

**The Arab Spring:
Success or Failure?**

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Abstract

Nearly four years have passed since the world witnessed a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region called the 'Arab Spring'. Few significant questions that are often asked include the followings: Was the Arab Spring a success or a failure? Why did it happen? And why is it important that it happened? I will argue that the Arab Spring has contributed to a few positive and to several negative outcomes in the short run, due to the strong coercive apparatuses of the countries involved and to their weak institutions, in addition to international factors. In addition, I will also argue that from a long-term perspective, the Arab Spring might eventually be credited with bringing democracy to the region like the French Revolution did in 1789. The unrest first began in Tunisia in December 2010, when the self immolation of a local vendor sparked countrywide protests that soon spread to neighboring countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and at a later stage to Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, Iraq and to some extent Sudan. Focusing on the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, my thesis claims that the Arab Spring has in the short term resulted in more negative than positive aspects. The Arab Spring can be considered successful in terms of ending unaccountable governments and dictatorships such as those of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi in Libya; in enhancing the political participation of parties that were not prominent in former regimes; and in promoting freedom of expression in the Arab World. However, the Arab Spring has also led to divisions on the basis of religion and along sectarian lines (especially Sunni and Shiite), in armed conflict and in the civil wars in Libya and Syria. It has also brought about militias, regional political instability (with political killings) and economic fragility (with a decline in economic growth for the whole MENA region). I conclude that in the same way as France and Western

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Europe took several centuries to become democratic and to move from dictatorship to democracy, the MENA region eventually has the potential to become democratic in the long run.

Key words: Arab Spring, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, MENA, Mubarak, Ben Ali, Gaddafi

Chapter One:**Introduction**

It is believed that more than any other part of the former colonial world, the Middle East has never been fully decolonized (Milne, 2011). The reason for this is that the Arab world, sitting on top of the globe's oil reserves, has been the target of continual interference and intervention ever since it became formally independent. After it was carved into "artificial states" following the World War One, it has been bombed and occupied by several countries such as the US, Israel, Britain and France (Milne, 2011). Furthermore, it has been locked down with US bases and "Western-backed tyrannies" (Milne, 2011). As a result of this, the Arab world has seen numerous deaths due to invasions, foreign occupations, regional or civil wars, terrorist attacks, or sectarian and ethnic conflicts. As an illustration, the protracted (eight years) war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s resulted in at least half a million casualties and several million worth of damages on both sides. In addition, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is due to the shared history and to the linguistic and cultural bonds of the region's people (Hassan, 2012). Similar consequences have been observed as the result of the Arab Spring of 2011, where thousands of people lost their lives and thousands more were made to flee their respective countries to save their lives. Few questions that arise in the aftermath the Arab Spring are: Was it a success or a failure? Why did it happen? And why is it important that it happened? I will argue that the Arab Spring has been successful in the short run in terms of ending unaccountable governments and dictatorships, in enhancing the political participation and in promoting freedom of expression in the Arab World. However, the Arab Spring has also led to divisions on the basis of religion and along sectarian lines, armed conflict and civil wars, regional political instability and economic instability in the MENA region. This thesis argues that some of the reasons for

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this situation include the strong coercive apparatuses of these countries, their weak institutions as well as a number of international factors. In addition from a long term perspective, the thesis will also argue that the Arab Spring has the potential to bring democracy into the region, similarly to what the French Revolution did in 1789.

The term Arab Spring, which is used to describe the events that unfolded (and in fact are still unfolding) since 2011, was first used by media and political commentators in 2005 to describe an anticipated democratization wave in the wake of the Iraq invasion (UCDP, 2011). It was the Western media who popularized the term in 2011, when the successful uprising in Tunisia against former leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali encouraged similar anti-government protests in most Arab countries (Manfreda, 2013). The term was also a reference to the Prague Spring of 1968, when a reformist leader called Alexander Dubcek tried to liberalize the politics of Czechoslovakia and lessen the stronghold the USSR had on his nation's affairs. The Prague Spring came to an end with the USSR invasion of Czechoslovakia, the removal of Alexander Dubcek as a party leader and the end of reform within Czechoslovakia (The Week, 2008). The term "Arab Spring" acquired a new meaning at the end of 2010, when the people of North Africa managed to organize themselves and rally around a common goal: ousting undemocratic regimes. Although the outcome of these processes is hard to forecast, several experts argue that it will either lead to a greater degree of democracy or to a transformation into a different type of autocracy (UCDP, 2011). An illustration of the latter scenario would be the case of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, when mass protests erupted against the Shah by communists, nationalists and even secularists (though it was known as an Islamic Revolution) who chose Khomeini as their leader (Kuzman, 1996). As demonstrations took place and events unraveled, one autocratic ruler was replaced by another, regardless of the motives for the revolution (UCPD, 2011).

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In contrast to the pattern of past conflicts in the Arab world, the 2011 uprising has arguably changed the course of history in the region. During the year 2010-2011, the world witnessed a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Both the pattern and the reasons behind those conflicts were nothing like in the past, when they were based on religious or territorial issues. The main aim of the uprising was to sweep away every trace of the old order and to bring about an emerging multinational, secular, democratic generation of engaged citizens (Lynch, 2011). Although the values of freedom and dignity had already existed in the Arab world, it was a belief that appeared to be held by a small set of elites (mostly politicians), intellectuals and human rights advocates (Hassan, 2012). With the Arab Spring in general and the Tunisian uprising in particular, in December 2010 that faith changed into some collective form and spread to the citizenry of the Arab world (Hassan, 2012). Throughout 2011, thousands of citizens in numerous Arab countries lost their lives in the hope of real reform (the rejection of autocratic rule) and of the right to dignity, freedom and social justice (Hassan, 2012). Along with the young people of the Arab world—who played a decisive role in bringing about this change—new media and social networks also played a vital part in giving the forces of uprisings an advantage in terms of handling the tactical initiative, strengthening their ability to mobilize, gathering information and letting the world know what was happening in the region (Hassan, 2012).

The protests began in Tunisia but subsequently spread to Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and at a later stage to Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, Iraq and even to some extent Sudan. The uprisings have thus engulfed most parts of the Middle-East and the whole of North Africa (UCDP, 2011). In those countries that saw popular uprisings, the results varied: setbacks in Bahrain, economic and political transition in Tunisia, limited reforms

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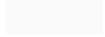
in Yemen, and the bloody removal of the regime in Libya were coupled with an inability to disarm the militias. In Egypt, the uprising swept away the head of the regime but left the opposition forces in power, whereas in Syria, the struggle continues in the face of a dictator who refuses to step down (Hassan, 2012).

Of all the countries in the MENA region, I would be focusing on three of them, namely, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, for these were the first countries to witness mass protests against their respective regimes. Other than being part of the Arab Spring 2011, they are similar in terms of naming their uprisings and using slogans throughout the revolts. In Tunisia, the uprising was termed the “Jasmine Revolution” after its national flower, a name first used by an American journalist Andy Carvin (Carvin, 2011). Similarly, the Egyptian uprisings was called “Lotus Revolution” which symbolized freedom, development and social justice (Rawson, 2011), whereas the Libyan Uprisings was called “Libyan Revolution” (Fritz, 2011). Also, *Ash-sha’b yurid isqat an-nizam* (“the people want to bring down the regime”) was a political slogan associated with the Arab Spring and was seen to be used in all three countries (Aljazeera, 2012). Last but not the least, a common slogan used in Tunisia during the uprisings was “Ben Ali, Degage!” which meant “get out Ben Ali” (Said, 2014).

As a whole, the Arab Spring of 2011 is a hot top cod discussion because of the involvement of most of the countries in the MENA region. There had been interventions in the Arab World before, of course, but these were mostly by foreign countries or within the countries of the regions. The Arab Spring is a new experience because for the first time most of those countries were demonstrating mass protests against their own regime and because so many countries started becoming part of the Arab Spring and tried bringing down their government at

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the same time. Among other things, I will argue that similarly to the French Revolution of 1789, the Arab Spring of 2011 does have a chance to spread democracy in the MENA region.



Chapter Two:**A Background Narrative of the Arab Spring**

This chapter outlines the most significant events and developments in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt during the Arab Spring of 2011. The narratives highlight the events that have led to the present situation since the late summer of 2011. The selection of countries and events is due to the fact that these three nations (Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) were the first to be engulfed by the Arab Spring. In my view, it is appropriate to choose these first three countries to see how they are doing after the Arab Spring as they have had more time to fulfill the goals of the Arab Spring in comparison to other countries of the MENA region. The chapter will also provide a better understanding of how the Arab Spring started and quickly transformed itself into a series of uprisings in the MENA region, thereby turning into a special period for the region as well as for the global community.

The birthplace of Arab Spring: Tunisia before and during the Arab Spring

Between the years 1987 and 1998, the Islamic and anti-dictatorship movements became more active in Tunisia and eventually led to the overthrow of the dictator that preceded Ben Ali (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012). In 1991, the conflict became more serious between Ben Ali and the Islamist. Ben Ali was famous for treating his opposition wildly—having them arrested and imprisoned for long period of times (16-17 years per person) and forcing them to leave the country (UCPD, 2011). Reports also indicate that Ben Ali used torturing equipments on those who opposed him and that the prisons were full of Tunisian youths and students. More than thirty thousand students and scholars were imprisoned by Ben Ali between the years 1991-2010 (UCPD, 2011). All such events helped accumulate hatred for Ben Ali amongst most citizens and

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led to the uprising of 2010-2011. Most people in Tunisia were tired of the corruption, lack of freedom, cruelty and oppression of their ruler, as well as of unemployment and poverty. In addition, most citizens were also unhappy because Ben Ali was exploiting their national resources and wealth, prohibited religious rituals and allowed only the ruling party to stand for elections. These factors enflamed the uprising and Ben Ali was accused of paying no attention to the people's expectations and of only considering his interests, which ultimately led him leaving the country (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012).

The Arab Spring was instigated by a minor event—indeed, by a personal tragedy—on 17th December 2010, when a Tunisian grocery vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself on fire as a reaction to being held in the custody of the Tunisian police for selling vegetables without a permit. Reports say that he was beaten, his cart was taken away forcefully and that he was humiliated, both physically and verbally. Bouazizi reported the malpractice to the authorities but was ignored, and it was then that, in great desperation, he resorted to self-immolation (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012).

Bouazizi's desperate actions led to demonstrations, and while the protests first took place in his hometown, they soon spread to the capital, Tunis. Several youths identified themselves with the desperation of Bouazizi and demanded not only better living conditions, but also that Ben Ali (who had been in office since 1987) should step down. Several hundred people lost their lives in the protests, as Ben Ali desperately fought to remain in office. A UN delegation put the number of deaths at 219, but this estimate may be revised as more organizations obtain access to information (UCPD, 2012). The Tunisian uprising came to an end with the removal of Ben Ali from power on 14 January, 2011

Egypt: before and during the Arab Spring

Mubarak's ruling National Democratic Party was notorious for its corruption and cronyism, filling all positions of influence in public institutions with loyalists (Abou-El-Fadl, 2013). As regards the corruption level, Transparency International (2011) ranked Egypt 2.9, which meant that the problem with Egyptian corruption was serious. Practices of media censorship were another thing for which Mubarak's rule was well-known. Under his reign, Egyptian poverty had a fluctuating but high rate of 8-12% (World Bank, 2011) and the country also had 40% of its people below the \$2 a day income poverty line and 2% of people living below \$1.25 a day (Korotayev, 2011; Zinkina, 2011). All these factors, in addition to the uprising in Tunisia, led to the uprising in Egypt.

During the Arab Spring, tens of thousands of protesters marched to central Cairo on 25 January to voice their disapproval of long-time ruler, Hosni Mubarak (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012). The event, which was termed "the day of rage", led to a chain of mass protests and eventually to the resignation and exiling of Mubarak and his family (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012). The uprising in Egypt was centered around Cairo, more specifically Tahrir Square, and another feature of the uprisings was social media. The protesters used different social media such as Facebook and Twitter to coordinate and spread information regarding the revolts. The use of social media also helped updating the international press regarding the events that were taking place in Egypt (UCPD, 2011).

By the end of January, Tahrir Square became a meeting point for the protesters and only a week after "the day of rage," an estimated 250, 000 demonstrators had gathered there. Similar to Ben Ali, Mubarak offered concessions to the protesters: he dismissed his cabinet and promised not to run for re-election, but none of his concessions were able to satisfy the growing number of

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protestors. Eventually, Mubarak faced overwhelming domestic pressure and stepped down on 11 February 2011 (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith, 2012).

Libya: before and during Arab Spring

Libya obtained its independence in 1951. Colonel Muammar Gaddafi ruled Libya for 42 years after taking power from King Idris I when he was just 27 years old (Ajami, 2012), something that made him the longest serving ruler in the Arab world and Africa. Gaddafi became popular because he started implementing his 'Green Book' theories. He abolished the parliament and party system, started rejecting communism and capitalism, and abolished personal property. By doing so, Gaddafi made everything *about* him, *by* him and *for* him. Basically, he wanted to *be* the state and did not want anyone to oppose him. During his reign, Gaddafi ruled Libya brutally - people who disagreed with him were either imprisoned or given death sentences. He even made it illegal for political parties to oppose his revolution and the media was mostly controlled by the government. As the leader of Libya, he also tried to be as powerful as possible in the Arab world and in Africa (Ajami, 2012).

Following the neighboring countries, demonstrations demanding better quality of life, more freedom and a higher level of participation broke out in Libya too. What distinguished the case of Libya from its northern African neighbors, however, was the brutal fashion in which Gaddafi responded to the uprisings. From the start it was clear that Gaddafi would not tolerate any scenario diminishing or bringing an end to his absolute power. As an illustration, on the first day of the uprisings Gaddafi released prisoners from jail and used them as mercenaries to fight the protesters (Ajami, 2012). He also employed a great number of mostly West-Africans mercenaries to deal with the protesters. Just days after the protests started, Gaddafi's son, Saif al-

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Islam Muammar al Gaddafi, appeared on state television and warned the citizens of Libya about the possibility of a civil war. He blamed the uprising on foreign powers like Israel and accused the Western media of giving a biased picture of the situation in Libya (Ajami, 2012).

Due to continuous and intensified attacks on civilian protestors, many Libyans chose to leave their country to save their lives. When Gaddafi started to wage war against his own people, however, the international community decided to intervene. The issue was brought before the UN Security Council, which on 17 March voted in favor of imposing a no-fly zone over Libya, restricting Gaddafi from using his air force against the population (UCPD, 2011). The Security Council authorized "all necessary measures" to stop the violence taking place in Libya at that time (UCPD, 2011). However, no such intervention by international community was taken in the case of Syria (Ajami, 2012), one reason being that a Libya intervention had regional support legally, militarily, economically or politically (Ajami, 2012). In Libya, the regional supporters (the Arab League, key African states and Libyan diplomats) stood behind insurgents to stop Gaddafi. According to Ajami, "this regional support created an irresistible opportunity to forge a new partnership with the Arab League and regional states through a common military and political engagement" (2011). This has not yet been the case with Syria. The voting at the UN was not uncontroversial, and five countries chose to abstain (Brazil, China, Germany, India and the Russian Federation). However, Resolution 1973 was passed and the responsibility of enforcing the no-fly zone was shared amongst the member states of the UN, with NATO as the commanding organization (Ajami, 2012). In August 2011, the rebels took over the capital Tripoli and a temporary government called the National Transitional Council (NTC) took charge of the country. After the fall of Tripoli, Col Gaddafi went into hiding, insisting he would rather die than surrender. In October, he was found in hiding and was killed by the rebels (UCPD, 2011).

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The Arab Spring of 2011 started in Tunisia but spread to other countries in the MENA region. The focus of this chapter has been on three countries: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In all of them, most of the population was unhappy with their regime and wanted change. Dictators like Ben Ali and Mubarak only gave up their power when they were unsuccessful in calming down the protestors despite several attempts. Gaddafi chose not to go down silently but started a bloody war against the rebels and was killed in the process. So the Arab Spring, originally instigated by the personal tragedy of a Tunisian, unfolded in a series of uprisings in the MENA region. Coercive apparatuses, weak institutions as well as international factors all contributed to few positive and several negative consequences of the Arab Spring. The next chapter looks at the positive impact of the Arab Spring, whereas the following one considers its negative implications.

Chapter Three:

Positive impact of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring's impact on the MENA region has been profound and the protests that spread across the region in early 2011 started a long-term process of political and social transformation that was primarily marked in the initial stages by political turbulence, economic difficulties and conflict. Some of these transformations were positive whereas some were not. In terms of positive impact, some of the grounds on which scholars argue that the Arab Spring succeeded include the end of unaccountable governments, the explosion of political activity and freedom of expression. An interesting question, however, is why were there unaccountable governments, poor political participation and less freedom of expression in the MENA countries? Two independent factors seem to have led to such situation in the past; first, the presence of strong coercive apparatuses that had both the will and the power to repress democratic initiatives originating from society; and second, the institutional structure of the region. When the third wave of democratization took place in 1974, it swept across all of the regions of the world except the Middle East and one reason for such exceptionalism was the presence of well-maintained coercive apparatuses leading to long lasting dictatorships, poor political participation and limited freedom of expression (Bellin, 2012). In addition, though the states in the MENA region were doing well in terms of economic indicators, they were not doing well in terms of social development. There were no good institutions to promote state-citizens interface and help marginalized groups (especially youth and women) to develop and share the benefits that the states were gaining from their economic progress (The World Bank, 2008).

End of unaccountable government

The manifestation that Arab dictators can be removed through grass-root popular revolts and not just military coup or foreign intervention as in Iraq in 2003, was arguably the biggest achievement of the Arab Spring (Badicala, 2013). By the end of 2011, the governments of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were swept away by popular revolts in an exceptional show of people's power. In addition, the loyalty and defections of the coercive apparatuses also contributed to bringing down dictators like Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi. When tens of thousands of protestors showed up in Habib Bourguiba Avenue and Tahrir Square demanding that their leaders step down, the regimes turned to the military (army and heavy weapons) to contain those uprisings (Bellin, 2012). If the military chose to repress, it could have done so and the regimes would have survived. Military elites like General Amar of Tunisia and General Tantawi of Egypt could have easily shot the crowds since they had the capacity to do so (Bellin, 2012). Instead, they refused because they had no will to repress. The fact that in Tunisia and Egypt the military chose not to shoot demonstrators encouraged protestors and forced the long-ruling autocrats to depart (Bellin, 2012). In Libya, the military was fractured and some chose to shoot and some not (Bellin, 2012), a situation that led to civil war. So the coercive apparatus in the Middle East not only played a vital role in maintaining robust authoritarianism pre-Arab Spring, but also in ending dictatorships during the Arab Spring. Prior to the Arab Spring, Arab dictators (Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi) used to take extreme measures like punishments and restrictions to keep themselves in power. One way of doing that was by spending huge amounts of their state's GDP into building and maintaining military assets. For instance, according to the CIA World Factbook, Egypt under Mubarak spent 1.86% of its GDP in military expenditures in 2012, whereas in the same year countries like Germany and Brazil spent 1.35% and 1.47% of their

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GDPs respectively (Wang and Meyer, 2012). Germany and Brazil had GDPs in terms of trillions (3.4 trillion and 2.3 trillion respectively) but they chose to spend comparatively less towards building and maintaining their military assets—unlike Egypt, whose GDP in 2012 was only 262.8 billion (The World Bank, 2012). This suggests how important it was for Mubarak as a dictator to keep a strong standing army since it was a way through which he could secure his position. In addition, Egypt received the most U.S. foreign aid of any country besides Israel (Wang and Meyer, 2012). The exact amount varied from year to year, but U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt averaged about \$2 billion a year since 1979, when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel (Wang and Meyer, 2012). Out of that, military aid - which came through Foreign Military Finance - was steady at about \$1.3 billion from 1987 to 2010, whereas U.S economic aid to Egypt dropped from \$815 million in 1998 to about \$250 million in 2011 (Wang and Meyer, 2012). Furthermore, according to the State Department, along with the money, the U.S. sent fighter jets, tanks, armored personnel carriers, attack helicopters, anti-aircraft missiles and surveillance aircrafts to Egypt (Wang and Meyer, 2012). So we can see how Egypt's mass expenditure on military assets and strong international support in the form of aid was a way for Mubarak's regime to be authoritarian. This seems to support the view of classical realism: the presence of the West in Egypt suggests that the first and last guiding principle of a state is power (Newmann, n.d.). Egypt being a weaker state than the US, it tried to stick with Washington so that no other stronger states could get an opportunity to bully it. In return, the US had its own self interest in helping Egypt, such as getting a foot-hold in the Middle East and securing oil reserves in the region.

The Arab Spring made it clear that even if many authoritarian rulers managed to cling on to power, they could no longer take the people of their countries for granted. The governments

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across the region were forced to reform, aware that corruption, incompetence and police brutality would no longer be unchallenged. With the end of unaccountable government, the Arab Spring was initially successful in attaining one of the core motives of the protestors throughout the Arab world. The protestors were expressing both deep-seated resentment at the ageing Arab dictatorships, as well as anger at the brutality of the security apparatus of their countries (Mossa, 2011). When the Arab Spring started in 2011, Egyptian leader Mubarak had been in power since 1980, Tunisia's Ben Ali since 1987 and Gaddafi since 1969 (Badicala, 2013). Though most of their populations were deeply pessimistic about the legitimacy of these ageing regimes, people remained passive out of fear of the security apparatus and because there was no better alternative since most people did not want Islamist takeovers (Badicala, 2013). One of the reasons why dictators throughout the Arab world were able to stay in power for so long, therefore, was the weakly structured institutions which lacked inclusion (especially youth and women), rural and urban social cohesions and less citizen-state interactions (The World Bank, 2008). The regimes brought remarkable improvements in social development indicators (especially education and health) but on the other hand did not built the country's "social fabric" —youths and women were given good education but were rarely involved in decision and policy making processes; urban, rural and local governments institutions were not strengthened in order to reduce social cohesions and risk of conflicts; and the public had less access to information regarding government transactions and plans which reduced accountability and opportunities for citizens (The World Bank, 2008).

The other reason that aided the dictators of the MENA region to resist the test of time is the series of myths they created among the populations of their countries: how their power cannot be challenged, how ineffective resisting to this power will be and how submitting to this power is

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the only way (Mossa, 2011). However, the Arab Spring played a key role in falsifying these beliefs of unchallengeable power and ineffective resistance, ending most of the unaccountable governments in the MENA region.

Explosion of political activity

The Arab Spring has brought about a key change in terms of political participation in the Arab world. The Middle East has witnessed an explosion of political activity in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, particularly in those countries where the revolts successfully removed long-serving leaders. Under the authoritarian systems of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other Arab countries, formal political participation was largely restricted to regime-related party activity, civil society participation approved by the serving leaders, or voting in nontransparent and often fake elections (Khatib, 2013). Though the situation has not totally changed after the Arab Spring, there has definitely been improvement in terms of speed of formal political participation (Khatib, 2013). One reason why there was less political participation and activity in the past was the presence of strong military support for the regime, a support that was either institutionalized (following orders as a duty) or organized along patrimonial lines (whereby military elites had personal interest vested in the regime) (Bellin, 2012). As Peter Feaver pointed out, in the MENA region “the very institution created to protect the polity [i.e. the military] was given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity” (Norton and Alfoneh, 2008). Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, military institutions played a vital role in the politics of the region, thereby limiting the growth of civil society and political participation (Norton and Alfoneh, 2008). The stability of all regimes rested on the role of the military and of other coercive apparatuses (security forces, police and so on) whereby most of the competitive forces and real oppositions were excluded

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from the political scene (Norton and Alfoneh, 2008). Informal political participation was often done through social networks, underground political movements and social movements (Badicala, 2013). As an illustration, when Ben Ali rose to power in 1987, though he worked on a market-based economic development and women's rights, he also quite brutally suppressed political opponents. Independent journalists, secular activists and Islamists were harassed, tortured and made to face imprisonment because their views did not coincide with Ben Ali's (Freedom House, 2012). Many Islamists, particularly supporters of the banned movement Ennahda (a moderate Islamist political party in Tunisia), were jailed following sham trials in the early 1990s because they were supporting the opposition party (Freedom House, 2012). Due to the fact that Ben Ali exercised tight media and candidacy restrictions, in October 2009 he won his 55th presidential term by taking nearly 90% of the votes (Freedom House, 2012). After this victory, Ben Ali's repressive measures continued through 2010 and included severe attacks on critical journalists and bloggers in Tunisia. Furthermore, in June that year, parliament passed a new law which stated that the activities of the opposition parties would be considered criminal if they were regarded to be instigated by the "agents of a foreign power" (Freedom House, 2012). In addition to the presence of strong coercive apparatuses, therefore, the presence of weak (state-owned) democratic institutions was another contributing factor to poor political participation in the MENA region. Democratic institutions are defined as "political institutions [that] have a recognizable, direct relationship with the making of decisions that are mandatory within a given territory, the channels of access to decision-making roles, and the shaping of the interests and identities that claim such access" (Khatib, 2013). Such institutions would include political parties, the legislature, the judiciary, local governments, civil society and the media (Khatib, 2013). In order for political participation to flourish, these institutions should exist and be viable,

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yet they were made weaker by the Arab regimes in order to cease political participation and competitions.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, hundreds of parties, civil society groups, newspapers, TV stations and online media were launched across the region as people were trying to reclaim their country from “ossified ruling elites” (Badicala, 2013). For example, in Libya, where all political parties were banned for decades under Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi’s regime, no less than 374 parties took part in the 2012 parliamentary election (Badicala, 2013). Although the result seems very colorful and optimistic, it has also resulted in the fragmentation of the political landscape, which now ranges from “far-left organizations to liberals and hardline Islamists (Salafis)” (Badicala, 2013). One other minor impact of the explosion of political activities after the Arab Spring was that the voters in emerging democracies (such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya) were overwhelmed by choices they did not have in the past, something that caused confusion among the voters. Along with the massive increase in political activities, the Arab Spring’s “children” (Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) are clearly still trying to develop firm and stable political commitments and it will take time before mature political parties take root.

Freedom of expression

One of the benefits of regime change throughout North Africa and the Middle East is freedom of expression. Historically, the Middle East and North Africa region has been considered the least free in the world as it is often marked by abuses of fundamental rights and civil liberties and by the presence of coercive apparatuses and weak institutions (Freedom House, 2014). While the world was trying to improve the freedom of expression through debates and discussions, especially on the internet, the year 2010 saw a general regression in freedom of

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expression in the MENA region and Libya especially, where it was severely restricted. As an illustration, in January 2010 the Libyan government blocked access to at least seven independent opposition websites abroad, including *Libya Al Youm*, *Al Manara*, and *Libya Al Mostakbal* (*World Report*, 2011). In addition, journalists were harassed for expressing criticism and lawsuits were initiated against them for defaming the regime. In February 2010, security officers arrested four journalists from the radio station *Good Evening Benghazi* and authorities banned the program from airing altogether. In November 2010, Internal Security officers arrested 20 journalists from the Libya Press agency for three days and suspended the publication of *Oea* (*World Report*, 2011).

Both during and the after the Arab Spring, freedom of expression has improved in the MENA region. In fact, freedom of expression was one of the weapons and building block of the Arab Spring, when most people refused to stay quiet and expressed their opinions in the form of mass protests. Even after the uprisings, most of the countries that participated in the Arab Spring kept on expressing their views against their governments. For example, since November 2012 tens of thousands of Egyptians have held demonstrations across the country against the decree issued by President Morsi allowing him to take "any decision or measure to protect the revolution," and in support of the draft constitution, stating that the nation would be governed by the principles of Islamic law (Presstv, 2012). The Arab Spring thus became a model for other governments if they wanted to stay in power. For instance, in Algeria protestant churches were ordered by local authorities to "close down throughout the country all the Christian worship places, which are not designated for religious purposes" (Salem, 2011). The order implemented a 2006 law restricting non-Muslim worship which has been irregularly enforced and that led to a series of protests against the government by the Protestants (Salem, 2011). Instead of going the

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way of Syria which is suppressing and killing their citizens, Algeria decided to remain peaceful (Holman, 2011). Algeria's Minister of Interior allowed the Protestant Church of Algeria to be officially registered, instead of being harassed and discriminated against solely because of religious beliefs (Holman, 2011). The Arab Spring thus helped people in North Africa to express themselves freely and made governments accountable. It taught governments around the world a lesson about their code of conduct towards their citizens. In that sense, we can say that the Arab spring includes some success stories behind it in terms of ending dictatorship, giving opportunities to people to participate in politics, and expanding freedom of expression.

Chapter 4

Negative impact of the Arab Spring

Considering an average of the short-run positive and negative impact of the Arab Spring, it is clear that the latter outweighs the few positive impact we have discussed in the previous chapter. In a broad-spectrum, the negative aspects of the Arab Spring are as follows: division of people based on religion and sects (which are very difficult to settle); civil wars in countries like Libya (with no direction and solution in the near future); and political as well as economic instability (Badicala, 2013). Before I consider them in turn, it is important to mention the independent variable that led to such occurrences, namely, the international factor. The MENA region being one of the significant of the world, it has seen direct as well as covert foreign interferences by powerful economic interests for decades (Khalid, 2005). During the Cold War, US foreign policy in the Middle East was basically driven by three objectives: to contain the USSR, to secure petroleum supplies and to ensure the survival of Israel (Dalacoura, 2010). After 9/11, when Bush placed the democratization of the Middle East as a strategic priority, it was still eclipsed by the three objectives of the Cold War era (Lagon, 2011). Such international factors have also lead to several negative consequences after the Arab Spring, which I will now consider. Further issues such as terrorism in Tunisia, competitive authoritarianism in Egypt and militia lead violence in Libya will be considered at the end of the chapter.

Division of people on religious and sectarian lines

The Arab Spring has boosted sectarianism, which in turn undermines the vision of building peaceful and democratic societies. Way before the Arab Spring boosted sectarianism, international factors (especially foreign intrusions) exploited sectarian issues in the Middle East

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in order to diminish armed resistance towards foreign occupation. As an influential officer from the Bush Administration called Daniel Pipes said in an interview, “I don’t think from the point of view of the coalition it (the intervention into Iraq) is necessarily that bad for our interests... In the first place, there would be fewer attacks on our forces in Iraq as they fight each other” (Becker, 2006). Since the first US war on Iraq in 1991, every US administration – Bush Sr., Clinton and Bush Jr. – has tried to influence and encourage sectarian divisions in order to weaken Iraq (Becker, 2006). For instance, it was Bush Sr. who encouraged the Shiite and Kurdish populations of Iraq to go against the central government of Saddam Hussein (a Sunni) and his Arab Baath Socialist Party in 1991 (Becker, 2006). The rebels were crushed by the central government and this further raised tensions between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam (Becker, 2006). Later, the tensions led to a civil war in Iraq between Shiites and Sunnis and also damaged sectarian relations in other countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other countries with mixed population of Sunnis and Shiites (Becker, 2006).

Due to the Arab Spring, there was a power vacuum in many of the countries that participated in it and sectarianism was used to fulfill political ambitions and agendas (Mikail, 2012). Many of the Arab leaders who feared they might be swept away by the continuous uprisings instrumentalised sectarianism, which acted as a form of life insurance to maintain stability (Mikail, 2012). For instance, when there was an uprising in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, the ruler adopted a public diplomacy strategy and portrayed it as a struggle against Shia-led incitement (Mikail, 2012). Though sectarianism was taken up to curtail protests by the rulers, it has actually led to divisions between people of different religious groups and sects. In Egypt and Tunisia, in particular, society is divided into Islamist and secular camps that are clashing over the role of Islam in politics and public life. In Egypt, for the same reasons,

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Mohammed Morsi's government was overthrown within a short time which created clashes between the supporters of the overthrown president (Islamists) and opponents (secularists) (Badicala, 2003). Furthermore, the Islamists party of Egypt designates the Secularists as the "enemy of Egypt", something that emphasizes the level of hatred that has been generated between people of different sects (Badicala, 2003). In addition to political divisions, the Arab Spring can also be held responsible for reinforcing the tensions between Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam in the Middle East (Badicala, 2003). The conflict between the Sunni and Shiite had been on the rise since 2005, after violent clashes between Shiites and Sunni in most parts of Iraq (Mikail, 2012). When people were faced with the uncertainty of political changes due to the Arab Spring, many chose to seek refuge in their religious communities. For example, the protests in Bahrain (a Sunni-ruled state) were held largely by the Shiite majority that was demanding justice in terms of both political and social freedom (Badicala, 2003). Similarly, even though most Sunnis were critical of and unhappy about the regime, they had to side with the government because they were rejected by other religious groups, something that further aggravated the hatred among religious communities. As an illustration, in Syria most members of the Alawite religious minority had to side with the regime and with President Assad (also an Alawite) and ended up creating more resentment from the majority Sunnis (Badicala, 2003). The Arab Spring has thus aggravated an already present phenomenon, sectarianism, for the local actors of the MENA region started viewing each other again through sectarian prism instead of strengthening the internal unity of nation-states.

Armed conflict and Civil war

Armed conflict and civil war became another outcome of the Arab Spring. Unlike most of Communist Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, the Arab regimes did not give up easily to

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mass protests, instead deciding to fight back and thus creating civil war and conflict (Masetti et al, 2013). In Libya, though an Interim Body controls the state, the streets of Tripoli and Benghazi were filled up by militia checkpoints which were guarded by some of the 225,000 registered militiamen who were loyal to their commanders rather than their state (Cockburn, 2014). The militias include guerrillas, Islamist and those who fought against Gaddafi but later refused to put down their weapons when the Libyan Civil War ended in October 2011(Kirkpatrick, 2011). Instead, they continued their role and called themselves “guardians of the revolution” (Kirkpatrick, 2011). When there was a demonstration against the Misrata militia on 15 November, 2013, demanding that they go home, the demonstrators were faced with open fire by the militia, which killed 43 protestors and wounded 400 others (Cockburn, 2014). This event has instigated more protests in Libya. Furthermore, the militias have closed Libya’s oil ports to exports and they kidnapped the prime minister, Ali Zeiden, in the presence of his armed guards (though he was released shortly afterward). This shows how powerful militias have become as they have access to all advanced weapons like anti-aircraft guns and Kalashnikovs (Cockburn, 2014). There are good indications that international forces (especially the US) provided arms and money through Qatar to rebel groups in order to fight against Col. Gaddafi (Risen, Mazzetti and Schmidt, 2012). As a consequence of this, the arms and money went to Islamist militant groups which were “more antidemocratic, more hard-line, and closer to an extreme version of Islam” than to rebel alliance said the former Defense Department Official (Risen, Mazzetti and Schmidt, 2012).

A similar situation can be seen in the rest of the Middle East. The uprising in Syria - a multi-religious society - is now a long drawn civil war with no solution in sight. The security forces of Assad are killing thousands of people, whereas the regime is using a narrative that the

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protests were led by armed criminal gangs who are trying to stir up the sectarianism (Philips, n.d.). Yet some argue that in Syria too, it was international forces such as Qatar and the US which were arming the rebels (Risen, Mazzetti and Schmidt, 2012).

Regional political instability

It has become clear that the Arab Spring has generated deep political instability, unleashing most of the political, social and religious divisions which were kept under the carpet by the former regimes (Masetti et al, 2013). International factors aiding militias in terms of arms and money and exploiting sectarianism have also led to such political instability in the region. After the fall of the Tunisian, Libyan and Egyptian regimes, these countries are experiencing a power vacuum and one reason for this is the control of media practices by previous regimes, as well as the lack of political education in the past which did not allow the emergence of new leaders (Badicala, 2003). Almost four years have gone by since the Arab Spring started, yet the drafting of constitutions still remains a pending issue. The political transition in North Africa and the Middle East is not yet completed as the old constitutions (which were adapted to the needs of the former authoritarian governments) have not been replaced (Masetti et al, 2013). For instance, in Egypt, the first democratically elected parliament was dissolved in 2012 with the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate Mohammed Morsi through mass anti-government protests and military coups (Manfreda, 2013). As of now, the military has installed an interim body headed by Adly Mansour and a constitutional referendum was held on 14 and 15 January, 2014 (Caristrom, 2014). According to Human Rights Watch, 11 people were killed in the clashes between Muslim Brotherhood supporters and the security forces on 14 January 2014, mainly because of the exclusion of Muslim Brotherhood from supervising polling stations (Omar, 2014). In this situation of power vacuum, there is a political tug-of-war happening between military,

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judiciary and many political parties competing for power. In addition, according to official results, the voter turnout during the latest referendum was higher (38.9%) than the constitutional referendum of 2012 (32.9%), which indicates that the hopes of people for getting a fixed constitution are wearing thin (Reuters, 2014). Similarly, in Tunisia presidential and parliamentary elections still have not taken place because there is less consensus between parties, which delays the approval of electoral laws (Reuters, 2014). In addition, political killings have started taking place in Tunisia which was something that never happened during the former regime and as of now, the parties have finally agreed to bring in a caretaker government which will run the country until the elections (Reuters, 2014). The political situation is even more unstable in Libya. After NATO airstrikes overthrew the old regime, the rebels were too weak to fill up the vacuum left by the fall of the old regime (Cockburn, 2014). Thus, as of now, Libya is a failed state with no proper government and rules. The 2012 parliamentary election - the first election in Libya in 40 years - was won by a secular party, but the state is still weak as large parts of Libya are still controlled by militias (Manfreda, 2013). The clashes between rival militias are making the political situation of Libya even more unstable. The militias are insisting on officially banning anyone who worked for Gaddafi in the past, no matter if they ended their involvement thirty years ago (Cockburn, 2014). The fact that all three countries - Tunisia, Libya and Egypt - are still in rough and bloody transitional processes after four years, suggests that the Arab Spring has failed in the short run to transform those countries into free and democratic states.

Economic instability

The Arab Spring has had a significant impact on the economic activity of North Africa and the Middle East. In terms of economy, the decrease in export of oil and natural gases to international markets was one reason behind such instability. The Average real GDP growth in

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the region fell from 4.2% in 2010 to 2.2% in 2011, its lowest level in over a decade (Masetti et al, 2013). To make matters worse, the global economy and the Euro Zone crisis hit the region hard as Europe is the region's most important trading partner. The slowdown affected all countries in the MENA region, though its magnitude varied from country to country. Places like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen - which were at the center of the Arab Spring - were the hardest hit. In Libya, for example, oil production has decreased from 1.65m barrels per day in 2010 to only 0.47m barrels on average in 2011, due to the civil war and the international sanctions, thereby causing the economy to crash (Masetti et al, 2013). In Egypt, widespread demonstrations and strikes during the anti-Mubarak protests paralyzed the production process and deterred investments for months. In Tunisia, labor unrest has led to a significant decline in the mining sector (-40% added value), as well as in oil and phosphate production (Masetti et al, 2013).

In addition, one of the most immediate effects of the Arab Spring was a sharp decline in tourism. The number of tourist arrivals in the five main tourist destinations in the region - Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Lebanon - fell from 20 million in the first half of 2010 to 15 million in the first half of 2011 (Masetti et al, 2013). The decline was most severe in Egypt and Tunisia, at about 40% each. Though in 2012 tourist arrivals to the region recovered, they remained far below pre-revolution levels. Given that earnings from tourism account for over 20% of GDP in Lebanon, 12% in Jordan and between 5% and 8% of GDP in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, the decline had a significant effect on economic growth (Masetti et al, 2013). Furthermore, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows have also diminished sharply. Between 2010 and 2011, FDI inflows to the MENA region fell by 46% to US\$11.4 billion, their lowest level since 2004 (Masetti et al, 2013). The regional decline was mainly driven by a sharp

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reduction in FDI inflows to Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon (Masetti et al, 2013). The main reason behind such economic setback in the region was the Arab Spring. The high number of youth unemployment and poor living conditions in most of the Middle East countries was one of the key factors that led to the Arab Spring, but the focus was shifted to the civil war and the division of power between the stake holders. Therefore, conditions became worse and the debate on economic reforms in terms of creation of employment opportunities has taken the back seat. Meanwhile, ongoing political instability deters investors and scares foreign tourists. Removing corrupt dictators was a positive step, but ordinary people remain a long time away from seeing real improvements in their economic conditions and employment opportunities.

Further problems: Terrorism in Tunisia, authoritarianism in Egypt and militias in Libya

Though Tunisia seems to be doing better than Libya and Egypt, recently the people of Tunisia have once again organized demonstrations voicing their discontent with the interim body. The demonstrations were solely based on unsatisfactory democratization and slow economic and political progress. This development could in fact become an obstacle as the expectations of the system that will replace Ben Ali are high, and the problems that were present in that society are still very real in the post Ben Ali Tunisian society (Badicala, 2013). According to the country's Constitution, a presidential election had to be held no later than 45-60 days after the inauguration of an interim president. Mebezza was inaugurated on 15 January, and while the presidential and parliamentary elections of Tunisia are expected to be held later in 2014, they still have not happened (Reuters, 2014). Along with political instability, economic downturn and many other issues, Tunisia is also facing problems related to post-the Arab Spring terrorism. On January 10,

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the US State Department declared Ansar al-Sharia (AST) a “foreign terrorist organization” (Aljazeera, 2014). AST is believed to be having ties to al-Qaeda and has been blamed for the September 2012 riot at the US embassy, representing a threat to the US interests in Tunisia and political killings in Tunisia (Aljazeera, 2014). This event may call for foreign intervention from the US if the security forces of Tunisia are unable to bring AST under control. Visibly, Tunisia is still struggling to obtain democracy since the ousting of its former leader. People who took part in 2010-2011 uprising feel that they are being cheated and that they are not gaining anything from the post-Ben Ali regime. The inflation rate has risen, assassination of political leaders are taking place (which never happened before in Tunisia), security issues are making its way into normal Tunisians, unemployment still exists and poverty mostly hits people in marginalized regions (Badicala, 2013).

The uprising in Egypt was supposed to bring solutions to many of the problems caused by the uprising in the first place. The cronyism of Mubarak favoring his people and appointing those in higher post of the administration was seen again under Morsi in what has been referred to as the “Brotherhoodization” of the state (*akhwanat al-dawla*), whereby successive ministries and advisory positions were occupied by Brotherhood figures or sympathizers, while dissenters were marginalized. Soon after the appointment of Morsi as president, most Egyptian editors, journalists and media owners left their columns blank or went on collective strike in protest at the increasingly heavy-handed censorship of the press when it came to criticism of the president. The Islamist-dominated Shura Council, tasked with appointments in state-owned media, replaced the editors of all of its publications with Brotherhood or regime sympathizers. By November 2012, the head of the state television resigned over the coverage of anti-Morsi protests, while a

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record number of journalists and writers were facing court cases over criticism of the president in the public sphere (Abou-El-Fadl, 2013).

The absence of vision for economic change and social justice was highlighted by the continued spectacle of ongoing labor strikes and by the attempt to raise taxes in November 2012. Most familiar of all was Morsi's acceptance of another deeply unpopular and sharply conditioned loan from the IMF, which was negotiated behind closed doors and without serious engagement with domestic stakeholders. It was noted that the talks between Morsi and the IMF had proceeded with Morsi holding full legislative powers, after the dissolution of parliament in June 2012.

Thus, both Morsi and Mubarak were trying to monopolize power at the expense of the majority, with Morsi favoring military elites and their new band of bureaucrats and delegates.

Furthermore, few months into the presidency of Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's new constitution granted the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) greater autonomy and a more formal political role than they ever enjoyed under the former president, Hosni Mubarak. Morsi and the Islamist majority in the Constituent Assembly found it convenient to agree to the EAF's terms in order to ensure the forces' neutrality during the country's democratic transition. The Egyptian constitution during Morsi's reign formally required that the Minister of Defense be an EAF officer and that the defense budget no longer be submitted to parliament for approval. Instead, it was approved by the National Defense Council- which was also the only body able to look at what EAF does with US military assistance worth \$1.3 billion annually and at the EAF's formal military economy. The constitution had even reconfirmed the president as head of the council, but more significantly it had assigned eight out of its fifteen seats to EAF officers, granting them a permanent majority. Egypt was still a (competitive) authoritarian regime under its new leader,

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due to its mass expenditure on the fiscal health and strong international (especially US) support in the form of aid (Sayigh, 2012).

After the end of the Libyan Civil War, the interim National Transitional Council (NTC) declared that the country had been liberated in October 2011 and its main responsibilities were to form a new government, prepare for elections and act against former Gaddafi officials (Manfreda, 2013). Elections were indeed held in July 2012 to a General National Congress (GNC), which took power a month later. The NTC was dissolved and in November Ali Zeidan was sworn in as Prime Minister. Zeidan has listed his government's priorities as "security, defense, health, public services, the economy, and starting the process of national reconciliation (Badicala, 2013)" The GNC on the other hand is primarily concerned with organizing a constituent assembly, which will write Libya's new constitution (Manfreda, 2013). And yet, there has been violence involving various militias and the new state security forces. Some of the largest and most well-equipped militias are associated with Islamist groups which are now forming political parties. Before the official end of hostilities between loyalist and opposition forces, there were reports of periodic clashes between rival militias and revenge killings among the militias (Manfreda, 2013). In September 2012, Islamists attacked the United States consulate building in Benghazi, killing the US ambassador and three others (Manfreda, 2013). This event instigated another mass protest against semi-legal militias that were still operating and resulted in the storming of several Islamist militia bases by protesters (Manfreda, 2013). By December 2011, the NTC were also facing protests in Benghazi over the pace of reforms and lack of transparency in the new Libyan government. Protesters were criticizing the NTC and its chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil and demanding that former Gaddafi supporters be excluded from governing posts in the new Libyan state (Manfreda, 2013).

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In conclusion and as a whole, both broad-spectrum and country-wise (Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) analyses show that the Arab Spring has resulted in more negative than positive outcomes. In fact such an impact has been much stronger and is still visible not only in those countries but in the entire Arab region. As Cockburn puts it, “the uprisings of the Arab Spring have so far produced anarchy in Libya, a civil war in Syria, greater autocracy in Bahrain and resumed dictatorial rule in Egypt” (2014).

Conclusion

Mohammad Bouazizi, a young street vendor from Tunisia who immolated himself, could have never foreseen how his personal tragedy motivated thousands of Arabs to seek social change through demonstrations, protests and armed conflicts stretching from Morocco to the Gulf and leading to something that the international body designated as the “Arab Spring” (Mulderig, 2013). It all happened because Bouazizi represented that huge segment of the population in the Arab World who were young, unemployed or underemployed, distressed and angry with their governments for ignoring those problems (Mulderig, 2013). This segment later became the force behind the Arab Spring. Bouazizi did not lead the Arab Spring because he was someone special or prominent, but because his situation was common and his actions resonated throughout the world and more forcefully in the Arab World (Mulderig, 2013). The Arab Spring was not only a political struggle as the West put it, but it was also a cultural and economic struggle (Mulderig, 2013). The situation might have changed later in the process but at the beginning, the vast majority of protestors did not choose to demonstrate because they wanted free and fair elections. It was the poor economic circumstances in which they were living that pushed them to demonstrate. Through the Arab Spring, they wanted to demand the fulfillment of the “social contract” which was made by their autocratic leaders (Mulderig, 2013). One key part of this social contract was that their children be able to grow up fine and contribute productively to their societies, and to start a family on their own (Mulderig, 2013). This social contract seemed broken at that time in the Arab World, where the vast majority of Arab youths were trapped in a stagnant period called “The Waithood” (Mulderig, 2013).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the situation in the Arab world as a whole and certain countries (such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) in particular has worsened in terms of clashes

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between different sects, economic downturn, political instability and armed conflicts, but even more importantly women's rights. A study conducted in Egypt by the *Thomson Reuters Foundation* (TRF) found that Egyptian women were worse off after the Arab Spring in terms of violence, reproductive rights, their role in politics and economy, and treatment by their family and society as a whole (2013). The result of the study pointed out that Egypt is the worst country in the Arab world to be a woman. According to an Egyptian columnist post in the Africa Report,

"As the miserable poll results show, we women need a double revolution, one against the various dictators who have ruined our countries and the other against a toxic mix of culture and religion that ruin our lives as women," (The Africa Report, 2013).

Though women played an integral role during the Arab spring, they have been quickly forgotten and have been subject to violence, genital mutilations, harassment and human trafficking (The Africa Report, 2013). According to Human Rights Watch, ninety one women were either raped or sexually assaulted in public in Tahrir Square in June. Furthermore, a U.N. study in April revealed that 99.3 percent of women and girls in Egypt were subject to sexual harassment (The Africa Report, 2013). Women in the Arab world were already disadvantaged socially, economically and politically and the Arab Spring added conflicts, displacements and instabilities, further limiting women's rights (The Africa Report, 2013). The Africa Report concludes as follows:

"We removed Mubarak from our presidential palace, but we still have to remove the Mubarak who lives in our minds and in our bedrooms," Eltahawy added (The Africa Report, 2013).

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Though Tunisia is ranked as number one in the Arab world in terms of women's rights, there are only 27 seats out of 217 allocated to women in the national parliament. In addition, should the Ennahda Movement come to power after the election scheduled for the end of 2014, they have already suggested that a clause should be added to the draft constitution proposing the description of women as "complementary to men" (Sahin, 2013). An MP from the same party, Souad Abderrahim, also stated that single mothers are a disgrace for the Arab Muslim society and bad examples (Sahin, 2013). Does this mean that if the Ennahda comes to power, they will get rid of all single mothers in Tunisia? And how are they planning to do it? Such questions are being asked by thousands of women in Tunisia and all across the world who fear that women's rights would disappear in the post-Arab Spring Tunisia. On the other hand, if Salafis come into power, the situation for Tunisian women might be even worse. Salafis constitute extremist Islamists who believe that women should wear Hijabs and stay indoors (Sahin, 2013). So either way, it is a loss-loss situation for the women of Tunisia, and the Arab Spring can be partly blamed for it as it was the Arab Spring that brought back all these political parties which had been banned by previous regimes.

Libya is also not doing better in terms of women's rights post-Arab Spring. During the uprisings women participated equally like men: some marched on frontlines with men, some who were positioned inside Gaddafi strongholds and smuggled guns and information, some nursed the injured, several women chose to sew and distribute Libyan flags, and those who were living in diaspora returned to provide technical assistance to the newly formed NTC (National Transitional Council) (Omar, 2011). Despite such contributions, when the NTC was formed, only two seats out of forty were given to women. Later, when quotas for women in the Constituent Assembly were announced, only ten percent (twenty seats out of 200) were allocated

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to women, with 619 nominations for men and only 73 nominations for women (Zobairi, 2013). Similarly, Libyan women are facing social challenges as well. From April 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs has stopped issuing marriage licenses to Libyan women marrying foreigners (Zobairi, 2013). Women's rights in the Arab world as of now go three ways: they are either neglected like in Egypt, are being neglecting like in Libya or will be neglected like in Tunisia. The Arab Spring had a big role in such scenarios.

Although at the moment so many things seem wrong and negative in the Arab world and particularly in those countries which were part of the Arab Spring, I still hope that in the long run these countries will become democratic and that there will be improvement in human rights, especially in women's rights. At the moment, these countries are in a transitional phase (the hardest) and if citizens continue to show such perseverance, democracy might ultimately prevail like in France and Europe. This seems to support the view of Liberalism theory, according to which democracy takes a long time to take root but will eventually prevail because of cooperation in the world and states trying to build a more just world order (Newmann, n.d.). In Europe, the struggle for democracy arguably began with the French Revolution in 1789 (Berman, 2007). That event brought down the authoritarian regime of France like the Arab Spring, and it was seen as the start of a new era (Berman, 2007). It was during the transition period that people learnt that getting rid of authoritarian regimes was one thing and creating a stable democratic state was another (Berman, 2007). Europe, too, had to face many problems during such phase as the MENA is facing now. When the old regime came down in Europe, a new political order was built in 1791 (two years after the revolution, whereas in the MENA region it was initiated few months after the uprisings). A constitutional monarchy was installed in 1791 but it provided limited suffrage, something that caused political riots by reactionaries

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and radicals, with the radicals prevailing. In 1793 King Louis XVI was beheaded and a Republic was announced, which promised universal suffrage and both civil and political rights (Berman, 2007). This, too, did not last long as there soon was another revolution against the new regime, just like the Arabs started demonstrating against the Interim body in Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the NTC in Libya. In 1793 and 1794 came the “Reign of Terror” when 20,000 to 40,000 people were executed for “counter revolutionary” activities (Berman, 2007). As Wordsworth puts it (Berman, 2007);

All perished, all—
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those that bade them fall

A similar situation is taking place in the MENA region, where thousands of lives were lost in protests, armed conflicts and demonstrations. What happened in France was unexpected and in 1799 the country experienced a coup by Napoleon Bonaparte. So France moved from dictatorship to democracy, to wars and conflicts, and then back to dictatorship under Napoleon (Berman, 2007). Similarly, the MENA region has moved from robust authoritarianism, to electoral democracy, to armed conflicts and civil war, and now appears to be returning to autocratic rules. Despite such collapse and chaos in France, one reason behind France’s well known and powerful legacy was the hatred of people against absolute authoritarianism, just like people are protesting against new regimes in the MENA region. Though the French say that France became democracy in the late 1800s, it was not until 1944 that women had right to vote (Berman, 2007). It thus took France nearly two decades to become a democracy.

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So what does the example of France and Europe show? It reveals that democracy was developed in various ways and contexts even in Western Europe, which is now considered as a beacon of democracy. There is no single path towards democracy. Furthermore, it also suggests that democracy did not come easily, peacefully and in a straightforward manner to Europe. As a result, too much should not be expected of the MENA region, which was under autocratic rulers for nearly four decades, during which time the people never got the opportunity to experience self-rule. Time is what the region needs and if we compare the MENA countries to the democratization process of Europe, we can see that they are actually doing better than Europe. Only three years have passed since the Arab Spring, yet constitutions are being formed, referendums are being constructed, elections are taking place and more importantly, women are voting. It might take decades at best and centuries at worst, but there is hope that the MENA region will transform itself into a democracy like Europe has.

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