suppressed any potential challenge. Suppression of Public unrest, strict control of civic organizations and universities, suppressive and violent behavior against Kefaya movement, wide arrest of Muslim Brotherhood, and torturing and violating human rights were common in Mubarak's era. In addition, there were a lot of discriminations against those parties which could participated in elections, and Mubarak's National Democratic Party always won the elections using different methods; for example, in some cases, the security services blocked opposition voters from entering polling stations; in other cases, the switching of vote counts and stuffing of ballots occurred. (Ibid: 239). In her comprehensive study, Blaydes has categorized the Mubarak's regime among the 'hegemonic party regimes with competitive elections'. In these regimes, although a degree of competition is permitted, and different parties are active, the ruling party always wins the elections by using various illegal methods. (Ibid: 210-214)

4-Widespread corruption: Undoubtedly, the most evident factor which had an effective role in the formation of recent protests was widespread corruption within Mubarak and their related elites. 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.(Goldstone :2011)

In addition to the political characteristics listed above, the socio-economic situation of Egypt made the challenges of this country more complicated. The observers who investigated social situation of Egypt in recent years emphasized the institutionalization of corruption, the frightening increase in the rate and change in type of crime; a rooted disregard for human dignity; the descent of society's values and behaviors; and shifts in society's value system, particularly reflected in violent crimes perpetrated by teachers, students, businessmen and other members of middle class. (Osman 2010: 196-198) Meanwhile, the fast growth of population in the recent years was undoubtedly the most evident demographic development in Egypt which created massive unemployment among the youth especially university graduates who due to poor education, did not obtain the knowledge and expertise required to secure job in private sectors.   (Ibid: 199) In Egypt, like in Tunisia, the fast growth of population and the regime's inefficiency in providing necessary facilities created the potential for protest. It must be noticed that educated youth and workers had made strikes and demonstrations in previous years as well. However, like in Tunisia, the Mubarak's regime made some economic reforms such as privatization, trade liberalization and encouragement of foreign investment; but, these reforms were not effective due to the absence of a system of checks and balances, and their benefits had gone to an elite few and had not been seen by average people. (Dadush, Masood@Michele:2011)

In general, regime exhaustion and lack of circulation of elites, personalized power, political suppression and widespread corruption were the evident characteristics of the Mubarak regime which caused participation and legitimacy crises. Moreover, the fast growth of population and massive unemployment especially among university graduates, low salaries, widespread poverty, massive class gap, deep social problems and government inefficiency in solving objective problems led to widespread grievances among the people. Lisa Anderson has noted that the government's deteriorating ability to provide basic services and seeming indifference to widespread unemployment and poverty alienated tens of millions of Egyptians, a feeling that was exacerbated by growing conspicuous consumption among a business elite connected to Mubarak's son Gamal.(Anderson :2011) In such a situation, the Tunisian revolt triggered protests in Egypt. There, independent labor and civil society organizations called for demonstrations on 25 January. The demonstrations were unprecedentedly widespread and their range and intensity gradually increased. From January 28, known as "Friday of Wrath", on which for the first time Muslim Brotherhood and Mohamed El Baradei officially participated, the police and security forces gradually lost their control over Cairo and other major cities like Alexandria and Suez; and the government was forced to bring the army into the cities in order to control the protests. The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Egypt 1) In Egypt, urban and cosmopolitan young people in the major cities like Alexandria and Cairo organized the uprisings.(Anderson :2011) That's why, this movement has been called "youth movement". However, the protests were widespread

and various social classes, including workers, low and middle classes participated in the uprisings. Moreover, Christians were present along with Muslims in Cairo and other cities of the country. 2) As the protests expanded, the police and security forces gradually lost their control over major cities. In practice, Ministry of Interior made some efforts for mobilizing the proponents of Mubarak but these efforts failed. From the political sociology viewpoint, Mubarak's regime could not overcome the crisis by social mobilization; this illustrated the regime's fragile legitimacy, and the comprehensiveness of social forces conflicting it. 3) Egyptian protests did not have any leadership. In this country, political flows and parties like Muslim Brotherhood did not have influential roles in the initial stages of protests and joined them in the following stages; nevertheless, join of the political parties had a noticeable role in the expansion of the protests. 4) The Mubarak's regime mainly relied on police and security forces and, with the expansion of protests, the military, as an institution, sided with the protesters. George Gause has argued that high social homogeneity in Egypt, which is overwhelmingly Sunni, and also the existence of professional army were the most determinant factors explaining the political behavior of army. Like in Tunisia, army leaders in Egypt, realized that their institutions could play an important role under new regimes and thus were willing to risk ushering out the old guard. (Gause: 2011)

As far as the role of foreign players is concerned, the U.S. had contradictory positions with regard to the Egypt crisis. The extraordinary storm of events in Egypt posed sharp challenges to the

Barack Obama administration, which faced a delicate balancing act between demonstrating its commitment to a long-standing ally, managing an inevitable transition in order to protect core interests, and acting on its inherent sympathy with the values of peaceful, democratic protesters.(Lynch: Marc 2011) From the very beginning days of the protests in Egypt, the U.S. attempted to maintain the Mubarak's regime by encouraging him to do reforms; naturally, strategic considerations of America and its long-term good relationship with Egypt had an important role in adopting such a policy. Nevertheless, as the dimensions of protests expanded, the United State gradually sided with the protesters. Israel is another regional actor which examination of its stance is important. Egypt under Mubarak, was the most trusted Arab partner of Israel which guaranteed the security of its southern border. Therefore, Israel was profoundly concerned with regard to the transformations in Egypt; however, it did not have enough instruments for influencing the developments and preventing Mubarak's fall. Saudi Arabia and some other conservative Arab regimes supported Mubarak; but these countries also lacked influential power in terms of Egypt developments. In sum, foreign actors did not play an influential role in preventing the Egyptian revolution.

In general, the Mubarak's regime lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces like workers, students, villagers and middle and low classes in major cities, who actually constituted the whole nation of Egypt, were against the regime and no significant social force supported it. From religious viewpoint, it must be noticed that Christians alongside Muslims participated in demonstrations. In addition, political elites and opposition parties

also quickly joined the uprisings. Moreover, as the dimensions of protests expanded, influential foreign countries, especially the United Stated accepted the transformations and did not support the Mubarak's regime. Finally, The Egyptian army was unwilling to defend the regime and fire on its own people. Considering the combination of the above- mentioned factors, early fall of the Mubarak regime can be explained.

Bahrain

Generally speaking, the most important characteristics of Al-Khalifa rule which have led to the people's dissatisfaction are authoritarianism and religious discrimination. Due to its demographic structure, Bahrain has always been the cradle of Shiite resurrection. In this country, most of the people are Shiites, while the ruling family is Sunni. Bahraini Shiites have long sought an end to religious-based discrimination in public-sector employment, particularly their wholesale exclusion from the police, the armed forces, and the power ministries such as Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs. Shiites (as well as some Sunnis) decry the state's decade-old program of naturalizing Arab and non-Arab Sunnis for work in the security services as tantamount to demographic engineering. Opposition figures in both religious communities complain that the country's parliamentary districts are gerrymandered around ethnic lines to limit the influence of Al-Wifaq and secular Sunni societies. In fact, The authorities has enjoyed a manufactured pro-government majority in parliament and a ready-made force of largely non-Bahraini servicemen with loyalties to none but the state.(Gengler :2011) In general,

sectarianism and discrimination against the Shiites have been the most evident characteristics of AL-Khalifa regime. Accordingly, Shia demands have always been the main political aspect in Bahrain. As far as the political regime of Bahrain is concerned, the regime is apparently a constitutional monarchy. According to Bahrain's constitution, the three branches are independent and the system of supervision of the King of Bahrain and he has the right for appointing and dismissing all the country officials. In this country, political freedom is limited and the cleavage between nation and government is massive. It must be noted that the AL-Khalifa regime has not implemented political reforms promised from 2001. In fact, in such a condition that most field studies have indicated that the majority of people including Shiites and Sunnis are asking for the expansion of Parliamentary democracy and political freedom, the regime has not taken significant steps for actual political reforms during 1990s and 2000s and oppressive measures has continued for example, In the run-up to parliamentary elections in 2010, the regime arrested 23 opposition leaders and hundreds of activists, and charged them with such crimes as terrorism and conspiracy to overthrow the government.(Cooley, Nexon :2011; Gengler :2011) In general, repressing dissidents, limiting freedom of expression, Oligarchic government, and the wide gap between nation and government have been the most evident characteristics of the Al-Khalifa regime which have led to the dissatisfaction of various social groups in Bahrain.

From socio-economic perspectives, the high share of oil revenues in the Bahrain's economy should be considered. Other major economic activities are production of aluminum - Bahrain's second biggest

export after oil - finance, and construction. Moreover, Bahrain has the freest economy in the Middle East and North Africa region. (CIA world Factbook). Nevertheless, unfair distribution of wealth and wide class division are other aspects of Bahrain's economy. In this country, wealth has been concentrated in a small group while half of Bahraini citizens are suffering from poverty and poor living standard. A survey conducted by Bahrain Monetary Agency found that while the poverty rate is increasing, there are 5,200 wealthy people in Bahrain. The survey showed that the average wealth of each of them reaches US$4.2 millions, which is above the international average of wealthy people of US$3.8 millions. (http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/199) Another economic challenge of Bahrain is unemployment, especially among the Shia youth. The vast majority of Shiites face higher unemployment at a time when non-Bahrainis are given legal residency and employment with good salaries and housing benefits. It is now common for Bahraini Shi'a to see this citizenship program as a means of changing the demographic composition of the population in favor of the ruling elite. (Wright: 2008: 9)

In general, the lack of political reforms and the imposition of discrimination against Shiites, combined with socio-economic problems, laid the ground for widespread dissatisfaction among Bahraini people, especially the Shiites. The Recent protests began on February 14, 2011, when the people were inspired by the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt and gathered in pearl roundabout, in Manama. The upheaval began as a nonviolent protest by a diverse coalition, and the protestors included Sunnis and

Shiites and there were various political and intellectual spectrums among them. The main demands of protestors were political reform and an end to social and economic inequalities. (Coats Ulrichsen :2011) These protests were a reaction to the lack of political reforms and religious discriminations against the Shiites. In response to these protests, the regime attempted to frame the protests as Sectarian, and suppress them using Saudi forces. On March 15, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, deploying 1,000 troops, 500 security personnel, and more than 100 armored vehicles to quash the demonstrations. The king declared a three-month state of emergency and imposed martial law. (Cooley,Nexon :2011) In addition, the king of Bahrain followed the lead of other Gulf Cooperation Council countries and offered opponents (and would-be opponents) one thing: money. Shortly after the onset of protests, the government announced generous social welfare packages including increased salaries and benefits, cost-of-living stipends, and plans for new subsidized housing. The GCC even kicked in a $10 billion aid package of its own, dubbed a "Gulf Marshall Plan" for Bahrain. But this overt attempt at political buy-off only enraged protesters further. As aptly summarized by Ebrahim Sharif, the imprisoned head of Wa'ad, a now-dissolved secular political society, "This is about dignity and freedom -- it's not about filling our stomachs."(Gengler: 2011) Nevertheless, after emergency situation ended and heavy judicial sentences were passed against the protesters and opposition leaders, political protests continued in Bahrain. The following points are worth considering With regard to the uprisings in Bahrain: 1) At first, various communities including

Shiite and Sunni Muslims and secular and religious groups demonstrated and the most important demands were to make democratic reforms and remove religious discriminations. Nevertheless, the regime and Arab media made all their efforts to portray that the uprising was a Shia movement inspired by Iran; these efforts widened the gap between Sunnis and Shiites participating in the uprising and made the situation suitable for the suppression of the movement. Moreover, the generous social welfare packages gradually attracted some social groups. As a result of these efforts, some social groups, especially some Sunnis have distanced themselves from the uprising. 2) Among important political parties in Bahrain, there were two different perspectives toward the regime; on the one hand, some parties like Alwefaq wanted a constitutional monarchy and, on the other, some parties like Hagh Movement wanted the formation of a Republic system. This was one of the challenges of opposition groups in Bahrain. 3) As it has been noted before, Bahrain is a divided society in which a sectarian regime rules. In this country, The Army and security forces which represent the minority Sunni sect, have far backed the regime and there has not been any sign of disobedience in the armed forces.(Gause :2011)

As far as the foreign relations of Bahrain are concerned, special relationships with Saudi Arabia and America should be considered. Al-Khalifa family is originally from the tribes living in the land of Najd, in Saudi Arabia, and the family relationship between Al-Saud and Al-Khalifa has developed the ties between the two countries. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Sunni Islam and is

profoundly concerned about the expansion of Shiites power in the Middle East. Therefore, The prospect that the Sunni monarch might be overthrown by or cede significant power to his nation's long-oppressed Shia majority triggers the worst of Saudi fears. (Lynch: Marc 2011) Riyadh also is deeply concerned about the expansion of Iran's influence in the Middle East which could be realized by Bahrain's Shiite majority population taking power in this country. Shia success in Bahrain might also inspire the Saudi Shia minority (Lynch: Marc 2011) which are living under oppression and discrimination. In addition, any expansion of democracy is considered a threat by Saudi Arabia, so the prospect of a democratic Bahrain in its neighborhood would be unbearable. According to the mentioned factors, maintaining the regime in Bahrain has been the strategic priority for Saudi Arabia. With regard to the foreign policy stance of the United States, it should be considered that Bahrain has a strategic importance for America. "The U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet -- which brings with it several thousand onshore personnel and dependents, about 30 warships, and roughly 30,000 sailors -- has its headquarters in Juffair, a suburb of Bahrain's capital, Manama. The Fifth Fleet patrols the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the western part of the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf, ensuring that sea-lanes remain open, protecting the flow of oil, conducting anti-piracy operations, and acting as a check against Iran's regional influence. Bahrain also hosts the United States' Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) -- the maritime component to the U.S. Central Command -- and offers U.S. forces the Isa Air Base and space at Bahrain International Airport". (Cooley,Nexon :2011) Meanwhile, the United States has had serious doubts with regard to

the political outcomes of the fall of the regime considering the spiritual influence of Iran among Bahrain Shiites. Accordingly, the United States stands mostly silent as Saudi troops put down popular protests against the ruling al-Khalifa family. (Cooley, Nexon: 2011) In fact, the policy makers of the United States have once more opted for its strategic interests rather than democratic values. Meanwhile, Iran has spiritually supported the protests in Bahrain; nevertheless, it has not taken any significant measures to change the situation in Bahrain.

In general, although the regime of Bahrain has faced a legitimacy crisis, due to the lack of political reforms, the imposition of discrimination against Shiites, and socio-economic problems which have alienated various communities including Shiite and Sunni Muslims and secular and religious groups leading them to unite in the protests in the early days, the government has framed the protests as a Sectarian movement inspired by Iran. Moreover, the regime has won the support of some social groups through generous social welfare packages. As a result of these efforts, some social groups, especially some Sunnis have distanced themselves from the uprising. However, the factors which have been most decisive in ensuring the survival of the Al-Khalifa regime are the loyalty of the army which has a close relationship with the ruling class, and the intervention of Saudi Arabia with the implied approval of the United States.

Libya

Over forty years ago, Muammar al Qadhafi had led a revolt against the Libyan monarchy in the name of nationalism, self-determination, and popular sovereignty. After the recent revolution in Tunisia, opposition groups citing the same principles revolted against Qadhafi to bring an end to the authoritarian political system he had controlled in Libya for more than four decades.(Blancherd :2011) In general, the most evident characteristics of the Qadhafi's regime were as follows:
1- Reliance on tribal and kinship networks and lack of modern institutions: Tribal values and local loyalties have always been influential in Libya. The Gaddafi's regime was also based on these complex relationships. Lisa Anderson argued that, "Whereas demonstrators in Tunis and Cairo successfully ousted their former rulers, Tripoli collapsed into a protracted civil war. Its sustained fighting resulted from Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's four-decade-long effort to consolidate his power and rule by patronage to kin and clan. Years of artificially induced scarcity in everything from simple consumer goods to basic medical care generated widespread corruption and the capricious cruelty of Qaddafi's regime produced widespread and deep-seated suspicion. Libyans' trust in their government and in one another, eroded, and they took refuge in the solace of tribe and family. Libyan society was fractured, and every national institution, including the military, was divided by the cleavages of kinship and region. As opposed to Tunisia and Egypt, Libya did not have system of political alliances, network of economic associations, or national organizations of any kind. Thus, what seemed to begin as nonviolent protests similar to

those staged in Tunisia and Egypt soon became an all-out secession - or multiple separate secessions- from a failed state. In the absence of any public-sector bureaucracy, including a reliable police force, kin networks provided safety and security as well as access to goods and services. It was along such networks that Libyan society fractured when the regime's capacity to divide and rule began to unravel at the beginning of the protests" (Anderson :2011)

2- Authoritarianism and political suppression: Muammar al-Qaddafi argued that Libya was the only democracy in the world and other political systems were dictatorship. But in reality, his personalist regime lasted for more than four decades. In Libya under Qaddafi, any opposition was suppressed ruthlessly, and many of protesters including Islamists were massacred during 1990s and 2000s. In addition to the mentioned characteristics, widespread corruption was another evident character of Qaddafi's regime so that, according to corruption perceptions index 2010, the level of corruption in Libya was more than that of all countries examined in this paper. (www.transparency.org/policy-research/surveys-indices/2010). However, it must be considered that Libya's small population and enormous oil revenues caused this country to be much better than countries like Egypt, Yemen and Syria in terms of economic welfare. Libya under Qaddafi, was among the wealthiest countries in the Arab world and had one of the highest annual revenues in Africa. Moreover, during the 1980s, huge investments in social fields were made in this country. However, these facts did not mean that there were not any economic problems. In fact, high unemployment rate and unfair distribution of wealth were the most

evident crises in the economy of Libya. According to some estimates, unemployment rate was about 21 percent in 2009. (http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJOE52106820090 302).

The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Libya: 1) the protests started from the eastern parts of the country which got out of the control of the Qaddafi's regime very fast. However, there was considerable resistance in the western parts of the country on the part of Qaddafi and his proponents. Had NATO not intervened, the revolutionaries probably would never have succeeded in conquering the whole country. This issue reveals the importance of local identities in Libya. 2) The model of protests in Libya rapidly transformed to civil war so that the developments of this country cannot be categorized as a modern revolution. In fact, among the recent revolts of the Arab world, the Libyan case was the least modern one (Anderson: 2011). Heavy weapons used by the both parties of the conflict, and conquering cities after NATO's severe bombarding and bloody conflicts, make this issue more visible. 3) In Libya, kin networks and tribal gaps had a significant role; when the protests started and the regime's capacity to divide and rule began to unravel, the Libyan society fractured along the above-mentioned lines. Armed forces also were fragmented based on these cleavages so that some units joined the opponents and some remained loyal to Qaddafi. 4) Libyan uprising was neither a liberal-democratic revolution nor a post modern one; rather than, it was the appearance of traditional cleavages in a society in which national identity, and efficient governmental-administrative system have not been formed; accordingly, as Lisa

Anderson has argued, Libya confronts the complexity not of democratization but of state formation. It will need to construct a coherent national identity and public administration. (Anderson: 2011)

In terms of foreign reactions, in practice, no country supported Qaddafi and, as conflicts expanded in the country, NATO headed by the U.S. started to bombard Gaddafi's positions and supplied the opponents with ammunition and also imposed no-flight zone over Libya. Meanwhile, it must be noted that the Qaddafi's regime lacked the support of any regional power or that of Russia and China in Security Council; and attacking that was a low-risk option which would not cause any losses. In such a condition, attacking the Qaddafi's regime could restore America's international prestige.

In general, the authoritarianism of the regime, unfair distribution of power and wealth, widespread corruption, along with the existence of local loyalties and tribal cleavages in Libya provided high protest potential against Qaddafi, especially in the eastern parts of the country. Meanwhile, the lack of modern institutions and civil society increased the role of tribal and local forces in Libya. As protests started, Libyan society and armed forces fractured along kinship networks and tribal cleavages. Qaddafi's regime had a social base among local and tribal forces in the western part of the country, while the eastern parts were rapidly getting out of its control; accordingly, the country moved towards a long-term civil war which was only ended with the decisive intervention of NATO.

Yemen

The Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990 through the unification of the Arab Republic of Yemen and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and from then until 2011, Ali Abdullah Saleh ruled in this country. In general, the most evident characteristics of politics in Yemen after merging which laid the ground for 2011 uprisings included:

1- Authoritarianism based on "hegemonic party regime": The regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh can be categorized among 'hegemonic party regimes with competitive elections'. Lisa Blaydes has argued that the authoritarian system of Yemen under Saleh, resembled that of Egypt under Mubarak in a number of important ways. The state was closely associated with the ruling party. Parliamentary elections in both countries were highly competitive. Although violations of electoral laws were common in Egypt and Yemen, the regimes relied less on direct cheating and more on other types of political manipulation. Money and promised patronage were often decisive in Yemeni electoral outcomes, and a similar dynamic was described in Egypt. (Blaydes 2011:218)

2- Reliance on tribal and kinship networks: Yemen is a fragmented society in which various tribal and religious distinctions exist. Tribal values along with regional and sectarian loyalties have always been significant in this country. It has been said that most people in Yemen identify themselves by the tribes they belong to. Accordingly, national identity and social cohesion are very weak. Lack of fair distribution of wealth and power among religious and

tribal groups has also aggravated the mentioned social cleavages. The regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh was based on these complex relationships and always attempted to continue its rule by the policy of "divide and rule (Schmitz: 2011)

3- Widespread corruption: In the conditions that Yemen was the poorest country in the Middle East, there was massive corruption there among the elites. Yemen under Saleh was an oligharchy where a class of elites - increasingly Northerners with business interests- competed for economic wealth and political power. The system was as something between kleptocracy and plutocracy, where occupants of key government offices enriched themselves, using their positions as profit centers. There was a common perception that the president stole and "he allowed others to steal". Visible measures of elite corruption included the growing number of high-end vehicles and villas around the capital. Corruption allowed a "core group of elites" to grow wealthy while leaving the majority of Yemenis marginalized and discontented. (Blaydes 2011:217- 218). According to corruption perceptions index 2010, Yemen was highly corrupt and ranked 146 out of 178 countries.

(http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2 010/results) Meanwhile, Southern secessionists, Houthi movement and Al-Qaeda's influence added to the complexity of political situation in this country.
In terms of socio-economic situations, Yemen was the poorest country in the Middle East region with at least 58 percent of children undernourished. Studies also suggested that Yemen's 3.2

percent annual population growth rate was overwhelming the country's limited human, state and natural resources. (Blumi 2011 :1) Unemployment, especially among the youth, was another crisis in Yemen. High population growth on the one hand and the government's failure to create jobs on the other led to a very high rate of unemployment in this country. According to CIA world Factbook 2010, unemployment rate in Yemen was 35 percent (CIA world Factbook 2010). In terms of educational indicators, Yemen was in a dreadful situation so that, more than 37 percent of Yemenis were completely illiterate.(Human Development Report 2011 :160) In this country, most people lived in villages and identified themselves by the tribes they belonged to. This situation was completely different from that in countries like Tunisia and Egypt. In general, widespread corruption and Oligarchy nature of Saleh's regime along with the characteristics of party system in this country laid the ground for grievances of opposition parties and caused deep legitimacy crisis there. Massive poverty, widespread unemployment, lack of fair distribution of wealth, and resource crisis exacerbated the Yemen's problems and led to legitimacy and efficiency crises there; accordingly, a range of social classes and groups were alienated from the regime. In such a situation, the wave of the revolutions in the Arab world triggered the protests in Yemen and people held massive demonstrations in big squares of Yemen cities such as Sanaa similar to the ones held in Egypt. Main social forces which protested against the regime included student and youth movement, Houthis, Southern people and Al-Ahmar influential family. Undoubtedly, students and youth who were mostly independent from political parties played a significant role in

the uprisings. The following points are worth consideration with regard to the model of the revolution and involved social forces: 1) various social forces including students and youth, along with tribes participated in the revolts. However, considering the tribal and sectarian structure of Yemen, it seemed that religious sects and tribes played a more determining role in this country. The presence of different flows including Houthis influenced by Iran, Salafis inspired by Saudi Arabia, Southern secessionists, and finally independent students and youth who have different demands, demonstrates a complicated picture with regard to the political sphere of Yemen. 2) Considering the illiteracy of many people, tribal identities and sectarian and religious cleavages in Yemen, there were considerable differences between the experience of this country and that of Tunisia and Egypt. Accordingly, transition to democracy in Yemen is difficult and uncertain and the expansion of chaos is probable. 3) The reaction of the military to the protests was complex. In this country like in Libya, the military lacked institutionalization. Yemenis soldiers received their pay directly from division commanders rather than from the central government. This created opportunities for corruption and divided loyalties. (M.Sharp:2012:2) Accordingly, units led by the rulers' families supported the regime, while other units defected to the opposition, stayed on the sidelines, or just gone home. (Gause: 2011) In fact, like Libya, the military was divided by the cleavages of kinship and region.

As far as the reaction of foreign players is concerned, Saudi Arabia has always played an interventionist role in Yemen and considered

this country as its back yard. Most of people in Yemen, regardless of political orientation, region of origins or social class, believe that Saudi Arabia plays a significant role in destabilizing their country. Expansionist by nature, house of Saud is notorious among many Yemenis for its long history of instigating and then exploiting local conflicts, and there is plenty of evidence to support such an analysis. (Blumi 2011:147) The foreign policy orientations of Saudi Arabia against the recent revolution of Yemen included: 1) preventing democracy and trying to manage and control developments, 2) Maintaining the structure of the government and trying to empower dependent groups, 3) Decreasing the influence of Houthi Shiites which are spiritually close to Iran. Saudi Arabia has used financial support of some parties and tribes along with diplomatic activities in order to achieve these objectives. Accordingly, Ali Abdullah Saleh and opposition parties signed on an agreement according to which, Yemen held a presidential election with one consensus candidate on the ballot- former Vice President Mansour al-Hadi. The U.S. is another player which has had a determining role in the political outcomes of the recent revolts in the Arab world. The following points can be referred to with regard to the foreign policy stance of America in Yemen during the upheavals: 1) combating terrorism: Obama administration increased the intensity of drone attacks against possible terrorist centers during the upheavals. This meant that the main concern of America was to destroy the facilities of terrorist groups 2) Political assignment to Saudi Arabia: Obama took himself away from playing a serious role in the political process of Yemen and, in comparison with Egypt and Libya, demonstrated the least mobility and put the main responsibility on

the shoulders of Saudi Arabia. Two reasons can be mentioned in this regard: The first is that Arab countries are not of equivalent worth for America and the U.S does not have enough capacity for dealing with all of them simultaneously. The second reason is the strategic importance of Yemen for Saudi Arabia. As a close ally of the US in the region, Riyadh expects that its strategic concerns be respected by the US. It must also be noted that the U.S. is generally satisfied with the foreign policy stance adopted by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

In general, although the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces including influential tribes, youth, and political parties along with Houthis and southerners were alienated from the regime and held widespread demonstrations, the tribal structure of Yemen meant the regime had continued support from some groups and tribes. In addition, the support of some parts of the military such as the presidential guard and the strategic intervention of Saudi Arabia along with the foreign policy stance of the U.S. contributed to the survival of the regime. However, Saudi Arabia finally imposed the Gulf Cooperation Council plan in this country. In line with the plan, Yemen held a presidential election with one consensus candidate on the ballot; and Ali Abdullah Saleh received blanket immunity and resigned.

Syria

In general, the most evident characteristics of the political regime in Syria which have led to dissatisfaction among the people during both Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad period have been as follows:

1.   Authoritarianism based on single-party regime: The Assad's regime in Syria could be categorized among "single-party regimes with limited competition" similar to Saddam and Ben-Ali regimes. These regimes are more closed than 'hegemonic party regimes with competitive elections'. (Blaydes 2011 :229-231) In Syria, the main power of the country has been in the hands of the Baath party which has been leading the National Progressive Front. In fact, the regime of Syria has acted like a military regime in which absolute authority has been in the hands of the president. In Syria, there has been no real oppositions which could challenge the power of Baath party. Moreover, severe suppression of political dissidents, widespread violation of human rights and lack of freedom of expression have been other aspects of politics which have caused deep grievances among people. However, after the uprisings in 2011, the regime has claimed to make some political reforms for example some opposition groups have been allowed to participate in politics and constitutional reforms have been enacted. Nevertheless, most of the opposition groups believe that these reforms are superficial and the authoritarianism of the regime has continued.

2. Sectarianism: Undoubtedly, the most evident characteristic of the regime has been sectarianism. In the conditions in which Sunnis have constituted more than 70 percent of population and Alawis are less than 15 percent, the backbone of Assad's regime, especially

security and intelligence organizations are in the hands of Alawis. One often-cited statistic is that, at the time of Hafez-Assad's death in 2000, Alawis held 90 percent of the top posts in military and security sectors. (Blaydes 2011:229) This has made a profound sectarian cleavage in Syria so that Dekmejian has argued that Sunni protest movement against the Alawite-dominated regime is the peculiar character of Islamic fundamentalism in Syria.(Dekmejian:1995 :106) Nevertheless, besides Alawi political elites, there are a number of privileged families with close ties to the regime. Many of these families hail from the Sunni merchant class, which is closely tied to Alawi centers of power. Lisa Blaydes has summarized that although Sunnis are well presented in the legislature and cabinet; informal power and associated financial resources, however, are dominated by Alawis who have enjoyed privileged access to patronage. (Blaydes 2011:229-231) Widespread corruption and secularism are other aspects of politics in Syria under Bashar -Assad. According to corruption perceptions index, Syria has been one of the most corrupt countries in the Arab world. The prevalence of corruption at different levels has been in such a way that, during the recent protest movement, elimination of corruption has been one of the demands of the protesters. Secularism in Syria has been another character which has had different consequences. On the one hand, it has attracted minorities and secular groups and on the other hand, has alienated Islamists.

As far as social conditions are concerned, the most important characteristic of Syrian society is its low social cohesion and existence of various religious and ethnic sects. In this country,

national identity is weak while local and sectarian loyalties are strong. These factors have also caused those tribal and sectarian aspects to play significant roles in the recent protests in Syria. In terms of economy, unemployment rate and wealth gap have continuously increased in recent years and unemployment has risen to an estimated 20-25 percent. Moreover, like in Tunisia and Egypt, privatization policies, while detrimental to the large majority, have mainly benefited a few individuals close to the regime. It must also be noted that many in the middle class have been being pushed towards the poverty line because their incomes have not kept up with inflation that reached 17 percent in 2008. (Rivline 2011) In general, the authoritarianism and sectarianism of the regime along with economic crises like unemployment, class divisions and widespread corruption have led to dissatisfaction among many people in Syria. The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Syria: 1) At first, The protests were mainly spontaneous and it seemed that there were no controlling organizations or identified leaders and the opposition's ideological focus was unclear, beyond slogans calling for an end to corruption and repression.(Ruthven:2011) Nevertheless, the role of political organizations and even foreign countries has gradually increased so that they are now playing influential roles in guiding the uprisings. It must also be noted that both pro-democracy groups and Islamists have been active in protests, however, that the protests started from mosques, the greatest demonstrations were held in cities like Hamah and Deraa which have traditionally been the centers of Sunni Islamists, and considering that the Sunni Islamists were traditionally the most important challengers of Assad's regime, strengthen this

speculation that Sunni fundamentalists have had a determining role in these protests. 2) The centers of protests are marginal and less populated areas and in major cities, like Damascus and Aleppo, there have not been widespread demonstrations. 3) Despite severe violence, the military has generally supported the regime and there has no sign of a massive division within the military. To understand this stance, social and military structures of Syria should be considered. In Syria like in Bahrain, there is low social homogeneity and the army has organic ties with the regime. Alawis have constituted the backbone of the regime and holds most of the top posts in military and security sectors. Any fundamental change in political regime may decline their positions. However, some of the low-ranking soldiers and officers who are mostly Sunnis have defected the army, but their defections could not hamper the ability of army to suppress the protests. 4) In contrast to most of the crisis-stricken countries, considerable violence has been used by the protesters. This phenomenon can be explained by considering the historical background, especially Hamah bloody suppression in 1982. The Hamah massacre had contradicted effects, on the one hand, it frightened oppositions in such a way that they did not protest until 2011, and on the other hand, it made a continuous demand for revenge which explained the implementation of violence by opposition groups. 5) The regime of Assad has a considerable social base. In fact, a great number of people in Syria, especially in major cities like Damascus and Aleppo, have demonstrated in support of Assad several times. In this regard, the support of Alawis, Christians and other minorities which have been protected in the secular regime of Assad should be considered. Fear

of Sunni fundamentalism and violation of rights of minorities have encouraged them to support Assad. Moreover, some secular Sunnis have supported Assad since their economic interests have been linked to the regime and they have been terrified by the empowerment of Salafis. Finally, many of Syrians simply think that there is no better alternative to the current regime and they cannot accept their country becoming another Iraq -- in terms of security -- or another Saudi Arabia -- in terms of religious rule.(Akl: 2011)

As far as the role of foreign countries is concerned, they have not been able to play any determining role in the developments of Syria. Although America has talked about the end of the legitimacy of Bashar Assad, it has not taken any influential measures against the regime so that many of western experts have accused Obama administration of inaction against Syria. It's worth considering that Syria, In contrast to Libya, has a powerful regional ally, namely Iran, which supports it both politically and economically. Moreover, China and Russia have considerably resisted against the American plans in Security Council. Meanwhile, the stance of Israel seems to be more complicated. Israel believes that internal unrest in Syria may weaken the Iran-led axis of resistance; however, there is a concern that the expansion of insecurity may directly affect its national security. This issue becomes more evident if the security of Israel-Syria borders during Assad regime is considered. Additionally, Israeli leaders wonder what the alternative to Assad might be. (Rabinovich: 2011) In sum, the interests of foreign countries in the developments of Syria are in contradiction and foreigners have not been able to play a determining role, like the ones they played in Bahrain and Libya.

In general, although the regime of Syria has faced deep economic and political crises due to its non-democratic structure, lack of political reforms, widespread corruption and class divisions, the recent revolt has not been a widespread movement in which a range of groups and communities have participated. Accordingly, the regime still has a degree of legitimacy and a social base. Additionally, opposition groups are divided and they have contrasting perspectives on dialogue with the regime and foreign intervention. Most importantly, the military is still loyal to the regime and there is no sign of a massive division within the military. Finally, although some countries have backed efforts to overthrow the Assad's regime, it still has powerful international and regional allies which support it both politically and militarily. In sum, foreign countries have not been able to play a determinant role in Syria due to their conflicting interests.

Conclusion

Thus far, recent protests in the Arab world have led to different political outcomes. The leaders of Egypt and Tunisia surrendered rapidly, while the government of Libya collapsed after months of resistance; In Yemen, opposition parties and Ali Abdullah Saleh agreed to make only superficial changes, after which, Saleh resigned; In Bahrain and Syria, the regimes have shown considerable resistance, and protest movements have not been able to overthrow the rulers. This paper has explored the reasons for different political outcomes of protests in the Arab world using the Goldstone theory of revolutions. According to Goldstone's theory, for explaining the success or failure of revolutions, the political

legitimacy of governments, the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements and, the responses of national militaries and international powers are examined. In Tunisia and Egypt where the rulers surrendered rapidly, the regimes lacked legitimacy due to multiple socio-political crises and very broad, multi-class alliances were formed so that it could be said that the social base of the regimes were very narrow. Moreover, as protests expanded in scope, the militaries in both countries did not back the regimes, and neither did international powers. In Bahrain, although the regime has faced a legitimacy crisis, due to the lack of political reforms, the imposition of discrimination against Shiites, and socio-economic problems and various communities including Shiite and Sunni Muslims were alienated from it, the government has framed the protests as a Sectarian movement inspired by Iran. Moreover, the regime has won the support of some social groups through generous social welfare packages. As a result of these efforts, some social groups, especially some Sunnis have distanced themselves from the uprising. However, the factors which have been most decisive in ensuring the continuation of the Al-Khalifa regime are the loyalty of army which has a close relationship with the ruling class, and the intervention of Saudi Arabia with the implied approval of the United States. In Libya, the authoritarianism of the regime, unfair distribution of power and wealth, widespread corruption, along with the existence of local loyalties and tribal cleavages provided high protest potential against Qaddafi, especially in the eastern parts of the country. Meanwhile, the lack of modern institutions and civil society increased the role of tribal and local forces in this country. As protests started, Libyan society and armed forces fractured along

kinship networks and tribal cleavages. Qaddafi's regime had a social base among local and tribal forces in the western part of the country, while the eastern parts were rapidly getting out of its control; accordingly, the country moved towards a long-term civil war which was only ended with the decisive intervention of NATO. In Yemen, although the regime lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces including influential tribes, youth, and political parties along with Houthis and southerners were alienated from the regime and held widespread demonstrations, the tribal structure of Yemen meant the regime had continued support from some groups and tribes. In addition, the support of some parts of the military such as the presidential guard and the strategic intervention of Saudi Arabia along with the foreign policy stance of the U.S. contributed to the survival of the regime. In Syria, although the regime has faced deep economic and political crises due to its non-democratic structure, lack of political reforms, widespread corruption and class divisions, the recent revolt has not been a widespread movement in which a range of groups and communities have participated, and the regime still has a degree of legitimacy and a social base. Most importantly, the military is still loyal to the regime and there is no sign of a massive division within the military. Finally, although some countries have backed efforts to overthrow the regime, it still has powerful international and regional allies which support it both politically and militarily. However if the regime does not implement real political reforms, the violence continues, and comprehensive sanctions are implemented by Arab and Western countries , it is probable that the relative legitimacy and social base of support for the regime will decline and even the

foreign actors currently supporting it will redefine their policies. In these conditions, the fall of Assad is probable.

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