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Contemporary Arab Uprisings: Different Processes and Outcomes

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Abstract

Thus far, recent protests in the Arab world have led to different political outcomes including regime change, civil war, and suppression by regime. The present paper explores the reasons behind these different outcomes. The research methodology is a comparative case study approach, and five countries of Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria are examined. The hypothesis is that the different political outcomes of the protests are due to a combination of factors, including the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements, the responses of national militaries, and finally the reaction of international powers. Different configurations of these components in the crisis-stricken countries have led to different political outcomes.

Introduction

On 17 December 2010, a policewoman confiscated the unlicensed vegetable cart of a young street vendor, Mohammad Buazizi, in the small Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid. Humiliated by his abuse and exasperated by his inability to get redress, Buazizi went to a local governmental building, doused himself with gasoline, and set himself on fire. This event was the spark of extensive political protests which finally led to the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia. This occurrence had a deep effect on other Arab societies, so that after some time, Mubarak fell in Egypt as well, and a range of revolts engulfed different countries such as Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Syria. Some protests were also held in other countries such as Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. In terms of the nature and model of the recenhht revolts, a range of views have been put forward; Some observers see them as postmodern revolutions, diffused and leaderless, with no fixed ideology; others view them as the next wave of democratic and liberal revolutions; most commonly, they are described as youth revolutions, since young people played a key role in initiating them; still others argue that they may be Islamist revolutions and will turn the region into a theocracy resembling Iran (Bayat, 2011). In terms of the social

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origins of these developments, some scholars have focused on political factors such as a lack of democracy in previous regimes, while others have highlighted economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and discrimination; some have also attempted to present integrated theoretical frameworks which incorporate a range of different factors in order to explain these developments. A brief overview of the mentioned discussions demonstrates that in most studies, there is an attempt to organize the huge public blast in the Middle East and North Africa as a neat conceptual package (Aronson, 2011) and less comparative studies have been done on the crisis-stricken countries, For example, there has not to date been a comprehensive study on the reasons behind the different political outcomes of the protests in the Arab world. The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt resulted to regime change, while in Bahrain, thus far, the regime has shown considerable resistance, and, finally, in the cases of Libya and Syria the result was civil wars and ultimately the Libyan regime was collapsed while the regime of Syria has continuously resisted. Given the mentioned research gap, the present article attempts to answer the following question: Why have recent protest movements in the Arab world resulted in different political outcomes? This study covers the five countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain. The research methodology is a comparative case study approach. The hypothesis of the paper is that the different political outcomes of the protests are due to a combination of factors, including the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements, the responses of national militaries, and finally the reaction of international powers. Different configurations of these components in the crisis-stricken countries have led to different political outcomes.

Conceptual framework: different outcomes of popular uprisings

One of the most important topics in the field of political science is the formation and outcome of popular uprisings and revolutionary movements. In regard to the underlying causes of popular uprisings and revolutions, different and competing approaches and theories have been put forward over time. One of the most important approaches is undoubtedly Marxism; and the key ideas are best represented in the works of Karl Marx himself. Marx sees revolutions as emerging outclass-divided modes of production, and transforming one mode of production into another through class conflict. Most of other theories can be categorized in three major approaches: aggregate-psychological theories, which attempt to explain uprisings and revolutions in terms of people's psychological motivations for engaging in political violence or joining oppositional movements; systems/value consensus theories, which attempt to explain revolutions as violent responses of ideological movements to severe disequilibrium in social systems; and political-conflict theories, which argue that conflict among governments and various organized groups contending for power must be placed at the center of attention to explain collective violence and revolutions (Skocpol, 1979: 7–9). In regard to the factors determining the outcome of popular uprisings, many scholars have focused on similar factors. Generally speaking, the outcome of popular uprisings and revolutionary movements in authoritarian regimes which resist democratization

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can be categorized into three different types, including regime change, prolonged civil war, and effective suppression by regimes. Needless to say, the success of any popular uprising in regime change will ultimately be dependent on both factors: the size and strength of the uprising itself, and the ability and willingness of the regime and its security forces to suppress the pro-reform movement. This echoes the work of Skocpol on social revolutions. Goldstone, in a more detailed analysis, has argued that for a revolution to succeed, a number of factors have to come together. The government must appear so irremediably unjust or inept that it is widely viewed as a threat to the country's future; elites (especially in the military) must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself. Revolutions rarely triumph because these conditions rarely coincide (Goldstone, 2011). However, different configuration of the above-mentioned factors lead to different results. When people in some regions are loyal to the regime because of ideology or economic, social and sectarian incentives or fear, while other regions become bastions of the rebels powered by strong local popular support, and the military is fragmented by sectarian or regional cleavages so that some parts of the military supports the regime while other parts defect, the result will be armed revolt and civil war. It is noteworthy that non-homogenous countries, in which sectarian and tribal cleavages are more determinant, have been more exposed to civil wars than homogenous countries. It must also be noted that armed revolts typically start with demonstrations and civic unrest that quickly turn into local violence and then full-scale combat (Atkinson *et al.*, 2011). The ultimate outcome of a civil war is dependent on the fraction of population and the military supporting each side and their combat effectiveness. However, where there is a fragile situation in which it is difficult for each part of the conflict to overcome the other, foreign interventions may play a decisive role. The last type of outcome is effective suppression by regimes. This happens when the military is unified and fervently supports the regime and has a high capability in oppressing uprisings. In this situation, foreigners either don't intervene or intervene in favor of the regime. Nevertheless, when the legitimacy of a regime is fragile and a very broad-based section of the population mobilize, it is difficult for the regime to survive in the long run and if protests continue and violence committed by the regime escalates, influential foreign countries and even the military may revise their policies toward the regime. Profound legitimacy crisis seems to be a prerequisite for formation of a broad-based revolutionary movement. However, this needs other factors such as organization and resources. A broad-based movement can affect the military and foreign responses. In many cases, when protests expanded, military as an institution sided with the protestors. Nevertheless, in other cases, it was fragmented or supported the regime. In many cases such as the revolutionary movement in Iran in 1979, when a very broad, multi-class alliance against the state was formed, the foreign responses were more reactive rather than proactive and even the US did not support

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the shah of Iran. However, this type of response does not always happen and it seems that the interests and limitations of influential foreign countries are more determinant. It must also be noted that the foreign policy of democratic states is more influenced by pro-democratic movements than that of authoritarian ones. Moreover, foreigners can provide the necessary resources for opposition groups thereby increasing their ability to form a successful social mobilization. On the other hand, they can both encourage or discourage a regime's military to suppress the opponents and thereby decrease or increase the probability of regime change. However, this factor does not play a determinant role and it has been argued that the nature and structure of the military and its relationship with society are the factors ultimately determining the military response (Lutterbeck, 2011: 18–20). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the political legitimacy of governments, while affecting the level of anti-regime mobilization, is a reason that causes protests to erupt rather than an explanation for protests' political outcomes. Finally, it must be noticed that the role of the above-mentioned factors in determining the outcome of popular uprisings is not always the same.

In this study, the general view of Goldstone is elaborated and applied to investigate why some movements resulted in regime change, while others were suppressed or led to prolonged civil war. The reasons behind the uprisings are also examined. Accordingly, the political legitimacy of the governments, the social mobilization of the opponents, and the reactions of elites, especially armed forces and foreign powers in the mentioned countries, are examined and it is discussed how different configurations of the above mentioned factors led to different political outcomes and which factors played a more significant role in the mentioned countries.

Tunisia: reasons behind protest eruption

The fundamental characteristics of politics in Tunisia under Ben Ali (1987–2011) were the following.

Authoritarianism based on party dictatorship

While most of Arab governments are defined as authoritarian regimes, it must be noted that there are various types of authoritarianism across the Arab world, and according to different factors, such as the level of political competition and the role of military in politics, the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world can be categorized into various types. According to the level of competition, authoritarian regimes have been categorized into two different forms, including competitive and full authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 7) and it has been discussed that although authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa survived the third wave of democracy that took place in the late twentieth century, they did not survive it without undergoing fundamental changes (King, 2009: 1). Accordingly, some scholars argued that a new form of authoritarianism which was more flexible and resilient than ever emerged in the Arab world and even the concept of 'upgrading authoritarianism', which meant that authoritarian regimes exploited elements of openness and contestation to

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reinforce systems of authoritarian rule was introduced (Heydemann, 2007: 1–2). In other categories, authoritarian regimes have been categorized into four main regime types, including military, personalist, single party, and monarchy, as well as a series of mixed types, including military-personal, single-party hybrids, and regimes that blend elements of military, personal, and single-party rule (Brownlee, 2007: 29–30). Blaydes in a detailed analysis argues that four primary types of electoral–institutional arrangements exist across the authoritarian states of the Arab world: (a) hegemonic party regimes with high levels of political contestation such as Egypt under Mubarak and Yemen under Saleh, (b) constitutional monarchies with high levels of contestation such as Jordan and Bahrain, (c) single-party regimes with limited electoral competition, such as Tunisia under Ben Ali and Syria under Hafez and Bashar Assad, and (d) non-constitutional monarchies with low levels of electoral contestation such as Saudi Arabia and Libya under Qadhafi (Blaydes, 2011: 209–32). Turning to Tunisia under Ben Ali, the regime can be categorized among the single-party regimes with limited contestation. In that period, Tunisia continued to be dominated by a president who faced no serious institutional constraint and who directed a ruling party that remained virtually indistinguishable from the organs of the state (Alexander, 2010: 36). Oppressing political dissidents, extensive government control of media, and violation of human rights were the most important political characteristics of the Ben Ali period (Penner Angrist, 2011). Moreover, authoritarian growth during the Ben Ali period was such that some argued that Tunisia was more authoritarian in the first decade of the twenty-first century than it had been thirty years ago (Alexander, 2010: 3).

Widespread corruption

Widespread corruption was undoubtedly the most evident character of the regime. The American ambassador in Tunisia in 2006 reported that more than half of Tunisia's commercial elites were personally related to Ben Ali through his three adult children, seven siblings, and second wife's ten brothers and sisters. This network became known in Tunisia as 'the Family' (Anderson, 2011). Ben Ali's extended family was often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption. Beyond the stories of the First Family's shady dealings, Tunisians reported encountering low-level corruption as well in interactions with the police, customs, and a variety of government ministries (wikileaks, 2010).

From the socio-economic perspective, tremendous progress has been made in Tunisia after independence. Ninety-five percent of the population has access to potable water and electricity. Enrolment in primary schools is very close to 100%, which shows an advanced educational system. Moreover, in 2000, the World Bank declared that Tunisia had sustained the best economic performance in the Middle East and North Africa region since the late 1980s (Alexander, 2010: 85). Under Ben Ali, the regime had privatized state enterprises, encouraged foreign investment, created incentives to kick-start the private sector, and cut subsidies and state expenditures that previously consumed government budgets (Gause, 2011). Although the above-mentioned reforms

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may reveal a great picture, a more accurate examination suggests that these measures exacerbated inequalities and made life more difficult for the poor. In fact, due to the absence of a system of checks and balances, economic reforms had gone to an elite few and ordinary citizens gained nothing (Dadush *et al.*, 2011) The unemployment rate, which continued to hover stubbornly around 14%, was another challenge to the country. Although great investments were made in education, it could not provide a sufficient number of young people with the specific technical skills needed by employers in a rapidly changing economy (Alexander, 2010: 86). Educated youth and workers in Tunisia have been carrying out local protests and strikes for years to call attention to high unemployment, low wages, police harassment, and state corruption. Eventually, their protests combined and spread to other demographics (Goldstone, 2011). Generally speaking, authoritarianism and widespread corruption laid the ground for grievances and formation of participation and legitimacy crises. Meanwhile, socio-economic advances were affected by widespread corruption and lack of regulatory mechanisms which exacerbated class division and a resource distribution crisis. Growth in population and unemployment, especially among university graduates, further exacerbated the above-mentioned crises. In fact, the density of crises created explosive conditions in Tunisia and alienated a range of social classes and groups, including workers, students, and the middle and low classes from the regime. In this situation, Mohammad Buazizi's self-immolation acted like a spark and triggered a revolution. The following points are worth considering with regard to the model of Tunisian revolt: (1) The demonstrations spiraled toward the capital from the neglected rural areas, finding common cause with a once powerful but much repressed labor movement. As protests extended, there were no powerful social forces, which could change the social balance, that supported the regime. (2) Political parties did not have dominant roles in the revolution and the protest movements practically had no leaders; even famous parties, such as the Al-Nahda party did not have an influential role in this revolution as they had been severely oppressed during the Ben Ali period (Lynch, 2011a). (3) The youth who were suffering from unemployment, corruption, and despotism, and used new communication technologies had an influential role in managing and guiding the protests and practically triggered the revolution. The joining of opposition parties which occurred later was a result of the youth movement. Meanwhile, the joining of syndicates and workers had a determining role in balancing the power in favor of revolutionaries. (4) Ben Ali mainly relied on police and security forces, and, with the expansion of protests, the military, as an institution, sided with the protesters. Gause has argued that high social homogeneity in Tunisia, which is overwhelmingly Sunni, and also the existence of a professional army were the most important factors explaining the political behavior of the army (Gause, 2011). In Tunisia, the military was not ethnically split as we see in other developing states and in this respect is roughly representative of the population. Also it is comprised of 18% women, a 50/50 balance of officers from the coastal and interior zones, and includes a healthy portion from each social class. The government also did not prevent officers from commanding near

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their hometowns. The military had a hierarchy of command above the battalion level, and military commanders were not subject to surprise rotations (Parsons and Taylor, 2011: 9–12). In sum, the Tunisian military has been a highly institutionalized force. An institutionalized military force is considered to be one which is based on meritocratic principles, is apolitical, free of cronyism and corruption, and broadly committed to serving the national interest. Moreover, the connection between the armed forces and society has been relatively strong, given that the Tunisian army is a conscript force. According to Lutterbeck, the openness of Tunisian armed forces to the pro-democratic movement can be explained by the combination of these factors (Lutterbeck, 2011: 22) It is noteworthy that under president Ben Ali, the military was poorly funded. Tunisia's annual budget for military procurement in 2010 was about $70 million, the lowest in the Arab world. The military was politically weak, not considered a path of social mobility, possessed little autonomy, and was weaker than the Ministry of Interior. These factors, which meant that the military had high interests in overturning the status quo, also affected the Tunisian military's 'ambitious support' for the protesters (Parsons and Tailor, 2011: 9–12)

Turning to the factors determining the outcome of a popular uprising, it can be said that the Ben Ali regime lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces such as workers, students, villagers, and middle and low classes in major cities, who actually constituted the whole nation of Tunisia, were against the regime and no significant social force supported it. Accordingly, the size and strength of the uprising was massive. Meanwhile the responses of the national military and influential foreign countries to the uprising should be examined. The Tunisian army, which was a highly institutionalized military force with a relatively strong connection with the Tunisian society, was unwilling to defend the regime and fervently supported the protestors. This factor played a determinant role in the early success of the uprising. Had the military supported the regime or been fragmented, the outcome might have been entirely different. Finally, although some countries such as France supported Ben Ali until the last minute, in general foreigners did not play a vital and determinant role in preventing the revolution and they generally accepted the transformations – it is worth mentioning that Tunisia did not have much strategic importance for the west compared with countries such as Egypt and Bahrain and it was far away from the central interests of America and Britain in the Arab world. Considering the combination of the above-mentioned factors, which meant that the strength and size of the uprising was massive and the military response and foreign reaction were generally supportive, early fall of the Ben Ali regime is explained.

Egypt: reasons behind protest eruption

There are considerable similarities between the reasons behind the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia; most importantly, the political regimes in both countries before the revolutions were sultanistic regimes (Goldstone, 2011). A sultanistic regime is one in which the ruler personalizes the government and the regime, and in an

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uninstitutionalized but erratically pervasive way, penetrates the state, political society, and civil society (Linz and Stephan, 1996: 70). In general, the most evident characteristics of Mubarak's regime which created profound crises in Egypt were as follows:

Regime exhaustion

Three decades of Mubarak's rule caused many people to consider him responsible for their problems and sufferings. Eighty-two year old Mubarak spent most of his time in Sharm Al-Sheikh, which was away from polluted, crowded and arguably dangerous Cairo; he was a symbol of aging and exhaustion and most people considered him inefficient and energyless for solving their problems (Osman, 2010: 186–7).

Personalized power

Personalized power was another character of the regime which became more evident over time so that gradually all power was concentrated in Mubarak's hand and political institutions had no power. By the 2000s, the institution of the presidency, had long ceased to be (as under Naser and Sadat) a vibrant nerve centre of governance, full of notable advisor's and intellectuals, with links to most of the country's think thanks, and acting as a laboratory of ideas; instead it became a mere administrative structure around the president. That dilution could have been welcomed had it been combined with a strengthening of democratically elected institutions and a new balance between presidency and government. What happened in Egypt instead was that the parliament (undemocratic), the government, and the presidency had become varied representations of the president's will – executive bodies, rather than the pillars of a balanced political system (Ibid: 187–8).

Sham democracy and political suppression

The façade of elections, a multiparty political environment and the existence of upper and lower houses of parliament allowed the regime to claim progress and some political development, and to diffuse some of the masses' anger. However, the competitive nature of electoral competition in Egypt was only a strategy of regime maintenance (Blaydes, 2011: 226) and authoritarianism continued so that the Mubarak's regime strongly suppressed any potential challenge. According to Levitsky and Way, Egypt under Mubarak was a hegemonic regime. In these regimes, elections are so marred by repression, candidate restrictions, and/or fraud that there is no uncertainty about their outcome. Much of the opposition is forced underground and leading critics are often imprisoned or exiled and elections serve functions (e.g., a means of enhancing regime legitimacy, generating information, or distributing patronage) other than determining who governs (Levitsky and Way, 2010 : 7).

Widespread corruption

Undoubtedly, the most evident factor which had an effective role in the formation of recent protests was widespread corruption within Mubarak and their related elites.

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Mubarak and his family reportedly built up a fortune of between $40 billion and $70 billion, and 39 officials and businessmen close to Mubarak's son Gamal are alleged to have made fortunes averaging more than $1 billion each (Goldstone, 2011).

From the socio-economic perspective, the institutionalization of corruption, the frightening increase in the rate and change in type of crime, a rooted disregard for human dignity, and the descent of society's values and behaviors in Egypt in recent years should be emphasized. Meanwhile, the fast growth of population was undoubtedly the most evident demographic development which created massive unemployment among the youth, especially university graduates who due to poor education, did not obtain the knowledge and expertise required to secure jobs in private sectors (Osman, 2010: 196–9). It is noteworthy that the educated youth and workers had caused strikes and demonstrations in previous years as well. As in Tunisia, Mubarak's regime made some economic reforms such as privatization, trade liberalization, and encouragement of foreign investment, but these reforms were not effective due to the absence of a system of checks and balances, and their benefits had gone to an elite few and had not been seen by average people (Dadush *et al.*, 2011). In general, regime exhaustion, personalized power, political suppression, and widespread corruption laid the ground for grievances and formation of participation and legitimacy crises. Moreover, the fast growth of population and massive unemployment especially among university graduates, low salaries, widespread poverty, massive class gap, deep social problems, and government inefficiency in solving objective problems alienated tens of millions of Egyptians, a feeling that was exacerbated by growing conspicuous consumption among a business elite connected to Mubarak's son Gamal (Anderson, 2011). In such a situation, the Tunisian revolt triggered protests in Egypt. There, independent labor and civil society organizations called for demonstrations on 25 January. The demonstrations were unprecedentedly widespread and their range and intensity gradually increased. From 28 January, known as 'Friday of Wrath', the police and security forces gradually lost their control over Cairo and other major cities such as Alexandria and Suez, and the government was forced to bring the army into the cities in order to control the protests. The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Egypt: (1) Urban and cosmopolitan young people in the major cities organized the uprisings. That's why this movement has been called 'youth movement'. However, the protests were widespread and various social classes, including workers, low and middle classes participated in the uprisings. Moreover, Christians were present along with Muslims in Cairo and other cities. (2) As the protests expanded, the police and security forces gradually lost their control over major cities. In practice, the Ministry of Interior made some efforts to mobilize the proponents of Mubarak but these efforts failed. From the political sociology viewpoint, Mubarak's regime could not overcome the crisis by social mobilization; this illustrated the regime's fragile legitimacy, and the comprehensiveness of conflicting social forces. (3) Egyptian protests did not have any leadership and political parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood did not have influential roles in the initial stages of protests and only joined them in the later stages;

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nevertheless, their joining had a noticeable role in the expansion of the protests. (4) The regime mainly relied on police and security forces. However, as the regime found itself backed into a corner, with the police and CFS having a hard time suppressing the teeming masses in Tahrir Square, the military emerged openly on the political scene for the first times in years, declaring that it would guarantee a democratic transition according to the constitutional plan framed by Mubarak. It is noteworthy that contrary to popular perceptions, the military was not on the side of the protestors from the beginning of the revolution (Hashim, 2011:116) and with the expansion of protests, under huge societal pressure, sided with the protesters. Lutterbeck has argued that, as in Tunisia, the existence of an institutionalized army and a strong connection between the military force and society are the most determinant factors explaining the political behavior of the army (Lutterbeck, 2011: 25–6). Accordingly, it is argued that the Egyptian army has a strong corporate identity shaped by battles from as far back as the Battle of Qadesh in 1274 BC to as recent as the war with Israel in 1973 and its involvement in Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Military officers pride themselves on their professionalism, military education, and training. Moreover, Egypt is ethnically homogeneous with over 99% of its inhabitants self-identifying as Egyptian. The country is divided among Sunni Muslims (90%) and Christian Copts (9%), yet these religious differences are not a source of strife within the military. The military's composition is 60–70% conscript and generally representative of the religious and class makeup of the country. Many of the soldiers, therefore, come from the peasantry. As a result, the military has an intimate relationship with the Egyptian people (Parsons and Tailor, 2011:11–12). However, it must be noted that the role of the army in politics and the economy of Egypt has been much greater than in Tunisia. The Egyptian army has been the most important pillar of all Egyptian regimes since the fall of the monarchy in 1952. It has been the recipient of $1.3 billion a year from the United States, three times the entire Tunisian defense budget and it has maintained a parallel economy of vast proportion (Beinin and Vairel, 2011:248). Under Mubarak, it retained a privileged position in relation to other political institutions and social elites, and, based on the relative freedom of action that it enjoyed, there was little dissatisfaction among military leaders. Parsons and Tailor have argued that considering all of the above-mentioned factors which meant that the Egyptian military operated under low restraints and had low interests in overturning the regime, its behavior, which was 'reluctant support of protestors', can be explained (see Parsons and Tailor, 2011: 14–21).

In terms of foreign reactions, the US had contradictory positions with regard to the Egypt crisis. The extraordinary storm of events in Egypt posed sharp challenges to the Barack Obama administration, which faced a delicate balancing act between demonstrating its commitment to a long-standing ally, managing an inevitable transition in order to protect core interests, and acting on its inherent sympathy with the values of peaceful, democratic protesters (Lynch, 2011b). From the very beginning of the protests in Egypt, the US attempted to maintain the Mubarak's regime by encouraging him to undertake reforms; naturally, strategic considerations of the US

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and its long-term good relationship with Egypt had an important role in adopting such a policy. Nevertheless, as the protests expanded, the United State gradually sided with the protesters.

Israel is another regional actor where examination of its stance is important. Egypt under Mubarak, was the most trusted Arab partner of Israel, guaranteeing the security of its southern border. Therefore, Israel was profoundly concerned regarding the transformations in Egypt; however, it did not have enough instruments to influence the developments and to prevent Mubarak's fall. Saudi Arabia and some other conservative Arab regimes supported Mubarak; but these countries also lacked influential power in terms of Egypt's developments. In sum, foreign actors did not play an influential role in preventing the revolution.

Turning to the conceptual framework for examining the factors determining the outcome of a popular uprising, it can be said that the sultanistic regime of Mubarak lacked political legitimacy due to multiple crises; and various social forces such as workers, students, villagers, and middle and low classes in major cities were against the regime and no significant social force supported it. Moreover, Christians alongside Muslims participated in demonstrations. Political elites and opposition parties also quickly joined the uprisings. Accordingly, the size and strength of the uprising was massive. Meanwhile the responses of the national military and influential foreign countries to the uprising should be examined. Generally speaking, the response of the Egyptian military to the uprisings was reluctant support, and the military only under huge societal pressure sided with the protesters. The Egyptian army was a highly institutionalized military force with a relatively strong connection with society and operated under low restraints. These factors lead us to expect that the military fervently supports the popular uprisings. However, it is noteworthy that the role of the army in politics and the economy of Egypt was much greater than in Tunisia, and, in contrast to the Tunisian army, the Egyptian military retained a privileged position in relation to other institutions and there was little dissatisfaction among military leaders. This meant that the Egyptian military had low interests in overturning the regime and this decreased any incentives to support the protestors. Considering the combination of the above-mentioned factors, the response of the Egyptian military to the uprisings can be explained. Finally, as the dimensions of protests expanded, influential foreign countries, especially the United Stated, accepted the transformations and did not support the Mubarak's regime. In sum, the size and strength of the uprisings was massive. This demonstrates the fragile legitimacy of the regime and the ability of opposition groups in social mobilization. Meanwhile, the military response and foreign reaction to the uprising were generally supportive. However, it is noteworthy that these responses were to a large extent affected by the size and strength of the uprisings.

Bahrain: reasons behind protest eruption

Generally speaking, the most important characteristics of Al-Khalifa rule which have led to the people's dissatisfaction are authoritarianism and religious

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discrimination. Blaydes has categorized the regime of Bahrain among constitutional monarchies with high levels of contestation and argues that the regime holds regular parliamentary elections that are relatively free and fair and reflect high degrees of contestation between candidates (Blaydes, 2011: 222). However, there are other important facts that should be considered. Opposition figures complain that the country's parliamentary districts are gerrymandered around ethnic lines to limit the influence of Al-Wifaq and secular Sunni societies. In practice, while Shiites are more than 70% of the population, they can only have 18 representatives out of 40 in the parliament. In fact, The authorities have enjoyed a manufactured pro-government majority in parliament (Gengler, 2011). In practice, the regime of Bahrain is an oligarchy regime in which political power has been concentrated in a family. In this country, political freedom is limited and the cleavage between nation and government is massive. It is noteworthy that the AL-Khalifa regime has not implemented the political reforms promised from 2001. In fact, in such conditions, most field studies have indicated that the majority of people, including Shiites and Sunnis, are asking for the expansion of Parliamentary democracy and political freedom, but the regime did not take significant steps towards actual political reforms during the 1990s and 2000s, and oppressive measures have continued. For example, in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 2010, the regime arrested 23 opposition leaders and hundreds of activists, and charged them with such crimes as terrorism and conspiracy to overthrow the government (Cooley and Nexon :2011; Gengler :2011). Sectarianism and religious discrimination is another evident characteristic of the regime. Most of the people are Shiites, while the ruling family is Sunni. Bahraini Shiites have long sought an end to religious-based discrimination in public-sector employment, particularly their wholesale exclusion from the police, the armed forces, and the power ministries such as defense, interior, and foreign affairs. Shiites (as well as some Sunnis) decry the state's decade-old program of naturalizing Arab and non-Arab Sunnis for work in the security services as tantamount to demographic engineering. Accordingly, Shia demands have always been the main political aspect in Bahrain.

From socio-economic perspectives, unfair distribution of wealth and wide class divisions are the most evident challenges in Bahrain. Wealth has been concentrated in a small group, while half of Bahraini citizens are suffering from poverty and poor living standards. A survey conducted by the Bahrain Monetary Agency found that while the poverty rate is increasing, there are 5,200 wealthy people in Bahrain. The survey showed that the average wealth of each of them reaches US$4.2 millions, which is above the international average of wealthy people of US$3.8 millions (www.bahrainrights.org/node/199). Another economic challenge for Bahrain is unemployment, especially among the Shia youth. The vast majority of Shiites face higher unemployment at a time when non-Bahrainis are given legal residency and employment with good salaries and housing benefits. It is now common for Bahraini Shi'a to see this citizenship program as a means of changing the demographic composition of the population in favor of the ruling elite (Wright, 2008: 9).

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In general, the lack of political reforms and the imposition of discrimination against Shiites, combined with some socio-economic problems, laid the ground for widespread dissatisfaction among Bahraini people, especially the Shiites. The recent protests began on 14 February 2011, when the people were inspired by the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt and gathered at Pearl roundabout in Manama. The following points are worth considering with regard to the uprisings: (1) At first, various communities including Shiite and Sunni Muslims and secular and religious groups demonstrated and the most important demands were to make democratic reforms and remove religious discrimination (Ulrichsen, 2011). Nevertheless, the regime and the Arab media made every effort to portray the uprising as a Shia movement inspired by Iran; these efforts widened the gap between Sunnis and Shiites participating in the uprisings. Moreover, shortly after the onset of protests, the government announced generous social welfare packages, including increased salaries and benefits, cost-of-living stipends, and plans for new subsidized housing which gradually attracted some social groups. As a result of these efforts, some social groups, especially Sunnis, have distanced themselves from the uprising. (2) The Army and security forces have so far backed the regime and there has not been any sign of disobedience in the armed forces (Gause, 2011). For further understanding, the behavior of Bahrain's military, its structure and the relationship between the military establishment and the population should be examined. Bahrain's security establishment, like that of other Gulf monarchies, is not only based on tribal connections but is entirely dominated by the ruling Khalifa family; all of the most important positions within Bahrain's security forces, such as the minister of defense, chief of staff, chief of naval staff, and commander of the air force, are firmly in the hands of relatives of the monarch. Apart from these tribal and family ties, two other distinctive features of Bahrain's security apparatus stand out: the exclusion of the Shia majority population from the country's security establishment, and the heavy reliance on Sunni foreign fighters. Therefore, Bahrain's military and security forces can be described as both patrimonial and largely detached from the local population. A patrimonial military force, contrary to institutionalized military, is one which is closely tied to the regime either through family, tribal, or ideological ties or other forms of politicization, and is characterized by a high degree of favoritism and corruption (Lutterbeck, 2011: 41–2).

As far as the foreign relations of Bahrain are concerned, special relationships with Saudi Arabia and the US should be considered. The Al-Khalifa family is originally from the tribes living in the land of Najd, in Saudi Arabia, and the family relationship between Al-Saud and Al-Khalifa has developed ties between the two countries. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Sunni Islam and is profoundly concerned about the expansion of Shiites power in the Middle East. Therefore, the prospect that the Sunni monarch might be overthrown by or cede significant power to his nation's long-oppressed Shia majority triggers the worst of Saudi fears (Lynch, 2011b). Riyadh also is deeply concerned about the expansion of Iran's influence in the Middle East which could be realized by Bahrain's Shiite majority population taking power. Shia success in Bahrain might also inspire the

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Saudi Shia minority, who are living under oppression and discrimination. Moreover, the prospect of a democratic Bahrain in its neighborhood would be unbearable for the patrimonial regime of Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, regime maintenance in Bahrain has been the strategic priority for Saudi Arabia so that it has intervened under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council to quash the demonstrations. It must also be noted that Bahrain has strategic importance for the United States. 'The US Navy's Fifth Fleet has its headquarters in Juffair, a suburb of Bahrain's capital. The Fifth Fleet patrols the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the western part of the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf, ensuring that sea-lanes remain open, protecting the flow of oil, conducting anti-piracy operations, and acting as a check against Iran's regional influence. Bahrain also hosts the United States' Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and offers US forces the Isa Air Base and space at Bahrain International Airport' (Cooley and Nexon, 2011). Moreover, the United States has had serious doubts with regard to the political outcomes of the fall of the regime considering the spiritual influence of Iran among Bahrain Shiites. Accordingly, the United States stands mostly silent as Saudi troops put down popular protests against the ruling al-Khalifa family (Cooley and Nexon, 2011). In fact, the policy makers of the United States have once more opted for strategic interests rather than democratic values. Meanwhile, Iran has spiritually supported the protests in Bahrain; nevertheless, it has not taken any significant measures to change the situation in favor of the protestors.

Turning to factors determining the outcome of the popular uprising, it can be said that although the regime of Bahrain has faced a legitimacy crisis, due to the lack of political reforms, the imposition of discrimination against Shiites, and the socio-economic problems which have alienated various communities including Shiite and Sunni Muslims and secular and religious groups leading them to unite in the protests in the early days, the government has framed the protests as a Sectarian movement inspired by Iran. Moreover, the regime has won the support of some social groups through generous social welfare packages. As a result of these efforts, some groups, especially some Sunnis have distanced themselves from the uprising. In this situation, the responses of the military and influential foreign countries to the uprising seem more decisive. The Bahrain's military have fervently supported the regime. It is noteworthy that the military is entirely dominated by the ruling family. The exclusion of the Shia majority population from the military, and the heavy reliance on Sunni foreign fighters are other factors leading it to support the regime. Finally, the effective intervention of Saudi Arabia in favor of the regime with the implied approval of the United States alongside that Iran, as an influential regional actor, has not taken any significant measures to support the protestors, have meant that international factors have been generally in favor of the regime. In sum, although the regime has won the support of some social groups by various policies thereby decreasing the strength and size of the uprisings, the factors which have been most decisive in ensuring the survival of the regime have been the responses of the military and influential foreign countries to the uprisings.

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Libya: reasons behind protest eruption

The most evident characteristics of the Qadhafi's regime which have led to the people's dissatisfaction are the following.

Reliance on tribal and kinship networks and lack of modern institutions

One notable scholar has described Libya as a hodge-podge of different tribes, languages, clans, regions, and cities. Libya has roughly 140 tribes and influential families who are loosely connected by the arbitrary boundaries drawn by Western powers (Parsons and Tailor, 2011: 22). The Gaddafi regime was also based on these complex relationships and increasingly used tribal divisions and loyalties as instruments of power. Qadhafi centralized power in the informal networks surrounding his extended family and tribe and constantly rearranged the confusing patchwork of institutions with nuclear and overlapping remits. The regular army, like other institutions, was purposely kept weak to minimize the possibility of a Coup d'etat, and an elaborate system was established in which numerous security agencies, paramilitary and special forces watched over each other. This structure was headed by close relatives of Qadhafi, and personnel were recruited primarily from Qadhafi's tribe (the Qadhadfa) as well as two allied tribes, the Warfalla and Magarha (Lacher, 2011: 142). The importance of tribal loyalties along with the weakness of state institutions in Libya under Qadhafi had important consequences on the process and outcome of the uprising. Anderson argued that:

> Whereas demonstrators in Tunis and Cairo successfully ousted their former rulers, Tripoli collapsed into a protracted civil war. Its sustained fighting resulted from Qaddafi's four-decade-long effort to consolidate his power and rule by patronage to kin and clan. Years of artificially induced scarcity in everything from simple consumer goods to basic medical care generated widespread corruption and the capricious cruelty of Qaddafi's regime produced widespread and deep-seated suspicion. Libyans' trust in their government, and in one another, eroded, and they took refuge in the solace of tribe and family. Libyan society was fractured, and every national institution, including the military, was divided by the cleavages of kinship and region. (Anderson, 2011)

Authoritarianism and political suppression

Qaddafi argued that Libya was the only democracy in the world, and other political systems were dictatorship. But in reality, authoritarianism lasted for more than four decades. It is noteworthy that the type of authoritarianism in Libya was unique in the Arab world. Under Qadhafi, there was no political parties, parliament and other modern institutions and a military personal regime governed more than four decades. Under Qaddafi, any opposition was suppressed ruthlessly. Widespread corruption was another evident character of Qaddafi's regime so that, according to the corruption perceptions index 2010, the level of corruption in Libya was more than that of all countries examined

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in this paper (www.transparency.org/policy-research/surveys-indices/2010). However, it is noteworthy that Libya's small population and enormous oil revenues caused this country to be much better off than countries like Egypt, Yemen, and Syria in terms of economic welfare. Libya was among the wealthiest countries in the Arab world and had one of the highest annual revenues in Africa. However, these facts did not mean that there was not any economic problems. In fact, the high unemployment rate and unfair distribution of wealth were the most evident economic crises in Libya. According to some estimates, the unemployment rate was about 21% in 2009 (http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJOE52106820090302). The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Libya: (1) Protests started from the eastern parts of the country and became out of the control very fast. However, there was considerable resistance in the western parts of the country on the part of Qaddafi and his proponents. Had NATO not intervened, the revolutionaries probably would never have succeeded in conquering the whole country. It is worth mentioning that the three tribes which formed the backbone of the regime were located in the western and central part of the country while the regime lacked a base of social support in the eastern part of Libya. It must be noted that the northern elites had held much more influence during the Sanusi monarchy and were particularly severely persecuted by Qadhafi. Accordingly while the eastern parts were liberated very fast, the proponents of Qadhafi even after the fall of Tripoli, made their last stand in the stronghold of the Warfalla (Bani Walid), Magarha (Fezzan), and Qadhadfa (Sirte) (Lacher, 2011: 145). It is noteworthy that the existence of a long-standing historical gap between the eastern and western parts of Libya is one of the main concerns of revolutionary groups in post Qadhafi period. (2) The model of protests rapidly transformed to civil war in which the interests of prominent families, as well as tribes and local identities played a key role on both sides of the conflict. In many cases, the defections of senior officers and politicians in the first weeks of the uprising reflected their tribes' decision to turn against Qadhafi. The first to do so were the tribes of the northeast, where regime repression started (Lacher, 2011: 144). Heavy weapons used by the both parties of the conflict, and conquering cities after NATO's severe bombarding and bloody conflicts, were other characteristics of the Libyan revolt. (3) The Libyan military response to the uprisings was unlike that of Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain. In fact, while the military behavior of the latter countries were widely unified, the Libyan military response was bifurcated along regular and elite unit lines. Elite military units which were commanded by Qaddafi's sons, exhibited 'fervent support' for the regime. The two major elite military units, the 9th and 32nd mechanized brigades, were the only military units intact when the war began. Regular military units exhibited 'fractured support' for the regime. Some regular military units, such as those in the East and around the Tobruk region, defected wholesale to the rebel movement when their leaders made their defections known. Most regular military units simply disintegrated: some joined the rebel movement, others joined Qaddafi, and still others remained at their posts (Parsons and Tailor, 2011: 22). The behavior of the Libyan military can be explained as

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a result of a combination of a very low level of institutionalization and a high degree of fragmentation of the armed forces, as well as a relatively strong connection between at least parts of the military establishment and the population. It is noteworthy that in addition to the army discussed above, Libya also had a plethora of other security agencies principally aimed at protecting the Qaddafi regime and its ideology. These included the Revolutionary Committees, the Revolutionary Guards, and the People's Guards. All these bodies were led by Qaddafi's relatives or members of his own or particularly loyal tribes. Moreover, Qadhafi created the People's Militia as an auxiliary force to the regular army and also relied heavily on foreign mercenaries (Lutterbeck, 2011: 31–3). (4) The Libyan uprising demonstrated traditional cleavages in a society in which national identity and an efficient governmental-administrative system have not been formed; accordingly, Libya confronts the complexity not of democratization but of state formation. It will need to construct a coherent national identity and public administration (Anderson, 2011).

In terms of foreign reactions, in practice no country supported Qaddafi, and, as conflicts expanded in the country, NATO headed by the US started to bombard Gaddafi's positions and supplied the opponents with ammunition and also imposed a no-flight zone over Libya. It is noteworthy that Qaddafi lacked the support of any regional power or that of Russia and China in the Security Council. In such conditions, attacking the Qaddafi regime could restore international prestige of the US in the Arab world.

Turning to the factors determining the outcome of a popular uprising, it can be said that the authoritarianism and brutality of the regime, lack of democratic procedures, widespread corruption and the high unemployment rate caused a legitimacy crisis, and popular dissatisfactions among various social groups, especially the more educated ones. Moreover, the existence of local loyalties as well as tribal and regional cleavages combined with unfair distribution of power and wealth along provided high protest potential against Qadhafi in the eastern parts of the country which were generally marginalized in his regime. However, Qadhafi had a considerable social base in western and central parts of Libya, his tribal base. This factor complicated the internal situation of the country and affected the ultimate outcome of the uprisings. Meanwhile the responses of the national military and influential foreign countries to the uprising should be examined. As protests started, Libyan society in general and the military in particular fractured along kinship networks and tribal cleavages, leading to a long-term civil war which was only ended with the decisive intervention of NATO in favor of the revolutionaries.

Syria: reasons behind protest eruption

The most evident characteristics of the Syrian regime which have led to dissatisfaction among the people during both Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad period are the following.

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Authoritarianism based on single-party regime

The Assad's regime could be categorized among 'single-party regimes with limited competition' similar to the Saddam and Ben-Ali regimes. Like the hegemonic party regimes described previously, the single party regimes generally have a president at the head of government who also serves as the leader of a party structure. However, these regimes are more closed and repressive than 'hegemonic party regimes with competitive elections'(Blaydes, 2011: 229–31). The Syrian regime has acted like a military regime and there has been no real opposition. Severe suppression of dissidents, widespread violation of human rights, and lack of freedom of expression have been other aspects of politics in Syria. However, after the recent uprisings, the regime has claimed to make some political reforms; for example, some groups have been allowed to participate in politics and constitutional reforms have been enacted. Nevertheless, most of the opposition groups believe that these reforms are superficial and authoritarianism has continued.

Sectarianism

While Sunnis have constituted more than 70% of population and Alawis are less than 15%, the backbone of Assad's regime, especially security and intelligence organizations, are in the hands of Alawis. One often-cited statistic is that Alawis held 90% of the top posts in the military and security sectors in 2000 (Blaydes, 2011: 229). This has made a profound sectarian cleavage in Syria so that Dekmejian has argued that the Sunni protest movement against the Alawite-dominated regime is a peculiar characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism in Syria (Dekmejian, 1995: 106). Nevertheless, besides Alawi political elites, there are a number of privileged Sunni families with close ties to the regime. They are well presented in the legislature and cabinet; informal power and associated financial resources, however, are dominated by Alawis (Blaydes, 2011: 229–31). Widespread corruption and secularism are other aspects of politics under Bashar-Assad. The prevalence of corruption has been such that during the recent protests elimination of corruption has been one of the demands of the protesters. Meanwhile, secularism has had different consequences. On the one hand, it has attracted minorities and secular groups, and, on the other hand, has alienated Islamists.

In terms of social conditions, Syria suffers from low social cohesion and the existence of various religious and ethnic cleavages. In this country, national identity is fragile, while local and sectarian loyalties are very strong. These factors have caused sectarian aspects to play a significant role in the recent protests. In terms of the economy, the unemployment rate and wealth gap have continuously increased in recent years and unemployment has risen to an estimated 20–25%. Moreover, privatization policies, which are detrimental to the large majority, have mainly benefited a few individuals close to the regime (Rivline, 2011). In general, the authoritarianism and sectarianism of the regime, along with economic crises, have led to dissatisfaction among many people. The following points are worth considering with regard to the protests in Syria: (1) At first, the protests were mainly spontaneous and there were no controlling organizations or identified leaders and the opposition's ideological focus was unclear, beyond slogans

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calling for an end to corruption and repression (Ruthven, 2011). Nevertheless, the role of political organizations and even foreign countries has gradually increased so that they are now playing influential roles in guiding the uprisings. It is noteworthy that both pro-democracy groups and Islamists have been active in protests, the protests started from mosques, and the greatest demonstrations were held in cities such as Hamah and Deraa, which have traditionally been the centers of Sunni Islamists. Considering that the Sunni Islamists were traditionally the most important challengers of Assad's regime, leads us to conclude that Sunni fundamentalists have had a determining role in these protests. (2) At first, the centers of protests were marginal and less populated areas, and in major cities such as Damascus and Aleppo there were not widespread demonstrations. However, unrest and conflict has gradually expanded virtually to most of cities and villages so that bloody conflicts, even in Damascus and especially Aleppo, have been occurring. (3) Despite severe violence and more than 23 months of conflict, the military has generally supported the regime. Although some soldiers and even high-ranking officers have defected, and this has transformed a peaceful uprising into a civil war, it can be said that at least by February 2013 the relative coherence of the military and its capability to suppress has generally continued. To understand the response of the army, the social and military structures of Syria should be considered. In Syria, there is low social homogeneity and the army has organic ties with the regime. Alawis have constituted the backbone of the regime and hold most of the top posts in military and security sectors. While most of Syrian conscripts and air force pilots are Sunni, Alawis account for 70% of career soldiers. The imbalance is even more pronounced in the officer corps, where 80–90% are estimated to be Alawites. Moreover, the country's most elite military units are exclusively Alawite, and are commanded by close relatives of Assad (Lutterbeck, 2011: 46). Any fundamental change in political regime may decline the positions of Alawis. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Syrian military is a patrimonial army through which the Alawi minority has ensured its grip on the Syrian political system. Given the military sectarian bias, it is obviously clear that there is a relatively weak relationship between the military and society. The general response of the Syrian military can be explained by a combination of the above-mentioned factors. (4) In contrast to most of the crisis-stricken countries, considerable violence has been used by the protesters. However, it is noteworthy that the protests started out peacefully, for weeks and even months, before turning violent in reaction to the repressive measures adopted by the Syrian regime. Nevertheless, the current violence in Syria, at least to some extent, can be explained by considering the historical background, especially the Hamah bloody suppression in 1982. The city of Hamah was the center of armed struggle between the Syrian regime and Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s. This reached a climax in February 1982, when the regime's ensuing crackdown on the movement's strongholds in the city resulted in thousands of casualties among Ikhwan activists (Porat, 2010: 3). It has been said that more than 25,000 people were killed and a quarter of the city was destroyed. The Hamah massacre had contradictory effects; on the one hand, it frightened oppositions in such a way that they did not protest

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until 2011, and, on the other hand, it made continuous demands for revenge which explained the implementation of violence by some groups. (5) Assad has continuously enjoyed the support of many Alawis, Christians, and other minorities which have been protected in his secular regime. Fear of Sunni fundamentalism and discrimination against minorities have encouraged them to support the regime. Moreover, some secular Sunnis have supported Assad since their economic interests have been linked to the regime and they have been terrified by the empowerment of Salafis. Finally, many Syrians simply think that there is no better alternative to the current regime.

As far as the role of foreign countries is concerned, they have not been able to play any determining role in the developments of Syria. It is noteworthy that among the recent uprisings in the Arab world, the case of Syria is the most complicated one and severe competition exists between regional powers. Saudi Arabia and Turkey support opposition groups, while Iran has backed the regime of Bashar Assad. It should be noted that in the light of Arab spring, these countries are competing to expand their influence sphere. Considering that the Syrian regime is the most important strategic partner of Iran in the Middle East, any regime change in this country can decrease Iran's influence in the region in favor of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. It must also be noted that limiting the influence of Iran in the region is of strategic importance for the west in general and the US in particular. In addition, severe competition between western countries, which economically and politically support opposition groups, on one hand, and Russia and China, which fervently oppose regime change and foreign intervention, on the other, has been continued. As a result, the security council has been paralysed by deep divisions between the US, Britain and France, on the one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, and it seems that conflicting interests of these international actors have considerably complicated the Syrian crisis. Both sides in the security council are attempting to expand their political influence, international prestige, and economic gains. It is noteworthy that while the US has talked about the end of the legitimacy of Bashar Assad, it has not taken any influential measures against the regime so that many western experts have accused the Obama administration of inaction against Syria. It should be noted that considering the current situation in Syria, military intervention in favor of the opponents and arming the Syrian opposition seems to be the most effective way for toppling the regime. However, the consequences of military intervention in Syria is uncertain and due to the conflicting interests of regional and international powers, and the sectarian nature of the Syrian society, the prospect of a prolonged civil war in the aftermath of Assad, which means the expansion of insecurity in the whole region, would be very realistic. Finally, in the United States there is a profound concern about the role of militant Islamists in the Syrian opposition groups, and, accordingly, the United States is opposed to heavily arming the opposition groups. Meanwhile, the stance of Israel seems to be more complicated. Although there are different points of view among Israeli leaders, they generally believe that internal unrest in Syria may weaken the Iran-led axis of resistance; however, there is a concern in Israel that the expansion of insecurity may directly affect its national security. This

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issue becomes more evident if the security of the Israel–Syria borders during the Assad regime is considered. Additionally, many Israeli leaders wonder what the alternative to Assad might be (Rabinovich, 2011). In sum, the interests of foreign countries in the developments of Syria are contradictory and foreigners have not been able to play a determining role, like the ones they played in Bahrain and Libya.

Turning to the factors determining the outcome of a popular uprising, it can be said that although the regime of Syria has faced deep economic and political crises due to its non-democratic structure, sectarianism, widespread corruption, and class divisions, the recent revolt has not been a widespread movement in which a range of groups and communities have participated. It is noteworthy that minorities, and some secular Sunnis, who have been terrified by the empowerment of Salafis or their economic interests have been linked to the regime, have generally supported the Assad's regime. Accordingly, the regime still has a degree of legitimacy and a social base. Additionally, opposition groups are divided and they have contrasting perspectives on dialogue with the regime and foreign intervention. Meanwhile, the responses of the national military and influential foreign countries to the uprising should be examined. The Syrian military has generally supported the regime and it seems that this is the most important factor contributing to its survival. Although some soldiers and even high-ranking officers have defected, and this has transformed a peaceful uprising to a civil war, at least by December 2012, the relative coherence of the military and its willingness and ability to suppress has generally continued. It must be noted that there is weak relationship between the military and society so that 70% of career soldiers and at least 80% of officer corps are Alawites. However, most of Syrian conscripts are Sunnis. This mixed structure explains that while the military, especially the most elites units, has generally supported the regime, there has also been some defections. This phenomenon is the main difference between the military response of Syria and that of Bahrain. In the latter case, defections has been entirely absent. The reason behind this difference is that while Bahrain's military is completely sectarian and Shiites are entirely excluded, the sectarian bias of the Syrian military has been more limited and most of the conscripts are Sunnis. Finally, although some countries especially most of western and Arab countries as well as Turkey have backed efforts to overthrow the Assad's regime, it still has powerful international and regional allies, such as Russia and Iran, which support it both politically and militarily. In sum, at least by February 2013, foreign countries have not been able to play a determinant role in Syria due to their conflicting interests.

Conclusion

Thus far, recent protests in the Arab world have led to different political outcomes including regime change, civil war, and suppression by regimes. The leaders of Egypt and Tunisia surrendered rapidly, while the Libyan regime collapsed after months of armed revolt. In Bahrain and Syria, the regimes have shown considerable resistance, and protest movements have not been able to overthrow the rulers. However, there

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are important differences between these two cases. In Syria, the uprisings has resulted in a civil war and opposition groups have taken control of some parts of the country, while, in Bahrain, the uprisings are peaceful and the intention of many groups is not to overthrow the monarchy. This paper has explored the reasons behind these different outcomes using and elaborating the general view of Goldstone on revolutions. According to Goldstone (2011), to explain the success or failure of revolutions, it is necessary to examine the political legitimacy of governments, the level of mobilization of anti-regime movements, and the responses of national militaries and international powers. In this paper, the author has examined the above-mentioned factors in the crisis stricken countries and discussed how different configurations of these factors have led to different political outcomes and which factors have played a more significant role.

In Tunisia and Egypt, the regimes lacked legitimacy due to multiple socio-political crises and very broad, multi-class alliances were formed so that it could be said that the social base of the regimes were very narrow and the size and strength of the uprisings were massive. Moreover, as protests expanded in scope, the militaries in both countries did not back the regimes. However, there is an important difference between these two cases. In Tunisia, the military fervently supported the protestors, while in Egypt it did so reluctantly and only under huge social pressure. In both cases, influential foreign countries did not play a vital role in preventing the revolutions and they generally accepted the transformations. It is noteworthy that Tunisia did not have much strategic importance for the west and it was far away from the central interests of America and Britain in the Arab world. In the case of Egypt, the military and foreign responses were to a large extent affected by the size and strength of the uprisings. In Bahrain, although the regime has faced a legitimacy crisis, and various communities including Shiite and Sunni Muslims were alienated from it, the regime has framed the protests as a Sectarian movement inspired by Iran and has won the support of some social groups through generous social welfare packages. As a result of these efforts, some social groups, especially some Sunnis, have distanced themselves from the uprising. However, the factors which have been most decisive in ensuring the continuation of the regime have been the loyalty of the military, which is both patrimonial and largely detached from the local population, and the intervention of Saudi Arabia with the implied approval of the United States. In Libya, authoritarianism, widespread corruption, and the high unemployment rate caused popular dissatisfaction among various social groups, especially the more educated ones. Moreover, the existence of local loyalties as well as tribal and regional cleavages combined with unfair distribution of power and wealth along these lines provided high protest potential against Qadhafi in the eastern parts of the country, which were generally marginalized in his regime. However, Qadhafi had a considerable social base in western and central parts of Libya, his tribal base. As protests started, Libyan society in general and the military in particular fractured along kinship networks and tribal cleavages leading to a long-term civil war which was only ended with the decisive intervention of NATO. It is noteworthy that attacking Qadhafi, who did not have any regional and international allies, was a low risk

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option for the United states and NATO and could restore their international prestige in the Arab world. In Syria, although the regime has faced deep economic and political crises due to its non-democratic structure, sectarianism, widespread corruption and class divisions, the recent revolt has not been a widespread movement in which a range of groups and communities have participated. It is noteworthy that minorities, and some secular Sunnis, who have been terrified by the empowerment of Salafis or their economic interests have been linked to the regime, have generally supported Assad. Accordingly, the regime still has a social base. The Syrian military has also generally supported the regime and it seems that this is the most important factor contributing to its survival. Although some soldiers and even high-ranking officers have defected, and this has transformed a peaceful uprising into a civil war, at least by February 2013, the relative coherence of the military and its willingness and ability to suppress has generally continued. Finally, although some countries especially most of western and Arab countries as well as Turkey have backed efforts to overthrow the Assad's regime, it still has powerful international and regional allies, such as Russia and Iran which support it both politically and militarily. In sum, at least by February 2013, foreign countries have not been able to play a determinant role in Syria due to their conflicting interests.

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