

# **Protests and Possibilities**

West Asia and India

**Rajendra Abhyankar**

**Azadeh Pourzand**

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Gateway House Research Paper No. 8, March 2013



**GATEWAY HOUSE**  
INDIAN COUNCIL ON GLOBAL RELATIONS

भारतीय वैश्विक संबध परिषद्

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*T: +91 22 22023371 E: [info@gatewayhouse.in](mailto:info@gatewayhouse.in) W: [www.gatewayhouse.in](http://www.gatewayhouse.in)*

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# About the Authors

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**R**ajendra M. Abhyankar retired from the Indian Foreign Service in August 2005 as India's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg. He was Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, from 2001 to 2004. He has been India's High Commissioner to Cyprus (1987-1990) and Ambassador to Syria (1992-1996), Turkey and Azerbaijan (1996-1998). Abhyankar was India's Deputy High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, non-resident Consul General to the Republic of San Marino and Consul General of India to San Francisco from 1998 to 2001.

After retirement, Abhyankar has been associated with various institutions, including as Director, Centre for West Asian Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University; Chairman, Kunzru Centre for Defence Studies and Research, Pune; and as Director and Adviser for The Asia Foundation, San Francisco, on their India Program (2005-2011). He was President, Hinduja Foundation, Mumbai, from 2006 to 2009. He currently teaches a graduate course on 'The Practice of Diplomacy' at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.

**A**zadeh Pourzand is a Senior Researcher at Gateway House. She has a Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, U.S.A, and an MBA from the Nyenrode Business Universiteit in the Netherlands. Azadeh focuses on the Middle East and the geopolitics of the region. She was the editor-in-chief of *Women's Policy Journal* at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and has written widely on Iran in publications such as the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Huffington Post* and for *CNN International*. Born and raised in Tehran, Azadeh immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16. she has worked and studied in Mexico, Argentina, Bangladesh, China, The Netherlands and India.



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# List of Abbreviations

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- AL: Arab League
- AHDR: Arab Human Development Report
- BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
- GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
- IBSA: India, Brazil, South Africa
- ICC: International Criminal Court
- IMF: International Monetary Fund
- ITEC: Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
- MEPP: Middle East Peace Process
- NAM: Non-Aligned Movement
- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- OIC: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
- PNA: Palestine National Authority
- UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
- UNSC: United Nations Security Council

# Section One

## Contextualising the Arab uprisings

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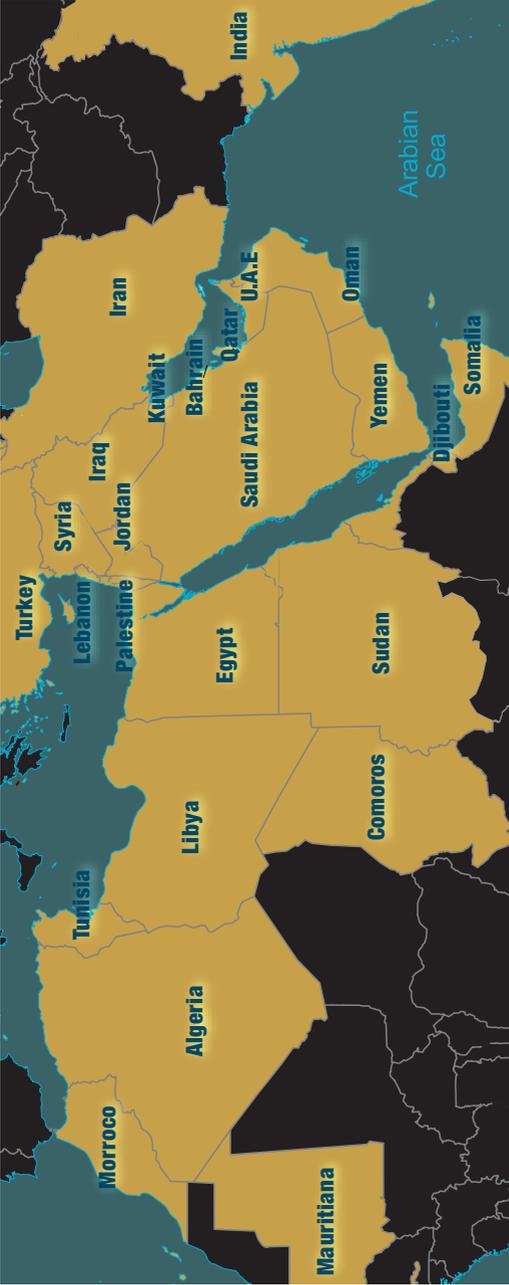
### I. Introduction: India's overarching West Asia policy

West Asia is undergoing momentous political changes, which have created new challenges and opportunities for India's engagement in the region. The changes mark a new inflection point for India's West Asia policy. This paper will analyse the origin and trajectories of these shifts in order to assess their actual and potential impact on India.

India has interacted with three civilizations to its West since antiquity – Persian, Arab and Turkish – and has maintained close ties with each. India's relations with the Arab and Islamic world, rooted in history and culture, have been enriched over the centuries by a prolific and mutually-beneficial exchange of goods, services, people and ideas. This long-standing contact imparts a unique character to India's relations with the region.

The political ties between India and the Arab world expanded significantly in the decades after India's Independence in 1947. With the end of colonialism, the independent countries of West and South Asia adopted a policy of non-alignment in a world sliding into the Cold War. Non-alignment brought a pan-Arab credo of liberty, unity and socialism into an acceptable international political framework without threatening the internal stability of the weak West Asian regimes that came to power in the post-colonial period.

India sees 'West Asia' as three distinct sub-regions – the Gulf, West Asia or the Mashreq and North Africa or the Maghreb, which it considers part of its proximate neighbourhood. (*See map on page 6*). India no longer refers to the region as the 'Middle East', a Eurocentric term based on British naval strategy, adumbrated by the naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914). In this paper, the authors will use the terms 'Middle East' and 'West Asia'



*The map shows the countries of West Asia, with India to their east. The 22 countries of the Arab region (across Northern Africa, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean) are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen*

alternately, depending on whether an international or an Indian view is being presented.

Since Independence, India has sought the “middle ground” on divisive issues related to West Asia. India’s policy towards West Asia operates within a broad framework of maintaining equidistance in intra-regional conflicts and support to the Palestinian cause. Its economic corollary has been the development of economic, trade and investment ties, and of energy security.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran in August 2012, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said: “... [T]he progress, prosperity, well-being, political stability and plurality of the Asia to our West have always been of equal historical and civilizational significance for us. A West Asian region that can realise its full developmental potential, live in peace and harmony and join the comity of democratic and plural societies will contribute enormously to human progress and peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” [1]

India has always believed that its relations with West Asia stood on its own, that its role did not compete with any of the great powers – and it did not, to a large extent. In the last decade though, this belief has been shaken. Issues like terrorism, money-laundering and the safety of oil lanes have imposed new imperatives.

In the wake of the Arab uprisings, the West is likely to lose its legitimacy in the Middle East, with more governments based on Islamic principles coming to power. India too will have to re-think its West Asia policy while navigating the destabilising aspects of the region. In the final section of this paper, we make recommendations for India’s policy in the immediate, medium and long-term, to preserve and enhance India’s interests in West Asia.

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While India’s overall West Asia policy has emphasised friendship, peace and prosperity, its thrust towards each sub-region is nuanced on the basis of mutual interest. Decisions related to Israel and Palestine were amongst the first foreign policy positions a newly-independent India took, demonstrating the

interplay of differing stances of the secular and Hindu theocratic streams in its domestic polity. India's policy towards West Asia reflects a similar interplay of these forces even today.

The cardinal elements of this policy include support for the Palestinian cause, a preference for secular and democratic regimes, security and stability in and of the Gulf, enhancing bilateral trade and investments based on comparative advantage, energy security, and people-to-people contact.

After the end of the Cold War, and with the onset of economic liberalisation, India was forced to recalibrate its West Asia policy. An important consequence was the diplomatic opening to Israel 45 years after India's Independence.

Another turning point came after the September 2001 attacks in the U.S., which gave some forms of global terrorism an Arab and Islamic identity. India's reiterations on the cross-border nature of terrorism, with Pakistan at its epicentre, are now conventional wisdom. India has since aimed to draw in the West Asian countries to jointly combat terrorism, and to project itself as a religiously-neutral secular model – a country that is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world.

The Arab uprisings are the cause of the most recent change in direction in India's policy towards West Asia. As the world's largest democracy, India cannot but welcome these developments. At the same time, the certainties of the past decades have evaporated. India's position on the uprisings has appeared to be reactive, vacillating, transactional and primarily concerned with the internally-driven imperative to bring trapped Indian workers out of these troubled countries, to the exclusion of the larger picture these developments represent.

This image and India's primarily neutral stand has not done great disservice to India's policy parameters and core interests so far, such as security in and of the Gulf, energy supplies, jobs for Indian nationals and remittances. India's "hands-off" attitude since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings may have even helped.

At the same time, India's stand has neither enhanced its political capital nor embellished its image amongst the Arabs in the region or in the international community.

As the new dispensations based on political Islam settle in, India will need to recalibrate its policy in order to maintain its status in the region and as an emerging global power. In its self-interest, India will have to cope with these changes, some of which may go against its avowed preference for secular and democratic regimes. The question now is: Does India have the political will or the ability to be a constructive force in bringing stability to West Asia?

## II. Understanding the Arab uprisings

In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young street vendor from Sidi Bouzid, a small and remote Tunisian town, self-immolated. This act of protest was remarkable in that it went against the tenets of Islam and catalysed a revolution from the periphery of the Arab world. It was the equivalent of the so-called “greased cartridge incident,” the catalyst for India’s first war of independence in 1857.

The crisis in West Asia today has its roots in the persistence of illiberal and autocratic regimes and the long-unresolved issue of establishing a secure and viable Palestinian state. Its short-term causes are the invasion by, and continuing presence of, foreign forces, as well as regional rivalries. This has put pressure on national sovereignty, regional and national security, the authority of the state, and the economic well-being of the people.

Generally described by the West as the ‘Arab Spring’, the political upheavals in the Arab countries (*see map on page 6*) are not a single event but an ongoing process, which could well take decades to spend itself out.<sup>[1]</sup> For this reason it has been variously described as a revolution, an awakening, an uprising and a protest. While the term “spring” reflected the initial enthusiasm that these unrests inspired, particularly amongst the youth, it cannot capture the developments that followed.

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[1] The Arab region consists of 22 countries in Northern Africa, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. With a few exceptions, the region’s principal language is Arabic. The countries are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen. [2]

As is now evident, the upheavals embody popular Arab disgust with existing autocratic regimes and a clamour for participative governance; a perception that the U.S. is anti-Islam, shaped by the U.S.'s invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq; and helplessness and despondency at Israel's wanton acts against the Palestinians, which have cast doubts on the viability of the two-state solution.

For the autocratic Arab regimes – in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria and Sudan – the illusory confrontation with Israel, which left Palestinians on their own, provided a convenient pretext to take away human rights and the freedoms of speech and of assembly, and assert unbridled control over their countries' natural mineral resources of oil, gas, sulphur, rock phosphate and water

The acute frustration and deprivation that pushed Bouazizi to set himself afire, reflected the simmering turbulence under the placid surface of ostensible Arab apathy. It suited the western and regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran to associate this "apathy" with their notions of Arab history and culture.

Yet, unlike in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, centripetal forces such as overarching state power, sectarian affinity and a consciousness of national identity have prevented the region from completely exploding or redrawing national boundaries to create new states.

## **II. i American foreign policy in the Middle East**

A major reason for the survival of West Asian regimes, historian James L. Gelvin writes in *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*, was America's foreign policy of maintaining and nourishing these regimes. [3] During the Cold War, U.S. support was aimed at countering Soviet influence, maintaining access to oil, protecting Israel and connecting the western world to Asia. In the post-Cold War years these objectives, including deterring Russia and China, have continued to determine the U.S.'s approach.

The invasion of Iraq by the U.S. in 2003, based on the specious claim that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, exacerbated the anti-American sentiment that U.S. foreign policy engendered, by coalescing two negatives: pro-Israel and anti-Islam. That invasion, coupled with George Bush's Greater Middle East

project, which saw the U.S. as the precursor of democracy in the entire region, instead unleashed *sub-rosa* political and religious currents in Iraq, which grew beyond the people's desire for participative governance.

The widening currents touched religion, ethnicity, economic privilege and security in Iraq and the entire region. These are now reverberating in the violence against U.S. assets and personnel from Tunisia to Yemen.

During the last decade, sporadic, amorphous and diffused protests have erupted in different countries in the region, all of which were quickly subdued. In 2011, the protests erupted simultaneously in a number of countries and drew sustenance from each other. Even after non-democratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were overthrown, popular protest has come to stay as a weapon of mass mobilisation.

## **II. ii Development deficits in the Arab world**

These momentous shifts are also rooted in the long-standing development failures in the Arab world. Long before the emergence of the Arab uprisings, the first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) in 2002, *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, identified three major areas of development deficits in the Arab world: political freedom and governance, the acquisition of knowledge, and women's empowerment.

**(a) Political freedom and good governance:** The AHDR (2004) stated "of all impediments to an Arab renaissance, political restrictions on human development are the most stubborn." [4] "Freedoms" according to the report, in particular those of "opinion, expression and creativity," are under pressure in much of the Arab context. The 'Freedom Index' used to characterise the extent of freedoms indicates that, "out of the seven regions of the world, Arab countries had the lowest freedom score in the late 1990s." [5]

The report emphasised that "culture" is not responsible for the failure of democracy in several Arab countries. Instead, it highlighted the "convergence of political, social and economic structures" as a key factor that has suppressed or eliminated "organized social and political actors capable of turning the crisis

of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes to their advantage.” [6] In other words, infrastructural and institutional deficiencies in the Arab world are responsible for the restrictions on freedoms.

In all the Arab countries that have been through protests, there is indeed an absence of credible and viable institutions that can hold the trust of the people and can bridge the *ancien regimes* and the nascent regimes. Governance is marked by a multiplicity of intelligence and security agencies all answerable only to the ruler; by the use of minorities like the Druze and Christians for internal intelligence gathering, discreet surveillance and reporting; severe punishment, torture and disappearances; a total absence of any system of redress; and an army with overarching powers over the people and immunity from public scrutiny.

The failure to create employment and a reasonable standard of living for the large youth population – of the Arab region’s population of about 350 million people, more than 50% are under the age of 25 – socio-political repression, high rates of unemployment – exceeding 30% in Bahrain and Tunisia and 50% in Yemen and Syria – have all characterised the rampant mis-governance in the region. [7]

Many of the major economies in the region – such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries,<sup>[ii]</sup> Libya, Iraq and Algeria – rank high in the world as “rentier economies,” surviving on revenue from mineral resources, with oil accounting for a substantial percentage of the revenue. Overall, the Middle East-North Africa region is endowed with about 70% of the world’s proven oil reserves and 50% of proven gas reserves. Oil and gas earnings account for about 70% of total exports and 75% of budget revenues. [8] The bulk of oil revenues gets ploughed back into the oil industry and is not used for human development. Soaring real estate prices and the neglect of agriculture and rural infrastructure have left the majority of the fast-growing and urbanising populations deeply impacted by low wages and high food prices.

**(b) The acquisition of knowledge:** In many Arab countries, the state completely controls education. An analysis done by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of the 2003

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[ii] GCC: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. [9]

AHDR says that virtually “all of the indicators of the transformation to a knowledge economy forecast weak progress in the Arab world.” [10] Illiteracy was a major concern as “approximately 40% of adult Arabs – 65 million, two third of whom are women, are illiterate.” [11]

According to the UNDP’s analysis, “[O]ver 50 million young people will enter the labour market by 2010 and 100 million by 2020 – a minimum of 6 million new jobs need to be created each year to absorb these new entrants.” [12]

The 2003 AHDR also says that “Communication in education is didactic, supported by set books containing indisputable texts and by an examination process that only tests memorisations.” [13] The report raises concerns about research and innovation in the Arab world: “At a time when technological innovation is central to boosting productivity, Arab investment in research has been declining.” [14]

The restrictions imposed by the Arab regimes on new knowledge tools such as information and communication technology to restrain the online spaces that were being used to mobilise against the government also resulted in more widespread dissatisfaction.

In all of this, the aspirations of the substantial youth population have not only been neglected but also repressed. When emerging economies like India, Brazil and China were jump-starting rapid economic growth, the Arab world lost the opportunity to harness the talent of its people.

**(c) Women’s empowerment:** Women constitute approximately 50% of the population of 360 million in the Arab states. [15] The AHDR (2005) states that in terms of gender, two key areas need to be addressed: The participation of women in government structures, Parliament and the business sector has to increase beyond a token presence; and equal rights or legal entitlements of women have to be enhanced, more so in all the GCC monarchies that are based on *Sharia* laws. [16]

Despite legislative action in such areas as political rights, gender equality and freedom of movement in countries like Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, “Arab women’s economic participation remains the lowest in the world”

– about 33.3% of women, 15 years and older, in contrast to the world average of 55.6%. [17]

Although the enrolment of women in elementary and higher education has increased, their academic focus remains largely within the social sciences and humanities; these are fields that are least in demand by most employers. Women in Arab countries also suffer “unacceptably high rates of morbidity and mortality connected with pregnancy and reproductive functions.” [18]

These severe deficits, which have spawned large discontented populations, are the context within which recent unrests in the region emerged and grew.

## **II. iii Nature and trajectory of the protests**

More than two years after the political turmoil began, it is evident that the uprisings are not definitive in terms of their goal, nor are they irreversible in their direction or determinate in their pace.

The spontaneity and inclusion that marked the initial gathering in Cairo’s Tahrir Square on 25 January 2011 became the initial hallmark of uprisings in every country. Online social networking sites signalled the “days of rage,” most often on Friday, which became a way to track the protests as they spread through early 2011, on the dates listed below:

January 28 in Egypt; February 3 in Yemen; February 12 in Algeria; February 14 in Bahrain; February 17 in Libya; February 18 in Oman; February 20 in Morocco; February 25 in Iraq; March 11 in Saudi Arabia; March 15 in Palestine and Syria; and March 24 in Jordan. [iii]

As the tensions between the ruling regimes and the people grew, the nature of protests also altered. Passion, the initial organising principle, splintered along religious, occupational, or even geographical lines. The opportunistic entry of better-organised groups like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, to secure

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[iii] Appendix A outlines the course (till December 2012) of the uprisings in these countries. Appendix B is a chronology of the Arab uprisings.

for themselves a role in the new political dispensation, destroyed the spontaneous and inclusive character of the protests. It was a testing period for Islamic-oriented groups throughout the region, because most of them were either banned or had limited room for manoeuvre. After the exit of the rulers in Egypt and Tunisia, they took on a more assertive role in the developing political changes.

The uprisings have so far overturned the established order in the “non-monarchies” in the region – with the fall of governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya and government changes in Morocco and Jordan.

But the momentum of the uprisings could not be sustained in a liberal, secular and non-partisan direction because of various factors – due to the failure of the liberal and secular parties to convert into electoral votes their drawing power in the streets; a lack of organisation; and their inability to work with the plethora of opposition groups with competing agendas.

Consequently, the religious dimension of the protests had serious repercussions: first, the uprisings attained a sectarian colour; second, liberal and minority groups felt increasingly threatened; and third, the growing polarisation within the protesting Islamic groupings exacerbated the Shia-Sunni divide.

As expected, election results during 2012 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Morocco and Jordan gave Islamic-oriented parties a lead role, if not the majority, in the new parliaments. With the preponderant success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Islam emerged as a major influence on the mutating protests in different countries. In effect, this moved political agitation that was hitherto confined to the mosques out in the streets.

The Islamic groups, many linked to the Salafists – the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Ennahda in Tunisia, the Islamist Party of Justice and Development in Morocco, the Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan, al-Islah Islamist Party in Yemen, al-Sahawa in Saudi Arabia – could not be ignored, given their strong popular roots, a history of opposing the autocratic rulers, better organisation and funding, and a culture of shaping public sentiment into a conservative mould.

These groups had also demonstrated a capacity to oppose Al-

Qaeda and its belief in violent change, by working within society to provide facilities such as primary healthcare and education to sections not covered by these states' social security services.

The uprisings have also resonated in Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia without so far leading to changes in their ruling political structure. These monarchies have managed to stave off the protests from spilling onto the streets by tightening repression, reshuffling the government, and monetary handouts – this, according to Middle East experts Glenn Robinson and Marc Lynch, is a form of “defensive democratisation.” [19]

The next round of uprisings may well engulf the monarchies in the region. Equally, there are signs that popular political mobilisation could eventually engulf autocratic regimes in Africa as well, if the ongoing protests since January 2011 in Sudan are an indication.

Most of the countries that witnessed uprisings are now facing the challenges of transition, but Syria continues to be caught in a worsening sectarian civil war. Major world and regional powers have taken sides and armed their preferred side in the conflict, and so far there has been no local resolution to the situation in Syria.

The political transformation in Egypt could provide the paradigm for other Arab countries in transition, but the outcome in Syria will determine the future of the Arab transformation project itself. The old adage indeed appears to be true: There is no war (read “change”) without Egypt, and no peace (read “stability”) without Syria.

## **II. iv The goals of the Arab awakening**

Ever since the political upheavals started in December 2010, many of our assumptions have faltered in the face of such events as the landslide election of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the invulnerability of the army's power in Egypt and Tunisia, the assertion of tribal affinity in Libya, and the near-eclipse of secular and liberal parties.

Many West Asian countries remain on a knife's edge, given the diversity and complexity of contending interests, as was evident

in the violence in Libya in November 2012 and mounting popular protests against the Mohamed Morsi dispensation in Egypt.

Will the continuing protests lead to a West Asia that is open, dynamic and democratic? For answers to this question, it is important to consider the aspirations expressed by the Arab peoples during the uprisings.

The broad goal of the protesters in every country was to supplant the existing political system by a form of governance which would be participative and inclusive, and which would respect the diversity of views, traditions, customs and beliefs. To reach this goal across all the countries in turmoil, the first step would have to be free and fair elections leading to elected peoples' assemblies, which would, after the widest discussion, decide and legislate on a Constitution.

The outcome has taken different forms in different countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Syria, depending on the diversity of populations and the role of *ancien regime* structures still at work in these countries, like the army or the trade guilds and unions.

The real question then was this: how would the ongoing protests be converted into constructive institutions and sustainable mechanisms, which could assure the maximum participation of the vast range of interests, ethnicities and demographics? From the pronouncements of the new leaderships in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen, and the nascent leaderships in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine and Syria, the common criteria of governance appear to be:

- A transition from “defensive democratisation” to genuine democracy with a Constitution subject to review by a genuinely-elected Parliament
- Islamic inspiration for the Constitution, short of the *Sharia* law, although its degree may vary from country to country
- Army under civilian control of the Parliament, including public scrutiny of its budget and resources
- An independent political opposition
- An independent judiciary

- The space to separate the leader from his government or his political party
- A constitutional guarantee for minority rights

After the ouster of the long-serving potentates in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen, as well as government changes in Morocco and Jordan, public discourse has focused on these criteria for establishing an alternative government structure. These parameters differ considerably from the definitions promoted by western liberal democracies, and indicate the limits within which political evolution in the region is likely to proceed.

## **II. v Democracy paradigms**

At the same time, other competing paradigms are being discussed for the alternative governance structures of the nascent democratic forces. Turkey, for example, with a nearly 95% Muslim population, has been active in promoting a model of a secular government with a moderate Islamic flavour. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's tours of Egypt and Tunisia since the ousters of Mubarak and Ben Ali were intended to buttress Turkey's standing as a leader in the Arab world, based on its democratic polity, moderate Islam and a successful economy.

Democracy promotion initiatives were launched and funded by the U.S. in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan; its parallel track, also funded by the U.S., has been overt or clandestine support to opposition groups in Libya, Syria and Yemen. France has been equally active in propagating its brand of laic or secular democracy, especially in the Maghreb.

In the GCC countries, the reigning potentates have reluctantly tried to provide the trappings of democratic institutions like a Parliament, restricted adult franchise and constitutional courts, but without making any real move to cede political power. The quiescence of the populations in the GCC countries has been assured by increased financial subventions in areas like education abroad, medical care and housing.

Considering the wide divergence of opinion in the West Asian world on the extent of governance based on Islamic principles,

an early resolution of this fundamental issue seems to be unlikely. A Lebanon-type “confessional democracy,” where state power has been divided between the major confessional groups (Shia, Sunni and Maronite Christians) as the *via media*, is more than likely to emerge. Iraq has already shown the way, with the polity divided three-ways between the Shias, Sunnis and the Kurds.

The West Asian nations today face these questions: Can democracy be imposed from the outside? Is democracy compatible with Islam? Is it really a choice between religion and governance? Can democracy and stability co-exist? Can Islamic governance deliver economic prosperity?

The same questions came up with President Bush’s Greater Middle East project. This time though the Arab people are asking the questions, and not an outsider. The evolution – and eventual answers to these questions – of the Arab uprisings will undoubtedly be closely watched by all Islamic countries and other nations with large Muslim populations, including India.

### **III. West Asia today**

It is evident that the Arab Spring has outlived its early euphoria. It has transformed from a broad trans-regional peoples’ movement to a divisive, sectarian and diffused undertaking in which the geo-strategic importance of each country will determine the ultimate outcome in each country. This is the inevitable result of the entry of regional and international powers with strategic political, economic and social agendas. From an internally-generated process, the Arab Spring has turned into an externally-stimulated exercise.

An overview of West Asia, as it looks after two years of political upheavals, can help assess future developments. The scenario in West Asia now has the following elements: Sectarianism; the Palestine issue; Iran’s ascendance; and the Israel dilemma.

#### **III. i Sectarianism**

A decline in the notions of Arab solidarity, unity and socialism has triggered deepening fissures in social structures in favour of sect, tribe and tradition, and a desire to move away from what is

seen as western values. Sectarianism has been exacerbated by the continuing civil war in Syria. This is likely to remain an immutable feature of the region in the foreseeable future, with the potential to spread to South Asia, South East Asia and Africa.

Although West Asia is one of the most homogenous regions in terms of religion and language (with the exception of Iran and Turkey), it comprises a diverse mosaic of ethnicities and cultures – all of which need to secure their cultural and minority rights under any alternative government. The current trends in this regard are adverse both for minority Muslim sects like the Druze, Alawites and Yezidis in Syria and Jordan; the Kurds and diverse Christian denominations like the Copts in Egypt; and the Assyrian Christians and Armenians in Syria and Iraq.

Linked closely to sectarianism is the re-emergence of a “back-to-roots” perspective that gives primacy to religious belief in political matters and encourages literalist schools of Islam, such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. From Afghanistan to Egypt and from Mali to Syria, there is a deliberate, and at times violent, attempt to incorporate Islamic theocratic injunctions into governance. Western activism in provoking regime change in the region, dating back to the invasion of Iraq, has elicited a strong backlash of anti-western and anti-American sentiment.

### **III. ii The Palestine issue**

The inability of major players – the Al-Fatah-led State of Palestine, Hamas-led Gaza, Israel, the U.S., U.K., the European Union (EU) and Russia – to find a way to establish a secure, independent and viable Palestinian state continues to sear the psyche of its people and the Muslim world. Israel’s continuing moves to consolidate and spread its settlements in the West Bank have made the two-state solution virtually impossible.

AL-Fatah, which espouses the secular and pan-Arab goals of its founder Yasser Arafat, has been unable to negotiate or to develop a common platform with the Islamic-oriented Hamas, which today controls Gaza. The U.S.’s reputation as an “honest broker” has withered through political neglect and a skewed position in favour of Israel.

The endless rounds of unproductive talks have led to fatigue, but incoming governments in West Asia are likely to continue to give great importance to this issue, even pursuing activist policies vis-à-vis Israel, like opening up the borders with Gaza. Unlike the governments so far, the new governments are likely to be much more sympathetic and supportive of Hamas and also more articulate about the Palestine issue.

The U.S., the only power with the ability to revive the peace process, remains mired in internal debates on fiscal reform during President Barack Obama's second term. While Obama may now have greater flexibility than he earlier had in dealing with outstanding foreign policy issues, it may be some time before he can be expected to address the Israel-Palestine issue.

### **III. iii Iran's ascendance**

Iran has been the biggest beneficiary of U.S. intervention in Iraq, even though it faces strong pressure from the West and its regional neighbours to give up its nuclear ambitions. Iran has consolidated its clout in Iraq after the election of Nouri al-Maliki in Baghdad for the second time in March 2010. Iran's long-standing assistance to Hezbollah and to Hamas in Palestine has created surrogates for Iran vis-à-vis Israel and the U.S.

Iran also strongly supports and gives military assistance to the Assad regime in Syria, against opposition groups, 70% of which are Sunni. This has created an affinity between Iran and other protesting Shia groups, especially those which inhabit the oil-rich eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia.

The latent sectarian Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran is now, after the Arab upheavals, out in the open. Iran and Saudi Arabia's funding and arming of opposing forces in Syria has opened a fault-line with different countries ranged on either side. The western powers and Israel have been complicit in this struggle, with their efforts to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, their efforts to cut Iran's assistance to the Hezbollah in Lebanon and to remove the Assad regime.

This has led to multiple outcomes: growing fears of sectarian conflict amongst Iran's neighbours with significant Shia minorities

like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE; Turkish funds, arms and shelter for refugees from the Syrian civil war; and the increasing desire of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Iraq to pursue nuclear and missile weapon capacity to offset Iran's nuclear weapons programme and create military assets against Israel.

These outcomes have three enduring consequences. One, the growing presence of foreign troops on land and sea in the Middle East. Apart from U.S. troops based in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Qatar, the UAE, and the western navies patrolling the Gulf, there are reports of the development of a U.S. missile shield in the Gulf.

Reports also indicate that in the Libyan and Syrian uprisings, combatant intelligence officials from France, the U.S., UK and Turkey have actively assisted the opposition groups with military hardware, tactics and sophisticated communications equipment. The killing in Benghazi in November 2012 of the U.S. Ambassador was a consequence of this strategy.

Two, the attempts by the GCC, under a Saudi leadership buoyed by high energy returns and a common Sunni orientation, to garner a political role in the ongoing upheavals. Starting with the GCC's mediatory efforts in Yemen and during the Bahrain protests, it has actively advanced and imposed – through Qatar in the Arab League and Turkey in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – decisions on financial and military support to the opposition groups in Syria, financial support to the Morsi government in Egypt and to Hamas in Gaza, and an insulation from UN intervention in nascent protests in the Gulf countries.

It is unlikely that the GCC will give up a politico-religious role in the region in general as well as in its dealings with countries with Muslim minorities like India and China. This could add a religious dimension to the GCC's prolific economic, commercial, political and security relations with India.

The third consequence is the increased militarization of the region, which is awash with weapons and ammunition since the Iraq-Iran war of 1980. The spreading protests increased the import of sophisticated arms and equipment to the protesting groups, creating an intractable situation.

### **III. iv The Israel dilemma**

Israel provokes strong sentiments not only in Iran but in the entire Arab world due to its policy of expanding and consolidating settlements in Gaza and east Jerusalem. The U.S.'s inability to take strong measures to curb the settlements has given Israel the space to filibuster even the two-state solution, the avowed goal of the peace negotiations. The unwritten edict that disallows international acknowledgement of Israeli nuclear weapons, while holding different standards for Iran and other countries in the Arab world, also provokes deep animosity against Israel.

Israel's neighbourhood has now become exceedingly volatile. The Arab uprisings have breached the comfort zone provided by pliant autocrats. The election of Islamic parties to power has multiplied Israel's security concerns, now that all its borders, other than the Golan, are active. The Arab uprisings have placed Israel in a dilemma: Should it wait and watch or take an active stand?

The Morsi government in Egypt has opened its border with Gaza, a border which Israel wanted closed. It is not clear if the Egyptian government will continue to honour the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in letter and spirit. Sending Egyptian troops to the Sinai Peninsula in 2012 to combat the Islamic insurgent groups based there was seen as a breach, although Israel tacitly acquiesced.

The increasing focus on the Israel-Palestine issue will heighten anti-Israeli opinion in Arab politics. If Israeli anxiety leads to hostility between Egypt and Israel, the conflagration could engulf the region. More importantly, it will give an opportunity to radicals like the Salafists in Egypt and other countries to hijack the peoples' revolution.

Israel is apprehensive that it may be flooded with Alawites and Druze refugees through the Syrian Golan, and the use of Syria's stock-pile of chemical weapons remains a concern for both Israel and the U.S. Meanwhile, Israel's strong pressure on the U.S. for decisive action against Iran was sought to be made a factor during the U.S. presidential elections in 2012. While Israel continues to project Iran as a threat to its security, it is likely that during his second term President Obama will resort to negotiating with Iran rather than adding to Israel's rhetoric.

West Asia faces a number of challenges as it undergoes momentous changes. The Arab uprisings have left the region in an explosive state. Considering the complexity of the forces unleashed by the uprisings, it is difficult to predict their future course. In the following sub-sections we discuss these challenges, the present volatility, and the possible future of West Asia.

## **IV. Challenges, volatility and the future**

West Asia faces a number of challenges in its moment of political, economic and social transition. The key challenges are: irreversibility, definition, pace, counter-revolution and the role of foreign powers.

### **IV. i Challenges posed by the uprisings**

**(a) Irreversibility:** The irreversibility of the political transformation will depend on the extent to which the popular demands of the people are translated into laws and institutions, with six determinants:

- A continued effort by those who win the elections, in all the countries in turmoil or transition, to allow the free expression of views and opinions
- Strategic planning and coordination by the opposition groups, for the long haul
- Curbs to be imposed by the new regimes on the role of ‘spoilers’ – entrenched opposition groups including state-allied political parties and Islamic groups
- Restrictions on state violence
- International support for building democratic institutions
- An ability to quickly put in place economic policies that will generate confidence, jobs, and encourage investment and trade.

**(b) Definition:** Defining an acceptable alternative model of governance is another key challenge. The Arab uprisings have not yet pointed to a clear direction and goals. The task of building non-partisan institutions of the legislature, judiciary and the executive, which will assure every interest group a voice in a country’s

governance, has not yet begun. While free and fair elections are seen as the first step towards political transition, their outcomes in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Jordan and Morocco have not necessarily pointed the way forward. Should the Constitution be drafted before or after the elections? This remains a contentious dilemma in the countries still in the throes of upheaval, like Syria. The idea that in the changed circumstances the legitimacy of the leadership only stems from the ballot, has not yet become an accepted principle across West Asia and North Africa.

**(c) Pace:** The third challenge is the pace of the transformation. This will crucially depend on how soon a country is able to recover politically in the aftermath of the uprisings. In Syria, it has become increasingly difficult to hypothesise a resolution that will assure a reasonable degree of stability. The internal instability in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya has exposed the latent sectarian Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran to influence and acquire pawns in the region. Their predilection to meddle in such unstable settings has also encouraged non-state actors like Al-Qaeda and the Salafists to pour oil on these troubled waters. This has worsened sectarian violence within Islam and increased the repression of religious and ethnic minorities.

**(d) Counter-revolution:** The fourth challenge relates to the outcome of the “counter-revolution” launched by existing regimes, as has happened in Syria. The violent action against the protesters in Libya and Yemen was a rearguard move by the autocratic regimes to ensure that they did not leave without a fight. It also spurred the division between the “conservatives,” led by Saudi Arabia, and the “reformers,” led by the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, who had staked a claim to power in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan.

The support given by the GCC for UN military action against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and the GCC mandate for Saudi military action to put down protests in Bahrain, consolidated this division. Support from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, France, Germany, the UK and U.S. in the form of funds and sophisticated weaponry to Syrian opposition groups became a part of this schism. The counter-revolution has been strong enough to temporarily halt the momentum of the uprisings in countries like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and its spread to other unaffected monarchies in the region.

(e) **Foreign powers:** How regional dynamics determine the role of foreign powers from within and outside the region will be the fifth challenge. As the uprisings have progressed, the regional agenda of the external actors has changed from initially welcoming the protests in Egypt and Tunisia, to calling for the leaders to leave, to selectively supporting opposition groups in countries in the throes of protests.

These shifts demonstrate how the external actors have gradually tailored their reaction to suit their strategic interests and not the interests of the people who are directly affected. Instead of Israel, it is Iran that has dictated the disposition of forces in the region: The pro-Sunni anti-Iran agenda of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar has coalesced with the West's pro-democracy anti-Iran agenda. Meanwhile, Iran has continued to strongly support Shia and Shia-led regimes in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

At the United Nations' Security Council (UNSC), within the five permanent members (P-5), the differences that Russia and China have had with the U.S., UK and France on the legitimacy of external intervention were evident in the case of Syria and were also on display during foreign military intervention in Libya and Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia and the GCC ensured that within the Arab League, GCC support would be available for the Security Council to pass resolutions which dealt with military intervention in Libya. Operative Paragraph 4 of UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011) was pushed through the Security Council sanctioning military air operations to "protect civilians and civilian-populated areas." [20]

In the case of Bahrain, they ensured that the issue never reached the level of the Security Council, and would be handled amongst themselves. The ongoing civil war in Syria has once again coalesced these agendas.

#### **IV. ii The volatile impact of the Arab awakening**

The Arab uprisings have left West Asia in an explosive state, made more febrile by the role of regional and international players. It will take a long time to address the effects of the uprisings on the region's security, economy and society.

The rivalry between the Great Powers is now rekindling in West Asia – with the Russian navy based in Tartous in Syria and the U.S. navy in Bahrain. Iran's belligerent rush to reach a nuclear weapon threshold to immunise itself from a possible western attack has provoked preparations by the U.S. to secure the Strait of Hormuz, and by Israel to look for an opportunity to neutralise Iran's nuclear facilities.

The continuing unrest and instability has reached the GCC, a sub-region on which many countries rely for energy security. The West Asian region holds 61% of the world's detected oil reserves and 36% of current oil supply. Iran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for sanctions against its nuclear programme will remove 20% of the world's traded oil. [21, 22, 23] This will impact countries throughout the world.

The uprisings have also generated worries about maritime security. The West Asia-North Africa region has major blockages on key sea lanes. According to a briefing of the Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (for the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference to be held in March 2014):

“The maritime trade – in particular, energy – which flows through the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, along the sea lines of communication and maritime choke points (the latter including the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab Al-Mendeb and the Suez Canal) and through key infrastructure nodes such as ports and pipelines plays a crucial role in supporting the global economy. A physical manifestation of globalization, nations rely on these global maritime arteries.” [24] Any conflagration could gravely affect the world economy.

The political instability has also led to an economic slowdown in the countries which have been through uprisings. According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) *Regional Economic Outlook Update* of April 2012, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for this group of countries – Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen – fell to about 4% in 2011. [25] Egyptian GDP growth in 2011-2012 was forecast at 1.2%, down from 1.8% in 2010-2011 and 5% in 2009-10. [26]

In Libya, the GDP dropped by an estimated 40% in 2011; it is expected to bounce back by as much as 30% from the 2011-2012 rate, reflecting the recent strong recovery of oil output. [27] Tunisia still has a relatively stable economy, mainly because the uprisings have not created economic instability. Syria's GDP contracted by 2% in 2011 and was expected to have dropped at the same rate or more in 2012. [28]

For the moment the shock from the cresting of prices in 2011 to \$100 per barrel has been mitigated by the global downturn in the world economy, although it has impacted global consumption and GDP growth.

There is growing concern about the high and volatile international food prices and their impact on vulnerable populations in the region, as well as the longer-term risks the prices pose to growth and poverty reduction. This will also affect prices of agricultural and industrial materials and especially the interlinked overheating of strategic inputs like oil and natural gas, rare earths and metals.

Many of the countries in the region rely on expatriate workers for economic growth. The migrants come from within the region – from Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Cameroon and other African countries – as well as from outside, that is, from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. A third of Saudi Arabia's 27 million residents are foreigners. Among the Saudi age group of 15-24, the unemployment rate is around 28%. [29, 30] In the UAE around 80% of the population are expatriates, with migrant workers constituting 90% of the national labour force. [31, 32]

The presence of such a large number of expatriates has exposed the absence of job opportunities for local citizens. These governments are likely to initiate employment policies to increase the proportion of jobs available to local aspirants to correct this imbalance.

Perhaps the greatest impact of the uprisings has been on Arab society and values. A major failing of the former potentates was their inability to create a viable and socially acceptable forum for public debate on national issues. It will take considerable time before such a form of civil governance emerges from the turmoil.

This is a testing time, with various contending interests in each country jostling for political and religious space, often without the benefit of a national arbiter.

The struggle is already evident in the process of Constitution-making in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and elsewhere. The delay in a national consensus on the role of religion in governance has seen the recrudescence of intolerance towards religious minorities. It is estimated that since the outbreak of the political upheavals a large proportion of the Christian population in the Middle East of approximately 10-12 million has emigrated. [33] This does not augur well for countries with religious and sectarian diversity.

#### **IV. iii The future course of the uprisings**

Given the complexity of the forces unleashed by the Arab uprisings, it is difficult, if not naïve, to predict their future course. But a careful look at the shifting realities of the region reveals key patterns that are likely to shape future dynamics. These patterns are:

**(a) The emergence of Islamic governance:** As the new regimes settle into the post-uprising context, governance within a framework based on the principles of the *Sharia* or Islamic law and jurisprudence, is emerging. The rise of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will have regional and global implications. Whether the people accept such groups will depend on the groups' ability to accept the power of the ballot, and on their ability to keep away extremist groups like Al-Qaeda and its clones from imposing on the new governance structures.

The continuing upheavals will be marked by increased violence and terrorism due to the entry of radical and sectarian Islamic groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda, as has happened in Syria and was witnessed in Iraq in the early years after the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003.

**(b) The emergence of Islamic principles in the economy:** While the economic policy in these countries may well adopt Islamic principles, which prohibit interest-based ventures and investments, their weakened economic situation will not allow them to cut

themselves off from the international financial system.<sup>[iv]</sup> The Turkish model, which has a westernised banking system, illustrates the limit to which Islamic principles can be imposed in a non-oil economy if the economic health of the country is to be assured. To the extent possible, the new Islamic dispensations, in line with *Sharia*-based financial principles, will encourage small and medium industries rather than large mammoth projects. In countries like Egypt, which heavily rely on tourism, a dual-track social and tourism infrastructure, with separate facilities for tourists (that are not open to nationals), will be expected to immunise society from tourism's downsides, such as trafficking, illegal money transactions and the trade in drugs.

**(c) Shifting dynamics of regional rivalries and the presence of western powers:** The shifting and/or worsening dynamics of regional rivalries, with internecine struggles to harness spheres of influence, will derail the gains of the Arab uprisings, but may prove to be unstoppable. The Middle East will be divided ideologically, both in terms of sectarian adherence and proximity to the U.S. The overt presence of western powers through the establishment of military and naval facilities and civil society organisations in the region will become more entrenched and overt. This will happen at considerable social cost to Arab society, because it could eventually negatively impact the judicial system and redress mechanisms available to nationals for crimes committed against them.

**(d) Heightened attention to the Palestine issue:** Greater attention to the Palestine issue will mean an increase in tension with Israel, including the possibility of a cathartic military conflagration in the region. Once again, the U.S. will be called upon to revive the dialogue based on a grand bargain of establishing an independent Palestine state in return for guaranteeing the entry of Israel in the region as a full participant. Will the U.S. have the ability and the will to play this critical role?

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[iv] See Deo, N., & Mathur, A. (2012, June 27). 'Brics "hostage" to west over Iran sanctions, need financial institutions'. *Financial Times*. At: <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2012/06/27/guest-post-brics-hostage-to-west-over-iran-sanctions-need-their-own-financial-institutions/>

# Section Two

## India confronts the Arab uprisings

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### I. Introduction

Although initially hesitant to accept instability and the unpredictable dramatic political transitions possibly towards Islamic political structures, India has taken a pragmatic approach to the fast-changing situation in West Asia. In the process, India's view of the Arab uprisings has evolved on a case-by-case basis, without becoming enmeshed in the sectarian jousting between the major regional powers. While this keeps trouble at bay, it does not amount to a policy which can guide India in the future as the Arab world moves into a more determinate pattern.

India has received no appreciation either from the region or at home for its hands-off approach. While its current strategy has immunised it from the political and religious upheavals in the region, the Arabs continue to see India as being dependent on their region for energy and remittances, and not as a serious political player.

At home, criticism has centred on four important concerns: the rise of political Islam and Islamic governance; regional stability; India's confusing stand on the Arab uprisings in the UN Security Council; and India's role in the changed circumstances.

India will have to tread a fine line if it is to maintain a West Asia policy that will take into account its varied concerns and interests. Indian policy makers need to recognise that Arab sensitivities have been deeply offended and hurt by aggressive U.S. interventions in the region. Indian policy must be shaped in consonance with regional concerns while ensuring that its bilateral relations with the U.S. do not come under pressure.

This implies that Indian policy cannot become hostage to West

Asia's expectations but must hinge upon maintaining its leverage by pursuing and articulating its core interests in the region in a more forthright manner.

## **II. India's core interests in West Asia**

India faces several immediate and long-term challenges with regard to the uprisings in West Asia, the Gulf and North Africa. These are:

**(a) The security and safety of Indian expatriates:** Around 6 million Indian expatriates live and work in the Gulf region. [34] When the civil war in Libya started in February 2011, the Indian government's immediate action was to move out the expatriate population, as it had done earlier during the Iraq-Iran War (1980), the first Gulf War (1991), and the Lebanon-Israel War (2006). This will remain a primary concern whenever such conditions prevail in other countries in the region with large Indian expatriate populations. Apart from the real need to evacuate people in times of war or civil strife, India needs to be seen to be helping its people, because this directly impinges on domestic vote bank politics.

**(b) Indian projects/investments/collaborations in the region:** India has huge investments in Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the GCC countries, covering projects and joint ventures in petroleum and petro-chemicals, fertilisers, manufacturing and consumer goods, information technology and the financial services sectors.

As of November 2012, India's investment in Egypt alone exceeded \$2.5 billion. [35] India has investments in the power and petro-chemical sectors in Libya, a phosphoric acid manufacture facility in Tunisia and in the oil sector in Syria. The disruption of these economies due to the uprisings has threatened Indian investments and assets on the ground. These interests urgently need to be protected vis-a-vis the new political dispensations through heightened political contact at the government level and with emerging centres of power.

**(c) Oil and gas supply:** The region as a whole accounts for more than 70% of India's crude oil and gas requirements. [36] Reduced exports from Iraq and Libya have already required India

to seek alternative sources from Africa and Latin America. The outbreak of war since May 2011, which led to the separation of South Sudan as an independent country, has also temporarily reduced the supply of crude from India's investments in the Greater Nile Oil Project.

An intensification of protests in other countries will undoubtedly further affect India's supply sources, at least in the short term. This concern is further complicated by the reduction of India's crude imports from Iran following UN sanctions against Iran. So far, India's quest for alternative sources in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ghana, Myanmar and Russia has had limited success.

**(d) Remittances:** Overseas Indian workers remit over \$50 billion to India annually, a significant portion of which is contributed by the increasing number of unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers employed in the Gulf countries. [37] Any change in the configuration of India's labourers and professional workers in the region, or a fall in their numbers as a result of any indigenisation policies of the new political dispensations, will have a negative impact on India. This requires a careful recalibration of Indian interests in these countries.

**(e) Indian-Muslim community:** India's sizeable Muslim minority of close to 150 million has always had an impact on India's policy on West Asia, in part due to the imperatives of vote bank politics. Although the ease of travel for pilgrimage purposes to Iraq and Syria may be affected, it is the longer-term impact which is of greater significance.

So far India has remained largely immune from the mounting sectarian strife in the Arab world. But the heightened religious fervour that it has provoked within Islamic societies has engulfed those countries in sudden and periodic violence at signs of disrespect to Islam – as seen during the November 2012 protests in Libya and most of the Middle East against the U.S.-made film on the Prophet. The fallout was felt in India, with protests in Chennai and Kashmir.

In the past too, there has been a similar backlash in India; for example, during the protests against the Danish anti-Islamic cartoons in December 2007. The mounting sectarian strife in the

Arab world could draw in the Indian Muslim community, but it is unlikely to become a pervasive threat, as it has in Pakistan.

**(f) Rise of the Islamic factor in bilateral relations:** Over the last decade, the increasing economic enmeshing between India and countries of the West Asian region took the focus away from the Islamic dimension of the bilateral relationships. This meant that OIC resolutions on Kashmir and the Indian Muslim community were largely sidelined in bilateral interactions, and these countries have largely given up making *demarches* to India on Kashmir.<sup>[v]</sup>

With Islamic-oriented governments coming to power, the Islamic factor may well underpin bilateral relations again. The addition of 'Jammu and Kashmir' to other "countries" with beleaguered Muslim communities in *Special Report: Mecca Islamic Summit – Final Communiqué* of the Extraordinary Summit of the OIC in Mecca in August 2012 illustrates the point. [38]

### **III. India's West Asia policy parameters**

From a post-Independence position of looking at the region through an Islamic prism, Indian policy parameters have evolved over the last 60 years. From India's viewpoint, relations with the region now fall into two broad categories:

(a) With West Asia and North Africa, the thrust remains primarily political, based on India's status as a leader of the non-aligned world, and underlined by India's consistent support to the Palestinians. It was only from 1998 that the economic content of India's relations with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya became more economically significant.

(b) With the Gulf countries, the thrust is mainly economic, although negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between the GCC and India, initiated in 2002, remain unfinished. India's economic success in the last decade was the driver of the change in India's overall relationship with the region. Two parallel developments assisted in this:

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[v] See: Abhyankar, R. (2013, January 23). 'India and the OIC: To join or not to join?' At: <http://www.gatewayhouse.in/publication/gateway-house/ambassadors-views/india-and-oic-join-or-not-join>

India's growing relationship with the U.S., which made India attractive as a partner to others as well; and the growing tension in relations between the West and West Asia, which had a positive influence on West Asia's economic relations with India. The need to tie up viable economic and investment projects catering to the Indian market became their overriding concern. This goal has come out clearly in India's official bilateral interactions with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, the UAE and Kuwait.

India's policy toward the region has continued to be guided by the following broad parameters: Although the desire to play a role in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli issue has been expressed at the highest level since Jawaharlal Nehru's days, India has neither assumed, nor been offered, any significant role in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).

India has opposed exclusivist religious ideologies and Islamic radicalism. It has kept a distance from the OIC in line with its decision to not be a part of religion-based organisations. India's formal participation as a representative of the second largest Muslim community in the world in OIC's founding Conference in Rabat in 1969 was aborted by the machinations of Pakistan, Morocco and Jordan. India continues to ignore the plethora of negative and one-sided OIC resolutions on Kashmir and on the Indian Muslim community.

But this has not affected India's good relations with the Arab and Islamic world. India's secular and democratic polity has been a source of reassurance in the Arab and Islamic world at a time of exacerbating religious and cultural differences amongst its diverse ethnicities and sects. This led Qatar in 2003, when the OIC was under strong internal and external pressure after 9/11, to propose, for the first time, that India be invited to join the OIC.

India's primary goal has been to safeguard the security of, and in, the Persian Gulf. In order to curb the growth of terrorism in the region, India has created an infrastructure of agreements that will enhance security cooperation with Saudi Arabia, the GCC countries, Iraq and Iran in a mutually-beneficial manner. This includes maritime security and agreements for mutual assistance in criminal matters, extradition treaties, and cooperation in counter-terrorism with all the Gulf countries.

It has also presumed close multilateral contact by sharing intelligence in combating terrorism and the linked nexus of arms smuggling, money laundering and drugs.

India's formal diplomatic relations with Israel, established in January 1992, have now acquired a depth and diversity that cannot be rolled back. India has emphasised that its support to the Palestinian cause does not diminish the growth of its relations with Israel. India has tried to posit these relations in the context of the security of its one billion citizens, making Israel the largest supplier of weapons to India. The success of the Iron Dome missile interceptor system against Hamas in November 2012 has demonstrated the efficacy of the advanced systems available from Israel. This could be of interest to India in future in the context of Pakistan's relentless hostility. India's experience has shown that despite the exorbitant costs of weapons systems, Israel has been a reliable partner. India has been reticent, but not defensive, in expanding relations with Israel, especially since the bilateral relationship has domestic political consensus.

Using the weight of its historical relations and its continuing economic success, India has tried to leverage its growing market and talent pool of professionals and skilled workers, to access the natural and financial resources of the West Asian region. With the Gulf countries, the strategy has been to harness their respective "asymmetric complementarities" vis-à-vis India. With countries like Iran, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria, the approach has been to make available Indian know-how and expertise (and occasionally investments) to exploit their natural and petrochemical resources.

India's international stature now significantly depends on the increasing recognition by the Gulf and West Asian region of India as a proximate rising Asian economic power able to harness the region's natural and financial resources.

#### **IV. Indian perspectives on the changes in West Asia**

In the context of India's historical emphasis on secular governance, Indian experts and scholars have been pondering the implications of the transformations in West Asia on India's

relations with the region. Kanwal Sibal, former foreign secretary of India, writes, “India cannot be comfortable with the replacement of authoritarian secular-minded regimes in West Asia by Islamist regimes backed by highly conservative authoritarian Gulf monarchies.” [39]

The support given to the transformations by GCC monarchies has been an important factor in exacerbating the sectarian divide. Sibal explains: “This changes the balance in the region between more open and more conservative political and social thinking. The impact of this will be felt closer to our borders where Pakistan is already lurching towards greater radicalism and the Taliban are likely to be accommodated in Afghanistan.” [40] Pakistan’s role in transmitting radical and sectarian ideology to India – “the rancid sectarianism of the Arab East” – as Fouad Ajami of the Hoover Institution calls it – is a constant threat. [41]

These observations speak of the ways in which India can engage with the new governments without compromising its core principles of secularism, democracy and non-alignment.

S.Nihal Singh, senior Indian journalist and foreign policy expert, writes in the journal *New Age of Islam* in December 2011: “There can be no doubt that the future shape of the Arab world will be more Islamist-oriented... [B]ut each country will find its own mix and there seems little stomach for the extremist varieties of dispensations.” [42] This conclusion seems to be based on the relatively moderate profile projected by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Carrying the thought further, Raja Mohan, veteran foreign policy analyst, writes in the *Indian Express* in July 2012, “India will have to approach the Middle East on the basis of its own internal dynamics rather than a preconceived idea of preferences.” [43] This is an exhortation to reconsider India’s traditional policy of giving preference to secular regimes.

On the whole, the Indian press and public discussions focus on stability in the region in the context of India’s growing regional and international role and its interests in the region, which are closely tied with the Gulf, Iran and Iraq.

Expressing disappointment at India’s inability to leverage its tenure in the U.N. Security Council to oppose political or military

intervention in Arab countries in the throes of political upheaval, S. Nihal Singh writes that India should move beyond timidity in the international arena. [44] In a similar vein, Raja Mohan says, “With a relentless focus on India’s interests, Delhi must find ways to contribute to the emergence of a stable regional balance of power over the longer term.” [45]

Neelam Deo, Director of Gateway House, says that it is in India’s interests to articulate a clear line because “for India to shrug off our long-standing non-aligned, independent foreign policy would promote neither our own interests, nor peace in our wider region. It would only silence a different and important perspective in international debate.” [46]

Our existing regional interests will not be jeopardised though. Taking an overview, Kanwal Sibal adds, “Our relations with the Gulf monarchies involving manpower, trade, energy and remittances will continue for reasons of mutuality of interest.” [47]

Indian policy will have to address these imperatives with regard to the entire region and not only to the Gulf. It remains to be seen if such a policy will transcend or minimise the Islamic factor in multilateral relations with West Asia. India’s positions on the upheavals in Egypt, Syria, Libya and Bahrain (discussed in the following sub-section), illustrate the limitations of India’s policy and strengthens the conviction that it will have to be tailored separately to each situation.

## **V. India’s policy positions**

When it was a member of the UN Security Council (till December 2012) India decided that its official pronouncements will only be articulated in that forum. As the world’s largest democracy, India has welcomed the movements in West Asia that have demanded inclusive and participative governance.

India condemned the violence “by both sides” during the protests but stopped short of taking a position when Tunisia, Libya and Egypt were engulfed in political unrest. For this, New Delhi was criticised on both the domestic and international stage and it did not win India any friends among the new regimes.

## **V. i Libya and Syria at the UNSC**

In the case of Libya, on UN Resolution 1973 (2011) calling for military action “to protect civilian areas and civilians,” [48] India explained its abstention by taking recourse to a procedural gambit rather than openly conveying its objections, as was done by Russia and China.

Explaining his abstention, India’s Permanent Representative “...expressed great concern over the welfare of the population of Libya and supported the appointment of the Secretary-General’s Envoy. The report of that Envoy and that of others had not yet been received. As a consequence, today’s resolution was based on very little clear information, including a lack of certainty regarding who was going to enforce the measures. There must be certainty that negative outcomes were not likely before such wide-ranging measures were adopted. Political efforts must be the priority in resolving the situation.” [49]

India expressed concern about the violence in Libya and eventually announced its support to the National Transitional Council (NTC) at meetings of the ‘Friends of Libya’ group in London, Istanbul and Paris in November 2011. Once the NTC had gained a measure of legitimacy, India gave the Council \$1 million in humanitarian assistance and gave life-saving and essential drugs worth another U.S. \$1 million to Libya in 2012. [50]

In the Syrian case, India was initially reluctant to condemn the Syrian regime’s crackdown on internal political unrest because of the regime’s support to the Kashmir issue, Indian investment in the oil sector and an ongoing \$100 million line of credit. [51]

It is not clear if India changed its position in July 2012 due to U.S. pressure or after a policy review. India was among the 11 countries that voted in favour of the UN Draft Resolution (SC/10714), which would have enforced new sanctions against President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime, but it was clear that Russia and China would bring in a veto. [52] India’s vote could have further complicated India’s relationship with an Iran already reeling under UN and U.S. oil and financial sanctions.

On balance, it looked like a calculated gamble given the need to ensure that there will be no cut-backs in India’s crude oil

requirements from the GCC. Thus, in the Syrian case, India used a low-cost option rather than procedural stratagems to change its position. In this context, India's Permanent Representative to the Security Council stated:

“[it was] regrettable that the Council has not been able to adopt the resolution today and send a joint message that was sought by joint special envoy Kofi Annan. In our view, it would have been preferable for the council members to show flexibility so that a united message could be conveyed to all sides to the Syrian crisis instead of pursuance of domestic interests. India remains ‘gravely concerned’ at the events unfolding in Syria that have resulted in the deaths of several thousands of civilians and security force personnel. From the beginning of the crisis, we have called for cessation of violence in all its forms and by all sides. We condemn all violence irrespective of who its perpetrators are. India voted in favour of the resolution today to ‘facilitate a united action’ by the Security Council in support of the efforts of the joint special envoy Annan.” [53]

The Indian government explicitly expressed concern about the human rights situation in Syria. Explaining its vote at the 19th Special Session of Human Rights Council in June 2012, India said: “India has consistently supported all efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis through an inclusive Syrian-led process”. [54] Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reiterated this at the NAM Summit in Tehran in August 2012, emphasising that external actors had no role in the process.

Commenting on India's performance at the Security Council and linking it to India's position on Kashmir, Fouad Ajami writes in the book *The Syrian Rebellion*: “The sordid vote at the Security Council over Syria was an indictment of the three ‘emerging’ powers that abstained on so simple a proposition – India, Brazil and South Africa. If these powers were making a bid for a more permanent role on the Security Council, their moral abdication was proof that they were not ready to shoulder the burden of maintaining a decent international order. The shame of India, the world's largest democracy, was all its own. India is forever thinking of Kashmir, and the principle of unfettered national sovereignty must be maintained at all cost.” [55]

India's term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council ended on 31 December 2012. When India began its term on 1 January 2010, the international community uniformly expected that it would use this opportunity, which came 16 years after India's last tenure at the UNSC, to establish its credentials as a candidate for permanent membership. These hopes have been belied. To a large extent, India's record of votes in the UNSC and policy responses on the different dimensions of the Arab uprisings, were responsible for creating a negative perception of India.

## **V. ii Bahrain**

Bahrain is on the front-line of the Saudi-Iran Cold War. India's policy on Bahrain has been ostrich-like; it foregrounds the interests of nearly 350,000 Indian nationals working there (of a total Bahraini population of 1.2 million). [56] India has been reticent to speak out on the pro-democracy protests or their brutal suppression by the Saudi army under a GCC mandate. India chose to support Saudi Arabia in exchange for the deportation of wanted terrorist Abu Jundal, with the expectation that Saudi Arabia will make up the western sanctions-driven oil deficit from Iran.

High-level Bahrainis have visited India, such as Sheikh Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the crown prince and the Deputy Supreme Commander of the Bahraini army, in May 2012. There have been other mutually beneficial initiatives to expand trade and investment cooperation.

## **V. iii Post-Mubarak Egypt**

Egypt and India have been political and economic partners since their Independence from colonial rule; the non-aligned movement was led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser.

A number of high-level official visits ensued between India and Egypt shortly after Hosni Mubarak stepped down in February 2011. These visits have focused on trade, information and communications technology, and agriculture planning and cooperation. Despite its hesitation in endorsing religious governments, India welcomed the elections that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power in January 2012.

During the Mubarak years (1981-2011) the bilateral relationship had become moribund, with an element of envy on Egypt's part of India's economic success, strategic autonomy and nuclear prowess. During these years, there was little contact at the highest level between the two countries. For example, President Mubarak was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1995 but, due to the latent hostility towards India, he only accepted the award 14 years later. During this time, he visited China every year.

Now that the Morsi government has announced that it will follow policies that will regain for Egypt its erstwhile status in the Arab world, India must fashion a relationship based on mutual respect despite the differing social and political structures of the two countries. It must emphasise the complementary nature of the two economies. Such a relationship could well become a model for India's relations with other countries in the region.

#### **V. iv Regional rivalries**

India has continued to maintain strong bilateral relations with other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, despite their backing of the armed opposition to the Syrian regime. India increased its crude oil imports from Saudi Arabia following the U.S.-EU oil embargo against Iran. At the same time, it continued interacting with Iran in a diverse range of sectors, including an exchange of trade delegations. The Indian prime minister attended the NAM Summit in Tehran. The recent overtures from Saudi Arabia to set up a strategic partnership with India, while a welcome initiative, is still coloured by the distrust engendered by Saudi Arabia's proximity to Pakistan.

The growing synergy with Iran, especially on the joint development of the Chabahar port as India's alternative route to Afghanistan, is significant. India's relations with Iran have achieved a dynamic of their own, based on Iran's straitened position after stringent UN and U.S. sanctions. Iran still remains an important supplier of crude oil to India – about 8%-10% of its requirement. [57]

With Iraq, India has maintained relations at a low level, given

the instability in Iraq and a slow increase in its oil production. Nevertheless, both Iran and Iraq remain major trade, investment and energy partners for India. India has yet to take any major political or economic initiative vis-à-vis Iraq, which will be an important peg in its energy strategy.

In Turkey, Indian companies have carved a niche for themselves in the construction of oil and gas pipelines. Turkey expects to double its seven weekly flights each to Delhi and Mumbai to facilitate the growth of tourism.

India was never a major player in the erstwhile MEPP; it was invited as a full participant for the first time to the failed conference in Annapolis in November 2007 of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, which was sponsored by the Bush administration. The Obama administration has made no attempt to revive the process.

Interestingly, both the Palestine National Authority (PNA, under Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas) and the Israeli government have, from time-to-time, voiced the view that India should be included in the MEPP. But this seems to be more rhetorical than real. India has continued to develop close links with the PNA, extending financial and other assistance, including \$10 million in March 2010 and another \$10 million grant to support Palestine in 2012. [58]

The Indian government has also opened official links with Hamas in March 2011 in order to better engage with the people of Gaza through scholarships in Indian universities, supply of books to the library-activity centre at the Palestinian Technical College in Deir-El-Balah, and the construction of another library at the Al-Azhar University in Gaza.

## **VI. India's progress in West Asia**

India's efforts to build cooperation with countries in West Asia on matters related to security have been moderately successful. In the last decade, the tenor of India's relations with the countries of the region improved, though the security issue in the Gulf became more complicated. The spawning of terror outfits, which got inspiration, sanctuary and funds from the region, became a

matter of major concern as the number and intensity of terror attacks in India increased.

Nevertheless, with each of the countries in the region, India continued to have a positive relationship and they appeared to be disinclined to flog the Kashmir issue. Two additional factors helped: one, India and the Arab League embarked on a regular dialogue, which helped to clear the air on misperceptions and misrepresentations of India's social, internal and foreign policy relations with Israel and related issues; two, the move by some OIC countries to take a more positive view of India and the success of its secular model led Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz to formally propose in 2006 "observer status" for India in the OIC, ruffling the placid waters of an organisation which has primarily moved to Saudi signals.

This was helped by the OIC's fixation on making itself more relevant against the western onslaught after repeated Al-Qaeda terror attacks, prompting it to curtail its Pakistan-inspired India-baiting actions. There was also a realisation in the region that regimes that promote greater prosperity and participatory governance are needed more than political creed and religious dogma.

India's initiatives in the region were bilateral, aimed at enhancing energy security and the security of its borders. India has aimed to develop a framework for security cooperation, particularly with the GCC countries. In the past, such efforts foundered due to the Pakistan factor – the lens through which these countries viewed India. But 11 September 2001 changed these circumstances, enabling Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties to be put in place for criminal and civil matters, and extradition and understanding on deportation of wanted criminals and terrorists to India.

The success of these initiatives was demonstrated by the deportation from the UAE in 2002 of Aftab Ansari, an accused in the attack on the American Centre in Kolkata in January 2001, and the extradition by Saudi Arabia in 2012 of Abu Jundal of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, implicated in the Mumbai terror attack of 26 November 2008. The close contact between Indian security and intelligence agencies and their counterparts in the Gulf to combat groups involved in terror, arms smuggling, money laundering and drugs has been largely successful.

In the last decade, India has used its proximity to the Gulf and West Asia to build a high level of two-way exchanges in trade, investments, and financial and information technology services. The Gulf countries have realised that their hydrocarbon resources need stable markets, and this has boosted India-GCC inward investment and resource-based projects, both *in situ* and in India. Syria, Jordan, Morocco and others have followed in the steps of the Gulf countries. This is apart from the tremendous contribution that Indian labourers and professionals are making to the GCC economies.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India's imports in 2010-2011 from West Asia (excluding the GCC) were valued at \$24.80 billion, from the GCC at \$74.91 billion and \$5.89 billion from North Africa. During the same period, India's exports were \$7.75 billion to West Asia (excluding the GCC), \$42.47 billion to GCC countries and \$3.98 billion to North Africa. [59]

Maximising these exchanges will provide the ballast for closer and more balanced relations, which will help to transcend the salience of the Islamic factor.

## **VI. i The future course of action for India**

The future for the region looks fraught with further uprisings, the projected withdrawal of U.S. and western forces from Afghanistan, heightened anti-American sentiment, and the parallel resurgence of Al-Qaeda. The future direction of the region will largely depend on the strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the outcome of the civil war in Syria. India will have to closely watch the evolution of dynamics amongst the regional rivals – Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel and Turkey.

The political capital that Jawaharlal Nehru built for India in the region nurtures multilateral relations to this day. People of the region rarely forget India's support to causes such as freedom from colonialism, independence and territorial integrity, as well as the continuing support to Palestine. Mahatma Gandhi's exhortation of passive resistance resonated during Independence Day protest marches by Palestinians to the Israeli separation line in the West Bank in November 2012.

In the context of the independent and nationalistic policies that the new governments in the region are likely to follow, there is a lot that India can reap from its long-standing positions. The redefining of this capital to bring about harmonious bilateral relationships despite differing world-views will certainly be the key challenge for India's West Asia policy in the years to come.

India brings considerable strengths to the table: economic success, which has created a growing market for energy and other natural resources from West Asia and a secure destination for West Asian investment; participation in rejuvenated blocs of developing countries like IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa); as a paradigm for democratic and cultural pluralism; and India's firm opposition to terrorism.

India can turn the increasingly religious character of the governments in transition into an opportunity through a pragmatic and inclusive approach that does not detract from its secularism. The experience of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or AKP) government in Turkey in stabilising the economy and stepping up bilateral trade and economic relations with India is an example to other Islamic-oriented governments. The reconstruction of these devastated countries presents new opportunities for India.

India must immediately step up diplomatic efforts if it has to maintain and strengthen its core interests in the region. India must also recalibrate bilateral relations with the newly-emerging leaderships in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen on its own terms, by mitigating the interplay of the Islamic factor and consolidating its existing economic and trade relations.

India's political influence should implicitly challenge the notions of repression, populism and fundamentalism while promoting tolerance, especially towards minorities, in the region. India's voice at the UNSC and other international forums should be used in favour of democratic values and the importance of the fundamental freedoms of expression, speech, religion and assembly, as well as the rights of minorities. India has never believed in exporting "democracy" but it should, if asked, be ready to share its long experience – as it has done in Afghanistan – of building the institutions of democracy.

# Section Three

## Recommendations for India's West Asia policy

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### **Recommendations for India's West Asia policy**

The Arab uprisings have to be seen as part of a continuum of political developments in West Asia. The uprisings are taking place in the background of a recrudescence of religious and sectarian strife. As a result, neither are their goals determinate, nor their course irreversible, nor their pace even. Rearguard action by existing power structures or the “counter-revolution,” and an encouragement of sectarian agendas at the national and regional levels also continue.

Apart from the anxiety of possible influence on its own Muslim community, India has felt it prudent to keep a low profile so as to secure its core interests in the region. It has also, at the bilateral level, worked at strengthening relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran without getting enmeshed in their historic rivalry. This has saved India from having to take sides in the covert sectarian conflict between these two regional powers.

Simultaneously, India has deftly managed its expanding relationship with Israel, and avoided negative reactions from the Arab world. This was wise, as the Arabs have themselves succumbed to a *fait accompli* in favour of Israel by ignoring Arab boycott provisions and even allowing resident non-official Israeli representation in some of their capitals, like Qatar.

In this context, India should affirm and reassess its commercial, national and geopolitical interests in the region.

#### **I. Immediate/ short-term recommendations**

1. Hold bilateral political consultations at the level of Minister of State or Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs with all the new or emerging post-upheaval governments in West Asia,

in order to reiterate close bilateral ties and reemphasise India's continued interest in strengthening relations.

2. Regularly update contingency plans for the evacuation of Indian nationals, as needed, from countries in the throes of uprisings or due to a possible threat of insecurity in the Persian Gulf stemming from a fall-out from Syria, or in case of Israeli action against Iran.

3. Open dialogues with the new leaderships-in-information. India's participation in the pre-transitional informal groupings of the opposition parties, set up independently of or by the western powers, will be useful to develop direct relations with the emerging leaderships.

4. Evaluate India's commercial interests and engagements through a series of smart analysis and statistical reports by:

a. India's oil marketing companies like ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), Indian Oil Cooperation (IOC) and Gas India Limited (GAIL) on the impact of the upheavals on the supply of crude, gas and export of petroleum products, as also an assessment of available options for alternative sources in the region and elsewhere.

b. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through apex bodies such as the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), on the operation and profitability of Indian projects and investments in the context of the political upheavals with a view to mitigating their negative fallout.

c. Visits by Indian industry delegations sponsored by the apex organisations listed above for on-the-ground study and access to the new governments, as has been done in Egypt.

## **II. Medium/ long-term recommendations**

India's policy towards the West Asian region in the context of the ongoing upheavals in the Arab world will have to address both the institutions and the countries in the region. India will have to work with the new dispensations in West Asia, and travel the ups and downs of their democratic journeys with them.

## **A. General**

### **a. Political and security:**

1. Foreign Office consultations: In view of the major political changes that have taken place in the countries affected by political upheavals, the Indian government should soon bring forward dates for bilateral Foreign Office consultations to assess the action that needs to be taken for shoring up the bilateral relationships. This will be particularly relevant in countries like Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria, where India has important infrastructure, energy and petrochemical projects awarded by the earlier regimes.

2. Formal invitations to Foreign Ministers in the new regimes to visit India.

3. Take stock of the existing state of the security infrastructure with these countries so as to build new relationships between the counterpart organisations and offer help to complete its components where needed.

In the last decade, India has tried to enter into three major agreements to create a security infrastructure with countries in West Asia: the Mutual Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters, an Extradition Treaty, and an Agreement on Cooperation in Counter-terrorism.

India has extradition treaties and agreements for combating crime in the Gulf with Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait, and only with Tunisia in West Asia-North Africa. Oman is the only country with which India has a Strategic Dialogue.

In addition, mutual assistance treaties in commercial and civil matters have also been sought, especially with countries where India has a large economic presence.

A number of minorities in the region, like the Kurds, who have found a voice in the political churning, hold India in high esteem. As a subsidiary policy goal, India must encourage these emerging communities by establishing special windows for educational scholarships and medical treatment within the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITECH) programme, while keeping within the constitutional framework of these countries.

## **b. Culture and education**

1. Civil society exchanges by organisations working on issues of gender equality, social development, maternal and child welfare, and local conflict resolution, and with progressive Muslim organisations.

2. While India has never believed in exporting its democracy, unlike some western countries, it has tremendous experience in its practice and in the building of democratic institutions. India can make this experience available to interested countries in the region; for instance, by extending the expertise of India's election commissions and its civil society think-tanks like the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi and others.

3. Exchange of inter-religious and inter-faith delegations and academic professionals. This should be done by setting up Civil Society Roundtables anchored to major trade and industry associations, which can meet annually for an exchange of views on social and religious issues in India and the region.

4. Offer scholarships to Indian students to study the Arabic language and literature at important universities in the Arab world, such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt, Kairouan University in Tunisia, the Islamic University of Gaza and Birzeit University in Palestine. Offer scholarships to students in West Asia to study theology and also secular subjects at universities and institutes such as Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi, the Aligarh Muslim University, and Osmania University in Hyderabad. India already supports such efforts with students from South Asian and African countries.

5. Promote the publication of Indian books into Arabic languages. Much of the Arabic writing on India is in the form of texts translated from English and foreign languages. At present original writing in Arabic on Indian issues suffers from an absence of objectivity.

6. Increase scholarships given by the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations for graduate and post-doctoral study at Indian universities and institutions. A separate window could be opened for countries in the West Asian region with an allocation of at least 100 scholarships per year.

### **c. Economic and commercial**

1. Invitations for visits to India by trade and industry associations in the West Asian region. The three apex organisations – ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI – can be more speedy and effective if they divide up the region amongst themselves, working separately vis-à-vis countries in North Africa, West Asia and the Gulf, depending on the strength of their respective linkages.

2. Extension of supplier credit lines to countries in North Africa and West Asia to promote the export of Indian consulting services in project design and feasibility engineering, chemicals, petro-chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and plants and equipment both for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the power and industrial sector, and to harness natural resources for new mutually-beneficial projects.

### **B. Institutional**

India needs greater participation in regional institutional channels such as the Arab League (AL), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). During the Arab uprisings the role of all three has been rejuvenated:

#### **a. Arab League**

The Arab League, based in Cairo, has acted as an instrument of Egyptian foreign policy. During the upheavals, the Arab League became the organisation of choice for the western countries to demonstrate 'Arab' support to its proposals in the UN Security Council.

On 12 March 2011, the Arab League met at the ministerial-level in Cairo on the situation in Libya (it had suspended Libya's participation on 22 February until the violence stopped). It issued a statement which noted the Libyan authorities' use of military aircraft, mortars and heavy weaponry against civilians, and called on the Security Council to impose a no-fly zone.

The statement rejected foreign intervention and indicated that the failure to take appropriate action to end the crisis would lead to such intervention in internal Libyan affairs. The statement also called for communication and cooperation with the Benghazi-

led Interim Council, asserted that the Gaddafi-regime had lost its legitimacy, urged humanitarian assistance, and said that the AL would continue coordination with the UN, the OIC, and the EU.

Similarly, in the first instance it was the Arab League which sent its delegation to intervene in the Syrian situation. At the same time, the AL has also been reticent to pronounce on situations where its major backers like Egypt and Saudi Arabia wanted to keep a low profile – for example, in Bahrain.

India has had a structured dialogue with the AL since 2002, primarily in order to remove misconceptions in the Arab media and elsewhere about India's relations with Israel and the Indian Muslim community.

The dialogue has also made tentative suggestions for enhancing the economic relationship between India and the Arab world.<sup>[vi]</sup> (See footnote for links to some of the dialogues).

In view of the renewed importance of this organisation, India needs to ensure that the annual India-AL dialogue becomes regular and endowed with greater political will on both sides. In contrast to the OIC the AL still represents a largely secular stream in the Arab world.

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- [vi] 1. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. (2007). Visit of *Arab League delegation to India (9-10 May 2007)*. At: <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/2397/Visit+of+Arab+League+Delegation+to+India+910+May+2007>
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## **b. GCC**

From being an organisation of the small Gulf sheikhdoms primarily intended to confront Iran, the GCC has become a forum for demonstrating consensus amongst these countries on other international issues as well. In the background of the Arab uprisings, the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, its major backer, took active steps to defuse the crises in its neighbourhood in Yemen and Bahrain since 2011.

In Yemen, the GCC's effort was intended to persuade President Ali Abdullah Saleh to leave the country. In Bahrain, under a GCC mandate, Saudi Arabian troops were used to quell the protests. Given the effort by all GCC countries to subdue or co-opt nascent protests within their own country, the organisation has set itself up as a champion of the "counter-revolution" in the sub-region. At the same time, the GCC's support to the Syrian opposition has shown its intention to pander to sectarian interests as well.

The GCC countries also provide about 65% of India's crude oil needs. [60] So India needs to play this with great delicacy. India has excellent relations with all the Gulf countries despite some of them, like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, having been far closer to Pakistan. The positive dimension of the relationship has been nurtured by the fact that both the governments and major industrial groups in these countries are important investors in the Indian infrastructure and manufacturing sector. India needs to initiate a political dialogue with the GCC in tandem with its Free Trade Agreement, which is being negotiated since 2003.

## **c. OIC**

The OIC, like the GCC, was used to demonstrate Arab consensus at the UN Security Council on its Libyan intervention; it has passed resolutions on Syria calling for the departure of Assad. At its last meeting in Jeddah, the OIC considered alternative action vis-à-vis Syria. The OIC has also functioned as an instrument of Saudi foreign policy, guided by Pakistan on issues related to India.

During a visit to New Delhi in January 2006, Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz offered India "observer" status in the OIC; this was a recognition of India's economic importance to that country. It is against India's secular policy to have any status in

a religion-based organisation, but India could respond to the Saudi overture by proposing an institutional India-OIC dialogue to create a non-partisan forum to clear misrepresentations/misperceptions about the Indian Muslim community and Jammu and Kashmir, and to project India's secular democracy as one in which the Muslim community has flourished.

## **C. Regional**

### **a. GCC countries**

1. Enhance security cooperation: Complete and strengthen the security infrastructure with the GCC countries; for example, the new U.S.-supported cooperation between the Indian and Saudi security and intelligence agencies, which in 2012 led to the arrest and extradition of Abu Jundal, wanted for the November 2008 terror attack in Mumbai.

India has bilateral maritime cooperation agreements with some countries in the Gulf like Oman, which need to be extended to all Gulf countries and to Yemen and Iraq. An annual naval exercise between Indian ships and the combined naval ships of the GCC countries can be started, in order to focus on inter-operability, search and rescue, and counter-piracy operations.

2. Leverage “asymmetric complementarities” in human, mineral and financial resources respectively with all the GCC countries. In addition, bilateral mutual assistance treaties in commercial and civil matters, especially with countries where we have a prominent economic presence, are recommended.

3. Encourage upgrading skills and creating jobs at home (through the Ministry of Indian Overseas Affairs) to: (i) Change the composition of the Indian expatriate workforce in the Gulf to include managerial and professional staff more than skilled and semi-skilled workers to make up for the inevitable lost remittances. (ii) Prepare a roster of the skills of the Indian expatriate workforce in the Gulf with a view to matching these skills with jobs in India in case of major displacement due to chaos or increased competition from job-seekers in other parts of West Asia.

4. Identify and draw up feasibility studies for specific projects in India in which the Gulf countries can invest; discuss these studies

with the investment organisations in those countries.

5. India needs to quickly finalise the long-pending Free Trade Agreement with the GCC.

### **b. West Asia and North Africa**

1. Security cooperation: India needs to reach agreements on extradition and cooperation in combating crime and terrorism with Qatar, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, Jordan, Syria and Yemen.

2. Egypt's political bulk in the region is vast and the Morsi government has taken it upon itself to enhance the country's stature within the region. In this context, India needs to take special steps to strengthen the bilateral political dialogue. It is likely that Egypt will play an active role on regional issues like Palestine, Iran's nuclear ambitions and Syria. This requires India to build its interaction with Egypt far beyond the moribund level that it had sunk to under President Mubarak. India's interaction with Egypt in the economic sectors must be intensified to support the growth of small and medium scale manufacturing in Egypt. This can be a parallel plank in developing overall bilateral relations with Egypt.

3. With the relatively greater stability in Iraq, India can now enhance its presence there through increased trade exchanges and off-take of crude oil.

4. With Algeria and Libya, India's involvement in both upstream and downstream petroleum and petrochemical projects needs to be consolidated and enhanced; the same has to be done with India's involvement in the manufacture of phosphate and phosphoric acid in Morocco.

### **c. Palestine**

1. Increase the number of scholarships in the sciences and humanities. India offers eight scholarships under the General Cultural Scholarship Scheme of the Department of Education and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to Palestinian students for higher studies in India. Over the years, several hundreds of Palestinian students have also studied in Indian universities and institutions on their own.

The Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External

Affairs had organised a 'Special Course for Palestine Diplomats' in November-December 2004. This should become an annual exercise and cover not only young diplomats from Palestine but also from across the Arab world. Over time this can create a cadre of young diplomats in those countries who are India experts.

India has been offering 40 slots for training courses under the ITEC programme. During the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership Ministerial Conference on Capacity Building for Palestine at Jakarta in July 2008, India committed to provide 60 slots for training courses under the ITEC programme. This was increased to 100 slots per annum from 2009-10. A limited number of scholarships can also be provided for medical courses like MBBS and BDS.

2. Provide grants and trained medical personnel for setting up medical facilities in Ramallah and Gaza, possibly building maternity, childrens' and eye hospitals in cooperation with major Indian brands like Apollo, Wockhardt and Sankara Netralaya in Chennai, and the Life Spring maternity centres of Hindustan Latex in Hyderabad.

#### **d. Israel**

1. India does not need to be defensive about its relations with Israel because there is political consensus across party lines. Consequently, India needs to manage the fall-out from the increase in anti-Israeli sentiment in the region through public diplomacy, particularly towards Arab institutions and major regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran. Israel will continue to be one of India's major defence suppliers.

2. Simultaneously, India must enhance its economic engagement with Israel, which has now moved beyond defence supplies to cross-investments in pharmaceuticals, industrial products, medical devices, real estate and agri-business. Some of the companies that are active in non-defence sectors are: NaanDanJain, Netafim, ICL fertilisers in agriculture, Jain Irrigation in micro-irrigation through drip and sprinklers, Maxximilk in dairy, Tahal Group in water management, Sun Pharma in pharmaceuticals, Tower Vision in Telecom, Levithan Energy in wind and hydro power, Levinstein Group in real estate, and Tejas Networks and Ness Technology in

information technology.

#### **e. Turkey**

Turkey has played an active role in fostering political change in the Arab world and in projecting its model of a secular democracy with a majority Muslim population. Prime Minister Erdogan has visited Egypt twice and visited some other countries in the region since the outbreak of the upheavals in December 2010. Turkey has been directly affected by the ongoing civil war in Syria – it has taken in close to half a million Syrian refugees. Turkey has pursued an activist policy vis-à-vis the Syrian opposition, both morally and materially, and called for the end of the Assad regime. But Turkey's political initiatives in the region have not been lauded, and the Syrian civil war could spread to Turkey.

Turkey will remain an important player in the region. The time is opportune for India to reiterate its long-standing links with Turkey and to rejuvenate bilateral political and economic relations.

#### **f. Iran**

India has fully adhered to UN sanctions on Iran, which are intended to halt its nuclear weapons programme. India has also tried its best to observe the separate U.S. sanctions on Iran to the extent of reducing its off-take of crude from 18% in 2010 to 8%-10% in 2012, reducing its overall exports, and virtually closing down its exports of petroleum products. [61] India maintains that Iran needs to clarify its nuclear intentions and conform to the obligations of its adherence to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It opposes the possibility of yet another nuclear weapon power in its neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, there are limits beyond which India cannot pare down its relations with Iran because of its own energy needs, the imperative of access to Central Asia and Afghanistan through the Chabahar port, and Iran's importance in the stabilisation of Afghanistan. In the recent past, India has welcomed an Iranian trade delegation in order to boost private sector trade and investment between the two countries. For example, the Hinduja Group has important investments in petroleum products and trading in Iran.

India must carefully calibrate its relations with the region in

a way that the autonomy of its policy remains inviolable amidst the pressures of its growing relations with the Great Powers, particularly the U.S. A regular dialogue with the U.S. and the EU on developments in West Asia would provide a tool to understand the parameters on both sides.

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These recommendations are aimed at opening a dialogue on the actions that India will need to take in order to keep itself relevant in the ongoing political churning in West Asia.

The region – West Asia, North Africa, the GCC, Iran, Turkey and Israel – looms large in India's foreign policy matrix and critically impacts domestic policy in various ways. India's policy has to become responsive to the changes, which could have a significant influence on India's economic and energy security as well as its internal harmony.

# Appendix A

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## **Nations in transition: Country survey** (up to December 2012)<sup>[vii]</sup>

This appendix is an overview of the trends and present state of the nations in transition, essential for a better understanding of West Asia's shifting realities and the implications for India.

### **I. Nations with new governance structures**

#### **i. Egypt**

The people's grievances about a lack of economic opportunities and political inclusion led to an 18-day-long revolt. As a result, President Hosni Mubarak had to resign in February 2011. Mubarak transferred power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which promised a swift transition to democracy. In practice, this transition took more than a year. In the parliamentary elections in December 2011 and January 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party won a majority. Mohammad Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, became the first democratically-elected president of Egypt.

The victory of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group that was banned during Mubarak's rule (and also banned at the time in most of West Asia), heightened concerns about the rise of political Islam, democratic gains, the status of minorities (in particular Coptic Christians) and women. The victory also raised questions about the prospects of tourism and other industries that involve interaction with the West.

Political leadership in the context of the balance and distribution of power between the civilian government and the army is now a challenge, with instances of conflict between the newly-emerged civilian leadership and the military. For example, on August 12,

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[vii] Arranged alphabetically in each sub-section according to the name of the country

Morsi issued a presidential decree that ordered the retirement of some of the top leaders of the Supreme Council, including General Mohamed Tantawi Soliman, a Mubarak-era Defence Minister. He then appointed Major General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, an Islamic-oriented General, as the Defence Minister. With this, Morsi has jumped straight into settling the future civil-military equation in the political set-up in Egypt. Liberal and secular forces have been sidelined in this struggle.

This was not the end of the civilian-military tensions in Egypt. In November 2012, Morsi issued more decrees to expand his powers. Through one of the most controversial of these decrees, Morsi took away the power of the courts to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Less than a week later, a draft Constitution was made available to the public and a date was set for a referendum. Widespread protests followed, and Morsi agreed to take back some of his decrees. But the draft Constitution remained untouched and calls to cancel the referendum were pushed aside.

Despite all the tension, the Constitution got a majority vote of 63.8% in a two-round national referendum on 15 December 2012. [62] Morsi signed a decree putting into effect Egypt's new Constitution. However, many Egyptians did not feel that the vision of a democratic nation, for which they fought, is reflected in this Muslim Brotherhood-backed national document.

In the midst of transition and subsequent political turmoil, Egypt's economy remains grim. This is one of the major challenges Morsi faces. The economy is still suffering from a severe downturn, and central bank reserves have fallen by \$1.4 billion per month, standing at about \$15.1 billion. This is only 40% of what they were in January 2011. [63]

Mindful of the sterile Egyptian economy and its low GDP growth rate that dropped to 2.6% in the July-September 2012 period from 3.3% in the preceding quarter, the Morsi government has asked for foreign aid and loans to restore Egypt's deteriorating economy. [64] Most notably, despite its initial reservation about the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the U.S. has given the new Egypt \$1.3 billion in annual military aid. [65]

Qatar has given Egypt a \$2 billion aid package, Turkey has

pledged a \$1 billion loan and Saudi Arabia has pledged \$4 billion in aid. [66, 67] Trans-national institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are issuing loans, although after the escalation of the political crisis in December 2012, the IMF has delayed a \$4.8 billion loan. [68]

On his first state visit outside the Arab world, Morsi went to China in August 2012 in pursuit of Chinese investments. During this visit, Beijing and Cairo signed agreements for a number of major investments including a power station, a water desalination plant and a high-speed rail line. [69]

But even with these loans and aid packages, Egypt's economy remains a major point of concern and its recovery is considered a test for Morsi's controversial approach to democratic leadership and governance.

Internationally, Morsi has demonstrated that Egypt intends to follow an activist foreign policy to restore the country to its earlier pre-eminence in the Middle East. His visit to Iran for the 16<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in August 2012, even before he visited Washington D.C., is intended to send such a message to the western world.

Yet, at the NAM Summit Morsi explicitly took a stand against Bashar Al-Assad's regime, condemning him for violent crackdowns on the protestors. In doing so, he sent a clear and loud signal to Iran, Al-Assad's close friend in the region, that the new Egypt's regional policy does not always follow that of Iran's.

At the extraordinary summit of the OIC in Mecca in August 2012, Morsi suggested setting up a regional group comprising Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to deal with the Syrian crisis after the failure of the Arab League and UN initiatives. This was an indication of Egypt's emerging regional leadership. Morsi also proved pivotal in brokering a U.S.-backed ceasefire between Hamas in Gaza and Israel after an eight-day series of attacks that led to the deaths of 162 Palestinians and six Israelis in November 2012. [70]

Overall, though Egypt has emerged as an important regional and international player, as long as the economic and political situation remains fragile at home, Morsi will struggle to sustain

promises to his constituents and to the world.

## **ii. Libya**

A six-month long uprising and a civil war opposing Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's autocratic rule was ultimately brought to an end with the air-strikes by forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in October 2011. The UN Security Council's resolution 1973 (2011) authorised the air-strikes ostensibly to protect civilians and civilian-occupied areas. Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) took over the capital, Tripoli, Gaddafi was killed and the country was declared "liberated" on 23 October 2011.

The transition to the NTC has not been easy and its writ does not run throughout the country. Disarming the militias has been difficult, and sporadic outbreaks of violence among various militias continued into 2012.

In December 2011 the Libyan interim government was formed. On 7 June 2012 Libya held its first election since the popular uprising. Libyans elected a 200-member legislative assembly called the General National Congress (GNC), which replaced the NTC on August 8, 2012. In this election the National Forces Alliance, led by ex-interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril, won 39 of 80 seats that are reserved for parties, and the Muslim Brotherhood got 17 of these seats. [71] Mohamed Maqrif, the leader of the National Front and Gaddafi's enemy, won the GNC's presidency and Ali Zeidan became prime minister.

Despite the election that passed off peacefully, Libya continues to face political, regional and tribal chaos rooted in problems inherited from the Gaddafi era, the difficulty in coming to terms with the recent NATO intervention, and the rise of Salafist Islamist groups in pursuit of the implementation of *Sharia* law. As evident in the 11 September 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi and the assassination of the U.S. ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, security and the presence of weapons remain concerns in the volatile circumstances of the country.

In addition to the challenge of bringing about order and stability, the new government faces an economic downturn. The conflict and disorder has had an unprecedented impact on the

Libyan economy. Oil production fell from 1.49 million barrels per day (mbd) in January 2011 to 22,000 barrels per day (bpd) by July 2011, following a 60% drop in oil production. [72] Non-oil outputs have also declined by 50% and around 600,000 migrant workers from places such as Egypt, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pakistan and India have fled Libya. [73]

Assuming that the security and tribal challenges are minimised, the IMF forecasts a prosperous economic future for Libya. Despite Libya's recent conflicts, according to the World Bank the Libyan economy had a relatively "impressive recovery" in 2012 because oil production and exports have recovered faster than expected. According to the National Oil Company, the total oil production for the first seven months of 2012 reached 302 million barrels, equivalent to an average of 1.42 million bpd. [74]

### **iii. Tunisia**

The increasing discontent with the 23-year-old autocratic rule of Ben Ali led to mass protests on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia, which evolved into the 'Dignity Revolution'. [75] The Tunisian police and National Guard opened fire on the protestors, but the army refused Ben Ali's demand to support his rule against the people. After a month of protests, Ben Ali stepped down from power in January 2011 without much resistance and fled to Saudi Arabia with his family. This victory inspired protests throughout the region.

Tunisia's first democratic election, held in October 2011 after the overthrow of autocratic rule, resulted in the victory of the once-banned Islamist Ennahda party in the National Constituent Assembly. Tasked with drafting a new Tunisian constitution, the Assembly elected Moncef Marzouki, a human rights advocate, and an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, as President in December 2011.

Despite the rather smooth turnaround of power in Tunisia, the new government is struggling to meet the demands of the people. Throughout 2012, sporadic protests questioned the government's promises of pluralistic, religion-neutral, gender-equal and constitutional governance.

The economy remains at the centre of Tunisia's challenges. Ranked first in Africa by the World Economic Forum's *Global*

*Competitive Report* in 2008-2009, Tunisia is more prosperous than its neighbours. [76] Its economy has historically depended on oil, phosphates, agri-food products, manufacture of car parts, and tourism. Tunisia has strong trade relations with Europe. The recent political uncertainties and transition have negatively affected the tourism industry and foreign direct investments in manufacturing industries, energy, real estate, agriculture, and services – all of which are important for Tunisia's economic growth. [77, 78, 79]

Deepening socio-economic inequalities were a key driver of the protests and continue to be a major source of the average Tunisian's dissatisfaction. Unemployment is at the core of Tunisia's economic challenges. While slowly recovering, unemployment is expected to remain high in the short-term. Following the 2011 revolution, after reaching 19%, a 6-point increase from the previous year, the unemployment rate dropped to 17.6% in 2012. Nearly 40% of the population is under the age of 24, and the unemployment rate in the 18-29 age bracket remains high at 30%. [80, 81] Tunisians had hoped to see more drastic improvements after the fall of Ben Ali, and the high unemployment remains a source of discontent. [82]

#### **iv. Yemen**

Throughout 2011 there was continuous political unrest and protests in Yemen, which ended the 33-year rule of President Abdullah Saleh. The late January 2011 protests were fuelled by the people's objections to widespread unemployment, deteriorating economic conditions and corruption. In April 2011, as the protests were becoming increasingly more violent, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stepped in to mediate the crisis. The GCC introduced an agreement, based on which President Saleh would step down in exchange for immunity against prosecution. President Saleh refused to step down, leading to street violence and to Saleh being injured in an explosion in June 2011. [83, 84]

Eventually, Saleh agreed to sign the GCC-brokered agreement and to step down, transferring some of his power to Vice President Abd Rbuh Mansour Hadi. However, Saleh still has sufficient influence to be a destabilising factor. His son, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, who controlled sections of the military, only agreed to give

up his missiles in December 2012.

In February 2012, the election of a single candidate, endorsed by both the opposition and the ruling parties, led to formal shifting of the executive power to Vice President Hadi. He became the head of a government to lead a period of transition. He has promised to launch a national dialogue aimed at drafting a new Constitution, followed by presidential elections in 2014.

Yemen remains the poorest country in West Asia, with a GDP per capita of \$2,300 in 2011, a heavy dependence on declining oil resources and an estimated 35% unemployment. [85] An Al-Qaeda-led insurgency within its borders has raised security concerns regionally and internationally.

## **II. Monarchies that have introduced reforms**

### **i. Bahrain**

The Sunni constitutional monarchy of Bahrain, led by the Al-Khalifa family, called in Saudi Arabia to help with the crackdowns on the largely Shia protestors who first came to the streets on 14 February 2011. The hard-line conservatives in the ruling class raised the bogey of Iranian proximity and influence to justify the action. Although the Bahraini monarchy banned all demonstrations in late October, sporadic protests continue and frustrations remain among the Shia majority, who demand a greater say in governance and an end to the alleged systematic discrimination in jobs and services against Shias.

The International Formula One event in April 2012 galvanised further protests after a widespread crackdown. As the non-violent protest tactics failed to yield results, some of the frustrated young protestors started using explosives and bombs to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the current monarchy.

In response to the ongoing protests, the monarchy has promised some degree of reforms, while also offering token concessions such as handing out cash to each Bahraini family – a move aimed at appeasing the Shia majority. [86]

Bahrain is a small but prosperous banking and financial services centre with an economy less dependent on oil than most other

Gulf countries. [87, 88] While petroleum production and refining account for more than 60% of the country's export receipts and 70% of government revenue, Bahrain has successfully diversified its economy, relying on its other major industries such as aluminium, which is the second biggest export after oil, and has developed the finance and construction industries. [89]

Overall, despite the political tensions and destabilising factors in 2011 and 2012, the Bahraini economy remains robust. Bahrain's economic growth for the third quarter of 2012 was up by 0.7% on the previous three-month period. [90] Growth is evident in the Bahraini economy despite a decline in crude production by 7.1% in the output of the national petroleum industry for the third quarter of 2012. [91] Thus, even with the political turmoil and the financial crisis of 2011, Bahrain has benefited from the long-standing decision to diversify its economy into the non-oil financial sector.

## **ii. Jordan**

This small, economically strong upper-middle class country has faced uprisings since January 2011. Low-scale and persistent demonstrations began to challenge the ruling government and demand political reform as well as an end to government corruption, rising prices and high unemployment. Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, known as King Abdullah, responded to the uprisings by replacing his prime minister and forming two commissions to propose reforms to Jordan's electoral and political party laws and to consider limited constitutional amendments.

A royal decree issued in September 2011 approved the constitutional amendments passed by Parliament to strengthen a more independent judiciary and establish a constitutional court and an independent election commission to oversee municipal and parliamentary elections.

While a step in the right direction, Jordanians did not see these reforms as sufficiently substantial. As the widespread public dissatisfaction lingered, King Abdullah dismissed the Cabinet, dissolved the Parliament and replaced the prime minister in October 2011. The Parliament election (of 23 January 2013) is yet another test for the Jordanian ruling elites' attempts to respond to the dissatisfaction with the government's performance. [92, 93]

Jordan has insufficient supplies of water, oil and other natural resources, which have led to a historical reliance on foreign assistance. Despite King Abdullah's economic reforms since 1999, which resulted in foreign investments and jobs, Jordan's economy suffered in the wake of the global economic slowdown and the regional turmoil of the Arab uprising.

Jordan is dependent on foreign assistance and in 2007 foreign grants comprised 8.6% of total actual government revenue. This proportion is estimated to have increased to 22.4% in 2012; the U.S. and IMF are the most significant donors. [94, 95] Given its budget deficit, Jordan is likely to remain dependent on foreign assistance from the GCC and U.S., among others, in the foreseeable future.

### **iii. Kuwait**

Kuwait has the Gulf's oldest elected parliament, relatively the most free media and religious liberty. In spite of its hereditary monarchy, Kuwait has the most democratic system in the Gulf. Yet, Kuwait too had an Arab uprising.

The highlight of the uprising in Kuwait was the repeated protests in 2011 by youth activist groups objecting mainly to the worsening corruption, stateless Arabs demanding citizenship in Kuwait, and by opposition legislators and Prime Minister Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah's rivals within the Al-Sabah ruling family. This eventually led to the resignation of the prime minister in late 2011.

Large-scale protests also took place in Kuwait in October and November 2012 after the Amir introduced amendments to the electoral law, which reduced the number of votes per person from four to one. Subsequently, the opposition, which includes Sunni Islamists, tribal activists and fractions of liberals and youth groups, boycotted the legislative election in December 2012. This led to Shia candidates winning an unprecedented number of seats. The tensions between the Amir and the National Assembly have resulted in 12 Cabinet reshuffles and the five orders from the Amir to dissolve the National Assembly since 2006. [96]

A small but wealthy economy, Kuwait relies heavily on its crude oil reserves of about 104 billion barrels, which account for approximately 7% of world reserves. Kuwait's total oil reserves,

including the Neutral Zone, which Kuwait shares on a 50-50 basis with Saudi Arabia, amount to 104 billion barrels. [97] The global financial crisis negatively impacted Kuwait's financial sector. However, the stock market recovered from a drop by 40% by the end of 2008. [98]

Caught between the tensions of the National Assembly and the executive branch, Kuwait has done little to diversify its economy. Meanwhile, the rise in global oil prices in 2011 has revived government consumption and economic growth, leading to an increase of about 20% in government budget revenue and subsequently higher expenditures, such as wage hikes for government employees. [99, 100]

#### **iv. Morocco**

A relatively peaceful series of protests emerged in 2011 and became known as the 'February 20 Movement'. This movement led to the launch of comprehensive reforms by King Mohamed VI, who has been ruling since 1999 (his family has ruled the country for close to 400 years). Although he had already introduced a series of political, economic and social reforms, they were not sufficient to overcome corruption, poverty and the large gap between the rich and poor.

When the unrests reached Morocco, the King proposed broad and comprehensive political reforms that got 98.5% of the votes in a referendum held in July 2011. [101] The new constitution drafted by the King instituted a democratic and decentralised system of governance, an independent judiciary and calls for a new social contract with laws guaranteeing civic engagement in a range of activities and better access to information.

The head of the government, the Constitution said, would be from the party with the most votes, while the King continues as the ultimate authority, the Head of the Council of Ministers and the Ulama Council, which runs the mosques. The elections of November 2011 resulted in the victory of the Parti de la Justice et du Développement (PJD), a moderate Islamist party. The party was formerly active as the opposition and support for it had steadily increased. The discussions on reforms ended in the formation of a coalition of four parties in January 2012 and the leader of the

PJD, Abdelilah Benkirane, became the new Head of Government.

With reasonable macroeconomic strategies and consistent growth in non-agricultural sectors such as manufacturing and textiles, Morocco has steadily moved out of the stagnation of the 1990s. Spending on subsidies significantly increased to meet the high world food and fuel prices of 2011. The subsidies are now a serious problem and place financial restrictions on the new government that has promised to lower the cost of the subsidy system to free up funds to implement economic reforms. [102]

#### **v. Saudi Arabia**

In 2010-2011, small-scale protests erupted in Saudi Arabia. These protests were mainly led by Shia demonstrators demanding the release of detainees and the withdrawal of the Saudi military from Bahrain. The police forces used repressive methods to stem the protests. In March 2011 King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz announced a series of benefits to Saudi citizens, such as funds for affordable housing, salary increases for government workers and unemployment benefits.

The Saudi dynasty has a monopoly of power in a country that is the world's dominant oil producer and the owner of the largest hydrocarbon oil reserves – more than 25% of the world's known oil reserves. [103, 104] Politically, it is one of the main players in the Middle East and beyond, and it has led and supported the “counter revolution” against the reformists. The Saudi ruling elite cannot underestimate the threat that even the smallest uprisings bear for the country's political and economic stability, because Saudi's major oil fields are in the Eastern Province, which has the largest Shia population.

As the largest exporter of petroleum in the world, Saudi Arabia has a strong economy. Driven mostly by the rising oil prices and expansionary public spending, Saudi Arabia's economy has expanded at an average rate of 3.5% since 2007. [105] While the petroleum sector accounts for about 80% of budget revenues and 45% of GDP, Saudi Arabia's diversification efforts focus on power generation, telecommunications, natural gas exports, and petrochemical sectors. [106] With 6 million foreign workers who play an important role in the oil and services sector, Saudi

Arabia has stepped up efforts to reduce unemployment among its own nationals, and in particular the youth population who lack education and technical skills. [107, 108]

### **III. Nations with inflexible governance structures**

#### **i. Algeria**

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who led the country out of the civil war that broke out in Algeria in 1992, has been in power since 1999. As the protests in neighbouring Tunisia gathered pace in January 2011, there were widespread disturbances in Algeria. On 5 January 2011, riots broke out in the capital, Algiers, to protest against soaring prices of basic food items like sugar, flour and oil. The government responded by ordering price cuts. After the pro-democracy protesters drove Egypt's long-time leader Hosni Mubarak from power on 11 February 2011, Algerians demanded the ouster of Bouteflika.

In an attempt to appease the opposition's demands for democracy and greater freedoms, the President lifted the 19-year long emergency on 24 February 2011. But this had little impact on the people and protest marches in the capital continued to be banned. The conciliation continued when Bouteflika introduced media reforms in September and a promise for next April to introduce democratic reforms by amending the Constitution.

The elections of 10 May 2012 resulted in the victory of President Bouteflika's National Liberation Front (FLN) and Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia's National Rally for Democracy (RND). However, the election was called a "blatant fraud" by parties like the Algerian National Front and Green Algeria Alliance. [109]

In Algeria, the Department du Renseignement et de la Securite, or DRS, the Intelligence and Security Department, is at the core of what Algerians call "Le Pouvoir" – the Power – that is, the generals who rule the country behind the front of an elected government. Algeria is therefore believed to be the last dictatorship in North Africa, after the downfall of absolute rulers in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in the uprising that have swept the Arab world since January 2011. The number of political protests in Algeria dwindled in 2012, but violent demonstrations over issues related to housing, power

cuts, social unrest and dire living conditions remain a common occurrence.

In 2011, the Algerian economy grew at an abysmal 2.6%. [110] Hydrocarbons remain the backbone of the economy, accounting for around 60% of budget revenues, 30% of GDP, and over 95% of export earnings. [111] Algeria has the tenth-largest reserves of natural gas in the world and ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in oil reserves. [112] The wave of protests prompted the government to offer more than \$23 billion in public grants and retroactive salary and benefit increases. [113]

Despite the unrest, the IMF predicted that the Algerian economy will “remain solid” in 2012 and grow at a rate of 3.4% in 2013. But inflation was the principal cause of discontent among the people; it surged to 8.4% in 2012, reaching a 15-year high, from 4.5% in 2011. [114]

## **ii. Iran**

Iran became an Islamic Republic in 1979 under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini after the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty. After reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which were interrupted by hardliners, Iran went through a wave of unrests similar to the recent uprisings in the Arab world. Large-scale protests erupted in 2009 (which were called the Green Movement) against the allegedly fraudulent presidential polls that re-elected Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Widespread repressive methods were used to halt these protests.

However, the worsening repression and the fast deteriorating economy of Iran under U.S.-led economic sanctions that were tightened in June 2012 to deter the country’s nuclear ambitions, have added to people’s frustrations with the government. With Iran nearing the June 2013 presidential election, the increasingly visible political fracturing of the ruling elite is creating further uncertainties for the future stability of the country.

Iran is the second largest economy in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia. Despite its political and economic challenges, it is a key player whose influence in the region is ascendant, in particular among Shia Muslims.

However, 2012 was particularly challenging for the Iranian economy. As a result of the current sanctions, the Iranian riyal has lost 50% of its value, the inflation rate has risen by 27% and Iran's oil exports are down to 40%. [115] While struggling with this economic deterioration, Iran is looking for alternative ways to slow the further worsening of the economy. In particular, in 2012 Iran's non-oil products have risen by 8% to reach \$32 billion. [116]

Despite the economic downturn and political tensions at home, Iran continues to exert an influence in the region. For instance, the recent developments in Syria and Iran's steadfast support to the Assad regime and to the Hezbollah, have exacerbated the historic Shia-Sunni rivalry in the region.

### **iii. Iraq**

The U.S. invaded Iraq, at the time ruled by Saddam Hussein, in 2003, making it a battleground between external and internal forces. Although the federal government of Iraq and the U.S.-led coalition established some level of control, the country remains volatile. Violence has destabilised the Iraqi economy, already shattered by decades of conflict and repression.

The Nouri al-Maliki government, which succeeded the Iraqi Transitional Government and came to power for a second time in December 2010, has become increasingly authoritarian, recalling the days of Saddam Hussein. Iraq has the world's third-largest reserves of crude oil, among other resources. The potential for economic growth is high if the internecine conflict recedes.

But Iraq remains fragile and disputes between Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurdistan government over who controls exploration, prospecting and construction of the oil-rich areas further threatens political stability. Disputes over the oil-rich city of Kirkuk have also threatened to derail the slow progress towards stability. Insurgents continue to use violence to undermine the Maliki government.

Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which accounts for more than 90% of government revenue and 80% of foreign exchange earnings. [117] While still struggling with the fallout of the war, the Iraqi economy is slowly recovering from the hostilities that began in 2003. But economic progress has been uneven in the midst of sectarianism and political tensions.

#### **iv. Syria**

On 15 March 2011, the residents of a small city in Syria came out on the streets to protest against the torturing of students who had expressed anti-government sentiments. In response, Bashar al-Assad's government used heavy forces to rapidly put an end to the demonstrations. Protests continued despite the crackdowns. The violence escalated and the United Nations said Syria was on the verge of a civil war.

The fragmented Syrian oppositions and rebels signed an agreement in November 2012, creating a unified overarching organisation called the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and opposition Forces. The coalition was recognised by the UK, France, Turkey and several Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia. Others, such as Russia and Iran, have rejected the opposition, standing on the side of Bashar al-Assad. Countries such as Saudi Arabia are funding and arming the opposition rebels, while countries like Iran are assisting Assad with the widespread crackdowns.

By the end of 2012, Syria, already drowned in violence, was labelled as "overtly sectarian" by the UN. The struggle has evolved to involve the Alawite, a Shia minority to which the Assad family belongs, and the majority Sunni population, as well as minorities such as the Kurds.

According to the UN, by the end of 2012 the Syrian civil war had killed more than 60,000 people, most of them civilians; tens of thousands were arrested and more than 400,000 refugees registered in neighbouring countries. Thousands more are unregistered refugees; 2.5 million Syrians are in need of aid inside the country and more than 1.2 million Syrians are domestically displaced. [118, 119, 120]

With Bashar al-Assad still in power as the country faces a civil war, the Syrian economy has dramatically worsened. Since March 2011, when the revolt erupted, inflation has risen to 40%. Meanwhile, sanctions introduced by the Arab League in late 2011 as well as the sanction imposed in September 2011 by the U.S. and the EU, have contributed to the weakening of the economy. As the war continues, Syria's economic situation is expected to worsen further in 2013. [121]

## **v. Turkey**

Turkey is strategically located between Europe and Asia and is a key regional influence in West Asia-North Africa. Turkey's economic growth is strong and is led by trade, foreign investments, tourism and agriculture.

But Turkey faces various political, religious and ethnic challenges. The conflict continues between a secular military-backed system and the growing power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a composite party with deep Islamic roots, which first came to office in 2002. In 2003 the government confronted military officers for an alleged plot to overthrow the ruling party. The chiefs of staff resigned in protest against the arrests of military officers, allowing the civil government to appoint their successors for the first time.

The AKP under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan began a four-year third term in 2011. Meanwhile, the government's efforts to stop coup plots reached a climax in September 2012, when a Turkish court found more than 300 active and retired military officers guilty of plotting a coup. [122]

The Shia populations, particularly the Alevi, are concerned that the AKP is becoming an overtly Sunni party. The ethnic tensions between the Kurds and the Turkish forces have heightened, and a regime change in Syria could provoke the Syrian Kurds to go the way of a separate Iraqi Kurdistan. A fearful Turkish government has launched efforts to accommodate at least some of the Kurdish quests, such as putting an end to legal and social discriminations and allowing this ethnic minority more political representation. [123]

However, clashes in southeast Turkey between the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and the Turkish armed forces have grown in 2012. The PKK remains classified as a terrorist organisation by the European Union and the U.S. It has set aside its claim to an independent Kurdish state, but continues to fight for autonomy and cultural rights. [124, 125]

Turkey's growth rate topped at 8% in 2010 and 2011. [126] Despite the global and Eurozone economic slowdown, Turkey is managing an economic expansion. But the neighbouring Syrian civil war became a challenge for Turkey's economy in 2012. Turkey

also faces the challenge of high unemployment rates. While steadily decreasing since 2009 when it reached 15%, unemployment stood at 8.8% in August 2012, indicating a continuing challenge. [127]

Relatively minor protests have also erupted in other countries in the region since early 2011. Influenced by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, people in neighbouring Qatar, Oman, Sudan and Somalia began protesting against their governments, demanding reforms. Inflation, unemployment, and misguided government policies have been the common reasons for the discontent.

# Appendix B

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## A chronology of the Arab uprisings

(till December 2012)<sup>[viii]</sup>

### 1. ALGERIA

**January 2011:** Major protests over food prices and unemployment. Two people are killed in clashes with the security forces. The government orders price cuts for basic foodstuffs. Inconclusive protests continue into 2012.

**February:** President Abdelaziz Bouteflika lifts the 19-year-old emergency – a key demand of the anti-government protesters.

**April:** President Bouteflika sets up a committee to suggest constitutional changes aimed at “reinforcing democracy.”

**September:** Bouteflika ends state monopoly over radio and television.

**May 2012:** At the parliamentary poll, the ruling FLN wins 220 of 463 seats, followed by its ally, the National Democratic Rally, with 68 seats. The Islamist alliance comes third with 48 seats. Some opposition MPs allege FLN has used fraudulent methods.

**September:** Bouteflika appoints key ally Abdelmalek Sellal as the prime minister, ending post-election uncertainty.

**November:** Security alert levels raised over a planned foreign intervention against Islamists in neighbouring Mali.

**December:** French President Francois Hollande acknowledges the suffering caused by France’s colonisation of Algeria, but he stops short of an apology.

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[viii] Arranged alphabetically, according to country name. Appendix B has been compiled from various sources. Only some countries are listed; this is not an exhaustive listing. The main sources include the *BBC*, *The Guardian* and *Al Arabiya*, which have similar ongoing timelines of the Arab uprisings [128,129, 130]

## **2. BAHRAIN**

**February 2011:** Thousands of protesters gather in Manama, inspired by the popular revolts that have toppled rulers in Tunisia and Egypt. A security crackdown results in the death of several protesters.

**March:** Saudi troops are called in after further unrest. The authorities declare martial law and clamp down on pro-democracy activists. Protests continue, despite the ban on demonstrations. The focal point of the demonstrations – the Pearl monument – is demolished.

**April:** The government moves to ban the two main opposition parties, Al-Wefaq and the Islamic Action Society, which represent the 66%-70 % Shia majority.

**June:** The emergency, imposed for three months by King Hamad on 15 March 2011 is lifted on June 1, but trials before the National Security Court continue for several months. The civilian courts have taken over and already passed heavy sentences on people with links to the protest movement.

**September:** Low turn-out for by-elections to replace members of Parliament from the Shia opposition who quit Parliament objecting to the violent crackdown on demonstrators.

The Appeal Court of Bahrain's National Security Court upholds the judgment of June 22 by the court of first instance against 21 Bahraini members of the political opposition and human rights activists, who were given prison sentences varying from two years to life, because of their participation in the protest movement.

**November:** The government concedes that “excessive force” was used by security forces in Bahrain against pro-democracy protesters.

**February 2012:** The police subdue opposition attempts to protest on the anniversary of the crackdown on the previous year's mass demonstration at the site of the demolished Pearl Square. Protests continue through the spring.

**April:** The controversial Bahrain Formula 1 Grand Prix takes place amid anti-government protests.

**May:** Leading opposition activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja ends a three-month hunger strike. A military court jailed him for life in June 2011 for plotting against the state.

**June:** The appeals court partially overturns long jail sentences for 20 doctors for taking part in the anti-government protests. Nine are acquitted, and the rest are given much shorter sentences.

**August:** Activist Nabeel Rajab is jailed for three years for taking part in “illegal gatherings.” Sporadic anti-monarchy protests continue.

**October:** Protesters clash with riot police in Manama after thousands attend the funeral of Ali Ahmed Mushaima, who was jailed for taking part in the pro-democracy demonstrations. The protesters say he died because the authorities refused to allow him treatment for sickle cell anaemia; the authorities deny this charge.

**November:** The government bans all public gatherings and rallies. Five bombs exploded in the heart of the Bahraini capital Manama on November 5, killing two people. The explosions took place in the Qudaibiya and Adliya districts of Manama.

Bahrain’s government revokes the citizenship of 31 opposition activists for “undermining state security.” Information Minister Samira Ibrahim bin Rajab tells BBC Arabic that the activists had “all contributed to, and worked for, breaching national security and damaging the supreme interests of Bahrain.”

### **3. EGYPT**

**February 2010:** Mohammed El Baradei, the former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), returns to Egypt and, together with opposition figures and activists, forms a coalition for political change. El Baradei says he might participate in the presidential election scheduled for 2011.

**March:** President Mubarak undergoes gall-bladder surgery in Germany; returns to Egypt three weeks later.

**June:** The Muslim Brotherhood fails to win any seats in elections to the Shura consultative upper house of Parliament; alleges that the elections were rigged.

**November:** Coptic Christians clash with the police in Giza

over the construction of a church. Parliamentary polls are held, followed by protests against alleged vote-rigging. The Muslim Brotherhood fails to win a single seat, though it held a fifth of the places in the last Parliament.

**January 2011:** A bomb kills 21 at a church in Alexandria where Christians had gathered to mark the New Year.

Anti-government demonstrations erupt, apparently encouraged by Tunisian street protests.

The 'Day of Revolt', with protests erupting nationwide against the government on January 25. Tens of thousands of protestors gather in Cairo, with thousands more in other cities. After social media networks facilitate mass demonstrations, the government blocks access to Twitter. This results in the 'Friday of Anger' protests on the 25th, prompting the government to increase military presence in Cairo. President Mubarak reshuffles his Cabinet but fails to placate demonstrators, whose calls for his resignation grow louder. He promises to step down in September.

**February:** President Mubarak steps down on February 11, the 'Friday of Departure', entrusting the Supreme Council of Egyptian Armed Forces with the leadership of the country.

**March:** A day before large protests against him were planned, Ahmed Shafik steps down as Prime Minister and is replaced by Essam Sharaf. The constitutional referendum is finally held on 17 March and passed by 77.27%, paving the way for new elections.

**April:** 'Save the Revolution' day on 1 April. Approximately 4,000 demonstrators fill Tahrir Square for the largest protest in weeks, demanding that the ruling military council move faster to dismantle lingering aspects of the old regime. They call for the trial of Mubarak and other leaders, which leads to their arrest. Protests continue for a week, criticising the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for not following through on the revolution's demands.

**May:** The 'Second Friday of Anger' as tens of thousands of demonstrators fill Tahrir Square demanding no military trials for civilians, the establishment of an Egyptian Constitution before elections and trial of all members of the old regime.

**June-August:** Protests continue in Cairo's Tahrir Square over the slow pace of political change. Islamist groups come to the fore. The army finally disperses protestors in August. Former President Mubarak goes on trial in Cairo, charged with ordering the killing of demonstrators earlier in the year.

**October:** Clashes erupt between Coptic Christians in front of the state TV building in Cairo and soon spread to Tahrir Square. Security forces kill 28 people and injure 212.

Egypt and Israel swap 25 Egyptians in Israeli custody for a U.S.-Israeli citizen accused of spying.

**November:** Violence in Cairo's Tahrir square as security forces clash with protesters accusing the military of trying to keep its grip on power. Prime Minister Essam Sharaf resigns in response to the unrest. Parliamentary elections begin.

**December:** The National Unity Government headed by new Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri takes office.

**January 2012:** The Islamist parties emerge as victors in the parliamentary elections. Egyptian Field Marshal and leader of the military, Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman, announces that the decades-old state of emergency will be partially lifted the next day.

**March:** Pope Shenouda III, the veteran head of the Coptic Church, dies.

**April:** Crisis in relations with Saudi Arabia over the Saudi detention of an Egyptian lawyer briefly threatens the substantial aid that the Saudis give to Egypt. Protests erupt once again in Cairo's Tahrir Square, with demands for a faster transition.

**May:** Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi tops the first round of voting in the first free presidential elections, narrowly ahead of Mubarak-era Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq. Official media put the turnout at a low 43%.

Military leaders announce the end of the decades-old state of emergency as its last renewal date expires. Egypt had been in a state of emergency since Anwar al-Sadat's assassination in 1981.

**June:** The court in Cairo sentences Mubarak to life in prison for complicity in the killing of protestors during the 2011 uprising.

The acquittal of four senior interior ministry officials sparks anger. Just ahead of the presidential run-off vote, the Supreme Court annuls the Islamist-led Parliament, citing illegal articles in the law governing parliamentary elections. Cries of ‘coup’ after the court ruling and delay in election results. Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi is declared the new president of Egypt on Sunday 24 June, following the first democratic election in Egypt’s history.

**August:** Hisham Qandil, the irrigation minister in the outgoing government, becomes prime minister. He appoints a government in which persons from the out-going government, technocrats and Islamists predominate, to the exclusion of secular parties.

Islamist fighters clash twice with the army in Sinai, leaving 16 soldiers dead. Israel says this is a wake-up call to Egypt about the largely-lawless area. President Morsi dismisses Defence Minister Tantawi and Chief of Staff Sami Annan and strips the military of a say in the legislative process and the drafting of the new Constitution. The president reasserts power which the military claimed for itself before he took office.

**September:** Egypt kills 32 militants and destroys 31 tunnels used for smuggling to Gaza in its offensive against Islamists who attacked troops in Sinai in August. The Administrative Court of the State Council postpones its decision on the constitutionality of Egypt’s Constituent Assembly until 2 October 2012.

Egypt’s Supreme Administrative Court upholds an earlier Supreme Constitutional Court ruling, which had ordered the dissolution of the lower house of Egypt’s parliament (People’s Assembly). The administrative court says that since the electoral laws on which the People’s Assembly was elected were found to be unconstitutional, the entire composition of the Assembly is invalid.

Egypt’s Supreme Administrative Court issues a verdict supporting the right of former members of the now-defunct National Democratic Party (NDP), which was formally disbanded by an administrative court in April 2011, to contest parliamentary elections.

**October:** The Administrative Court of the State Council postpones its decision on the constitutionality of Egypt’s Constituent Assembly until 9 October 2012.

Morsi orders a pardon for all persons already convicted and those who are still under investigation or are on trial for deeds “committed with the aim of supporting the revolution and bringing about its objectives.” [131] The decree includes felonies and misdemeanours committed to support the uprising from 25 January 2011 until 30 June 2012, except first degree murder, and it asks the general prosecutor and the military attorney general to publish a list of those given amnesty in the official newspaper.

The Administrative Court of the State Council postpones its decision on the constitutionality of Egypt’s Constituent Assembly in order to review more documents.

**November:** Bishop Tawadros is chosen as the new pope of Egypt’s Coptic Christians. President Morsi issues a decree stripping the judiciary of the right to challenge his decisions, but rescinds it in the face of popular protests.

**December:** The Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly approves a draft Constitution that enhances the role of Islam and restricts freedom of speech and assembly. The people approve it in a referendum, prompting extensive protests by secular opposition leaders, Christians and women’s groups.

#### **4. LIBYA**

**February 2011:** On 15 February, a riot in Benghazi is triggered by the arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel, who has worked to free political prisoners, according to the *Quryna* newspaper. [132]

**February:** Activists designate 17 February as a day of rage. It is the anniversary of the clashes in 2006 in Benghazi when security forces killed protesters who were attacking the Italian consulate.

Diplomats at Libya’s mission to the UN support the revolt against their country’s leader and call on the Libyan army to help overthrow Muammar Gaddafi. A defiant Gaddafi vows to die “a martyr” in Libya and says he will crush a revolt in which the eastern regions have broken free from four decades of his rule.

Anti-Libyan government militias take control of Misrata after evicting forces loyal to Gaddafi. The U.N. Security Council imposes sanctions on Gaddafi and his family, and refers Libya’s crackdown on rebels to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

European Union governments approve a package of sanctions against Gaddafi and his closest advisers, including an arms embargo and bans on travel to the EU. The 27 EU states also agree to freeze the assets of Gaddafi, his family and government.

Gaddafi refuses to acknowledge the protests in the streets of Tripoli, saying all Libyans are devoted to him.

**March:** The UN Security Council authorises a no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians from air strikes, over which NATO assumes command. Backed by extensive NATO air raids, Libyan rebels initially capture territory but are then forced back by better-armed pro-Gaddafi forces. The rebels turn to the West for arms.

**April:** A NATO missile attack on a house in Tripoli kills Gaddafi's youngest son and three grandchildren, his government says.

**June:** The ICC issues arrest warrants for Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam and intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi on charges of crimes against humanity.

**July:** The International Contact Group on Libya formally recognises the main opposition group, the National Transitional Council (NTC), as the legitimate government of Libya.

**August:** Rebels swarm into Gaddafi's fortress compound in Tripoli, six months after the uprising began. With only a few remaining strongholds under his control, Gaddafi goes into hiding. His wife and three of his children flee to neighbouring Algeria.

**August-September:** The African Union joins 60 countries, including India, which have recognised the NTC as the new Libyan authority.

**October:** Gaddafi is killed on 20 October. Three days later, the NTC declares Libya officially "liberated" and announces plans to hold elections within eight months.

**November:** Saif al-Islam, Gaddafi's fugitive son, is captured, becoming the last key family member to be seized or killed. The transitional government says he will be put on trial.

**January 2012:** Clashes erupt between former rebel forces in Benghazi discontented with the pace and nature of change under

the governing NTC. The deputy head of the NTC, Abdel Hafiz Ghoga, resigns.

**February:** Scores killed in clashes between Arab Zawi and African Tebu groups in Al-Kufra in the remote south-east.

**March:** NTC officials in the oil-rich east, centred on Benghazi, launch a campaign to re-establish autonomy for the region, further increasing tension with the central NTC in Tripoli.

Mauritania arrests Gaddafi-era intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi at Nouakchott Airport and insists it will investigate him before considering an extradition request from Libya. The ICC and France also seek his extradition.

**May:** Gunmen burst into government headquarters in Tripoli during a protest against the suspensions of bounty payments to groups that had fought against the Gaddafi government. Security forces restore order.

Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi dies after a battle with cancer, in Tripoli. A private funeral is held.

**June:** The government struggles to control local militias, especially in Zintan in the West. The Al-Awfeia Brigade briefly takes over Tripoli International Airport, and a pro-autonomy mob ransacks the election commission building in Benghazi. Tunisia extradites former Prime Minister Al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi.

**August:** The transitional government hands power to the General National Congress, which was elected in July. The Congress elects Mohammed Magarief of the liberal National Front Party as its chairman, thereby making him interim head of state.

**September:** The U.S. ambassador and three other Americans are killed when armed men storm the consulate in Benghazi. The U.S. believes Islamist armed groups used protests against a film produced in the U.S. that mocks Prophet Muhammad as cover for the attack. Crowds in Benghazi drive out the Ansar al-Sharia and other militias from the city and the nearby Islamist stronghold of Derna, prompting head of state Mohammed Magarief to vow to disband all illegal militias.

Mauritania extradites former spy chief Abdullah al-Senussi to

Libya to stand trial for crimes allegedly committed under Gaddafi's rule.

**October:** Mustafa Abu Shagur, prime-minister-elect, fails in two attempts to gain parliamentary approval for his government, and is suspended by the National Assembly.

Pro-government forces put down armed uprising in western town of Bani Walid. The Libyan authorities allege that Gaddafi loyalists are still present in the town – a claim rejected by local militiamen

**November 2012:** New government led by Ali Zidan is sworn in. Benghazi police chief is assassinated by unknown gunmen.

**December:** Former Prime Minister al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi goes on trial in Tripoli on charges of “acts that led to the unjust killing of Libyans” and of funnelling about \$25m of public money through Tunisia to help forces loyal to Col Gaddafi.

## **5. OMAN**

**February 2011:** Protesters demand jobs and political reform. One demonstrator is shot dead by police. Sultan Qaboos reacts by promising jobs and benefits.

**October:** Elections to the Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura, which Sultan Qaboos promised greater powers since the unrest inspired by the Arab Spring.

**September 2012:** Trials begin of activists accused of posting “abusive and provocative” criticism of the government online, amid reports of a crackdown on protests over unemployment and lack of democracy. Six are given jail terms of 12-18 months and fines of about \$2,500 each.

## **6. QATAR**

**March 2011:** – Qatar joins international military operations in Libya.

**April:** Qatar hosts meeting of international “contact group” on Libya, which calls on Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to quit.

Qatar reportedly arms Libyan opposition.

**November:** Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani says elections to the advisory council will be held in 2013, in what would be Qatar's first legislative elections.

**January 2012:** The Afghan Taliban say they are setting up a political office in Qatar to facilitate talks.

**May:** Fire at a shopping mall kills 19 people, including 13 children.

## **7. SUDAN**

**January 2011:** Sudanese police clashed with students on January 30 as protests inspired by rallies in Egypt broke out in the capital. The students protested at a university in Khartoum, chanting "No to high prices, no to corruption" and "Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan together as one."

The government responded to the demonstrations by dispatching armed riot police and national security forces to the protest sites, including university premises.

**February:** Sudan's Omar al-Bashir decides not to seek re-election. A Sudanese organisation, 'Youth for Change', calls for demonstrations in all parts of Sudan on March 21 in a new bid to bring about a mass uprising similar to the ones in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

**July:** South Sudan gains independence.

**November:** Hundreds of students stage an anti-government rally in eastern Sudan protesting against poverty and rising food prices

**December:** About 16,000 students start a sit-in at the university in Khartoum, protesting police violence and demanding the overthrow of the administration and the government

**June 2012:** Week-long protests against austerity measures spread from students to general public and turn into clashes with police in Khartoum. The north Sudan government cut fuel and other subsidies because of the drop in oil revenues after the independence of South Sudan. About 2,000 protesters gather in the Ummdurman district of the capital demanding the downfall of the government.

**July:** About 500 people leaving a mosque in the city of Omdurman, the largest city in Sudan, are driven back by tear gas while trying to move to a nearby field.

## **8. SYRIA**

**March 2011:** Protesters in Damascus and the southern city of Deraa demand the release of political prisoners. Security forces shoot a number of people dead, triggering days of violent unrest that steadily spread nationwide over the following months.

The government announces some conciliatory measures in an attempt to dampen the unrest. President Assad releases dozens of political prisoners and dismisses the government, and in April lifts the 48-year-old state of emergency. However, he accuses protesters of being Israeli agents.

**April:** Assad promises citizenship and increased rights to hundreds of thousands of Kurdish minorities, hoping to dissuade them from joining the protests. Protests nationwide — including the first uprisings in Aleppo, Syria’s second-largest city — are the largest and deadliest thus far. Demonstrators begin calling for an end to Assad’s regime.

**May:** Army tanks enter Deraa, Banyas, Homs and suburbs of Damascus in an effort to crush anti-regime protests. The U.S. and EU tighten sanctions. Assad announces amnesty for political prisoners.

**June:** The government says that 120 members of the security forces have been killed by “armed gangs” in the north-western town of Jisr al-Shughour. Troops besiege the town and more than 10,000 people flee to Turkey. Assad pledges to start a “national dialogue” on reform.

The IAEA nuclear watchdog decides to report Syria to the UN Security Council over its alleged covert nuclear reactor programme. The structure housing the alleged reactor was destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2007.

**July:** Assad sacks the governor of the northern province of Hama after mass demonstration there, eventually sending in troops to restore order at the cost of scores of lives. Opposition activists meet in Istanbul to form a unified opposition.

**August:** U.S. President Barack Obama and allies call on President Assad to step down.

**October:** The newly-formed Syrian National Council says it has forged a common front of internal and exiled opposition activists. Russia and China veto the UN resolution condemning Syria.

**November:** The Arab League votes to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement an Arab peace plan, and imposes sanctions. Army defectors target a military base near Damascus in the Free Syrian Army's most high-profile attack since protests began. Government supporters attack foreign embassies.

**December:** Syria agrees to an Arab League initiative allowing Arab observers into the country. Thousand of protesters gather in Homs to greet them, but the League suspends its mission in January because of worsening violence.

Twin suicide bombs outside security buildings in Damascus kill 44, the first in a series of large blasts in the capital that continue into the following summer. The opposition accuses the government of staging these and subsequent attacks.

**February 2012:** Russia and China block a UN Security Council draft resolution on Syria, and the government steps up the bombardment of Homs and other cities, recapturing the Homs district of Baba Amr the following month. The UN says that more than 7,500 people have died since the security crackdown began.

**March:** The UN Security Council endorses a non-binding peace plan drafted by UN envoy Kofi Annan. China and Russia agree to support the plan after an earlier, tougher draft is modified. The UN statement falls short of a formal resolution, and violence continues into the summer.

**May:** The UN Security Council condemns "in the strongest possible terms" the government's use of heavy weaponry and the militia killing of civilians in the small town of Houla near Homs. More than a hundred people, most of them women and children, were killed in the attack on 25 May 2012. France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada and Australia expel senior Syrian diplomats in protest.

**June:** 225 Syrians are killed by their own army in Tremseh, causing the Red Cross to officially declare the uprising as a civil war. A week later a bombing in Damascus kills many members of President Bashar al-Assad's inner circle, including his brother-in-law, Asef Shawkat.

**July:** Government forces and rebels begin fighting a battle to capture Aleppo. The UN reports that ever since the fighting began over 200,000 Syrian refugees have fled the country. The Free Syrian Army also moves its command headquarters from southern Turkey into rebel-controlled areas of northern Syria. Defence Minister Dawood Rajiha, Deputy Defence Minister Assef Shawkat – al-Assad's brother-in-law – and Hasan Turkmani, al-Assad's security adviser and assistant vice president, are killed in a deadly attack, causing a death blow to Assad's govt.

**August:** Kofi Annan resigns as the UN envoy to Syria. Syria's Prime Minister Riyad Hijab leaves the Assad government and joins the opposition on August 6. Opposition leaders say Riyad Hijab defected, while Syrian state television says al-Assad dismissed Hijab from his post. Obama warns Syria, says that the use of chemical weapons by Syria would be a 'red line' that would change his inclination to intervene. The U.S. also plans to train Syrians in democratic governance. The UN appoints veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as the new joint UN-Arab League envoy for the crisis in Syria.

More than 100,000 Syrians flee the country in August, the UN says – this is the highest monthly figure since the conflict began in March 2011.

**September:** The Free Syrian Army claims responsibility for two explosions at the military headquarters in Damascus. The government says four guards were killed in the "suicide attacks."

**October:** Syrian mortar fire on a Turkish border town kills five civilians. Apparently stray mortars continue to fall inside Turkey. The Turkish parliament authorises military action inside Syria. The armed forces respond with artillery fire into Syria for a week.

A fire in Aleppo destroys much of the historic souk market as fighting and bomb attacks continue in various cities.

The UN-brokered ceasefire during the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha breaks down as government continues attacks.

**November:** Several major opposition forces unite as National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and opposition Forces at a meeting in Qatar, including the Syrian National Council. Arab League stops short of full recognition. Islamist militias in Aleppo, including the Al-Nusra and Al-Tawhid groups, refuse to join the Coalition, denouncing it as a “conspiracy.”

Syrian Arab Red Crescent estimates 2.5 million people have been displaced within Syria, double the previous estimate.

Israeli military fire on Syrian artillery units after several months of occasional shelling from Syrian positions across the Golan Heights, the first such return of fire since the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

**December:** The U.S. joins Britain, France, Turkey and Gulf states in formally recognising Syria’s opposition National Coalition as “the legitimate representative” of the Syrian people.

## **9. TUNISIA**

**December 2010:** On 17 December Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old vegetable vendor in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, sets himself afire in front of a local municipal office in protest against mistreatment by the police. The first mass demonstrations against the government start in Sidi Bouzid.

A demonstrator participating in anti-government protests is shot by the police in the town of Menzel Bouziane. As clashes intensify, Tunisian President Zane al-Abidine Ben Ali appears on state television to condemn the protests, which he says are the work of a few extremists.

**January 2011:** In an attempt to quell protests and to respond to the growing international criticism of Tunisia’s handling of the unrest, Ben Ali dismisses the Minister of the Interior, Rafik Belhaj Kacem. The move fails to quieten the demonstrations.

In another bid to end demonstrations, Ben Ali appears on state television and announces he will not stand for re-election at the end of his term in 2014 and vows to institute a variety of

political, economic, and social reforms. The concessions are largely dismissed by protesters as a desperate ploy to remain in power.

Ben Ali declares a state of emergency on 14 January and promises new legislative elections within six months. The announcement has no effect on demonstrations, and Ben Ali and his family flee Tunisia to go into exile.

Tunisia's prime minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, and interim president Fouad Mebazaa, announce the composition of a new interim government, incorporating members of the opposition. However, key ministries in the new government are re-assigned to ministers from Ben Ali's regime, causing further protests.

Tunisian prosecutors open an inquiry into the finances of Ben Ali, who is believed to have amassed a fortune worth billions of dollars through a variety of corrupt practices. The central committee of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), the ruling party under Ben Ali, is dissolved, and members of the interim government leave the party.

Tunisia issues an international warrant for the arrest of Ben Ali.

**February:** The government suspends the RCD following demonstrations by protesters who claim that too much of the old regime remains intact.

Prime Minister Ghannouchi steps down on 27 February, responding to demonstrators' demands calling for a clean break with the past.

**March:** The date for the election of a constitutional council is set for 24 July. Rally for Constitutional Democracy (RCD), the party of ousted President Ben Ali, is dissolved by a court order.

**April:** Libyan troops cross the border into Tunisia during clashes with rebels. Thousands of Tunisians flee by boat to the Italian island of Lampedusa.

**May:** Curfew imposed amid fresh street protests.

**June:** Ex-president Ben Ali is tried in absentia for theft. He is sentenced to 35 years in prison.

**October:** Parliamentary elections are finally held. The

moderately Islamist Ennahda party (Resistance Movement) wins, but falls short of an outright majority.

**November:** The national assembly, which will draft a new Constitution, meets for the first time.

**December:** Human rights activist Moncef Marzouki is elected president by the constituent assembly, Ennahda leader Hamadi Jebali is sworn in as prime minister.

**May 2012:** Hundreds of Salafi Islamic extremists clash with security forces and attack a police station in Jendouba in a dispute over Salafi attacks on alcohol sellers.

**June:** Former president Ben Ali is sentenced to life in prison over the killing of protesters in the 2011 revolution. He is living in Saudi Arabia, which refuses to extradite him. The government imposes an overnight curfew in eight areas following riots by Islamists against an art exhibition. One man is killed after being shot in the head.

**August:** Thousands protest in Tunisia against moves by the Islamist-led government to reduce women's rights. The draft Constitution refers to women as "complementary to men," whereas the 1956 Constitution granted women full equality.

**September:** The violently anti-American rallies in the Islamic world over a video denigrating the Prophet Muhammad expand to Tunisia in September 2012, with demonstrators storming the American Embassy. The Tunisian police say at least three protesters were killed and 28 people wounded.

**October:** Tunisians protest over charges against a woman who was allegedly raped by the police. The case provokes a furious debate over whether the Islamist-led government is upholding the ideals of the 2011 revolution, or presiding over a restriction on women's rights.

Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki extends a state of emergency, which grants the police special powers of intervention, until 1 February 2013 in response to a fresh series of Islamist attacks in suburban areas like Manouba.

**November:** The World Bank approves \$500m of funding to

buoy up Tunisia's economy. The loan approved is equivalent to about 3% of Tunisia's 2012 budget and will have a modest leverage over economic decision-making.

## **10. YEMEN**

**January 2011:** Ongoing Tunisian street protests encourage similar demonstrations in Yemen. President Ali Abdullah Saleh pledges not to extend his presidency in 2013 or to hand power over to his son.

**February:** Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's fall rejuvenates protests and sparks 'Change Square' sit-in camps in cities across Yemen.

**March:** Pro-reform demonstrations continue. Police snipers open fire on a pro-democracy camp in Sanaa, killing more than 50 people. Senior military figures including key general, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, declare their backing for the protest movement. Several ministers and other senior regime figures also defect to the protesters' side. Saleh says the unrest risks plunging the country into civil war. A state of emergency is imposed.

**April:** The unrest and violent government response continue. Saleh vows to remain in office.

**May:** Dozens die in clashes between troops and tribal fighters in Sanaa. The airport is shut and thousands flee the city.

**June:** Saleh is injured in a rocket attack and is flown to Saudi Arabia. British and French forces prepare to evacuate foreigners in the event of a civil war.

**August:** Yemeni opposition activists form a transition council, aiming to strengthen their demand for power. Remnants of Saleh's regime remain intact and pro-Saleh military units continue operations against protestors in Taiz and opposition tribesmen north of the capital.

**September:** Saleh returns home. U.S.-born Al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki is assassinated by U.S. forces.

**October:** Yemeni human rights activist Tawakul Karman wins the Nobel Peace Prize, together with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia.

The UN Security Council passes a resolution condemning violence and calls for a transfer of power.

**November:** Saleh agrees to hand over power to his deputy. National Unity Government – including a prime minister from the opposition – is formed.

**January 2012:** Saleh leaves the country. Parliament grants him full immunity despite objections from thousands of street protesters.

**February:** Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi is inaugurated as president after uncontested elections. Saleh officially resigns, and then transfers powers to Vice President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi.

**May:** International donors pledge more than \$4 billion in aid to Yemen to help improve the infrastructure and security. Aid agencies warn that Yemen is on the brink of a food crisis. The government reportedly asked for \$10 billion.

An Al-Qaeda leader Fahd al-Quso in Yemen, wanted for the 2000 bombing of the U.S. warship USS Cole, is killed in an unmanned drone attack.

**June:** The army recaptures three Al-Qaeda strongholds in the south – Shuqra, Zinjibar and Jaar.

**September:** Defence Minister Muhammad Nasir Ahmad survives a car bomb attack in Sanaa that kills 11 people, a day after local al-Qaeda deputy head Said al-Shihri is reportedly dead in the south.

The U.S. Mission in Sanaa is attacked. Pentagon dispatches two warships to the Libyan coast as the violent anti-American demonstrations spread to Yemen and intensify in Egypt. Yemen's president offers dialogue to Islamist militants including al Qaeda.

**November:** Saudi diplomat Khaled al-A'anzi and his bodyguard are shot dead in Sanaa. Security officials say the assailants, who opened fire on the diplomat's convoy, were dressed in police uniforms.

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