Arab Spring Uprisings: Revolutionary Patterns and Theoretical Explanations

Arap Baharı Başkaldırıları: Devrimci Motifler ve Teorik Açıklamalar

Doha Samir Mustafa[1]

Abstract

Literature on authoritarianism and democratization in the Arab world lacks the required political shrewdness to predict and explain the trajectory of current Arab uprisings. In this paper, I briefly highlight theoretical explanations of concurrent Arab uprisings through a literature review on the writings of democratization, authoritarianism in the Middle East and third generation insights on the causes of revolutions. Theoretical explanations are supported with empirical evidences from State Fragility, and Transformation Index on the democracy status of eight Arab countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Yemen, and Algeria. The paper seeks to illustrate differences of revolutionary patterns among those countries, how this can be theoretically explained, and how concurrent upheavals would draw a new political map for the region. Through theoretical discussion to Arab uprisings, and available empirical evidences the paper argues that revolutionary situation is more likely to emerge due to level of elite's solidarity, autonomy of armed forces, national unity and geopolitics of the region compared with other factors like coercion, and economic, and political structure of the state.

Keywords: *Arab Uprisings, Authoritarianism, Elite's solidarity, Autonomy of armed forces, National unity, Geopolitics, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Yemen, Algeria.*

---

[1] Faculty of Economics and Political Science, American University in Cairo.

Özet

Arap dünyası üzerine olan otoriterizm ve demokratikleşme literatürü, Arap ayaklanmalarını tahmin edecek ve açıklayabilecek siyasi akıldan mahrumdur. Bu makalede Ortadoğu demokratikleşmesi ve otoriterizmi üzerine yazılanlar üzerinden bir literatür kritiği yaparak ve üçüncü kuşağın devrimlerin sebepleri üzerine görüşleri üzerinden Arap ayaklanmalarının teorik izahatını yapacağım. Teorik tezler State Fragility ve Transformation Index'den 8 Arap ülkesi (Mısır, Tunus, Suriye, Bahreyn, Ürdün, Libya, Yemen, Cezayir) için alınan ampirik bulgulardan desteklenmektedir. Bu makale söz konusu ülkelerdeki devrim modellerinin farklarını, bunun nasıl teorik bir dil ile açıklanabileceğini ve bu eş zamanlı büyük değişimlerin bölgede nasıl bir yeni siyasi harita çizebileceğini anlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Arap ayaklanmaları üzerine teorik tartışmalar ve mevcut ampirik bulgular üzerinden bu makalede devrimlerin cebir, ekonomik zorluklar ve devletin siyasi yapısından ziyade seçkin sınıfın dayanışması, silahlı güçlerin özerkliği, milli birlik ve bölge jeopolitiğine karşın ortaya çıktığı savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Arap ayaklanmaları, Otoriteryanizm, Elit dayanışması, Silahlı güçlerin otonomisi, Ulusal birlik, Jeopolitik, Mısır, Tunus, Suriye, Bahreyn, Ürdün, Libya, Yemen, Cezayir*

Arab Uprisings: an Attempt to New Theoretical Framework

Literature on democratization and authoritarianism in the Arab world remains, for the last two decades, uncertain about the future of the region. Recent popular uprisings in many Arab countries, mainly Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to an extent, increase this level of uncertainly, though open the way for more optimistic expectations. Most studies that address the phenomenon of authoritarianism in the Arab world are skeptical about the possibility of witnessing strong popular uprisings and revolutions. Eva Bellin who refers briefly to the work of Theda Skocpol's on revolution concludes: "successful revolutions are relatively rare event", because of the monopoly of the state over means of coercion (Bellin: 2004). Literature has been characterized by either a pessimistic or skeptical voice for real democratic transition[2]. The nature of current uprisings opens the door for revisiting Arab democratization's literature and theories with more questions about the future and possibilities for consolidated democracy. It should be noticed that none of these scholarly work is seeking for a theory of revolution or radical change in the region. They are more likely focused

---

[2] Many scholars like Posusney, Assef Bayet, and El Mahdi are optimistic about the future of the region on the long run. Posusney, in her article entitled *Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Institutional Engineering and Oppositional Strategies*, gives a strong attention to the role played by agencies, mainly opposition groups, in contested election, and how this can open more political opportunities (Posusney: 2002). She also appreciates the role of moderate Islamists and secular groups in shaping the agenda of the coming stage (Posusney: 2002). Assef Bayet has a faith on how ordinary people or leaderless movements can change politics. He has interesting insights on new forms of political dynamics taken by ordinary people, or he called activism of "non movement". His approach is a more bottom up on (Gause: 2011). Rabab el Mahdi also seems to be optimistic in regard to pressures imposed by new non state actors in Egypt like Kefaya and 6th of April movements (El Madhi: 2009). Larry Diamond also, in his article that has the title of *Why Are There No Arab Democracy*?, concludes authoritarianism is not the only fate of the region; certain elements can lead to change. For him, these elements can be a sharp decline in oil prices, the emergence of a democratic role model in the region, and US pressures for democracy. It should be noted that Diamond like others does not refer to revolutions or popular uprisings. On the other hand, Albrecht, and Schlumberger, in *Waiting for Godot: Regime Change without Democratization in the Middle East*, persuasively draw the main strategies used by incumbent elites to remain in power. These strategies can be summarized as follows: elite change either through rotation or maintenance of the old guard with new faces, Institutional building representing in introducing new rules, procedures and allowing for limited competition, and Changing patterns of cooptation through widening clientelism networks (Albrecht and Schlumberger: 2004). Stephen King, in his article that has the title of *Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, explicitly emphasize the continuity of authoritarianism, with some liberal changes (King: 2007). Ellen lust from the same perspective develops the concept of competitive clientelism to explain how elections are used to distribute resources among supporters and broaden their patronage networks (Lust: 2009). The same stance is emphasized again by Lust in her article with Amany Jamal on regime type and electoral law formation. Both authors conclude that Arab countries witnessed political liberalization but the regime is not yet losing control over the process (Lust, and Jamal: 2002). Lust and Jamal explain how electoral rules are designed differently according to regime type, mainly monarchies and one dominant system, to keep the power of rulers (Lust, and Jamal: 2002). Furthermore, incumbent elites use all different tactics to deal with opposition: physical repression, control over state economy and media, unfair electoral rules, and patronage relations (Lust, and Jamal: 2002, Lust: 2009). Abdullah An Na'im in his analysis for human rights dependency in the Arab world is also realistic in his expectations for the region. He focuses on tactics to make the second half of freedoms' cup more full rather than being dreamer of a full one (An Na'm: 2001).

in analysis, and narrowed to certain variables and not others. Regarding theories of revolution, I shall here refer to the work of Goldstone in *Theories of Revolution: the Third Generation*. But before starting this task two remarks should be taken into consideration:

Firstly, despite diverse commonalities between Arab states' authoritative patterns, it would be difficult to develop one comprehensive theory in explaining current changes. Anderson's article about the state in the ME and North Africa addresses differences between Arab states' history of state formation and how this affects the state capacity and legitimacy in present. Nonetheless, her special focus on institutional and administrative dimensions of state, Anderson did not ignore the role of the military and other political institutions (Anderson: 1987). The work of Anderson on statehood in the Arab world is a way to contextualize current uprising with shared similarities and contextual differences. The same idea is also emphasized by An Na'm in analyzing the context of human rights in the Arab world. He stresses differences between Arab countries in regard to understanding of Islam, culture, ethnic diversity, political, and institutional arrangements (An Na'm: 2001). The Arab Human Development Report also acknowledges differences among Arab countries, though it focuses on common problems that Arab states share in regard to human security and citizenship (AHDR: 2009). Despite these various contexts, scholarly work on the Arab world still able to draw a number of shared explanatory variables. At the side of explaining authoritarianism, the western interest in Arab's oil, and enduring peace with Israel, eliminating Islamic extremism and renaissance, the will and capacity of security apparatus to suppress any potential threats, controlling media, and state's economic resources, minimizing the military autonomy, weak political parties, with lack of organizational strength, and popular base, state's legal and security restrictions over associational life and civic participation, designing electoral and party laws to ensure sustainability of the regime, widening regime's patronage networks (competitive clientelism), and finally working engineered succession are among shared variables to analyze the phenomenon of authoritarianism (Albrecht and Schlumberger: 2004, Carapico: 1998, Anderson: 2001, Lust-Okar and Jamal: 2002, Bellin: 2004, Albrecht and Schlumberger: 2004, Albrecht: 2008, Posusney: 2002, King: 2007).

Secondly, scholars are still unsure if what we witness in many Arab countries is a real revolution or not. Most writings and news papers' releases describe current escalation as popular uprisings. Assef Bayet has another concept to describe the case. He calls new changes in Tunisia and Egypt a *Refolution* rather than a Revolution. By the former he means changes are taken place within the old incumbent institutions, without institutional radical change, and still fears from a counter movement in the horizon (Bayet: 2011)[3]. Bayet's analysis is so valid to the Egyptian case; especially after violent confrontation with the military and protestors, and the go-slow approach, the SCAF is following in responding to protestors' demands and transferring power to civil elected authority.

These remarks are helpful in assessing literature on revolution. Goldston classifies scholarly work on revolution into three generations. The first is from 1900 to 1940 characterized by the lack of solid theoretical explanations and more focus on psychological factors. The second generation, continued from 1940s till the Iranian revolution, dominated mainly by modernization theories. The second generation focused on cognitive psychology and frustration aggression, structural functionalist theory, and equilibrium of the system. The second generation had many limitations including focusing on vague causes that exist in many contexts and not necessarily resulting in a revolutionary outcomes. It also elided a set of important variables that opened the way for new theoretical framework of analysis. The third generation paid attention to those variables: the goals and structure of the state. Different structures, goals, and programs applied by the state affect revolutionary outcomes. The contradiction between state's goals and society would result in a revolution. Eisenstadt asserts that revolution happens in feudal imperial society when the state is not only making use of society resources but also change its value and symbolic system. This can be applied to the Arab countries where incompatibility between regime's interest and people exist. Symbolic and value changes in not only limited to imperial cases as Eisenstadt concluded but also a core dimension of authoritarianism. Apathetic citizens are a reflection for this soft character of despotism[4], and some Arab systems, like Tunisia, managed to impose more liberal policies

---

[3] Another skeptical voice for the democratic future of the region is expressed by David Arson in one of RAND reports entitled "*Is the Arab World Changing for the Better*? Revolutions are usually used to describe qualitative radical change, but these changes would not necessarily produce better results. Revolutions themselves can be a way to establish an authoritative rule, rather than a democratic one. Time, here, is the clue to evaluate Arson's assumption.
[4] Here I am adding my own insights to Eisenstadt' s analysis to relate his contributions to the Arab context.
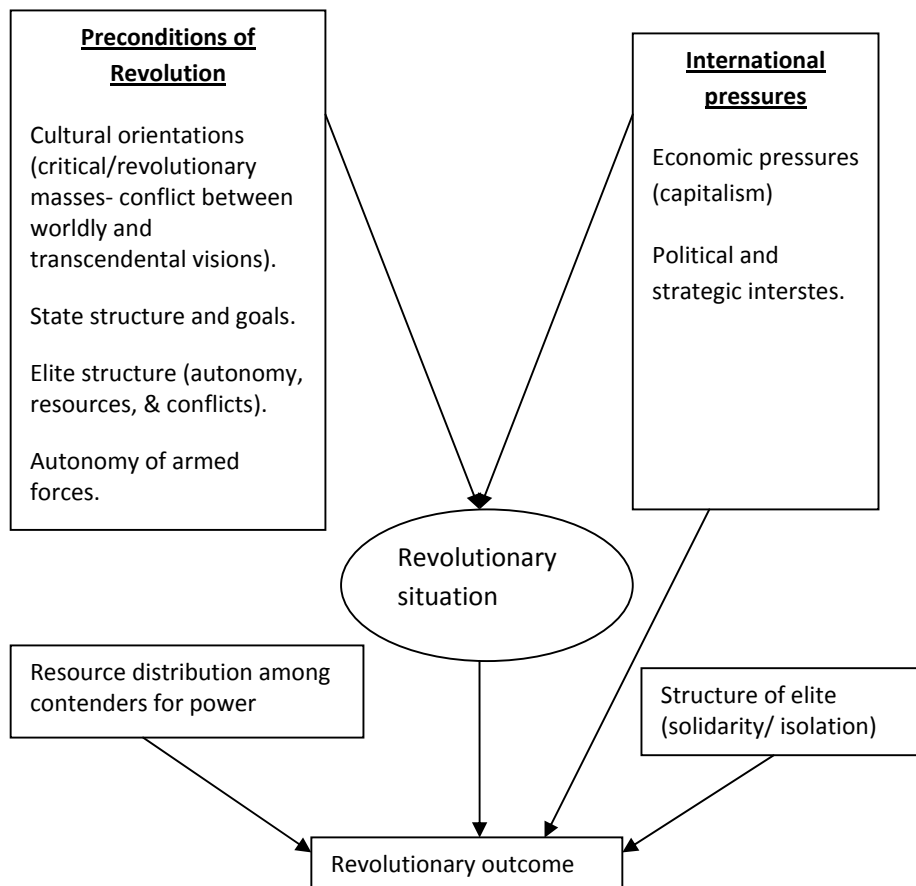
on its people. International political and economic pressures would result in revolution through imposing capitalist systems, and increasing military competition that would put the state in confrontation with the society. The coherence and structure of the military is another crucial variable for revolution. The structure of peasantry and its autonomy would also push for revolution. Finally, elite's behavior would determine revolutionary outcomes. More open revolutionary elite's collation would create more open societies compared with marginalized closed elites that tend to use coercion. I shall here focus deeply on some of the contributions of the third generation and mainly the work of Eric Wolf, and Eisenstadt. Wolf stresses the role of capitalism in provoking revolutionary trends. Eisenstadt on the other hand provides a more comprehensive approach that focuses on the level of centrality of the state, coherence inside the state, fiscal and military international pressures, and cultural orientations. For the cultural orientations part Eisenstadt concludes that certain cultural attitudes should emerge in the society to support political, economic, and cultural transformations. These orientations emerge through tensions between transcendental and worldly belief systems inside the society. One of the main problems of the third generation is its failure in identifying the difference between social transformation and revolution[5] (Goldstone: 1980).

Third generation's main variables found their way in the work of Richard Snyder about transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships. Though Snyder does not consider revolution the only fate of neopatrimonialism, it is still an option among others. Revolutionary outcomes, according to Snyder, depend on a number of variables: Ruler- Military relations refers mainly to the level of armed forces' autonomy and state control over it. Ruler- Elite relations include the level of exclusion of certain elites, and the capacity and organizational strength of opposition. Foreign powers influences on maintaining the regime or toppling it, which mainly depends on finding another acceptable alternative (Snyder: 1992). Based on the contributions of the third generation and the work of Snyder, I shall provide a theoretical approach to understand Arab current popular uprisings. This approach is summarized as follows:

---

[5] This is the same problem which the second remark highlights in the Arab context.

Arab Uprisings: theoretical framework (figure 1)[6]

```
┌─────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────┐
│  Preconditions of       │                    │  International       │
│  Revolution             │                    │  pressures           │
│                         │                    │                     │
│  Cultural orientations  │                    │  Economic pressures  │
│  (critical/revolutionary│                    │  (capitalism)        │
│  masses- conflict between│                   │                     │
│  worldly and            │                    │  Political and       │
│  transcendental visions).│                   │  strategic interstes.│
│                         │                    │                     │
│  State structure and goals.│                 │                     │
│                         │                    │                     │
│  Elite structure (autonomy,│                 │                     │
│  resources, & conflicts).│                   │                     │
│                         │                    │                     │
│  Autonomy of armed      │                    │                     │
│  forces.                │                    │                     │
└─────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────┘
                          ╲                    ╱
                           ╲                  ╱
                         ┌──────────────────────┐
                         │   Revolutionary      │
                         │   situation          │
                         └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐          │        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Resource distribution among│        │        │ Structure of elite       │
│ contenders for power      │        │         │ (solidarity/ isolation)  │
└──────────────────────────┘          │        └─────────────────────────┘
                     ╲                 │        ╱
                      ╲                ▼       ╱
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │   Revolutionary outcome  │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
```

Different Arab Revolutionary Patterns: Preconditions, Obstacles and Prospects

So, how this broad theoretical framework can help in understanding why uprisings erupted in some Arab countries and not in the rest? What are the missing elements? Why only two of them are partially successful, whilst others have been suppressed or still in the start of their revolutionary way? The paper focuses on Tunisia and Egypt as two successful cases, Libya and Syria as models of brutally suppression, Yemen as continuous struggle, Bahrain a case of successful suppression,

---

[6] This is figure is based on the work of Goldeston for Eisenstadt's analysis of revolution with new modifications.

Jordan a peaceful management, and Algeria a model that did not witness any revolts. Due to space limitations, I shall summarize differences among these countries in the following table, reflecting the main elements of the foregoing theoretical framework[7].

Country	Characteristics of uprisings	Available preconditions	Lacked preconditions	Reasons of sustainability	Reasons of breakdown	Obstacles of democracy	Assets
Tunisia	-More rural and workers participation. -From the periphery to urban center. -Spontaneous. -Popular participation. -civil peaceful participation.	-International economic and social pressures. -Incompatibility of state goals and programs with society. -Strong labor unions. -societal homogeneity.	-strong organized opposition. -International and regional support for democratic change. -conflict inside the ex elite. -Control over the military.	- Ex familial and sub elites and party economic and political benefits (quasi mafia).	- Lack of social and political legitimacy of Ben Ali. -Incompatibility of state goals and programs with society. - Neutral role of the military.	-conflicts between religious and secular groups. - The continuity of ex regime elites. - Lack of dominant political force and leadership.	- Efficient institutions. - High percentage of educated people. - Moderate stances of Naha Islamic movement. -Pro democracy young movement.
Egypt	-Organized (influential role for social media). -Cosmopolitan organized middle class, and young people. -civil peaceful participation.	-International economic pressures. -Incompatibility of state goals and programs with society. -Tensions between ex elite and certain figures in the military. - New non state opposition groups. -Conflict over resource distribution between contenders of power. - Frustrated masses.	- International and regional support for democracy. - Lack of coordination among opposition groups.	-State affiliated economic, media, political, and security groups. - Sectarian tensions.	-Military interfere. - International fears from chaos or civil war. - Incompatibility of state goals and programs with society. - Intense use of coercive capacity of the state.	- factionalism among opposition groups. -unclear role of the military in the coming stage. -sectarian tensions. - orrupted institutions, and particularly state coercive bodies. - International and regional pressures against democratic changes. -High level	-newly young political forces. -strong societal movement pushing for reform.

---

[7] Key elements of the Table: Main characteristics of uprisings, available prequalifies that would lead to revolutionary situation or revolution based on figure 2, lacked preconditions for either revolution or a radical change, reasons for the continuity of the regime or retraining its old characteristics as in the Tunisian and Egyptian case, reasons for its break down, obstacles for real democracy, and added asset for more open system.

The content of the table and the following analysis is based on a number of recently short published articles including: Graham Usher "*The Reawakening of Nahda in Tunisia*", Mona El-Ghobashy "*The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution,*" Nir Rosen "*How it Started in Yemen: From Tahrir to Taghyir*", Asef Bayat "*The Paradoxes of Arab Refolutions,*" Ellis Goldberg "*Mubarakism Without Mubarak: Why Egypt's Military Will Not Embrace Democracy,*" Azzedine Layachi "*Algeria's Rebellion by Installments*", Nicholas Pelham "*Jordan's Balancing Act,*" Joshua Stacher "*Egypt Without Mubarak,*" Lisa Anderson "*Demystifying the Arab Revolt: Understanding the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya*", Sheila Carapico "*Yemen's Existential Crisis*".

Country	Characteristics of Uprisings	Available perquisites	Lacked perquisites	Reasons of Sustainability	Reasons of Breakdown	Obstacles of Democracy	Assets
						of poverty and lack of adequate education.	

Country	Characteristics of Uprisings	Available perquisites	Lacked perquisites	Reasons of Sustainability	Reasons of Breakdown	Obstacles of Democracy	Assets
Libya	-Popular participation characterized by tribal affiliations, and military participation. -turned into violent rebellion.	-Tensions between Qadafi and some military fractions	-Existence of opposition. -Existence of political institutions. -Conflict over distribution of resources between contenders of power. -Elite isolation. -Pro democracy movement.	-Qadafi's leadership. -severe violent suppression. -Intertribal divisions.	-NATO military interference. -The collapse of Qadafi regional and international legitimacy.	-lack of institutional arrangements. -skepticisms about the role of NATO in the coming stage. -Lack of strong civil and associational life. -Tribal affiliations as determinant of political power distribution.	-The emergence of new political groups, unions, and youth activism.

Country	Characteristics of Uprisings	Available perquisites	Lacked perquisites	Reasons of sustainability	Reasons of Breakdown	Obstacles of Democracy	Assets
Syria	-Popular participation and periphery cities. -civil peaceful.	-Regional spread phenomenon of popular uprisings. -International political and strategic pressures. -Restricted pro democracy movement.	-Elite solidarity. -strong opposition to state. -lively civil society and media. -conflict over resource distribution between contenders of power. -Autonomy of Armed forces.	-Elite solidarity. -strong control over Armed forces. -legitimacy profile of the system as a resistance revolutionary regime. -social economic policies. -state strict control over media, associational and civil life. -Regional support for the system (mainly Iran).	-International pressures. -strong popular uprisings. -conflict inside the military.	-Abolishing the incumbent restrict control over civil society, political participation, security apparatus. -Creating new strong opposition coalition. -The fears of civil war because of the Alawi minority.	-Opened windows for political activism. -International support for regime change.

Country	Characteristics of Uprisings	Available perquisites	Lacked perquisites	Reasons of sustainability	Reasons of Breakdown	Obstacles of democracy	Assets
Bahrain	-Organized protests. -peaceful.	-Political exclusion for majority rights (Shi'a). -Closed political system (monarchial regime). -Growing oppositional groups. -Regional pressures, mainly from Saudi Arabia.	-national unity. -International political pressures. -Elite conflict. -Autonomy of Armed forces.	-Militant regional interference. -Lack of international and regional support.		-Gulf interference. -International tensions with Iran. -Sectarian tensions.	- An emerging societal revolutionary movement.
Yemen	-Organized popular participation all over the country. - Peaceful.	-Conflict between elite over distribution of power (military fraction vs. Abdullah Saleh). -Revolutionary societal movement. -confrontation with state goals. -International economic and social pressures.	-Strong opposition (many fractions had mutual interest with the regime). -Lack of national unity. -The prevalence of violence, al Qaeda, and separation calls.	--Gulf interference.	-Strong large popular uprisings. -incumbent elite maneuver over Gulf initiatives. -Lack of control over major fractions in the military. -Use of violence against protestors.	-poor political institutions. -lack of popular support to current oppositional coalition. -Regime control over security apparatus. -Gulf fears from strong political change on boarders, and Shi'a political representation. -Southern Calls for separation. -Tribal affiliations that may undermine democratic procedures. -High level of poverty and lack of adequate education.	-Newly emerging political forces, and young Cadres.

Coun try	Characteristics of Uprisings	Available perquisites	Lacked perquisites	Reasons of sustainabi lity	Reasons of breakdown	Obstacles of democracy	Assets
Jorda n	-Motivated by the Islamic movement. -peaceful.	-Revolutionar y masses.	-Conflict over the distribution of resources among contenders of power. -Military autonomy. -International support for democracy. -National unity. -Pro democracy orientations.	-Elite solidarity. -Internation al and regional support for the regime. -Material benefits by Palestinian segments. -lack of national unity.		-Internationals and regional support for the incumbent regime. -The monarchial legitimacy of the regime. -National divisions among Palestinians and Jordanians.	

According to the content of the table, national unity[8], severe coercion, the emergence of revolutionary movement, confrontation with state's goals, economic structure of the state (rentier and non rentier states), autonomy of the military and cracks in incumbent elite's structure explain differences among those countries and why some of them sustained whilst others fall down or in their way.

Egypt and Tunisia shared the emergence of pro democracy movement, social homogeneity, less in the Egyptian case, confrontation with state goals and international economic and political pressures for liberal reforms. The Egyptian case took more time as the ex-elite draw a profile of legitimacy based on 1973 war and political stability supported with US and Israel fears from losing Mubarak alliance. Both cases reflected a will for security apparatus to suppress opposition that ended with delegitimization effects and increasing number of protesters. It accelerated the system decay[9]. The interference of the military has been the major determinate for taking a successful path. In Tunisia, the military enjoys autonomy and remained out of the political scene for decades. The establishment of constitutional committee and electing Al Marzouky as

---

[8] It should be noted that identity conflicts are used for political reasons (According to Arab Human Rights Report: 2009). This became so clear through how Mubark, Qadafi, Abdullah Salih defended themselves by preventing civil war, and preserving stability. Conflict between Shi'a and Sunni Mulslims was used in the Bahraini case to de legitimize demonstrations, and undermine Sunni and Arabs' support for their cause. In Syria the Alawi minority is in charge of most important positions in the state especially the military, thus there are fears from civil war.
[9] The civil and peaceful character of demonstrations made the use of violence costly, and put regimes in embarrassing situations. This also attracted more regional and international support for protesters' cause who asked for freedom and socioeconomic justice.

president, an intellectual and leftist activist, indicate a limited role played by the military in the transitional phase. In the Egyptian case, the military enjoys popular support and has high level of coherence, compared with other state's institution. It was the potential power to run the state. The popular support to the SCAF is fading away, especially after Masbiro' events when the SCAF was involved in killing Christian protestors, and just weeks ago when military solitaries were in charge of killing peaceful protestors and torturing others including women in streets. The military is also accused for virginity tests for female protestors.

Bahrain is the best case to reflect the role of national unity, regional and strategic competition, and economic structure of the state (rentier)[10]. Regional and international interests are also expressed in the Jordanian case, where the international system is not ready to lose another friend after Mubarak, though it would be reductionist to focus only on this factor. The same issue was present in the Egyptian case, but a totally different narrative emerged. The socioeconomic and demographic structure of Jordan is unique, and large majority of population, mainly Palestinians, has mutual interests with the regime. Both cases have monarchial traditions that put restrictions on calls for reform[11], but did not prevent the emergence of revolts. Tunisia, Egypt, Syria have different political structure, but they witnessed strong uprisings. In this sense, the political structure of the regime cannot be a satisfactory variable to understand why revolts emerged in some countries and not in others. Yemen in which there is a parliamentary significant representation for opposition parties like Algeria (using proportional representation system), witnessed revolts whilst the latter not.

Regional and geopolitical dimensions have been significant in the Yemeni case where the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is trying to assure a

---

[10] Bahrain is an example to validate the argument that the more well off the country is, the more democratic it will be. Rentier states are doing well like European countries in terms of per capita income, but the level of human development is worse than that, and resources are unjustly distributed. The problem is not in the availability of resources but rather the economic structure of rentier states and distribution of resources that undermines accountability and strength the central authority of the state (Diamond: 2010). This kind of states is characterized by intrusion and penetration. The rationale here is no representation without taxation, rather than no taxation without representation. The state's authority is not limited to taxation, but rather it is an active economic actor. Penetration is not only through formal institutions but through informal penetrative tools such as marriage, business partnerships, and monopoly over economic activities (Okruhlik: 1999). But unlike Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, Qadafi did not create strong network of patronage. He resorted mainly to physical repression. Oil revenues did not preserve both regimes them from strong popular revolts (Gause: 2011).

[11] According to Ellen Lust, monarchies managed to stay away from the pressures of opposition through parliamentary representation and division among opposition elite's structure (Lust Okar: 2004).

gradual transformation of power, and keep a hand in the coming stage. This regional interference allowed the system to sustain, as Saudi Arabia will not accept a democratic system with shi'e representation on its borders. Divisions inside the military are more crucial in the Yemeni case. It puts pressures on Abd ullah Saleh to not brutally suppress revolts, and it undermines its political legitimacy at the regional and international level.

Syria and Libya are two models to question the theory of Eva Bellin about the role of security apparatus. For Bellin authoritarianism is based on the will and capacity of security apparatus to suppress opposition. In Syria and Libya the will and capacity are so prevalent, but they are stabilizing the regime. Severe violence led to contrary results. In Libya it ended with foreign intervention, and the Syrian case might be in its way. Also, violence resulted in conflicts inside the structure of security apparatus and undermined its coherence. People would successfully topple their regimes if severe suppression is associated with divisions and conflicts inside incumbent elite, and military structure. This is obvious in the Libyan case, but the Syrian regime is still able to maintain strong control over the military.

Algeria has a completely different narrative; no demonstrations and no strong opposition emerged. The history of civil war is still a determinate factor. The military is running the state with civil façade, and any confrontation will be with it[12]; adding to that, the inflexibility and rigid discourse of Islamist forces there.

The foregoing analysis highlights the fallacy of Eric wolf about the role of capitalism in pushing for revolutions, and it undermines the significance of state's economic structure. The Syrian regime has very closed socialist economic system, and grievances in Bahrain and Libya were never economic. Nonetheless, Wolf's analysis would be valid in the other cases like Tunisia and Egypt.

Pro democracy movement is prevalent in all cases except Algeria, and with moderate voice in Jordan and Syria where protesters used to ask for

---

[12] The Algerian system avoids pressures from opposition parties through mechanisms of representation, mainly proportional representation system, and cooption (Lust Okar:2004).

freedom till the system employed harsh coercive measures[13]. New strategies of popular mobilization outside state's control, economic and political structure, and outside traditional opposition's structure existed. Thus there is need for sociological analysis for current uprisings, rather than comparative politics' rigid focus over structures and institutions (Gause: 2011).

To sum up; the solidarity of the elite, national unity, control over armed forces, and geopolitical calculations are key factors to understand and explain differences among these cases. Corruption, coercion, weak opposition are all shared factors and still play a role but not as the preceding ones. The economic and political structures of the state are not determinant factors; uprisings erupted in Bahrain, and Libya as well as Syria, and Egypt despite their political and economic distinctions.

Empirical Indicators: Do They Give an Explanation?

The findings of Transformation Index on democracy status and State Fragility index provide some variables that can be used to understand why some countries are more vulnerable to witness popular uprisings than others. I shall narrow my analysis to Stateness, Political Participation, Rule of Law, Stability of Democratic institutions, and Political and Social Integration indicators of Transformation Index[14]. For the Fragility Index, I select only the fragility of Political Legitimacy, Security Effectiveness, and Security Legitimacy.

---

[13] The empirical study of *Attitudes in the Arab world* by Amaney Jamal, and Mark Tessler indicates that the Arab support for democracy is high or as high as other regions but with a different perception based on gradual reform and assuring stability. It also indicates few differences between secular and religious groups in this regard (Jamal and Tessler: 2008). Differences between Islamist and secular political forces became so acute in Egypt and Tunisia after overthrowing their ex-elites down. Relationship between both groups would determine the coming phase. But it should be noted the conflict between worldly and transcendental was not a major factor in uprisings eruption as Eisenstadt assumed. Uprisings on the contrary reflected unity and understanding among all groups, especially in the Egyptian case. Later one, disputes and disagreements emerged.

[14] Each of the five indicators is divided into sub elements. The structure of Democratic index goes as follows: Stateness: monopoly of the use of force, state identity, no interference of religious dogma, and basic administration. Political participation: free and fair elections, effective power to govern, association and assembly rights, and freedom of expression. Rule of law: separation of power, independent judiciary, prosecution of office abuse, civil rights. Stability of democratic institutions: performance of democratic institutions, commitment to democratic institutions. Political and social integration: party system, interest groups, contest to democratic norm, associational activities. I shall refer only to the overall scale (out of 10) for each of the five indicators and not their sub elements.

Country		Democracy status	Stateness	Political Participation	Rule of Law	Stability of Democratic institutions	Political and Social Integration		Political legitimacy	Security effectiveness	Security legitimacy
Algeria		4.7	7	4.3	4.3	2	4.3		High	High	high
Bahrain		4.42	7.8	2.5	4.5	2	5.3		moderate	No	No
Egypt		4.8	7	3.5	4.3	2	4.3		High	No	high
Jordan		4.2	7	3.8	4	2	4.3		High	No	moderate
Libya	Transformation Index	3.2	7.5	1.5	3	2	2	State Fragility Index	High	No	moderate
Syria		3.23	7	2.3	2.3	2	2.7		High	No	high
Tunisia		3.78	8	2.5	3.8	2	2.7		High	No	moderate
Yemen		4.32	6.3	4.3	4	2	4.7		High	Moderate	high

Source: BTI Transformation Index data set. Retrieved from: http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/ranking/, State Fragility Index. Retrieved from:
http://www.systemicpeace.org/SFImatrix2009c.pdf

The transformation index does not include information about the coherence of military, use of repressive measures, and level of national unity. According to given scores, there are almost no differences among Arab states in terms of stateness, and stability of democratic institutions. Libya has the lowest scores among all of them, closer to Syria and Tunisia. Libya and Syria which share similar scores are the main two models to employ severe violence; even compared to Bahrain. Both countries have high level of security effectiveness according to the Fragility index. Based on these findings, we can understand why such closed autocratic systems with strong security apparatus tended to use severe violence; however we still cannot make a theoretical statement from that. Tunisia is not that much far from Syria in terms of political and social integration, and level of political participation. The only difference is in terms of the legitimacy of security forces. Geopolitical situation gives the Syrian security apparatus more legitimacy. This legitimacy may explain why Syrians were hesitant at early protest days to directly ask for toppling the regime, but it cannot explain to us why political reactions were different in both cases. In the Tunisian and Syrian case the autonomy of the military is decisive factor that is empirically absent.

Furthermore, Algeria and Egypt have very close scores according to the Transformation Index; Algeria only has higher level of political participation than Egypt. This higher level has been used as a way to divide opposition and avoid public mobilization against the regime. Both countries have fragile political, and security legitimacy. Algeria has a fragile security apparatus compared with Egypt that is empirically supposed to have a strong one. Based on these empirical evidences, Algeria would have an equal opportunity to witness popular uprisings like Egypt, though this did not happen. The history of two countries is a determinant factor to understand why Egyptians stepped their president down, whilst Algerians are still afraid to strike in streets. History can only be understood in a narrative, and impossible to be empirically grasped. Also, the role of the military, and coherence of opposition are key elements. In the Algerian case, any revolutionary actions would be against the military itself which is actually running the state.

Findings of the Fragility Index about Bahrain are significant. Bahrain has better scores compared with all other countries. But the legitimacy of the state and its effective security apparatus were not determinant factors to suppress demonstrations, the level of national unity and regional competition between Iran and Gulf countries were more significant. The same rationale can be applied to Jordan. Yemen has a high level of state fragility; nonetheless the system is not falling down yet. Regional interests and coherence of Yemeni armed forces are not empirically tested.

Therefore, a narrowed quantitative reading to data set would not lead to sufficient explanations for Arab Spring Uprisings. Geopolitical conditions, coherence of opposition, autonomy of the military[15], and solidarity of ruling elites are all significant elements that are not empirically tested. This should not undermine the significance of empirical analysis, but current uprisings proved others variables should be systematically searched.

---

[15] Richard Snyder illustrates the significant role of the military in determining revolutionary or non revolutionary outcomes. He also emphasizes that more systematic data on the autonomy of the military, and factionalism in its structure are required (Snyder: 1992).

Conclusion

Throughout this analysis, the question that remains unanswered is would current uprisings lead to democracy or just reproducing new democratic façade? Actually, the future of Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Libya is still unclear. Bahrain and Jordan succeeded in suppressing uprisings, but no one can be sure about the future, especially in Bahrain where there is still active opposition. Current uprisings sent an alert to most Arab rulers to adopt new policies including relative openness, co-opting opposition, economic development, and suppressing military autonomy.

The prospect of Egypt depends on the role of the military in the coming stage, restraining sectarian tensions, and reforming state institutions. Egypt still has lively social activism, but large segments of the society are unwilling to go for any sort of confrontation with the military and restore the status of insecurity when Mubarak stepped down. The military is controlling governmental media channels, marketing a discourse against protestors and advocating SCAF decisions. It would take time from Egyptians to neutralize the role of the military in politics and minimize the space it occupies in the public sphere. This would not be an easy task; the military controls important industries, and provide social services as well. The military recruits thousands of personnel every year, and provides them with prospect for social mobility. Strong relations with US administration also put the SCAF in the position of serving and guarding western interests in Egypt. The coming stage in the Egyptian struggle for democracy depends on the persistence of protestors, political arrangements between the SCAF and other political forces, especially Islamists, to get the military out of the political scene. Those arrangements are expected to assure special political status for the military which would undermine the prospect of democracy in the country. Islamists, who are controlling half of military, are also facing the challenge of reshaping their discourse regarding crucial issues like Copts' political rights, shari'a application, relationship with Israel, and institutional tools of controlling morality. The failure or the success of Islamists and their relationship with the military would be role model for other neighboring countries. The Egyptian political scene is so complex, and political arrangements after parliamentary elections would answer a lot of questions regarding the country's political trajectory.

Tunisia's prospect depends on developing an understanding between secular and religious groups, and putting more pressures for reform[16]. Tunisia has more promising future for democracy given the neutral role of the military, open minded discourse for Al Nahda Islamic party, and strong secular opposition to monitor Islamism's political actions. Libya, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, has much to do with state's institutions building. Tribal affiliations need to be integrated within the new institutional formula.

Based on literature review to writings about authoritarianism in the Middle East and the Arab World, Gause asserts that literature elides the changing relation between the military institution and ruling parties. Scholars assume that militaries are identical to their government; thus, they underestimated their political role, or kept it unsystematically searched. Also, comparative politics relies heavily on empirical analysis where geopolitical conditions, coherence of opposition, autonomy of the military, and solidarity of ruling elites are not empirically tested. Based on current revolutionary patterns, Gause develops a preliminarily hypothesis about political reactions of military institution. In his words: "a) militaries whose officer corps share a minority status with the ruling elite will stand by the regimes in times of trouble (Saddam's Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia); b) militaries in uninstitutionalized regimes where personal and family ties determine promotion and leadership of units (Libya, Yemen) will fragment under pressure into loyalist units (headed by relatives of the leader) and those willing to go over to the opposition; and c) highly institutionalized militaries in relatively homogeneous societies are most likely to assume the arbiter role in political crisis, even if they are tied to the regime (Egypt, Tunisia)" (Gause: 2011).

Actually, the future of the democratic map of the region cannot be easily drawn; and the complexity of geopolitics and the multiplicity of intervening variables do not allow scholars to develop solid predictions

---

[16] Bratton and de Walle in their about neopatrimonialism in Africa illustrate that democratic transition depends heavily on the role of political institutions and institutional characters in democratic transformation. The level of political participation and political competition allowed by the old regime shapes the next stage of transition (Bratton: 1994). Snyder also concludes that democracy can take place in neopatrimonialism after an intervening period of institutional authoritarianism (Snyder: 1992). Both Richard Snyder and Jason Browlee illustrate different scenarios for authoritarianism. Scenarios range from hereditary succession by one of the ruling family members or one of the incumbent elite, military coup, civilian rule backed by the military, revolutionary group or the worse is an imposition of a foreign rule (Snyder: 1992, Browlee: 2007). All these scenarios are opened for in-depth analysis according to the context of each state. Not all popular uprisings would necessarily end with democracy.

and generalizations. Nevertheless, we can conclude that the coherence of incumbent elite and its control over military power, strong change in US policies towards the region, real democratic changes in the region's three political pillars, mainly Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt are crucial factors for true democratic transformation.

References

NAIM, Abd Allah Ahmad (2001), Human Rights in the Arab World: A Regional Perspective, *Human Rights Quarterly* (23: 3).

JAMAL, Amany and TESSLER, Mark (2008), Attitudes in the Arab World, *Journal of Democracy* (19:1).

BAYAT, Asef (2011), The Paradoxes of Arab Refo-lutions, *Jadaliyya*, March, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/contributors/7739

LAYACHI, Azzedine (2011), Algeria's Rebellion by Installments, *Middle East Report*, March, http://merip.org/mero/mero031211

LUST-OKAR, Ellen and JAMAL, Amany (2002), Rulers and Ruled: Reassessing the Influence of Regime Type on Electoral Law Formation, *Comparative Political Studies* (35:3).

LUST, Ellen (2009), Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East, *Journal of Democracy* (20: 3).

LUST-OKAR, Ellen (2004), Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition, *Comparative Politics (*36: 2).

GOLDBERG, Ellis (2011), Mubarakism without Mubarak: Why Egypt's Military Will Not Embrace Democracy, *Foreign Affairs*, February.

BELLIN, Eva (2004), The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective, *Comparative Politics* (36:2).

GAUSE, F. Gregory (2011), "The Middle East Academic Community and the "Winter of Arab Discontent": Why Did We Miss It?". (Unpublished article).

USHER, Graham (2011), "The Reawakening of Nahda in Tunisia", Middle East Report, April, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero043011

OKRUHLIK, Gwenn (2004), "Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition: The Political Economy of Oil States", *Comparative Politics* (31:3)

ALBRECHT, Holger and SCHLUMBERGER, Oliver (2004), "Waiting for Godot: Regime Change without Democratization in the Middle East", *International Political Science Review* (25:4).

BROWNLEE, Jason (2007), "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies", *World Politics* (59).

GOLDSTONE, Jack A. (1980), "Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation", *World Politics* (32:3).

STACHER, Joshua (2011), "Egypt without Mubarak", *Middle East Report*, April, http://merip.org/mero/mero040711

KAUSCH, Kristina (2010), "Managed Successions and Stability in the Arab World", *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE),* Madrid Spain, www.fride.org/publication/837/managed-successions-and-stability-in-the-arab-world

DIAMOND, Larry (2010), "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?", *Journal of Democracy* (21:1)

ANDERSON, Lisa (2011), "Demystifying the Arab Revolt: Understanding the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya", *Foreign Affairs*, June.

ANDERSON, Lisa (2001) "Arab Democracy: Dismal Prospects", *World Policy Journal* (18:3).

POSUSNEY, Marsha Pripstein (2004), "Enduring Authoritarianism: Middle East lessons for Comparative Theory", *Comparative Politics* (36:2).

POSUSNEY, Marsha Pripstein (2002), "Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Institutional Engineering and Oppositional Strategies", *Studies in Comparative International Development* (36:4).

BRATTON, Michael and VAN DE WALLE, Nicolas (1994), "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa", *World Politics* (46:4).

EL-GHOBASHY, Mona (2011), "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution", *Middle East Report*, April, http://merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution

MARSHALL, Monty G. and COLE, Bejamin R. (2009), "State Fragility and Matrix 2009", *Center for Systemic Peace*, http://www.systemicpeace.org/SFImatrix2009c.pdf

PELHAM, Nicholas (2011), "Jordan's Balancing Act", *Middle East Report*, February, http://merip.org/mero/mero022211

ROSEN, Nir (2011), "How it Started in Yemen: From Tahrir to Taghyir", *Jadaliyya,* March, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/935/how-it-started-in-yemen_from-tahrir-to-taghyir

EL-MAHDI, Rabab (2009), "Enough! Egypt's Quest for Democracy", *Comparative Political Studies* (42: 3)

SNYDER, Richard (1992), Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships, *Comparative Politics* (24:4).

CARAPICO, Sheila (2011), "Yemen's Existential Crisis", *Middle East Report*, May, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero050311-1

KING, Stephen J. (2007), "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa". *Political Science Quarterly* (122:3)

…….. (2009). The Arab State and Human Security – Performance and Prospects, *Arab Human Development Report Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries*, http://www.arab-hdr.org/contents/index.aspx?rid=5

BTI Transformation Index Data Set, http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/ranking/