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***The US and Regime Change in the Arab Countries under the
Obama's Presidency***

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Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture***

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كلمات

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ كُلِّهِ حَاجِلِهِ وَأَجَلِهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا
مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ نَعْلَمْ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الشَّرِّ كُلِّهِ حَاجِلِهِ وَأَجَلِهِ
مَا عَلِمْنَا مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ نَعْلَمْ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَا
سَأَلْتَ عَبْدَكَ وَنَسِيتَكَ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا حَاكَ مِنْهُ
عَبْدُكَ وَنَسِيتَكَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا
مِنْ قَوْلٍ وَعَمَلٍ وَنَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا
مِنْ قَوْلٍ وَعَمَلٍ وَنَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ كُلَّ قَضَاءٍ قَضِيَّتَهُ

لِي خَيْرًا

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my loving sisters and brother who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my best friends and colleagues.

Merabet Abdelhafidh

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my colleagues and friends.

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What I have learnt during this experience in preparing this modest work is that patience and aspiration are the main reasons of success and progress.

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Abstract

This study focuses mainly on United States of America regime in Middle East and the Arab spring. The relation exists from so long time and this was mainly due to the long history of colonial and imperial policies of the western powers in the Arabic countries. The relation and the bound between America and the Arab world raised .after the events of September the 11th, The relation and the spread of USA regime in Middle East is seen to be the dominant one, but with the period of the Arab spring which creates a dangerous threat to the Americans' interests From all of that, our research focuses on the Arab spring and USA regime in the Arabian countries, which aimed to put it under the light and reveal the American reaction in the period of the awakening of Arab; so our focus was on USA regime in the Middle East and the reaction After the Arab spring.

Key Words: Arab spring, reaction, regime, relation Crisis.

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General Introduction

The world is a diversity of ideologies, thoughts, and beliefs. is essential in particular Arabs and western, and using their power as a tool to provide relation. The conflict is started from the as Dark Ages which is the war to spread ideologies and controlling, and continually spread till now.

Arabs have always been identified as primitive. Therefore, it was up to the West to fight in proposes of getting a place for obtaining external benefits, but with all their attempts to do so, they had faced a new era in the Arabic land, which is the wake up of Arab citizens in what is known the Arab spring. In our research, we will try to uncover some of the facts about the Arab spring, especially the USA reaction about it. Our focus, therefore, will be based on the content analysis of one significant Speech of the American Ex President; Obama Who has seen to be one of the most reactions that America has done.

Literature review:

The review of related studies is an essential part of any research or investigation. The survey of the related studies is a crucial aspect planning study. There are some studies that analyze similar topic yet in different interpretation. The article written by Iona Matesan entitled “The Impact of the Arab Spring on Islamist Strategies” (2012) draws on the experience of certain Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa which are becoming more moderate after the victory of nonviolent protest in ousting several dictators in the region. Drawing on insight from Eva Bellin, as well as the case of Al-Jamā‘ah al-Islāmīyah (“Islamic Congregation”) movement in Egypt, Matesan maintains that the political change in the post-Arab Spring has made nonviolent strategies more appealing to Islamist groups. The experience of political transition from the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution and Egyptian 25th January Revolution have sent powerful signals to the Arab world that nonviolent resistance can be more meaningful for opposition groups, especially the Islamists, than the act of violent rebellion. Given the founding ideology of Al-Jamā‘ah al-Islāmīyah and its violent past, the commitments of its leaders to respect the law and participate in politics through the formation of a political party became even more significant after the Revolution (Matesan 2012, p. 39).

In addition to Matesan’s study, Tarek Chamki (2014) views the recent developments of Muslim politics in the post-Arab Spring as a “Neo-Islamism trend” since one of the most obvious outcomes of the 2011 Arab revolutions is the rise of Islamists and Islamic-oriented political parties. The regime changes in the Middle East and North Africa in late 2010

(starting with Tunisia and followed by Egypt) and the role performed by the Islamists in these countries added new urgency to developing fresh approaches to Muslim politics (Dagi 2013, p. 72). For Chamkhi, this trajectory represents a new modified path of Islamist political thought called “neo-Islamism”- which is considered more a tactical strategy than a new ideology. To emphasise his words:

...[By] acknowledging that Islamism and Islamists did not completely fail [in the post-Arab Spring events]...we distinguish these post-Arab Spring Islamists from traditional Islamists by classifying them as neo-Islamists (Chamkhi 2014, p. 460).

On the whole, one can find commonalities in the studies by Matesan (2012), Chamki (2014) and Kurzman and Türkoğlu (2015) as regards the emergence of interconnectedness between the post-Arab Spring phenomenon and the development of Islamist movements and parties. Indeed, the current presence of Islamists in a national political arena seems to be welcomed and can be considered as part of development of the larger Arab Muslim societies. However, in other places and outside the region, scholars such as Sadiki (2015) and Saikal and Acharya (2014) have suggested that impacts from the political upheavals in the Arab world could possibly be felt in other parts of the world, specifically in Asia. The following sub-section will highlight previous crucial work on the Arab Uprisings and its worldwide reactions and implications.

Research Methodology:

In our study, we will focus more on the Reaction of USA towards Arab upspring and the Future about the relation of USA and Middle East. By doing so, we sought to conduct our study after analyzing document content; this is a study based on the pickling of speech, which reveals the reaction of the United States towards the Arab spring. The study body here will be divided into two main chapters; the first chapter will include the theoretical concepts of the study, where we will provide a comprehensive description of Arab Spring, and what are the variables involved in the process of the beginning and the impact. The first chapter will present general perspectives on it; start with the Origins, the causes; the results. As for the second chapter, here

we shed light on one Arabic country that lived the Arab spring and the reaction of USA about it, the focus here will be on the assumption that the Future of the American regime in the Arabic land. Finally, we will end with a general conclusion that will summarize the results of our chapters and provide a general review of the main findings of our research, through a deep and critical analysis of the selected speech. The conclusion represents a synthesis of the main concerns of our work; its purpose is to provide a clear and concise summary of the entire work as well as its primary interests; how did the Arab spring Started , its causes, and its impact on the American, Arabic relationship as well. And in the end it opens the way for future investigations, especially when it comes to the future of US policies in the Middle East. Since our research is based on analyzing excerpts from the one of the best tools documents which is a speech in particular; we will be adopting the content analysis approach; which is mainly a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (words, reaction, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some language aims popular form of art. Hence, and according to Shoemaker and Reese (1996) the task of content analysis is ***“to impose some sort of order on these phenomena in order to grasp their meaning.”*** So, content analysis mainly tend to investigate the variables included within the process of communication; Who says what, to whom, through which channel, and with what effect . So, in this research, we tend to understand more about the ideology of the speech; and since the ‘content’ refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The ‘text’ is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. Our analysis will be based on the qualitative method which relies heavily on researcher ‘readings’ and interpretation of media texts. Qualitative analysis of texts is necessary to understand their deeper meanings. In addition, analysts can record notations during coding in relation to contextual factors. However, in many cases, in-depth analysis of selected content using

qualitative research methods is required to fully understand the potential meanings (manifest and latent) for audiences and likely effects of texts.

Following the content analysis method, the qualitative message analysis methods applicable to analysis of media content include text analysis, narrative analysis, rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis, interpretative analysis and semiotic analysis, as well as some of the techniques used in literary studies such as critical analysis. Within the broad hermeneutic “interpretative” tradition concerned with text analysis, there are two main strands particularly relevant to qualitative content analysis. The first, narratology, focuses on the narrative or story-telling within a text with emphasis on meaning that may be produced by its structure and choice of words. The second draws on semiotics and focuses attention on signs and sign systems in texts and how readers might interpret (decode) those signs.

Our research aims to answer questions related to the USA regime, in particular Arabic lands.

Therefore, the focus here will be on the impact of Arab spring globally, and the effect that would result on both America and Arab; Arab spring influence can be seen on how Arab spring effected the relation and the spread of the American regime in Middle East.

By doing so, we will be striving to achieve Validity, Generalizability and Replicability. So, when it comes to validity, it can only be achieved through thoroughly understanding the research, objectives, preliminary reading of a sub-set of relevant content and careful selection of the sample of media content to be analyzed. As for Generalizability, it refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to and taken as a measure of the target population generally Generalizability is largely determined by selection of a representative and sufficiently large sample, as well as the overall thoroughness of the methodology. And finally, Replicability, that is the ability and degree of difficulty or otherwise for other researchers to replicate the research to confirm or challenge the results, is a key criterion for all scientific research. Replicability is determined by full disclosure of information on methodology and

procedures. In the case of content analysis, this should include the Code Book/Coding List; coding guidelines and instructions to coders; method of coding used in the case of human coding; details of any software programs used; and all data supporting conclusions. Hence, our focus will be on the ideological, social and cultural beliefs that are being transmitted through the outlets of Obama Speech.

Since the research sample is taken from international samples, which is a speech , we used Non-probability sampling is defined as a sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. It is a less stringent method. This sampling method depends heavily on the expertise of the researchers. It is carried out by documents, and researchers use it widely for qualitative research. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which not all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the study, unlike probability sampling. Each member of the population has a known chance of being selected. Non-probability sampling is most useful for exploratory studies like a pilot survey (deploying a survey to a smaller sample compared to pre-determined sample size). Researchers use this method in studies where it is impossible to draw random probability sampling due to time or cost considerations. In addition, we have sought Convenience sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique where samples are selected from the population only because they are conveniently available to us. We choose these samples just because they are easy to recruit, and we did not consider selecting a sample that represents the entire population. Ideally, in research, it is good to test a sample that represents the population. But, in some research, the population is too large to examine and consider the entire population. It is one of the reasons why we rely on convenience sampling, which is the most common non probability sampling method, because of its speed, cost-effectiveness, and ease of availability of the sample.

Therefore, the problematic imposed in this research will be the future about the relation of employing the USA regime in the Arabic lands. In here, our main concern will be on analyzing some of the discourses presented in the speech uttered when it comes to talking about them; these discourses are seen to be as a direct step of the future of American and Arabic relation. Therefore, this research will focus mainly on the terminology used when describing and talking about it, the reaction, and the intentions behind the choice of these ways and terms. Speeches have their own way to describe objectives and aims.

In this study, we will be trying to answer some of the most important questions that are related to the USA regime, the American, relationship, and the Future of that relation. The main questions we will be seeking to answer through this study can be summarized into three main points:

- What is the future of American regime in Middle East after the rising of Arab spring?
- How Arab spring started?
- To what extent does the Arab spring effected the relation between Arab and Western?

Our aims from this study are multidimensional; starting with investigating the start of Arab spring, then the effects that would be left on USA interests .In our study, the investigated damage will be tackled from a semiotic/psychoanalytic perspective, for we will try to carefully analyze some of the chosen sentences in The Obama's speech to uncover the future of USA regime in Middle East and the future of relation as well as.

Chapter One: *the Arab spring: Universal Views*

Introduction

The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that enveloped several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. The events in these nations generally began in the spring of 2011, which led to the name. However, the political and social impact of these popular uprisings remains significant today, years after many of them ended.

The Arab Spring was a loosely related group of protests that ultimately resulted in regime changes in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Not all of the movements, however, could be deemed successful—at least if the end goal was increased democracy and cultural

freedom. In fact, for many countries enveloped by the revolts of the Arab Spring, the period since has been hallmarked by increased instability and oppression. Given the significant impact of the Arab Spring throughout northern Africa and the Middle East, it's easy to forget the series of large-scale political and social movements arguably began with a single act of defiance.

I-Origin and Genesis of the Term

All the authors used the term “Arab Spring”. The exception is *Tariq Ramadan* who in *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East* uses the term “Awakening” instead, which conveys an Islamic connotation to the term. In the book, Ramadan focuses on the role of Islam as a reference in the current process of Arab uprising. He emphasizes two main themes: the compatibility of Islam with democratic pluralism and religious diversity and the role of Islamist parties and societies after liberation from dictatorship. He refers to this process as “awakening” (p. 79) and expounds a reformist Islamism, one that purports to respect democracy, women’s rights and the rule of law. His doctrine is grounded in the work of his maternal grandfather Hassan al Banna.

“Arab Spring” is generally believed to have been caused by the way and manner by which rulers ran the administrative affairs of local governments, though others have attributed it to the general income inequality. Several antecedents have led to the protests, including factors like authoritarianism, or absolute monarchic system of administration, violations of inalienable rights of citizens, political mismanagement and nepotism, economic downturn, unemployment, acute poverty, and a number of demographic structural aspects like a considerable percentage of educated but disgruntled youth within the population. The 2009 2010 Iranian election protests was another factor that contributed to the Arab Spring. The Kyrgyz Revolution of 2010 might also have served as an additional factor affecting its beginning.

Generally, the unequal distribution of the wealth of nations and its concentration in the hands of a few elements in the society, particularly those who control power for a very long time; inadequate openness in the redistribution of the societal wealth, corruption, nepotism, and the constant struggle by the youth to change the status quo were the main impetus for the Arab Spring. Constant inflation of the prices of food and global hunger rates had also been major factors, as they included threats to food security the world over and prices which nearly reached the levels of the 2007-2008 global food price crises. In contemporary time, the increases in the cost of living standards and education rates, as well as the increased level of

tertiary education, have led to an improved Human Development Index in the countries concerned. The disparity between rising aspirations and inadequate government reform policies may have been a contributing factor in all of the uprisings.

Most of the Internet-savvy young users have persistently, over the years, been viewing dictatorial rulers and absolute monarchies as anachronisms or error in time and place. Because of their role in the upheavals, *Al-Najma Zidjaly* of Oman University described the upheavals in the Arab world as “youthquake”, to indicate the prominent role of the younger generation in the uprisings.

II- Structural and Proximate Factors of the Arab Spring

1- Structural factors

Breakdown of social contract

All the countries involved in the Arab Spring had authoritarian regimes, many of which had been in power for decades. Their survival rested on an ‘authoritarian bargain’ or social contract, whereby the regime would provide social services and large-scale public sector employment (including through nationalized industries) and massively subsidise basic foodstuffs and energy, in exchange for political compliance by citizens (*Winckler, 2013; Beck and Huser, 2013; World Bank, 2015*). This contract worked in the 1950s and 1960s because populations were relatively small; in the 1970s the oil boom kept it going, despite population expansion; in the 1980s it started coming under pressure as oil prices dropped, but regional developments in the 1990s (Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait) and the financial windfall associated with these enabled regimes to keep funding subsidies and public sector employment. By the 2000s, however, economic and demographic changes meant it was no longer sustainable.

It was the breakdown of this exclusionary social contract that precipitated the Arab uprisings (*Winckler, 2013; Beck and Huser, 2013; World Bank, 2015*): as regimes failed to deliver jobs and services, and as economic inequality became worse, so public anger at authoritarian rule grew. Regimes responded with greater suppression of fundamental rights and greater reliance on abusive security services to maintain control – further fuelling anger and opposition.

The case of Saudi Arabia illustrates how grievances against the regime were pacified and the social contract maintained so that a mass uprising was avoided. Protests began on 25 January 2011 over poor infrastructure in Jeddah, but escalated into an online campaign calling

for major political and economic changes. Protests spread, and in February 2011 a group of intellectuals submitted a memorandum to the King calling for political reform; youth submitted their own memorandum calling (among other things) for job creation and an end to corruption. The King responded by offering a reform package, mostly comprising financial benefits: allocation of US\$29 billion to aid the unemployed; approval of US\$2 billion for construction of housing units; 15% increase in salaries of government officials (Salih, 2013: p. 199). In this way, Saudi Arabia was able to quell the protests and maintain the ‘authoritarian bargain’. Saudi Arabia even handed out billions of dollars to bolster other regimes under threat during the Arab Spring, e.g. Kuwait and Jordan (Lawson, 2015). Other Gulf Cooperation (GCC) countries took the same approach – largesse coupled with repression – to curb domestic opposition and remain in power (ibid.).

Population explosion and unemployment

As noted, one of the main pillars of the exclusionary social contract was provision of public sector employment. Dependence on public sector jobs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is clear from data of government wages as a percentage of GDP: the figure for MENA was 9.8% in the 1990s compared to 6.7% in Africa and 3.7% in Europe and Central Asia.¹ By the 2000s this became unfeasible for two reasons. The first was a massive population explosion in the region. From 1970 to 2010 the population of the Arab world almost tripled, going from 128 million to 359 million inhabitants; significantly, nearly 30% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 30 (Beck and Huser, 2013) and 65% under the age of 25 (Ardic, 2012). The state was unable to provide public sector jobs to keep pace with this rate of population expansion (Winckler, 2013). ‘Faced with bloated and often inefficient bureaucracies and excessive wage bills, traditional strategies of utilising public sector employment as a means to soak up excessive labour demands reached their tipping point’.² The drop in public sector jobs is apparent from figures showing its share of the workforce: in Egypt, for example, the public sector used to absorb 70% of the workforce in 1980, compared to 15.5% in the informal private sector and 7.5% in the formal private sector. By 2000, the public sector employed only 23% compared to 41.8% in the informal private sector and 9.6% in the formal private sector (UN ESCWA, 2014: p.80).

The second was the failure by regimes to create jobs outside the state to cater to the needs of the growing population, especially young people. In the 1970s oil boom period, regimes had neglected to carry out structural reforms that would have reoriented their economies away from services and rents to export-oriented industries that could generate

large-scale, skilled jobs. While deep economic reforms promote job creation in industrial and manufacturing sectors, the kinds of shallow reforms undertaken in Arab countries generated low-skilled jobs in restaurants, shops and hotels (Douglas et al, 2013; UN ESCWA, 2014: p.80). Other reasons were corruption and mismanagement, and the capture of large segments of the economy by politically connected firms, slowing down reform, innovation and employment creation. Economic policy was biased towards such firms, neglecting SMEs and the masses (Winckler, 2013; Lesch, 2013; World Bank, 2015).

With few good jobs created in the formal sectors (private and SOEs), and many of the new jobs that were created being low-skilled and low-paid (World Bank, 2015, Winckler, 2013), unemployment rose. In Algeria, for example, the unemployment rate went from 19.8% in 1990 to 29.9% in 2000 (Gardner, 2003: Table 1). Many countries at this time displayed an imbalance between a relatively high economic-growth rate and a worsening of the employment situation. In Tunisia, for example, where economic growth rates averaged 5% annually during the 1990s and 2000s, unemployment actually rose, as most of the new jobs were low-skilled and low-paying. Similarly, in Egypt overall economic growth did not have a significant impact on employment (Winckler, 2013).

Youth and education

The large share of *young* people in the population and high levels of *youth* unemployment are identified as particularly important in the Arab Spring context. While earlier generations of youth benefited from free education, job guarantees and other entitlements, those born after 1980 were no longer guaranteed these same institutions and high living standards.³ The unemployment rate among those between the ages of 15 and 24 was 25.6% in 2003, the highest in the world (Beck and Huser, 2013: p. 2). The number of unemployed youth in the Middle East increased by 25% between 1998 and 2008 (this compares to 14.7% in sub-Saharan Africa) (ILO, 2010: p. 17).

The rise in youth unemployment in Arab Spring countries came about despite improvements in education. Education levels increased significantly in the Middle East in the past three decades and were, on average, higher than those in countries with similar development levels (Ansari and Daniels, 2012). Over the period from 1980 to 2010, the average years of schooling for those over 25 years old in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and

Tunisia at least doubled, and in many cases increased almost threefold (ibid, p. 13). There was also significant improvement in higher education attainment (UN ESCWA, 2014: p. 51). Increased education made people unwilling to take the low-skilled, low-paid jobs that might be available to them; most still craved the security of public sector employment (Gardner, 2003). A 2009 survey found that 80% of Syrian graduates reported a preference for public sector jobs, with nearly 60% saying they would only take such a job.⁴ However, the *quality* of education in Arab countries has also been identified as contributing to high youth unemployment: the education systems largely prepared students for employment in government bureaucracies – where opportunities were limited – and did not provide them with the knowledge and skills needed for the modern world.⁵ ‘The skills mismatch in turn increase(d) pressure on the public sector to absorb graduates unable to find jobs in the private sector’ (Gardner, 2003).

While the causal nexus between education and democracy is debated, studies show that education – in particular primary schooling – can be a strong predictor of democratisation. One study of MENA countries plotted scores for a commonly used indicator of democracy against average years of schooling: it found the democracy index scores to be considerably lower than those corresponding to their education levels (Ibid, p.11-12). Thanks to their higher levels of education, as well as globalization and ready availability of information, this generation differed from previous ones in having greater awareness of how people elsewhere lived and higher expectations for themselves. ‘The increased capacities of Arab youth...and their inability to translate these human development gains into higher incomes and political participation explains why the middle class shifted allegiance and took to the streets’ (UN, ESCWA, 2014: p.6).

Rising prices and inequality

Economic hardship due to rising unemployment was exacerbated by austerity measures imposed by the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes (e.g. in Egypt in 1991) and rising prices. Government subsidies of basic essential commodities were slashed or cancelled, public sector jobs were substantially reduced, national industries were privatised, and taxation increased, leading to inflation and economic impoverishment of the majority of people (Salih, 2013; Lesch, 2013). The global economic crisis of 2007-08 hit the Middle East

and North Africa especially hard because of their high dependence on imported food. Most Arab countries buy half of what they eat from abroad. This means they ‘suck in food inflation when world prices rise’ – in 2007-08, they spiked, with some staple crops doubling in price; in Egypt local food prices rose 37% in 2008-10.⁶ There was a region-wide 32% increase in food prices in 2010 (Ardic, 2012: p. 18). Prices rose despite increases in government subsidies in some countries: Tunisia’s governmental expenditures on subsidies tripled between 2000 and 2010, but even this was not enough to maintain the prices of basic foodstuff and energy products (Winckler, 2013). Many of the Arab Spring countries (Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco) saw demonstrations about food in 2008.

High rates of unemployment and inflation (as well as corruption – see below) led to a widening of the gap between rich and poor, and created the phenomenon of ‘middle-class poverty’ (Ardic, 2012). Structural adjustment programmes widened the divide between haves and have nots, as ordinary people faced economic hardship, while elites carried on enriching themselves through corruption, amassing vast amounts of wealth (Salih, 2013). Strong economic growth rates in Tunisia and Egypt failed (as with reduction in unemployment) to translate into reduced inequality (Ardic, 2012). The contrast between the living standards of the elite (gated communities, private schools and hospitals, extravagance) and of ordinary people (decaying urban infrastructure, informal housing, and persistent poverty) was stark. Nearly half the residents of Cairo lived in unplanned areas that lacked basic utilities, sometimes living in wooden shacks (Lesch, 2013).

In Tunisia, income inequality between different parts of the country was an important factor in the uprising. There was a large divide between the interior and the coast. The interior regions were much poorer and had higher levels of unemployment, while the coast (and Tunis in particular) was better off and people generally had a higher quality of life – leading to resentment among those in the interior (expert comment). The consequences of Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation have been contrasted with a similar event in Tunisia in March 2010, when an unemployed fruit vendor, Abdesselem Trimech, set himself on fire outside the town municipal office. Trimech was from Monastir, a major tourist resort along the coast; Bouazizi came from Sidi Bouzid in the economically and culturally marginalized hinterland. The area’s relative economic underdevelopment, lack of public services, and high unemployment created a sense of relative deprivation among people there (that they were worse off than their countrymen elsewhere), and this resentment accounts for the contrasting local reactions to Trimech’s and Bouazizi’s deaths (Patel, 2014).

Middle class frustration

The ‘authoritarian social contract’ whereby the state provided jobs, services and subsidies, led to the emergence of a large middle class in Arab countries. A UN report put the aggregate share of the middle class in Arab countries in 2000 at 47.3% (UN ESCWA, 2014: p. 35). This varied from country to country but in most was substantial, for example: Egypt 44% in 2011, Tunisia 57.5% in 2010, Yemen 31.6% in 2006, and Syria 56.5% in 2007 (ibid). However, as the authoritarian bargain broke down, the middle class saw their quality of life deteriorate: services and subsidies were cut, people had to spend large shares of their income on private education and healthcare, public sector jobs were no longer available and there were few other good job opportunities. Despite this, the *share* of the middle class remained relatively stable until 2011 (ibid).

Popular frustration, particularly among the middle class, at deteriorating living conditions is reflected in the precipitous decline in life satisfaction scores on the eve of the Arab Spring (World Bank, 2015). In Egypt, for example, average life-evaluation levels plunged from 5.5 in 2007 to 4.4 in 2010 – a deep drop in the context of improvements observed in socio-economic statistics and growth in per capita incomes (ibid.: p. 25). Thus, by the end of the 2000s, people in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen were among the least happy people in the world. Statistics also showed a rise in dissatisfaction with the quality of government services that influence the quality of life. The percentage of people dissatisfied with the availability of affordable housing rose most dramatically, but there was also increase in the incidence of people dissatisfied with public transportation, quality healthcare, and availability of quality jobs (ibid). Young men were especially unhappy as they struggled to find decent jobs and start families. Middle class frustration was vented in the Arab Spring. A study of those who participated in the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings found that the middle class participated disproportionately in both (Beissinger et al, 2012).

Corruption

Corruption emerges strongly from the literature as a driver of public anger in Arab Spring countries (Ardic, 2012; Lesch, 2013; Winckler, 2013). As ordinary people saw their living standards drop, they contrasted this with increasingly blatant corruption and wealth concentration among the elite. The drop in life satisfaction noted above was driven by

dissatisfaction with living conditions, but also by the increased importance of perceptions about corruption for life satisfaction (World Bank, 2015).

Authoritarian regimes in Arab Spring countries were characterized by widespread corruption and patrimonial mechanisms that favored a small segment of the society: the ruling party, the ruler's family and their cronies and loyalists (Ardic, 2012). In the years leading up to the Arab Spring, corruption had become both more blatant and on a much larger scale (Lesch, 2013). On May 3, 2011, the Swiss government declared that it would freeze US\$1 billion worth of assets that belonged to Qaddafi, Mubarak and Ben Ali.⁷

In some cases greed on the part of ruling families reached such an extent that even party members were excluded. 'In Tunisia, what had been a one-party state had become the private preserve of the president and the first family. Economic resources that had been previously shared among the elite were increasingly monopolised by Ben Ali and his wife, Leila Trabelsi' (ICG, 2011d).

The rise in corruption among ruling elites compared to early leaders was another factor in the breakdown of the 'authoritarian bargain': 'While the first generation of revolutionary leaders, such as Gamal Abd al-Nasser of Egypt; Hafiz al-Assad of Syria and even Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia enjoyed broad public support – inter alia due to their personal modesty and simplicity – the second and third generation were regarded by their people as corrupt and aloof' (Winckler, 2013: p. 5).

Autocratic regimes

As Arab regimes failed to deliver on their side of the social contract so public tolerance of authoritarian rule gave way to anger and vocal opposition. Regimes in turn became even more repressive and violent, characterized by increased authoritarianism and consolidation of power (and, in many cases, paving the way for succession within the family); denial of fundamental rights like freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of organization; routine use of violence to remain in power and massive violations of human rights (Salih, 2013). A number of countries imposed state of emergency⁸ laws, purportedly to fight terrorism, but in reality to increase controls over their own citizens and justify crimes against them (ibid; Lesch, 2013; Ansane and Daniele, 2012).

The literature identifies two developments that contributed to undermining the legitimacy of Arab Spring regimes and thus the ‘authoritarian bargain’. One was the end of the Cold War, and the lessening in significance to and therefore support from former international allies, notably the United States and the Soviet Union. Cold War imperatives had led the superpowers to side with oppressive regimes, but with that imperative removed, the absence of legitimacy in those countries became more visible (Ardic, 2012). The second was the spread of electronic information networks (non-state media channels such as Al-Jazeera, social media...) which raised public awareness of corruption and abuses in their own countries, and enabled them to contrast this with the democratic norms practiced in other parts of the world. ‘The internet showed videos which presented the corrupt rulers’ luxurious standard of living, thereby substantiating the once abstract criticism of the regimes’ (Howard and Hussain, 2011). Wikileaks in 2009, for example, revealed some of the ‘dirty secrets’ of regimes, as in the case of the Ben Ali family’s corruption and wealth in Tunisia (ibid.).

People felt anger and a growing sense of injustice at actions carried out by the regime and security services. Months before the Arab Spring, police brutality in Egypt had already triggered widespread protests. The beating and killing of a young man, Khalid Said, picked up by police as he entered an internet café in Alexandria, was filmed and spread through social media. Local demonstrations spread to other towns and cities, with protests ongoing through the summer. Dozens of Facebook pages sprang up expressing outrage and demanding justice, ‘We Are All Khalid Said’ being the most famous. People had had enough of the widespread and systemic police brutality (Lesch, 2013). There were other high profile cases of activists in Egypt brutally attacked by security services, and a growing feeling that opposition to the regime would not be tolerated (expert comment).

In Egypt, blatant rigging of the 2010 parliamentary elections gave the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) 97% of the seats in parliament. The rigging deepened fears that Mubarak would stay on for another term, or appoint his son (Lesch, 2013). ‘The increasingly likely prospect of another Mubarak presidency after the September 2011 election (either the incumbent himself or his son, Gamal) removed any faith that this process of decay would soon stop’ (ICG, 2011a) – hence the resort to popular revolt in early 2011.

Dignity

The search for dignity (*karama*) is another factor that comes up again and again in the literature. ‘More than anything else, the rebellions were a call for dignity and a reaction to

being humiliated by arbitrary, unaccountable and increasingly predatory tyrannies' (Delacoura, 2012: p. 67). 'A unifying thread runs through all of them (*uprisings*): a call for dignity, empowerment, political citizenship, social justice, and taking back the state from presidents-for-life, as well as their families and crony capitalists who hijacked it' (Gerges, 2014).

The slogan used by protestors in Egypt's Tahrir Square was 'bread, freedom and human dignity'. People were tired of being oppressed and humiliated; the psychological drive for dignity and respect was a strong feature of the Arab Spring (Ardic, 2012; Beck and Huser, 2013). The event that served as the trigger for the uprisings – the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor after he'd been humiliated at the hands of corrupt police – embodied both the mass sense of frustration and the desire for honor and respect. This applied both at the level of the individual and the country.⁹ 'For the sake of Khalid! For the sake of Egypt!' was a rallying cry in Egyptian protests at the murder by police of a young man in the street (Lesch, 2013).

2- Proximate Factors

Social media

Three kinds of ICTs were significant in the Arab Spring: satellite television, cell phones and the internet. 'Digital media helped to turn individualised, localised, and community-specific dissent into a structured movement with a collective consciousness about both shared plights and opportunities for action' (Howard and Hussain, 2011). Circulation of photos and videos of the self-immolation of Muhammed Bouazizi meant people were able to empathise with his plight to a far greater extent than they would have done merely through hearing/reading about what happened (Patel, 2014).

Once the protests started, social media played a range of important roles. By spreading news of protests, it encouraged social mobilisation in other parts of the country, as well as further afield. It served as a means of communication for those engaged in uprisings: to tell each other what was happening, where abuses were, what help was needed, what the next step would be and so on. Such communication helped foster a sense of unity and common cause among what were often very disparate groups (Delacoura, 2012). Widely circulated PDFs of tip sheets explained how to pull off a successful protest (Howard and Hussain, 2011).

Social media as well as satellite phones and software tools for protecting user anonymity, were used to transmit pictures and videos of events on the ground to the international media.

This, in turn, helped mobilise people in other Arab countries, led to support from Diasporas and others across the world, and helped opposition movements to gain legitimacy and global recognition. This probably influenced the actions some regimes took against protestors, as well as the attitude of the international community towards those movements (Ardic, 2012). Al Jazeera, and the Qatar government which owns it, came under pressure from regime leaders in Egypt and Tunisia to stop coverage of the uprisings, but it continued to do so (Delacoura, 2012).

While the literature acknowledge the significant role of social media and communications in the Arab Spring, a number of analysts argue that this has been over-hyped (Delacoura, 2012; Lawson, 2015; expert comment). They point to low internet coverage in some parts of the affected countries, regime attempts to block internet and phone communication, and stress the importance of more basic methods of communication and organization such as person-to-person messages. They also highlight the fact that the internet and social media were used by regimes as well, for example to identify protestors (leading to warnings by activists not to use twitter, Facebook, etc. for communicating messages) (Lawson, 2015).

Demonstration effect

The timing of the Arab uprisings clearly points to a demonstration effect: Muhammed Bouazizi's self-immolation on 17 December 2010 triggered protests and the flight of Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. In Egypt, demonstrations organized for 25 January by civil society and opposition groups brought out around 20,000 participants. The protests, sit-ins and strikes spread, leading to Mubarak's resignation on 11 February. A few days later, protests against Qadhafi broke out in Libya. In Bahrain, anti-government protests erupted on 14 February. In Yemen, small-scale protests started after Ben Ali's ouster from Tunisia, and grew after Mubarak's fall. Jordan saw protests gaining momentum in late January 2011, while these started in Morocco on 20 February 2011. In Syria, the first major protests began in March 2011.

The literature confirms the influence of uprisings in Tunisia, and later Egypt, in mobilizing anti-government protests and movements in other Arab countries. Thanks to media channels like Al Jazeera, as well as social media, people in other countries could see what was happening in Tunisia, Egypt and so on, and be inspired by the success of those movements. In Egypt, the removal of Ben Ali made protestors think that, if sudden change was possible in

Tunisia, it might be possible in their country (Lesch, 2013) – Mubarak’s resignation prompted the same sentiment in Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

‘Events in Tunisia and Egypt have been cause for inspiration with a speed and geographic reach that defies imagination. In Yemen, their effect has been to transform the nature of social mobilisation, the character of popular demands and elites’ strategic calculations. They emboldened a generation of activists who consciously mimicked their brethren’s methods and demands, taking to the streets and openly calling for Saleh’s ouster and regime change – aspirations many quietly backed but few had dared openly utter.’ (ICG, 2011b)

Blunders in state response

In most Arab Spring countries the initial response of the regimes was to use violence and try to suppress protests by force. This back-fired, having the opposite effect of galvanizing people to join the opposition movement. In Tunisia, for example, Ben Ali sent the police out against demonstrators, to forcibly quell them. Indiscriminate police repression was the image people had of the regime, and they responded to police action by joining the demonstrations.

‘Nothing did more to turn the population in favor of the uprising than the way Ben Ali chose to deal with it’ (ICG, 2011d).

A similar sequence of events unfurled in Yemen. The regime employed harsh tactics, particularly in the south, arresting, beating, harassing and even killing activists. It sent security personnel and supporters dressed in civilian clothes into demonstrations to disperse protesters by wielding sticks, clubs, knives and guns. On 8 March, the army escalated the situation by using live ammunition against demonstrators, but again: ‘None of these tactics appears to have worked. Violence boomeranged, enraging the youth movement and attracting more supporters to the protesters’ side’ (ICG, 2011b).

Another tactic used by ‘moderate’ (in the religious sense) regimes was to portray themselves as protectors of the rights of women and minorities, and to present the opposition as Islamists and extremists and highlight the dangers posed by them coming to power (Gerges, 2014).

This was done both for domestic consumption and to win over the international community, in particular the West. Aimed at discrediting and dividing the opposition, this tactic, too, had the opposite effect of bringing diverse opponents to the regime together and reinforcing solidarity (ibid.). Women played a prominent role in the uprisings; many countries saw liberals and Islamists working alongside each other for ouster of the regime.

Role of armed forces

The decision of the armed forces/security services to remain loyal to the regime or to side with protesters played a critical role in many uprisings.

In Tunisia, police initially tried to repress protests, but this receded by 10 January 2011, and the army's signal that it would not take action against protesters was an important factor in Ben Ali fleeing the country on 14 January. One expert consulted for this report suggested that the lack of harsh repression by the army was what 'tipped the balance': this made the public feel like it was safe to continue to protest and to increase their demands. Similarly, in Egypt the army's position was initially ambivalent, but it eventually opted to remove Mubarak. In both countries there were already divisions between the armed forces and the regimes. Ben Ali and Mubarak had both strengthened the security services (intelligence agencies, police, etc.) over the army: in Egypt the state security apparatus outnumbered the armed forces 3:1 (Salih, 2013). Resentment at this marginalization coupled, certainly in Egypt, with a desire to protect the army's institutional and economic interests, were important considerations in the armed forces' decision to side with the people against their rulers. Concerns about instability were another consideration (ICG, 2011a and 2011d).

In countries where the army sided with rulers, or where it was split along opposition and regime lines, the outcome was very different. Libya saw a splintering of armed forces, with some fighting for Qadhafi and others joining the rebels. The result was civil war and hundreds of death - arguably, only ended through foreign intervention (Delacoura, 2012). In Syria, strong ties between the regime and the army and security forces meant the core of the armed forces remained loyal to Bashar al-Assad (Gerges, 2014). Again the result was civil war, but, unlike in Libya, outside intervention sustained this – five years and thousands of casualties later, Syria is still at war.

Nature of protests

A number of features of opposition movements in the Arab Spring contributed to their effectiveness, and thus to protests continuing and spreading.

The first was that these were spontaneous protests. In Tunisia where the Arab Spring is considered to have started with the self-immolation of Muhammed Bouazizi, demonstrations at this death started locally and spread – driven by frustration, anger and a sense of injustice stemming from all the structural factors described earlier, and fanned by social media. There was no readymade opposition waiting to take advantage of public anger and activism; the protests were not organized by or associated with any political party. Once protests started, civil society groups such as trade unions and teachers’ associations did play a *supportive* role (ICG, 2011d), but they certainly did not lead or drive the movements.

Secondly, the ‘figureheads’ of the Arab Spring in popular consciousness, whom people identified with and drew inspiration from, were not political leaders or famous activists, but ordinary citizens – Bouazizi in Tunisia, Khalid Said in Egypt and other victims of regime oppression. Thirdly, the ‘ideology’ behind the uprisings was a simple determination to oust corrupt regimes and promote social justice and *karama* (dignity). The Arab Spring was not driven by any political ideology (left-wing, right-wing, etc.); nor by the anti-US, anti-West, anti-Israel sentiment behind previous large-scale protests in the region; nor by religion – the Arab Spring was not characterised by calls for Islamic government (Delacoura, 2012). This is not to say that Islam played no role; it did, but (from a behavioral perspective) it was primarily psychological (strengthening the resolve of individual protesters) rather than organizational (Hoffman and Jamal, 2014). Moreover, mosques served as important centers for organizing protests, feeding and providing medical treatment to protesters, etc.

These traits were significant because they allowed very disparate groups in society to come together. The demand for regime change and social justice was an inclusive appeal that united secularists, conservatives, rural and urban groups, different ethnic groups, and so on. The spontaneous, grassroots nature of the protests made it hard for regimes to counter: there were no obvious leaders for them to round up and thereby ‘decapitate’ opposition movements. There were no political parties for them to do deals with and try to win over and there were no organized groups for the regime to try to split and exploit divisions among (ICG, 2011a). Tactics such as mass sit-ins in Tahrir Square and the general approach (at least initially in Tunisia and Egypt) of peaceful protest, enhanced the appeal of the opposition movement and its image domestically and internationally, and made it harder for armed forces to take action against them. As the number of protesters in Tahrir Square grew from tens to hundreds of thousands the security forces gradually withdrew. The experience of spending time together in such sit-ins, and of collectively organizing their own security, food, medical treatment and so on, also served to unify people and promote solidarity (Ardic, 2012).

III- International Reactions

Protests in many Arab states afflicted by the Arab Spring have called for a widespread support from the international community while repressive government responses have been globally condemned. In the case of the protests of the people of Bahrain, Morocco, and Syria, the global response has been to some extent more nuanced. Some analysts have blamed Western powers and media, particularly France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, of pretense in the way and manner in which they have responded to the Arab Spring. Contemporary analysts, like Noam Chomsky, blamed the Obama administration for trying to suppress the revolutionary wave and prevent popular democratisation attempts in the MENA.

Some scholars, notably Mohamed Ayoob, have contended that the range of international reactions to the events in the MENA demonstrate hypocrisy on the part of “the free world”, charging that Western reactions to the uprisings, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia, were mere expressions of cynicisms. Ayoob was particularly critical of the attitude of Obama, who, when asked if he considered Hosni Mubarak to be an “authoritarian ruler”, prior to the popular revolt in Egypt, replied that he tended “not to use labels for folks”, calling Mubarak “a stalwart ally in many respects to the USA,” adding that Mubarak “has been a force of stability and good in the region” (p. 73).

The army of Yemeni president Salih massacred hundreds of Yemenis who were staging largely peaceful demonstrations. The United States approach, and that of the European Union, was relatively sluggish in supporting the Yemeni protests compared to their swift and decisive backing of Libyan protesters (Noueihed & Warren, p. 127). During the international operation in Libya, Noueihed and Warren called NATO’s concern for Libyans “deeply hypocritical... when they ignore or promote same repression in Bahrain” (p. 129).

Western powers were not the only targets of criticisms for their lukewarm reactions to the suppression of the Arab Spring. Shehata et al. observed that Hizbullah chief, Hassan Nasserallah’s response to the revolts was hypocritical as he supported Shi‘ite protesters in Egypt and Bahrain but he backed the “murderous shi‘i government in Syria” against peaceful demonstrators (p. 217). The authors of the same volume criticised the government of Iran for its harsh criticism of Egypt and Bahrain, but virtually ignoring Bashar al-Assad’s violent suppression of Syrian protesters (p. 228).

Generally, international reactions to the Arab Spring were variable, including calls for restraint and more expanded civil liberties and human rights. While Western leaders criticised their regional foes in the MENA countries, they eschewed openly criticising their regional allies.

Was Arab Spring a reaction to the forces of globalization? Efraim Inbar provided a cogent explanation which suggested that the Arab Spring was not a unified revolution on the model of East Europe in the late 1980s, but a series of national uprisings in response to national and regional-international socio-economic grievances. Those events were fuelled by purely national concerns and did not reflect a pan-Arab or pan-Islamic character; and that they are devoid of any overarching ideology or global concerns (pp. 98-99).

On the international economic front, international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, maintained that oil prices were possibly increased higher than the initial forecast because of the crisis in the MENA area. Beginning in 2010, worldwide investors have altogether decreased their activities in that region, leading to substantial decreases in domestic stock values. Dramatic collapse in oil prices in early 2015 has added to the economic worries within the MENA.

IV- The History of Relation between the United State of America and Middle East

The United States has long been involved in the Middle East, and its role has only grown since the end of the Cold War. Yet in contrast to Europe, another region of longstanding interest, or Asia, where the United States plans to “pivot” in the years to come, trade relations and cultural ties remain weak, and the region’s military power marginal. During the Cold War, the Middle East’s energy supplies and several communist-leaning regimes rendered it part of the US-Soviet chessboard. In the 1990s the United States expanded its security presence in the region to contain Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and the clerical regime in Iran. At the same time, Washington engaged in an energetic and sustained, but ultimately unsuccessful, effort to bring about peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Following the 9/11 attacks, US involvement grew even greater. The United States deepened counterterrorism cooperation with longstanding allies like Egypt and Jordan and pushed to establish more extensive ties with hitherto neglected or adversarial regimes, like Yemen and Libya. Most dramatically, of course, in 2003, the United States invaded Iraq and, in so doing, triggered an insurgency that led to a sustained US presence in the country until the end of 2011. And then, just as US

forces departed Iraq, the so-called “Arab Spring” shook the region, toppling longstanding US allies in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen and creating civil wars in several countries, most notably Syria. Although the Obama administration resisted a large-scale US military commitment in the region, after the 2014 Islamic State advances in Iraq, it began air strikes against Islamic State forces and stepped up its efforts to work with regional allies and local partners against the group.

Chapter Two: Syria's between Arab Spring and Nightmare ***and Obama Administration***

Introduction

When the dictatorial regimes of Tunisia and Egypt were toppled by popular unrest few expected Syria to follow. Despite suffering under dictatorship for over 40 years and facing similar economic and social challenges that had prompted rebellion elsewhere, Syrians appeared to support their young president, Bashar al-Assad, who had cultivated an image as a populist anti-western modernizer. When protests did eventually reach Syria in March 2011, in the southern town of Deraa, they called on Assad to reform not resign. Yet any faith in Assad as a reformer soon evaporated. His security forces responded with live fire, killing hundreds in Deraa and elsewhere, while the president offered only piecemeal reforms. The regime fashioned a narrative that protests were led by criminal armed gangs, intent on stirring up sectarian divisions within Syria's heterogeneous population. Yet in these early stages it was mostly regime-backed Shabiha militia from Assad's own Alawi sect that were responsible for any violence, while most protestors remained peaceful and inclusive. Tragically, as regime violence continued and protests spread, with over 9,000 deaths in the first year, that narrative became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not only have some taken up arms against Assad, but

sectarianism is increasing, with the Alawi community as a whole blamed for Assad's excesses. Yet the regime still appears far from collapse. The opposition, both within Syria and exiles abroad, has proved unable to win over key segments of Syrian society. The international community remains divided on what action to take, with western and Arab economic sanctions only frustrating rather than disabling the regime, while Russia, China and Iran continue to explicitly or implicitly back Assad. After a year of violence Syria looks headed for a civil war between the regime and the poorly armed but determined opposition, with the potential to transform one of the Middle East's most stable states into a sectarian bloodbath.

I-THE Causes of the Uprising

The uprising can be partly explained by examining who has and hasn't been willing to rebel against Assad. Opposition activity has been concentrated in certain areas, suggesting that certain ethnic, economic, demographic and geographical groups harbour more anti-regime feeling than others. For decades, the security state established by Hafez al-Assad, Bashar's father, encouraged certain social and economic inequalities as a means of divide and rule. Hafez won the support of Syria's working class and peasantry, largely from Syria's Sunni Arabs who make up 60 percent of the population, by building a large socialist state that provided employment and subsidies. He won the backing of Syria's non Sunni Arab minorities – the Christians (10 percent of the population), Druze (3 percent) and his own Alawi sect (10 percent). These groups welcomed Hafez's secular Arab nationalist identity discourse as a means to integration, an identity that he promoted through expanded state institutions, notably the army and the ruling Ba'ath party. While this coalition of support was sufficient to build a popular base, Hafez deliberately excluded some groups: Syria's Kurds

(15 percent of the population) and the former Sunni Arab ruling elite, as well as landowners and larger merchants that opposed his socialist policies.

When Bashar inherited power on his father's death in 2000, he inherited a system that was stable but had fostered divisions. Although he enjoyed personal popularity, his reforms exacerbated and increased resentment towards the regime as a whole. Economic reforms alienated the Sunni Arab workers and peasantry, as Bashar moved to open up the economy more rapidly. Syria's GDP grew, but subsidies to Syria's poorest were cut and public sector employment decreased. Rather than genuine liberalisation, those close to power amassed huge fortunes through government contracts and monopolies. This new generation of crony capitalists was visibly excessive, and a disproportionately high number of these elite were Alawis, with Bashar making far less effort than Hafez had to balance the sect's privileged position by promoting prominent Sunni Arab families, fuelling resentment among the formerly supportive Sunni Arab poor.

Some trends, of course, were beyond the regime's control. Rural Syria was hit by a major drought from 2007-10, hitting the peasantry hard, with Assad's inept government exacerbating matters through mismanagement of agricultural resources and corruption. This prompted a wave of migration from the countryside to the over-crowded cities. Syria, like many Arab states, had witnessed a demographic boom in the 1980s that brought a glut of youth to the labour market that the economy could not accommodate. Just when more jobs were needed, Assad's reforms actually shrank the labour market further. Alongside the shrinking of the state in the economy, its role in society decreased, with the influence and funding of the army and Ba'ath party heavily cut, meaning young Syrians received less government indoctrination. On top of this, Bashar encouraged a more conservative form of Islam to be preached among Sunni communities, hoping to restrict the growing regional trend of Islamic conservatism to society rather than politics. However, while he successfully co-opted some, notably Aleppo's ulema (clergy) from whom he appointed Syria's new Grand Mufti in 2004, in other areas this revived a sense of Sunni superiority and activism. It is not surprising that mosques and Friday prayers became the focal point for demonstrations, while the quiet of Aleppo's mosques helps explain that city's relative disengagement from the uprising. In general, the most persistent sources of opposition activity since 2011 have been in poorer religious Sunni Arab areas such as Deraa, Jisr al-Shughour, Homs, Idleb, Douma and Hama, and frustrated youth have taken the lead. In contrast, the areas that have remained relatively quiet are those benefitting from economic

changes or co-opted, such as central Damascus and Aleppo, or areas dominated by traditionally supportive ethnic groups, notably the Alawi-dominated cities of Tartous and Latakia.

Despite these long-term structural resentments, the outbreak of the uprising was not inevitable, and several short-term factors played a key role. The most obvious trigger was the toppling of dictatorial regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. Prior to 2011, unauthorized public demonstrations of any sort in Syria were extremely rare. With the exception of the short-lived Kurdish Serhildan (uprising) in eastern Syria in 2004, opponents of Assad's rule had largely restricted themselves to timid declarations. The empowering effect of the Arab Spring on Syria's protestors was seen in their mimicking of techniques and slogans from elsewhere. The use of Facebook (only formally legalized by Assad in January 2011), YouTube and Twitter to organize demonstrations, as well as slogans such as 'the people demand the end of the regime' and preparing a different name for each Friday of protest were all borrowed from other Arab revolts. The success of Libya's rebels in defeating Colonel Gaddafi militarily further inspired some of Syria's protestors, this time to take up arms and to revert to a pre-Ba'athist national flag, mimicking Libya's reversion to a pre-Gaddafi banner. Having spent decades telling Syrians to be proud Arabs, the regime was taken aback when its people suddenly demanded the same karama (dignity) won by their 'cousins' elsewhere.

The other key trigger was the regime's violent reaction. Arguably, even after the first protests, Bashar enjoyed enough personal support that he could have rescued the situation. Soon after the Deraa killings, Bashar gave a much anticipated speech before Parliament on March 30, 2011, yet he neither apologized nor offered any reforms. Subsequent speeches on April 16 and June 20 were equally uninspiring.

In the meantime, the regime's forces, supported by the mysterious Shabiha militia, cracked down violently on the growing number protests across the country. The funerals of murdered demonstrators became a focal point for further protests and, when people were killed on those demonstrations, a snowball effect took place. While the inner workings of the regime remain opaque, Bashar's inner circle apparently clashed over the best response to the crisis. Hardliners led by Bashar's younger brother Maher, commander of the elite 4th Armored Division that has been at the vanguard of the suppression, reportedly triumphed over those in favor of a negotiated solution. The violent response that was settled upon clearly sought to repeat the 'success' that Hafez had in brutally crushing a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and 80s, that eventually led to the massacre of over 10,000

fighters and civilians in Hama in 1982. Although regime hardliners viewed the challenge as a repeat of the 1980s - fighting 'terrorists' - this approach finally shattered any hopes from the opposition that Bashar would be different from his father. While past resentments placed some distance between the president as an individual and his corrupt, tortuous security officials and cronies, his willingness to repeatedly use violence prompted the radicalisation of the opposition, from peacefully wanting reform to demanding regime change.

II-The Regime Has Survived So Far

Parts of Syria have been in open rebellion for over year and yet, unlike the dictators of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, Assad remains in place. The reasons for his survival thus far are multi-fold. Firstly, key pillars of the regime remain in place. Multiple coups following independence in 1946 led Hafez to design his regime to be 'coup-proof', with four overlapping intelligence agencies to spy on the population, the army and one another. This has thus far prevented the kind of internal moves by the military that toppled the Egyptian and Tunisian Presidents. On the contrary, Syria's military and security forces, packed at the higher echelons with arch loyalists, many from the Alawi sect, have proven fiercely loyal to the regime: willing to slaughter their countrymen in a manner that Egypt's army refused.

Another key pillar has been the continued support the regime enjoys from parts of society. While Assad's economic reforms shrank his social base he retained the support of some groups: minorities that were skeptical of majoritarian Sunni Arab rule - the Alawis, Christians and Druze - and some members of the Sunni Middle classes, particularly in commercially successful Aleppo. In the early days of the uprising huge regime-orchestrated pro-Assad displays attracted hundreds of thousands. Some loyalists genuinely support the regime, buying the narrative of 'armed groups' backed by foreign powers, or believing in Assad's hollow reforms. More likely is that many fear for their fate if the regime collapses. Christians are wary of the experiences of their Iraqi brethren after Saddam Hussein's demise, with over a quarter fleeing targeted sectarian killings. The Alawis, many of whom contrary to popular belief did not benefit greatly from the Assad regime, also fear for their future, concerned that they will be blamed for Assad's violence. Fear of the security forces may still cow people, with middle class Sunni Arabs aware that they have much more to lose by opposing the

regime than the poor of Deraa and Homs. Some businessmen are reportedly playing a double game, declaring their support for Assad, while secretly funding the opposition to avoid any post-regime recrimination. Though this may help individuals in the future, it does little to persuade the 'undecided middle' or the arch-loyalists to switch sides, and the relative neutrality of these key groups has kept protests out of the two major city centers and denied the opposition the visible support of the majority of the population.

The opposition's weakness has also aided the regime. Assad's opponents initially organized Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) to arrange demonstrations in centers of rebellion. These proved effective as they were largely leaderless, meaning that the regime had no ringleaders to arrest or kill. Despite thousands of arrests, these committees continue to be the leading organisers of peaceful protest on the ground even after a year. However, the desire for international backing prompted the formation of an opposition in exile, the Syrian National Council (SNC), in Istanbul in August 2011. Yet the SNC has not won enough internal support. Syria's leading Kurdish grouping for example, the newly formed Kurdish National Council (KNC) has declined to join the SNC because of the dominant position given to the exiled Muslim Brotherhood, largely opposed by secular Kurds, and the council's base in Turkey, a long-time opponent of Kurdish rights. The SNC is seen as out of touch with events on the ground compared to the LCCs, while older opponents of the regime that have remained in Syria rather than spent decades in exile, such as Louay Hussein or Michel Kilo, have complained of the bullish stance taken by the SNC abroad. Even within the SNC there have been clear divisions, with key activists such as former judge, Haitham al-Maleh, walking out of the council complaining of poor leadership. The issue of whether to seek western military intervention has been particularly divisive. Given the decades of systematic repression meted out by the Baath regime on all opposition, this inability to organize and unite is perhaps not surprising, but it has meant that, despite much goodwill and support from the western powers and several Arab states, the SNC has been unable to secure the kind of armed backing afforded the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Libya.

Also seemingly inspired by events in Libya was the formation of the Free Syria Army (FSA), in July 2011 by defecting Syrian army officers that had fled to Turkey. Its leader, Colonel Riad al-Asaad, stated that the security forces willingness to kill civilians made them a legitimate target and called on soldiers to defect, eventually swelling their ranks to approximately 20-25,000 largely low-ranking officers and soldiers, mostly Sunni Arabs. The bulk of the 400,000-strong regime military has remained intact however, and no whole units or heavy weaponry has switched sides. The West steadfastly refuses to arm the rebels and,

despite Saudi Arabia and Qatar's enthusiasm, their supplies are limited. Attempts to take and hold territory that could form the base for opposition military operations have failed, leading the regime to brutally crush rebel strongholds such as the Baba Amr district of Homs. It remains unclear how much control Colonel al-Asaad actually has over the various militia nominally under his banner. US fears that Al-Qaeda may be operating within the FSA are probably embellished, but some fighters are certainly inspired by political Islam, as seen by the naming of some militias after Sunni historical figures. While journalists such as Al-Jazeera's Nir Rosen that have been embedded with the FSA highlight that most fighters are pious rather than overtly Islamist, there remains the possibility of increased radicalisation as the conflict becomes more violent.

The potential for sectarian conflict has been another tool used by the regime to cling onto power. For decades the regime promoted itself as a bastion of stability for Syria's heterogeneous population compared to the sectarian chaos in neighboring Iraq and Lebanon. At the same time it subtly ensured that sectarian differences between Syria's different communities were not forgotten. It privileged the Alawis, discriminated against the Kurds, and maintained legal barriers between Muslims and Christians. Although Baathist rhetoric spoke of a united Arab Syrian identity, the reality was a more complex manipulation of different identities at different times. The regime tapped into these identities by raising the specter of a sectarian civil war as soon as the uprising began, accusing the opposition of fostering sectarianism. Yet it was the regime's Shabiha that were deliberately stirring up ethnic violence to scare the minorities and those that feared civil war into backing the regime, for example by delivering sandbags to Alawi areas and warning of Sunni attacks. The protestors emphasized their inclusiveness early on, shouting slogans such as 'all the Syrians are one', but as regime violence continued and non-Sunnis largely backed the regime, sectarian attacks increased, especially in war-torn Homs, and sectarian chants emerged such as, 'we didn't used to hate the Alawis, now we do', or 'Sunni blood is one'. While the majority of the opposition still insists that they are not motivated by sectarianism, the potential for an ethnic civil war increases as violence continues, apparently the regime's cynical survival strategy in the first place.

Further aiding the regime have been the divisions within the international community. Unlike in Libya, military options don't appeal to western powers, Turkey and Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who have rallied most of the Arab League against Assad. Airstrikes and a no-fly zone, or even just establishing protective 'humanitarian corridors' around border areas, could be launched from Turkey or Cyprus, but Assad has far better air defenses than Gaddafi

making foreign casualties likely. Moreover, the FSA are not in a position to make significant gains on the ground as did the rebels in Libya, and any military strikes could increase instability and catalyze the descent into chaos. Arming the FSA directly, without the major military defections thus far not seen, is unlikely to allow them to pose a genuine threat anytime soon. Moreover, after Libya most of the anti-Assad camp, especially Turkey, which would likely take a leading role in any military action, recognize the need for UN approval of any moves, and that is unlikely to happen. Russia and China have blocked far more modest moves against Syria in the UN Security Council. Both generally oppose international interference in states' internal matters, and Russia in particular has a long-standing strategic relationship with Syria, which hosts Moscow's only Mediterranean naval base. Additionally, Russia felt that NATO overstepped its UN-mandated remit in Libya and is determined that the same will not happen in Syria. Putin also may also have a personal loyalty to Bashar, who was one of the few heads of state to publically support the Russian leader's invasion of Georgia in 2008. Although Russia and China both endorsed the ceasefire plan of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in Spring 2012, which importantly dropped the demand that Assad step down, few expect the regime to permanently halt its violence and it is questionable whether Russia would abandon the regime even if it did not. Despite opposition from the west and the Arab League, who have initiated economic sanctions on Syria, Assad retains important friends that allow him to avoid total isolation. As well as Chinese and Russian diplomatic cover at the UN, with Moscow still supplying Damascus weaponry, long term ally Iran is offering advice on sanctions-busting and defeating the opposition, as well as purchasing Syrian oil to replace European demand and ensuring its other Arab allies, Iraq and Lebanon, defy the Arab League's trade embargo on Syria. Syria's importance on the fault lines of so many conflicts in the region – the Arab-Israeli conflict, Lebanon, Iraq, Kurdish issues and Saudi Arabia and the West's battle with Iran – has ensured interest and interference from many regional and international powers, but also a degree of caution to avoid pushing the country into chaos.

III-Scenarios for Syria's Future

Syria is therefore in stalemate. The regime is far from finished but the opposition seems unlikely to give up. The violence looks set only to increase as each side radicalizes: the regime believing that the international community's punishments can be withstood, while parts of the opposition slide towards Islamism and sectarianism. With direct external

intervention seemingly ruled out, all scenarios for the future appear grim. Most unlikely is that the opposition will break through and topple the regime through popular protest or military success. The FSA is too weak and, even with Western or Gulf arms, will take years to reach parity with the military. Similarly, the opposition seems unable to win enough support to prompt the mass demonstrations in Damascus and Aleppo that worked in Tunisia. The decline of the economy under sanctions might prompt a coalition of merchants and the military to mount a coup against Assad to preserve their status, but the military is constructed to be loyal and have remained so, and they now have blood on their own hands after the crackdown. Similarly, the merchant class has stayed quiet and sanctions elsewhere suggest that the middle classes are more likely to emigrate than turn on the regime – a trend that has already begun in Syria.

What looks more likely is that, to the chagrin of Western and Gulf leaders, Assad holds on, as did Saddam Hussein after 1991. Assad clearly believes he can contain the threat of the FSA and cow his population back into submission. However, it is doubtful that the FSA would ever surrender, and so the conflict could evolve into a long-running guerrilla insurgency. Moreover, Assad's ability to rule as an army of occupation indefinitely is unsustainable both militarily and economically. Thus the final scenario is some form of civil war, which already appears to be breaking out. The regime would probably prefer a repetition of the Algerian civil war when the radicalisation and violence of the opposition eventually won the military government more support than it initially had, enabling it to re-impose control.

Alternatively, incremental opposition gains might erode the authority of the state, leading to a weak central state in Damascus and Aleppo, but militia rule in the countryside, as happened in parts of Lebanon during its civil war. Moreover, with the FSA already looking like it could fragment into different militia, there is a prospect of Syria becoming a failed state. While there remains a slither of hope that an internationally brokered negotiated solution could be found, nothing the regime has done so far suggests it is willing to compromise. With the Assad regime seemingly willing to destroy Syria rather than give up power, the future looks bleak.

IV-US Interests in the Middle East in a Historical Perspective

The dominant concern of American foreign policy in the post-World War II period was finding effective ways to check Soviet expansionism. When applied to the Middle East, this meant using all means available to prevent the Russians from filling the power vacuum being created by gradual withdrawal of old colonial powers. The interrelated objectives of containing Soviet attempts to gain the upper hand in the area and preserving access to the region's strategic facilities and oil resources required the development of effective doctrines and policies to attain the designated goals, namely the promotion of peace and stability and the recruitment of regional partners to assist the United States in containing the Soviet Union. The first orientation consisted in guaranteeing the territorial status quo and keeping the established political order in place as much as possible. Other major interests were to assure the survival and security of Israel and termination of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Lenczowski 1992).

American steadfastness reflected a definite conception of the importance of the Middle East itself to the United States. The protection of the oil resources in the Middle East, and the respective lines of communication, would remain a vital Western interest and would determine the US strategy and military deployments throughout the subsequent decades (Lesser 1992, 25). By the 1950s, the emerging Arab nationalist movement became an additional (and most likely) danger to US hold over the oil resources of the region (Campbell 1969, 257). Local disputes and radical processes of change were considered to provide appropriate grounds for communist/Soviet-sponsored activity. US policy was thus guided by the basic conviction that radicalizing political tendencies of any sort would challenge Western-favored access to cheap and reliable supplies of oil, the very key to the economic growth of the industrialized world. US opposition to the nationalist movement had an early manifestation in Iran, when in 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) executed a plan to overthrow the nationalist Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, in order to thwart the nationalization of the oil sector. Another tangible display of this concern was US policy to integrate the region in its global system of alliances and to preempt a possible shift by a regional state away from the American orbit. The US support to "moderate," pro-Western regimes in the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon), contemplating also the most important oil producers (Gulf kingdoms, Saudi Arabia, and Iran), was largely successful. In the wake of the Iranian revolution (1979), the rising political power of Muslim fundamentalism became a new prominent threat. It was only after the Iranian Revolution with

its follow-up of fiery, revolutionary Islamist-sponsored turmoil, that political Islam's strength was properly considered. The Iranian revolution and the wave of Shiite radicalism that marked the 1980s contributed, in another important way, to the shaping in the West of a stereotyped image of political Islam: that of an anti-democratic, anti-Western force. With the demise of communism and the end of the Cold War, a current of thought emerged saying political Islam is the new threat that confronts the West. Many saw it as aggressively anti-Semitic and anti-Western and charged Islamist movements of standing in direct competition to Western civilization and challenging it for global supremacy (Pinto 1999).

Growing American fears about political Islam are played into the hands of US allies, such as in the case with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. The 'political Islam menace became a convenient way for a leader to explain away opposition based on a country's economic, social, and political inequities. It was also an argument in favor of the continuation of US support to regimes whose strategic value weakened with the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, an additional interest was added to the three core ones: reducing the threats posed by so-called rogue states, particularly those aiming to acquire weapons of mass destruction. In response to the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration adopted three major policies to advance US national security interests in the region: defeating terrorism, promoting democracy, and stopping the development of weapons of mass destruction (Pressman 2009).

V-Obama's legacy

The Arab Spring's failure connects back to Barack Obama's lack of action ten years ago. After the former president's famous Cairo speech in 2009, in which he talked about a "new beginning" for US foreign policy in the region, many expected that he would help install democracy once the protests started. But this was not the case.

Blindsided and unprepared for the uprisings – and also fearful of getting bogged down in the Middle East the way the previous administration had after the War on Terror and the 2003 invasion of Iraq – Obama was cautious of anything that looked like a US project to promote democracy. Perhaps overly so. He thought he could simply let autocratic rulers – such as Bashar al-Assad in Syria – fall, and democracy would take care of itself.

Obama was wrong. Assad fought back, setting his military on the protesters. Syria descended into civil conflict as he reasserted his position. When America did get involved, its efforts were severely limited. Obama went into Libya with NATO under the guise of humanitarian intervention, but was accused of exceeding his mandate and quickly left the situation to France and Britain to clean up. Obama would later call failure to plan for the aftermath of the Gaddafi regime the “worst mistake” of his presidency.

In Yemen, US action was less overt. While Yemen’s president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was forced to resign in response to the uprising, Obama allowed both Saleh and forces loyal to him to continue to exert influence in the country, further fuelling the civil upheaval. Saudi Arabia then intervened in 2015 to protect its interests against the rebellion and its Iranian backers.

The Obama administration’s response to the Arab Spring has been fairly ambivalent and hesitant. Indeed, the apparent inconsistencies of US policy vis- à-vis the Arab Spring (for example, calling for Hosni Mubarak’s departure just days after Cairo’s street protests took shape, while refusing to denounce the Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria despite weeks of protests and repression), combined with a determination to a forceful regime change in Libya, only highlighted the contrast between the administration’s determined approach toward some of the Arab Spring regimes and much of the rest of its Middle East policy.

Critics have faulted the US for its seemingly embrace of the concept of “responsibility to protect” in Libya and calling for Col. Muammar Gadhafi to step down from power and not defending the same in Syria. The approach toward Syria contrasts markedly with military intervention in Libya or the US stance toward the brutal crackdown of pro-democracy protesters in Bahrain – a tiny, but strategic US ally in the Persian Gulf. The uprising against the minority dictatorship in Bahrain was largely ignored by Washington, which fears losing the headquarters of its Fifth Fleet in Manama. When Saudi tanks crossed the bridge to crush the Shia uprising in Bahrain, in March 2011, Obama kept silent and reluctantly acquiesced not wanting to alienate Riyadh.

The administration was also criticized for being too cautious in offering support to protesters in Cairo in the first weeks of the revolt. Eventually, the administration managed to sharpen the message and to try to place itself “on the right side of history,” but at the cost of dumping a valuable ally. Still, others – especially Republicans, including presidential

candidates – slammed the Obama administration’s support for the Arab Spring for foolishly opening the door to Islamist takeovers of once secular governments.

After siding reluctantly with the people’s revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt against pro-American regimes, Obama has reportedly reverted to Washington’s old double standard of shielding friendly authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world. Obama seems to have adopted the same strategic calculus as previous administrations: where compelling economic, energy or security interests are at stake, autocrat regimes are allowed not to be scrutinized by their democracy and human rights record.

The administration’s cautious response to the popular uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa is the reflection of a realist policy driven by strategic interests, such as oil security, fighting terrorism, and Iran’s rise in the region and, equally important, its realization of the limits of American power and its capacity to shape events.

The Obama administration eventually concluded that it must shape its response country by country, recognizing a stark reality that American national security interests in the Middle East weigh as heavily as idealistic impulses.

1-Analyzing Obama’s “reset” Speech

Speaking at the US-Islamic World Forum in March, Hillary Clinton provided some insights to clarify the US approach, stating it strongly supports democratization in the region, although rejecting a “one-size fits all approach” (Clinton 2011) to the Arab uprisings. Clinton said the administration had reoriented US policy in the Middle East to focus more on people and less on governments, but qualified that the response to the democracy movements would vary from country to country. Indeed, US policy looks different in Bahrain and Syria than it does in Libya, because American interests are very different in each arena (Clinton 2011).

The Obama administration seemed to realize the need to build a coherent policy framework towards the upheavals that dealt comprehensively with the challenges posed by this rising revolutionary wave in an area where the United States has vital interests. Obama’s most comprehensive response came on May 19 in a speech at the State Department. According to analyst Friedman, Obama’s speech clearly intended to be the formulation of a Middle East policy, a blueprint for policymaking, rather than just a showcase for speech-

making, “reflecting a shift in strategy if not the declaration of a new doctrine” (Friedman 2011).

In that speech, he put the US as squarely standing behind the struggle for freedom and democracy, specifying that Washington supports them for all Arab peoples, not only for some (The White House 2011). Obama based US policy on core principles: opposing violence, universal rights, and the right of people to choose their own leaders. He asserted: “we can, and we will, speak out for a set of core principles – principles that have guided our response to the events over the past six months.” However, he also reckoned the uncertainties the US faces in the process: “there will be times when our short-term interests don’t align perfectly with our long-term vision for the region” (The White House 2011d).

In this context, the content and substance of Obama’s speech were important, for two main reasons. First, he characterized the Arab revolts as a fight for “self-determination.” This was a particularly significant acknowledgement of the Arab peoples’ right to ultimately determine their outcome, as well as an advance on previous vacillating American responses to the uprisings. Secondly, he also made it clear that the right to live in freedom and democracy is a universal right that should be enjoyed by Bahrainis – who are strategically important to the US –, as well as by Libyans and Syrians – who are not.

Obama said the US has a historic opportunity to embrace this change and the responsibility to support the rights of people demanding for freedoms, and he announced for “a new chapter in American diplomacy.” He also disclosed mainly a set of economic incentives aimed at steering the region towards lasting democratic change.

In a general sense, the speech did not really resolve the tension at the heart of the question: that between Obama’s rhetoric of support for reform and the US clinging to Arab governments that are skirting reforms. Obama’s speech left many observers and people in the region disappointed. He was attempting to square a difficult circle: he wanted to reaffirm America’s support for democratic aspirations, but at the same time did not want to worsen a rift with allies, such as Saudi Arabia, about the pace of democratic development. Obama also said little about political grievances in Saudi Arabia, a major oil supplier, where Shia protesters have been violently dispersed. Human rights groups have called the Obama administration’s approach to the so-called “Arab spring” inconsistent, charging that US policy toward some countries has a double standard (Human Rights First 2011). The speech tried to combine policy interests which are not easily reconcilable and might even produce different

outcomes, at times inimical to American interests: the fact that “America’s interests are not hostile to people’s hopes; they’re essential to them [...] and [that] we will keep our commitments to friends and partners” (The White House 2011d). Obama also acknowledged that these interests will mean that sometimes the US may not always take the most aggressive stand in favor of democracy and freedom: “There will be times when our short-term interests don’t align perfectly with our long-term visions for the region, but we can and we will speak out for a set of long-term principles,” the president said. The speech represented an escalation of rhetoric, but failed to adequately shift policy or even render it more coherent. US policy towards the Arab Spring has been a divided policy marked by sincere but reactive support for democratic advances when it occurred, but no real proactive support for democracy where dictatorship remains (Carothers 2012a, 37).

Where political change has occurred, the US has usually backed democratic change, sometimes actively, as in Libya; sometimes more reluctantly, as in Egypt. But where autocratic stability continues to reign, the administration has held fast to the decades-old US policy of support for friendly dictators who are reliable on matters of security and economics (Carothers 2012b).

It must be pointed out, however, that, in its apparent inconsistency, the administration has tried to strike the right note of “cautious optimism and seriousness of purpose” in countries undergoing a democratic transition (Carothers 2012, 34). First, it has avoided getting involved in complex internal politics of democratic transitions. The US has been cautious by avoiding to put itself in the center of internal political change, for fear of compromising the prestige of democracy advocates, of being accused of interfering, or ultimately of assuming responsibility for an yet uncertain process. Secondly, it has accepted the popular will of Arab societies even if it takes the form of Islamist electoral victories, such as in Tunisia and Egypt.

2-Obama’s “reset” Speech Outcomes

It is clear that Obama decided not to take a single, blanket approach in order to avoid that rapidly-moving events drove administration policies. Events in the Middle East are part of a long-term transformation, with important risks, including the potential rise of Islamism in Egypt and potential civil war in Syria. The process will take decades to play out and will remain a challenge for the US presidents to come. The administration’s answer to the Arab

Spring very much reflects the interest in not being sidelined by the events and of placing itself on the “right side” of history. In the process, Obama had to juggle the idealistic and realistic impulses that have marked his foreign policy. Thus, at the beginning, an initial cautiousness was removed and the administration was driven by the emotional reaction of the street. It was only later that a policy was formulated – a policy that tries to conciliate particular US interests in the region and universal, pointedly American values.

As a result, the Obama administration’s response to the Arab Spring has been fairly ambivalent, hesitant and disjointed: grudgingly supporting the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, unenthusiastically backing limited military action in Libya, projecting a nuanced attitude to the unrest in Bahrain, and confounding US traditional allies.

Indeed, its apparent inconsistencies (for example, calling for Hosni Mubarak’s departure just days after Cairo’s protests mounted, while refusing to denounce the Syria’s regime, combined with a determination to a forceful regime change in Libya), only highlighted the contrast between the administration’s determined approach toward some of the Arab Spring regimes and much of the rest of its Middle East policy. As for friendly countries which have weathered the storm, the Obama administration has settled on a strategy to help keep allies who are willing to reform in power, even if that means the democratic demands of their newly emboldened citizens might have to lag behind. The administration’s commitment to democracy and human rights is undercut by its pursuit of countervailing economic and security interests. Growing US concern about stability in the Persian Gulf and Iran’s regional influence has prompted the administration to argely put aside democracy priorities for the sake of good relations with strategic allies (Carothers 2012, 44).

Obama is not the only president who, as far as the democracy agenda is concerned, has demonstrated “a split personality” (Carothers 2007, 96). For decades, Washington has considered the Middle East a region of vital US interest, in part because it sits atop the world’s largest reserves of oil and natural gas. To maintain its strategic influence in the region, Washington has often relied on friendly Arab governments that suppressed the democratic aspirations of their people. Like his predecessors, until the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Obama focused on building bridges with Arab leaders and governments. In improving relations with the Muslim world, there is a gap between US political ideals and the realpolitik of its strategic national interests.

The Obama administration eventually concluded that it must shape its response country by country, recognizing a stark reality that American national security interests in the Middle

East weigh as heavily as idealistic impulses. The administration cautious response to the popular uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa is the reflection of a realist policy driven by strategic interests, such as oil security, fighting terrorism, and Iran's rise in the region and, equally important, its realization of the limits of American power and its capacity to shape events.

General Conclusion

Our study focused mainly on the effect of Arab spring on the relation and the future of the US regime in Middle East. What we have found is that the relation was always strong, but after the Arab Spring Us had lost a lot of their sources in Arabic countries expect for some Middle East governments. Our study relied on the assumption that most Arabic countries have broken that relation and Even President Obama was the first who broke it but the relation is linked as a protein in Arabic leaders DNA. What we were able to discover through this part of the study is the fact that the relation is strong whatever it happen because it alive from decades and not one drop of years of rebellion can break the cycle. This relation was change during the colonial era. It was a means to justify all kinds of controlled methods. So, most of these methods are a goal to show that Western policies should be employed all over the world.

This research presents a great opportunity for most readers to learn more about the relation between US and Arabs. The same situation existed during the colonial era and even in ancient times. It is still the same trend that has really influenced the way the West should control the world. The methodology followed helped to explain and discuss the speech in which Western ideologies and internal policies which is closely related to historical events and especially colonialism and its ideas of the superiority of the West over the East. This superiority led to the suppression and subjugation of the "other". This was justified by religious and historical assumptions. Hence, Arabs were always indicating their inferiority and weakness, and should be governed by the US policies. In the end, this research provides an insight into the devastating effects and consequences of the Arab Spring on The position of US regime in Middle East countries.

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