

THE ARAB SPRING IN THE MIDDLE EAST: IMPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In the years between 1975 and 2000, the world had experienced dramatic changes wherein a number of countries were ranked as 'free country' and the proportion of the world under totalitarian rule or dictatorship shrank considerably.¹ A number of strategically important and economically successful Asian countries also embraced democracy and made strides towards a political freedom. In the face of such worldwide democratic surge, the Arab Middle East (ME) remained trapped in political stagnation. The ME was no longer one region out of many where autocracy was the rule and the status described as 'freedom deficit'.² The recent Arab spring is nothing but the aftermath of undesirable 'freedom deficit' environment in the region for a protracted period in contrary to the democratic surge in other parts of the world. The series of protests and demonstrations across countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), known as Arab spring have erupted as people's frustration which eventually had overthrown the tyrannical governments from the power in four countries. The events further unleashed popular uprising and major civilian protests in many more countries within and outside the region.³

Arab human rights organization do not regard the Permanent Arab Commission on Human Rights within Arab League as part of the universalistic human rights movement. This Commission, founded by the Council of the League of Arab States in 1968, has done little to promote human rights in Arab world. Likewise numerous other factors have led to such protests, including dictatorship, absolute monarchy, human right violations, government corruption, unemployment, economic decline and many others demographic structural factors. The Issue therefore, gives diverse signal for the third world Muslim countries including Bangladesh. On the other hand, Bangladesh depends on remittances from the ME in a significant scale which substantially contribute in the GDP. Therefore, the core issue of the problem is -

1. Arch Puddington, 'Democracy's Stake in the Arab Spring' *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2011. p.14.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

“Latest Arab spring in the ME has become an important issue for the region itself. The issue concerns Bangladesh being a third world developing country with numerous problems. Again Bangladesh is a Muslim country where people are vulnerable from religious sentiment point of view. Therefore, it is essential to identify the reasons of such situation including its impact on our socio-politico and economic aspects and suggest measures for Bangladesh to address the situation for future.”

Causes of Arab Spring

The Arab MENA Country’s history, political structures, socio-economic progress, cultural practices, human rights features, media management, and dictatorship by the authoritarian government etc are the root causes of such uprising.

Lack of Political Freedom.

As of February 2012, there were more than 100 registered political parties in Tunisia. Before Ben Ali fled the country on January 14, 2011, there were fewer than 10 parties, with none able to effectively challenge the ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally (DCR).⁴ The DCR under President Ben Ali won all seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 1989, and won all the directly elected seats in the 1994, 1999 and 2004 elections. The oppressive political environment, coupled with opaque political decision-making and the government’s insensitivity to popular demand for greater freedom gave rise to a popular revolution that began on December 17, 2010. The modern Egypt also bears the testimony of a single party authoritarian government, political domination and bureaucratic regime historically.⁵ On the other hand, the long 40 years rule and dictatorship in Libya by Gaddafi put the entire nation in to a cage from where people needed to come out seeking freedom and democracy.

Poverty and Unemployment.

It is really surprising that in the most Arab countries, around 50% of the population is under the age of 25.⁶ The average unemployment rate of these countries is 10% is higher than any other region in the world, and rapid population

4. Available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5439.htm> accessed on 05 May 2012.

5. ‘Egypt Table of Contents’ available at <http://countrystudies.us/egypt/105.htm> accessed on 03 May 2012.

6. Alanoud Al Sharekh, ‘Reform and Rebirth in the Middle East’ *‘Survival Journal’* Volume 53, IISS Routledge & Francis Group. p. 52.

growth is not accompanied by similar economic growth.⁷ Food prices in Tunisia soared in June 2010, and with limited salaries the consumers were unable to afford basic foodstuffs. In Egypt, the much-touted ‘open market’ policy could do little to stop the standard of living falling below the acceptable limit. The trend elsewhere is also similar. In Jordan, protests continued in response to country’s instability to solve the food-price crisis.⁸ Unemployment brought the region in to a trouble spot over the time. International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its April 2011 regional outlook for the ME and Central Asia also revealed the same.⁹ From Table 1, it can also be felt that the low median age, low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and high unemployment factors can all together act as catalyst for popular uprisings and regime change.¹⁰

Table 1: Poverty and Unemployment State

Country	Population (million)	Unemployment rate (%)	Median Age	Population Below Poverty level
Algeria	34.6	9.9	27.1	23
Egypt	80.5	9.7	24	20
Jordan	6.4	13.4	21.8	14.2
Lebanon	4.1		29.4	28
Libya	6.4	30	24.2	33
Morocco	31.6	9.8	26.5	14
Syria	22.2	8.3	21.5	11.9
Tunisia	10.6	14	29.7	3.8
Yemen	23.5	35	17.9	45.2

Source: Regional Outlook - 2011

Implementation of Human Rights.

In most Arab countries, the Sharia or Islamic law defines the rules of traditional social behaviour. Under the law, women are accorded a role inferior to that of men, and are therefore, discriminated with regard to personal rights and

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.* p.53.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Vivian Salama, ‘Middle East Leaders Address Unemployment in Arab Spring Wake’, *op.cit.* p.53.

freedoms. In Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Yemen, married women need their husbands' written permission to travel abroad. According to the UN, "Utilization of Arab women's capabilities through political and economic participation remain the lowest in the world in quantitative terms".¹¹ On the other hand, in most of the Arab countries Worker's Right is not preserved. In Saudi Arabia, there exist no labour laws, unions or collective bargaining. While child labour had been a problem in Egypt in the past, there has been marked improvement recently.¹² The labour rights are severely violated in Morocco as well.¹³ Only a few human rights NGOs can operate freely in Arab countries.¹⁴

Corruption and Lack of Good Governance. Corruption flourished at all levels in the ME, specially at structural level involving government's 'contracts and commissions' on oil business. More than 90% of participants in a survey for the Arab Human Development Report (2004) believed it to be pervasive.¹⁵ The survey noted that politicians, businessmen and high-ranking officials head the list in the spread of corruption while the same is also prevalent among the judiciary. In the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2008 compiled by Transparency International, only one Arab country ranked among the top 30 (out of 180). Qatar secured 28th in the list and was regarded as the least corrupt, while Iraq and Somalia were the most corrupt.¹⁶ Transparency International's CPI standing for last five years are appended in Table 2 below.¹⁷

11. Mitchell G. Bard, 'Human Rights in Arab Countries' available at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf16.html> accessed on 05 May 2012.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Human Rights Watch, Available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/09/01/middle-eastnorth-africa-treat-domestic-workers-fairly-ramadan>, accessed on 05 May 2012.

14. Pail J.Magnarella, 'Middle East and North Africa - Governance, Democratization, Human Rights'.*op.cit.* p.2.

15. 'An Open Door to Arab World' available at <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/background/corruption.htm> accessed on 06 May 2012

16. *Ibid.*

17. Transparency International, 'Corruption trends in the Middle East and North Africa Region (2007-2011)' available at accessed on 04 May 2012.

Table 2: CPI of Mena Countries 2007-2011

Year	Egypt	Jordan	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia
2011	2.9	4.5	2	3.4	3.8
2010	3.1	4.7	2.2	3.4	4.3
2009	2.8	5	2.5	3.3	4.2
2008	2.8	5.1	2.6	3.5	4.4
2007	2.9	4.7	2.5	3.5	4.2
Source: Regional Outlook - 2011					

Islamic Fundamentalism and Social Media Revolution. It is a fact that following the Arab spring, various Islamic groups are coming in the scene trying to gain the ground. The new Islamist mainstream, which includes Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia's Nahda party, has evolved over the years, and now promising that they would not universally impose *Sharia* law.¹⁸ Means to say that the revolutions which promised to usher in democracy are now being remoulded to enable the takeover by religious extremists.¹⁹ On the other hand, the due to the internet and satellite proliferations, the events of Arab Springs reverberated much faster across the borders and added fuel to it. The demonstrations in Egypt, Libya and elsewhere were watched across the globe by thousands of billions of audiences and were viewed as an attempt to oppress the innocent population. A young goggle executive was detained for 12 days before being released in response to pressure from youth protesters, who had designated him their leader in absentia.²⁰

EVENTS AND ANALYSIS - TUNISIA, EGYPT, LIBYA AND YEMEN

Events

The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurred in various Arab states that began on 18 December 2010. To date, rulers have been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen while the civil uprisings have erupted in Bahrain and Syria. Major protests have broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Oman; and minor protests

18. The Economists Column, 'Islam and the Arab spring' available at <http://www.economist.com/node/21525401> accessed on 05 May 2012.

19. A topic on 'Arab Spring for fundamentalism' available at <http://broadmind.nationalinterest.in/2011/10/13/arab-spring-for-fundamentalism> accessed on 07 May 2012.

20. Alanoud Al Sharekh, 'Reform and Rebirth in the Middle East' *'Survival'* 'op.cit' p.56

have occurred in Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara. Clashes at the borders of Israel as well as protests by Arab minority in Iranian Khuzestan have also been reported.²¹ An analysis is shown in table 3 below on four nations only whose Governments were forced from power.

Table 3: Analysis on Four Countries.				
Country	Dt started	Outcome/Events	Death toll	Sit
Tunisia	18 Dec 2010	Overthrow of Ben Ali; Ben Ali fled into exile in Saudi Arabia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resignation of Prime Minister Ghannouchi • Dissolution of the political police • Dissolution of the DCR and liquidation of its assets • Release of political prisoners • Elections held on 23 October and new govt came in power 	223	Govt Overthrown
Egypt	25 Jan 2011	Overthrow of Hosni Mubarak; Mubarak charged for killing protesters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resignation of Prime Minister(s) Nazif and Shafik • Assumption of power by the Armed Forces • Suspension of the Constitution, dissolution of the Parliament • Disbanding of State Security Investigations Services • Dissolution of the NDP, the former ruling party of Egypt and transfer of its assets to the state • Prosecution of Mubarak, his family and his former ministers 	846	Govt Overthrown

21. Available at <http://www.wikiepidie.org> accessed on 13 May 2012.

Country	Dt started	Outcome/Events	Death toll	Sit
Yemen	27 Jan 2011	<p>Overthrow of Ali Abdullah Saleh; Saleh granted immunity from prosecution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resignation of Prime Minister Mujawar • Resignation of MPs from the ruling party • Approval of President's immunity from prosecution by Yemeni legislators • Al-Qaeda linked militants take con of several cities in southern Yemen • Presidential election held to replace Saleh.; Mansur Al-Hadi elected as new president 	2,000	Govt Overthrown
Libya	15 Feb 2011	<p>Overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi; Gaddafi was killed by rebel forces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN-mandated military intervention took place and ended with NATO withdrawal • Opposition forces takes control of all Libyan cities • Assumption of interim control by NTC • International recognition of NTC as the sole governing authority for Libya • Beginning of sporadic low-level fighting and clashes 	30,000-35,000	Govt Overthrown. New Govt already Elected

Analysis

Tunisia. According to the 2011 Global Peace Index (GPI) data, Tunisia's global peace ranking is 44 out of 153 countries.²² It was given a status of 'Not Free' by the 'Freedom House' since it is not an electoral democracy. According to their website, former President Ben Ali exercised authoritarian rule since seizing power in a coup in 1987. Beginning in 1989, he won five consecutive five-year terms in tightly controlled elections. Tunisia had a very low political participation ranking of 2.22/10 and a high level of disrespect to human rights ranking of 3.0/5.0, according to the GPI report.²³ According to reports, around 2,000 people have been convicted of offences under the anti-terrorism law since 2003, including many who were tried and sentenced in their absence in trials that often failed to meet international fair trial standards.²⁴ According to Transparency International's 2010 CPI, Tunisia scores 4.3/10, making it a highly corrupt country.²⁵

Egypt. The suppression of general mass and the corruption of Government machineries were evident in long time practices of Egypt. Firstly, Egypt adopted a rent control law, with all the perverse incentives that entailed gentrification which was a concern for downtown residents.²⁶ Secondly, Egypt received a lot of fund from the United States, the European Union and the World Bank for 'health reform' between 1998 and 2009 but no significant measure was undertaken.²⁷ Thirdly, Egypt's tobacco tax increased to 40% on July 2010.²⁸ In Egypt the police were brutal, elections were rigged and corruption was rampant. Life was more difficult for the masses, as the rich grew richer and the poor grew poorer. All these actually made Egypt susceptible to such violent explosion.

Libya. The 2011 GPI data shows that Libya had a significant drop of falling 83 places from the previous year.²⁹ The data shows that it ranks 143 out of 153 countries.³⁰ It was given a status of 'Not Free' by the Freedom House since it is not an electoral democracy. Power in Libya was theoretically vested with a system of people's committee, but in practice those structures were manipulated to ensure the continued dominance of Gaddafi, who held no official title. Political parties were more or less illegal and joining a political party was punishable. Libya

22. 'Information on Tunisia' available at <http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/Tunisia> accessed on 1 May 2012.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. 'Economic causes of Egyptian Revolution' available at <http://www.futureofcapitalism.com/2011/02/economic-causes-of-the-egyptian-revolution> accessed on 17 May 2012.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. 'Information on Libya' available at <http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/Libya> accessed on 18 May 2012.

30. *Ibid.*

had a very low Political Participation ranking of 1.11/10 as reported by the EIU Democracy Index.³¹ Human Rights Watch reported in 2009 that 500 political prisoners remained in custody despite having been acquitted of all charges or served their full prison sentences.³² According to Transparency International's 2011 CPI, Libya scores 2.9/10, making it a highly corrupt country.³³

The country had GDP per capita above the world average (US \$ 12,062 in 2010).³⁴ But it saw its GDP per capita falling from US \$ 14,313 in 2008 to US \$ 9,511 in 2009.³⁵ Libya has seen its unemployment rate rising in recent years. The latest data of 2004 reflects that the unemployment rate of Libya is 30%.³⁶ According to World Investment Report 2009, FDI in Libya quadrupled between 2005 and 2008.³⁷ The government used to maintain strict control over all media outlets. A new analysis by the Committee to Protect Journalists had found Libya's media the most tightly controlled in the Arab world.³⁸

Yemen. The 2011 GPI data shows that Yemen had a significant drop of falling 11 places from the previous year.³⁹ It ranks 138 out of 153 countries according to the GPI 2011 report.⁴⁰ It was given a status of 'Not Free' by the Freedom House since it is not an electoral democracy. The country's political system is dominated by one party (the General People's Congress). Yemen had a very low Political Participation ranking of 3.33/10 as reported by the EIU Democracy Index and a very high Level of Disrespect to Human Rights ranking of 4.0/5.0, according to the GPI report.⁴¹ According to Transparency International's 2010 CPI, Yemen scores 2.1/10, making it a highly corrupt country.⁴² It also maintains a monopoly over the media. The country has nine government-controlled, 50 independent, and 30 party-affiliated newspapers.⁴³ Epidemic and infectious diseases like diphtheria and malaria are widespread.⁴⁴ All these contributed to the recent demonstrations.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. Transparency International, 'Corruption trends in the Middle East and North Africa Region (2007-2011)', op.cit.

34. 'Unemployment: A Major Problem in Arab World', available at <http://yallafinance.com/2011/04/13/unemployment-a-major-problem-in-the-arab-world/> accessed on 18 May 2012.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. 'Information on Libya', op.cit.

38. *Ibid.*

39. 'Information on Yemen', available at www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/Yemen accessed on 10 May 2012.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES AND IMPACT ON MIDDLE EAST REGION

International Responses

NATO's Response

The uprising in Libya and later to an armed conflict resulted in a NATO-led operation namely 'Operation Unified Protector' against the regime of Tripoli whose first priority was to protect civilians. NATO took action as part of a broad international effort and was legitimately authorized for military intervention through UNSC Resolution 1973. The support from the Arab League added to the political legitimacy for the intervention.⁴⁵ 'Operation Unified Protector' received criticisms as only a small number of allies (eight) contributed to the airstrike operation.⁴⁶ NATO justified its position in the plea of pursuing a new policy aiming to address the dire needs and interests of the peoples.⁴⁷

EU's Response

The EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring came as early as 8 March 2011, with the communication of the high level representative and the Commission proposing 'A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean'.⁴⁸ The EU committed both in the short and long term mission to help its ME partners particularly in facing two main challenges. Firstly, to build deep democracy and secondly, to ensure inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development without which democracy will not take root.⁴⁹

UN's Response

UN's overall response to Arab spring was generally impressive. Politically, the Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon immediately called on the Egyptian Government to respond positively to the demands of those demonstrating in Tahrir Square.⁵⁰ Since then, he made a series of consistent and bold statements on Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain in favour the civilians. Following the uprising the Secretary General paid a visit to UK and made a powerful speech at

45. 'The Arab Spring's Implications for NATO' available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabah-ghezali/the-arab-springs-implication-1462866.html> accessed on 25 July 2012.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Arik Segal, 'NATO's Response to the Arab Spring: A New Public Diplomacy Approach' available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabah-ghezali/the-arab-springs-implication-1462866.html> accessed on 24 July 2012.

48. 'The EU's response to the Arab Spring' available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press_ReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/918 accessed on 24 July 2012.

49. *Ibid.*

50. 'The UN's Response to the Arab Spring - One Year On', available at <http://ukun.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=PressS&id=730248882> accessed on 27 July 2012.

Oxford University on humanitarian intervention to these countries.⁵¹ The wider UN system also reacted positively. The General Assembly adopted its first ever Human Rights Resolution on Syria in December 2011. The UN had been active elsewhere in the Region too.

Arab League's Response

In general the Arab league did not echo with the Government of various affected countries. Rather it stood for the affected people of the countries and took measures for their protection. Arab League headquarters being a couple of hundred metres away from Tahrir Square, in central Cairo was not much reactive to the situation. In March 2011, the League voted in support of a no-fly zone over Libya. The stance of Arab League facilitated the move leading to a UN resolution and subsequent NATO intervention.⁵²

Amnesty International's Response

The Amnesty International, during its 50th anniversary celebration in London, analyzed the situation of human rights in 155 countries, and placed special emphasis on the 'unprecedented protests' during 2011 that took place in MENA.⁵³ It also said, 'The failure of leadership has become a global issue in the last year, in which politicians have responded to the protests with brutality or indifference'. In connection with the protests of the Arab spring, the report also revealed the lack of action of the UNSC before such abuses.⁵⁴ The report highlighted that the UNSC had done nothing while crimes against humanity were committed in Syria.

USA's Response

US President Barack Obama's speech on the ME policies was a belated response to extraordinary events over which the USA has so far exercised overt little influence. The president praised the spirit of people's power that had animated 'Arab spring' but also made clear that direct US involvement in the region would remain selective.⁵⁵ For example, Saudi Arabia, one of the most

51. *Ibid.*

52. 'Arab Spring revolution at the Arab League' available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15714771> accessed on 27 July 2012.

53. 'The Delta World' news on 'Amnesty International considers the Arab spring as a missed opportunity' available at accessed on 28 July 2012.

54. *Ibid.*

55. 'Barack Obama signals selective US response to Arab spring' available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/19/barack-obama-response-arab-spring> accessed on 26 July 2012.

repressive countries in the Arab world and a key US ally and oil supplier, did not get a single mention in the speech. Obama had harsh words for Syria, where hundreds had been killed by the security forces. On Bahrain issue which is US's a long-standing partner (and home of US fifth fleet), was not much concerned.⁵⁶ Besides, US's responses in Arab Spring raised internal controversies inside the country.

China and India's Responses

In contrast to other organizations and western countries, China and India's response were different. Chinese President Hu Jintao as regards to NATO action at Libya said, "If military action brings disaster to civilians and causes a humanitarian crisis, then it runs counter to the purpose of the UN resolution". On 17 March 2011, the People's Republic of China abstained from voting, rather than use its veto to block, the UNSCR to establish a Libyan no-fly zone. It is to be noted that India also abstained from voting on the UNSCR to establish a Libyan no-fly zone in its capacity as a non permanent member.⁵⁷

Impact on ME

Arab uprising in MENA countries has its political, economic and balance of power implications in the region:

Splitting the Region in Clusters. The ME has been divided in four separate clusters following the Arab Spring. These are- the transition countries, the teetering countries, the reforming countries and the countries with no political change. The transition countries are - Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia. The only Teetering country is - Syria. It has seen huge uprisings and has become more pronounced as the governments used violence to quell them. The reforming countries are - Jordan, Morocco, and Oman. All these countries are ruled by monarchies, which came under pressure and felt the need to promise reforms. The countries with no political change are rest of the countries in the region.

Change in Balance of Power

Iran and Turkey. In recent years, alongside the struggle between the two axes, it had also been the emergence of rivalry between the two rising non-Arab actors in the region – Iran and Turkey. The Arab spring has only brought this contest to the surface and intensified it. The Iranian model and the Turkish model compete for the hearts and minds of the Arab public that has risen up against

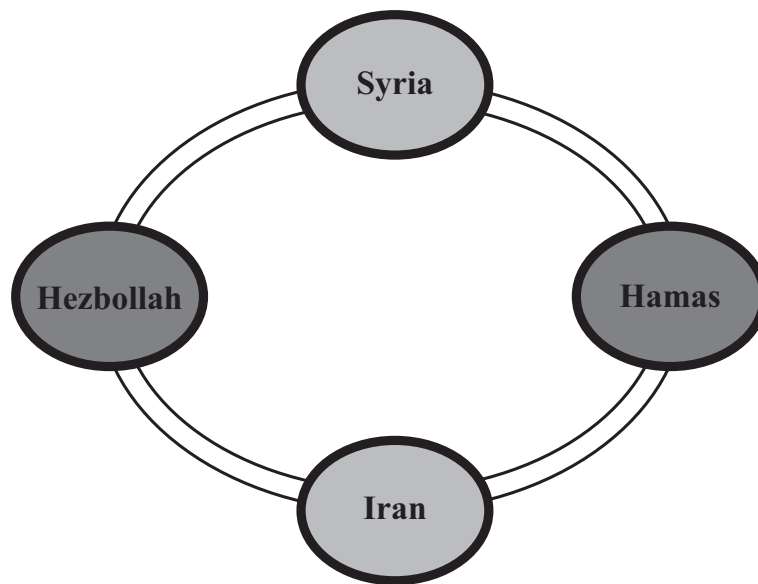
56. *Ibid.*

57. 'International reactions to the 2011 military intervention in Libya', *op.cit.*

its leaders. It seems now that the importance of Turkey as a player in regional influence is greater than that of Iran. While another conclusion may be that the western influence in the region specially that of USA will remain alive.⁵⁸

Syria and Iran. Arab Spring occurred at a point in time when the USA and Israel are in quest of a positive change in the balance of power in the Arab world. In this connection, Syria's relation with Iran will play an important role. Uprising in Syria is threatening the regime of Assad. **Should the regime fall**, the new regime may not work together with Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah nexus like the previous regime which might facilitate the USA to exert its influence. **If Assad's regime continues**, it will keep challenging USA and Israel but may be much less than what happened in the past Following Figure 1 shows the present nexus.

Figure 1: Power Nexus of Middle East



Source: Author

Saudi Arab and Egypt. The Arab spring also affected the positioning and conduct of Saudi Arab and other conservative states including Iraq and Kuwait in the Gulf. These countries had stirred quite well and are currently conducting a more assertive foreign policy than in the past. On the other hand, the Egypt after the toppling of Mubarak has given a message of democracy for the entire region. This is also going to serve the purpose of the western bloc specially USA.⁵⁹

58. Yoel Guzansky, 'One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications' available at [http://www.inss.org.il/upload \(FILE\) 1330948414.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload(FILE)1330948414.pdf) accessed on 25 July 2012.ark A. Heller, Editors

59. *Ibid.*

Impact on ME Peace Process. The changing dynamics in the ME are not good for either Israel or for Palestine. Israel always desires for a peace agreements with democratic ME countries which is a far cry. More so, much will depend on future Syria-Iran relation and Co-operation by Syria and Egypt. Egyptian stepped down President Mubarak followed a relatively pro-USA and Israel policies which may not continue in future.

Impact on Economy

Countries those witnessed revolutions, economic impacts are related to the macroeconomic as a whole via GDP losses, fiscal balance deterioration, depletion or exhaustion of foreign reserves, drying up of foreign investment, and enlarged current account deficits. According to the IMF, GDP losses in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain are estimated for 2011 alone at US\$ 20.56 billion. GDP growth of various MENA countries before and after Arab Spring is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: GDP Growth of Mena Countries		
Country	GDP Growth 2006-2010	GDP Growth 2011-2012
Egypt	6.2%	1.7%
Tunisia	4.6%	0.6%
Yemen	4.0%	-6.9%
Syria	4.9%	-5.8%
Libya	3.2%	0.5%
Saudi Arabia	2.8%	6.0%
UAE	3.2%	3.4%
Source: Regional Outlook - 2011		

IMPACT ON BANGLADESH AND MEASURES REQUIRED

Impact on Bangladesh

Political Viewpoint. The very incident can be a source of popular uprising, though not seem to be very promising one, at any point in time. Ours is country where a substantial percentage of population live below poverty level. Taking the weak areas in consideration any interested corner may try to derive political benefit. Following example would clarify the aforementioned fact of utilizing the Arab Spring as ill political motive.

Condemnation Conference by Bangladesh Crisis Group (BCG).⁶⁰ Following the Arab Spring, a gathering of community organizations, human rights activists, academics, lawyers and members of civil society was held in London on 3 October 2011, to condemn the human rights abuses and state-led terrorism towards the people and members of the opposition in Bangladesh. The conference was titled ‘Bangladesh in Crisis: Government at War with its People’. The participants very clearly highlighted the situation of Bangladesh as an emergency and explained how government was using the pretext of the War on Terror to suppress opposition voices, mainly Islamic organizations. Such actions could fuel the general mass against the ruling Government and create chaos throughout country.

Economic Viewpoint

Following the civil war, in early 2011, over 35,000 of the 70,000 Bangladeshis working in Libya returned home.⁶¹ Table 5 shows the growth trend of Bangladeshi workers in ME countries with a down trend in various countries in 2009-2010 only⁶²

Table 5: Worker’s Remittances in Bangladesh (US\$ in Million)					
Country	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Bahrain	61.29	79.96	138.2	157.43	98.69
Kuwait	454.38	680.7	863.73	970.7	602.67
Oman	153	196.47	220.64	290.06	218.72
Qatar	161.43	233.17	289.79	343.06	222.94
Saudi Arab	1562.21	1734.7	2324.23	2859.09	1985.13
UAE	512.64	804.84	1135.14	1754.92	1100.45
Libya	.16	2.61	0.36	1.25	1.01
Iran	1.68	2.36	3.24	3.28	2.74
Total in ME	2906.8	3734.8	4975.3	6380.1	4232.4
Source: www.freepatentsonline.com on 15 August 2012.					

60. *Ibid.*

61. ‘Manpower exports to War-torn Libya Restored’ available at <http://mashiurrahman.wordpress.com/2011/12/22/manpower-exports-to-war-torn-libya-restored> accessed on 16 August 2012.

62. ‘Workers’ Migration and Remittances in Bangladesh’ available at <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/Journal-Business-Strategies/229896357.html> accessed on 15 August 2012.

However, due to the prudent actions by the Government, the worker's export state has improved in 2012. Overseas employment rose by 68% in the first quarter of the year.⁶³ But it is to be noted that if the Arab spring would have resulted in significant return of workers from many affected countries including those from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries then it would have marked influence in our economy.

Security Viewpoint

The political instability, poor infrastructure, corruption at every sphere of life, insufficient power supplies and slow implementation of economic reforms etc are the unpleasant truth for our country. Therefore, Bangladesh remains vulnerable from a wide variety of internal crisis like food security, health security, job security, political disharmony and so on. With so many internal crisis and indirect influence of global and regional actors, Bangladesh's security remains threatened.

Self Organized Society⁶⁴

A great lesson of Arab Spring is that a structural framework backed by recognized leadership is not always necessary to articulate and organize the people for a successful revolution to happen. This is the age of self organized society carrying out mass revolution without leadership and structures.

Social and Media Viewpoint

Social networking and Media plays important role in spreading the message in a much faster way than anything. Internet and satellite proliferations had definite contribution in promulgating the uprising and strengthening the protests. The impact of 'twittering masses' and social networking tools on any revolution in future will remain significant also.

Measured Required

Bangladesh can take a lot of lessons from the recent Arab Spring that swept through the entire MENA countries in varied magnitude. The impact of such uprising is remarkable and needs to be arrested well in time.

63. 'Manpower state in Libya' available at <http://regionbuzz.com/Africa/Libya/---04042012> accessed on 16 August 2012.

64. Rahman Mahmud ur 'Revolution in The Arab World, Lessons for Bangladesh' available at 'Defence Journal' p.20.

Good Political Practices. Political instability is an important issue which put the country in turmoil very often. The promise and hope by the political parties need to be met in due course of time. We observe lack co-operation between the ruling parties and the oppositions also which hinders implementation of the project and government machineries to function.

Social Awareness. Government may take some steps to grow social awareness among the citizens highlighting the consequences of such uprising which can never be good for any country. When a nation is divided among them, the third party is always the beneficiary.

Good Governance. In order to save the country from such disorder and chaos in future, the good governance is a pre-requisite. But as per CPI of 2011 Bangladesh scores only 2.7 out of 10 which is one of the lowest.⁶⁵ Therefore, Bangladesh must pursue for good governance system.

Transparency in Policy Formulation. As part of good governance system, transparency in policy formulation is essential. Policy should not serve the purpose of the individual or political parties. Rather it should aim at fulfilling the national requirement.

Good Civil-Military Relationship. A well developed Civil-Military relationship with mutual respect and co-operation is very much essential to take the country to a long way.

Positive Media Performance. Media plays an important role to arrest such disturbance and also to fuel the same. Therefore, Bangladesh should formulate a conducive media policy and thereafter, develop the culture of using the same positively in the interest of the nation.

Clear National Security Strategy. Bangladesh needs to determine its National Security Strategy integrating all the agencies with clear allocation of responsibilities and continuously update the same. The National Security Council should meet on a regular basis and devise the strategy to meet the national requirement.

65. 'Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2011' available at <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results> accessed on 18 August 2012.

CONCLUSION

The Arab MENA countries underwent the mass uprising and demonstrations of varied magnitude commencing towards the end of 2010 and many countries have already changed their Governments. The main causes of Arab uprising are lack of political freedom, poverty, unemployment, human rights violation, non implementation of worker's and women's right, not allowing the human rights organization to work freely etc. Corruption and lack of good governance was common for all affected countries. On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism and social media revolution added fuel to the crisis. It was the spontaneous expression of long awaited deprivations by the general mass of the country against the autocratic rulers.

Following the Arab spring various MENA countries and international organizations had shown varieties of concerns. In general most of the international organizations condemned the oppressive regime and violent use of security forces against protestors. In Libya the NATO had to intervene militarily under the operation 'Unified Protector' to protect the civilians and change the regime. Arab League also provided the legitimate political support in this regard. The EU committed itself both in the short and long term mission to help its MENA partners to build democracy and to ensure sustainable economic growth. UN's overall response to Arab spring was generally impressive though military intervention in Libya earned mixed feelings. The Amnesty International analyzed the situation as a gross violation of human rights and the brutality displayed by the politicians and the regimes. USA in general was little tacit and praised the spirit of people's power.

Arab Spring has multidirectional implications like political, economic, ME peace process and balance of power shifting in MENA region etc. More importantly, it has the implications of westerns interests in the region and their far reaching vision of engaging with the partners and dominating their rivals. The changing dynamics in the ME are not good either for Israel or for Palestine. The economic impacts are also tremendous in the countries those witnessed revolutions. These are related to the macroeconomic environment as a whole via GDP losses, fiscal balance deterioration, depletion or exhaustion of foreign reserves, drying up of foreign investment, and enlarged current account deficits.

The recent Arab Spring in the ME has enormous impact on Bangladesh from political, economic, security, social and media view points. Taking the many vulnerabilities of Bangladesh into cognizance, any vested or paid organization might exploit the situation to fulfil an ill political motive. Bangladesh being swamped with numerous problems like food, health, job, political disharmony etc is prone to security threat. Under such situation, a crisis similar to Arab spring sponsored by any

corner might affect the country unless handled carefully. A clear national strategy together with good political practices, social awareness, transparent policies, good governance system, positive media management etc are key essential for avoiding such uprisings in future.

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