



The Arab uprisings

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Since December 2010, the most profound process of change has affected the countries of the Arab world. The change spread quickly between the countries of the region, underlining the many common factors that provoked unrest. How the region's revolutions progress, however, depends on the individual characteristics of each country, which are very different. This paper looks at these similarities and differences and considers the possible outcomes in each case. The legitimacy of ruling regimes, the effect of societies' divisions along confessional lines and the role of the region's militaries are considered.

Separately, the prospects for tendencies such as political Islam and violent *jihadis* are considered. The possible ramifications of the Arab unrest on relations with other countries in the region, such as Turkey, Israel and Iran are also discussed as are the military balance, and defence expenditure and relationships in the region. The immediate and short-term outlook for the region's economies, which will have such an impact on the outcome of the revolutions, is discussed.

Lastly, the paper looks at US, EU and UK policies towards the region and presents some views on how they should evolve.

Ben Smith

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Summary

Arab countries have a history of instability that is partly the legacy of domination by the Ottoman Empire and partly of the imperialism of European powers. In the 20th century, these forces left a patchwork of states some of which did not match the ethnic and confessional demographic groups which lived in the region. After the fall from favour of the socialism and Arab nationalism of the post-Nasser era, the politics of many Arab countries ground to a halt. Military or quasi-military regimes or monarchies kept the same figurehead for decades in many cases. In some cases these regimes were anti-western such as Colonel Qaddafi's in Libya. In others the regimes were staunch supporters of the west, as in the Gulf or Egypt.

Demographic growth, leading to rapid urbanisation and high youth unemployment, has contributed to the pressure on Arab economies. This pressure was exacerbated by some economic reforms that many Arab governments were encouraged to make. These reforms were intended to liberalise Arab economies, encouraging economic growth and dynamism. They may have increased growth, but they also appear to have encouraged the development of nepotistic capitalism, where the families and associates of dictators and monarchs monopolised entire sectors. Such problems demonstrated that economic liberalisation needs to be accompanied by transparency and a strong political system that is able to enforce fairness. These structures were in short supply in Arab countries. Closely allied with the corruption that is endemic in Arab countries, to a greater or lesser extent, this nepotism undermined the legitimacy that Arab regimes may have enjoyed.

The Arab world's authoritarian regimes bucked the trend towards democratisation that was visible in other parts of the world, and this led some to conclude that Arab culture and Islam were inimical to democratic government. The fact that Arab populations *did* want to participate fairly in their governments and economies and longed for an end to repression, nepotism and corruption was amply demonstrated when the 'Arab Spring' burst out in December 2010, spreading from Tunisia to Egypt, then to Yemen and Bahrain and beyond within a few months.

While the accepted policy in western capitals, inherited from the Cold War, had been to support friendly regimes, President George W Bush changed the emphasis in US Middle East Policy, calling for democratisation. Bush linked the rationale for the invasion of Iraq to his policy for other countries in the region, pressing Egypt's Mubarak, for example, to hold relatively free elections in 2005. The victory of Hamas in elections to the Palestinian Authority reduced western enthusiasm for democratisation and President Obama entered power with a more pragmatic policy.

The backing of the military was essential for the support of Arab authoritarian regimes, and this was secured with the help of military aid from the US, which was maintained for some regimes throughout.

There are many common factors, such as those mentioned above, in the stories of Arab societies and these contributed to the circumstances that led to the uprisings of 2011. It is important, however, to remember that Arab societies differ widely. In considering how the uprisings might play out, it is more useful to look at these differences; the outcomes are likely to depend on them.

Perhaps the most important factor is the sectarian fragmentation within many Arab countries. It is no coincidence that the countries that are considered likely to make progress towards democratisation are those where there is less sectarian and ethnic division: the continued difficulties with Iraq's democracy show how toxic these kinds of division can be. Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco are relatively unified societies with no Sunni/Shiite divide. However, recent bloodshed at a demonstration by Christians in Cairo shows that there is a fault line in

Egypt and analysts worry that this divide is being exploited by those who wish to re-impose authoritarianism in Egypt. The existing governments enjoy some legitimacy, in Egypt and Tunisia because there have been revolutions, in Morocco because the monarchy there is widely accepted. These countries may be able to make substantial progress towards democracy.

In highly divided countries such as Bahrain and Yemen, the prospects look far less promising. In countries where there is a divide between Shia and Sunni Islam, the uprisings have taken place in the large shadow of the Sunni/Shiite competition being waged by Iran and Saudi Arabia. This competition is also a Persian/Arab contest and has echoes of the Cold War, in that it pits pro-US countries against 'non-aligned' states such as Syria. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq, disputes tend to be seen in this light. The escalating disagreement over Iran's nuclear programme and the imminent withdrawal of most US troops from Iraq mean that friction along this fault line is likely to increase. This will hinder moves towards open and democratic political systems.

Some governments are rich enough to be able to spend their way out of trouble. The oil-rich Gulf monarchies, in particular, have a long history of appeasing social unrest with social spending; this time has been no exception. Gas exporter Algeria has taken the same route. Some analysts have cautioned that this spending may not be sustainable in the long term and in the end may damage the world economy by leading to higher oil prices.

In countries with particularly brutal repressive regimes, such as Syria and Libya, uprisings quickly deteriorated into armed conflict. In Libya, the fall of the Qaddafi regime leaves the worry that Libyan society may divide along tribal and regional lines. There is also concern that violent *jihadis* may gain a useful operating space if the new authorities are not successful at imposing control. In Syria some analysts feel that gradual economic degradation and the regimes reliance on the Alawite minority will eventually bring the regime down, although this is by no means certain.

Lebanon and Iraq have hardly been touched by the uprisings. Unlike many Arab countries, they are relatively democratic. Both, along with Algeria, have also been affected by disastrous civil wars in recent memory which is thought to have sapped enthusiasm for any sort of uprising.

The trajectory of the countries that have experienced uprisings will be closely followed in non-Arab countries in the region. Iran was initially enthusiastic about change because it hoped that it would bring down pro-American regimes, replacing them with anti-Israel governments that were more likely to be susceptible to Iran's influence. As the unrest spread to Syria, however, difficulties for Iran began to become apparent, as the government of Ali Khamenei changed its stance from full confidence in the actions of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad to calls for a dialogue with the opposition. The fall of al-Assad would remove Iran's only true Arab ally as well as the Iranians' route for influencing the Arab-Israeli conflict through Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Turkey, another powerful non-Arab player in the region, is also hoping that Arab societies will be remade partly in its own image. Turkey is widely admired in the Muslim world for its democratic system, its vibrant economy and its increasingly active foreign policy. The fact that Turkish politics are dominated by a moderate Islamist party is certainly relevant to developments in the Arab world.

Israel is principally concerned that its security should not be undermined and, particularly, that Jordan and Egypt should not withdraw from the peace treaties, which have been a cornerstone of Israel's security since 1979. Most analysts think that, even if the next Egyptian government is dominated by the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, it will *not* move quickly to

withdraw from the treaty. The Egyptian military and the massive support that it receives from the US should ensure that, at least for the medium term.

The support Islamist parties are likely to get in forthcoming elections attracts a lot of interest in the western media. The Muslim Brotherhood and related parties outside Egypt are the most popular single parties in many opinion polls but fall short of an overall majority. Some commentators worry that the Brotherhood will ally with more radical Islamists to take control of future governments. While there is undoubtedly a struggle going on about the nature of Arab societies, involving democracy Islam, sharia law, human rights and foreign policy, it can be argued that the potential advance of Islamists should not be viewed as a disaster. Saudi Arabia and Turkey have (very different) Islamist governments and these governments, being allied to the west, are treated relatively warmly.

More worrying than mainstream Islamism is the outlook for violent *jihadis* in the region. While many commentators think that the Arab Spring has undermined the strategic rationale of the terrorists by showing that change can be brought about by peaceful means, the removal of authoritarian regimes and the prohibition of their oppressive methods for suppressing terrorism might allow the violent *jihadis* more space in which to operate.

The outlook for the liberal reformist tendencies that led the revolution has been revised downwards in recent months. In Egypt, particularly, it has become apparent that the military wants to limit the depth of changes to society; some allege that conservative elements in society are intent on fomenting disorder to allow the reintroduction of authoritarian control. In Egypt and in other countries mainstream Islamists and more radical Islamic groups are gaining in confidence, having been reluctant to show their strength early in the uprisings for fear of derailing them. However, it is important to note the differences between countries. Tunisia is widely thought to offer the best prospects for liberals, perhaps partly because of the country's tradition of equality for women. In Tunisia too, however, liberal reformists did less well than expected in the first election in October 2011.

Analysts agree that the economic performance of countries such as Egypt and Tunisia will be crucial in determining the course of events. Economic cooperation and financial support from the US, the EU and from Gulf Arab countries can go some way to alleviating the economic difficulties that the revolutions themselves have caused. But many say that this cooperation must not be based on the old, discredited frameworks. The European Neighbourhood Policy, in particular was roundly criticised for failing to deliver its stated goals of encouraging democracy and the respect for human rights in North Africa and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean.

There will not, however, be total consistency in the west's relations with Arab states. The old policy of supporting friendly dictators has been reworded, rather than abandoned. Oil-rich monarchies in the Gulf are likely to retain the qualified support of western powers, particularly in the light of the growing confrontation with Iran and risks to energy supplies.

The relatively successful NATO action in Libya may encourage some to think more positively about 'liberal interventionism' or the idea that powerful nations have a responsibility to protect against gross human rights violations, even if this means violating national sovereignty. But Libyan success, even if it still appears to be such in the coming years, is unlikely to lead to a rash of new campaigns. Libya was a special case where it was particularly easy to gain political support for a Security Council resolution, but at the same time it showed the weaknesses of NATO and took some time to be carried through to a successful conclusion. western leaders will think twice before embarking on any more such operations, especially given budgetary constraints.

While military budgets have been under pressure in Europe, military spending in the Middle East and North Africa has risen in cash terms by over 60% from 2005 to 2009, leading to fears of an arms race. As with other questions, the spectre of conflict with Iran hangs over the region's armies. The most powerful military forces in the region belong to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt, but the shape of alliances after the Arab Spring will not become clear for some time. Egypt has certainly unfrozen its relations with Iran and distanced itself from Israel since the fall of Mubarak. It is far from clear, however, that Egypt intends to downgrade its relations with Saudi Arabia.

The outcome of the uprisings will be very different in different countries, and the opportunities for western governments to influence events will be limited. Relations need not necessarily take a turn for the worse, however, and there will be opportunities for cooperation and capacity-building.

1 Introduction and brief time line

This paper does not attempt to give much detail about the uprisings that have shaken the Arab world in 2011. Instead it examines the underlying causes of the unrest, shows how different conditions in the various Arab states will define the outcomes of such unrest and looks at the prospects for groups such as the Islamists across the region.

2010

7 December	Wikileaks publishes US cables regarding corruption in Tunisia
17 December	Mohammed Bouazizi burns himself to death after fruit stall is confiscated

2011

14 January	Zine el Abidine Ben Ali steps down as President of Tunisia
25 January	Protesters gather in Egypt for a demonstration named a “day of revolt”

2 February	Yemeni President states that he will not seek re-election
11 February	Hosni Mubarak resigns as President of Egypt
25 February	Protests erupt in Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Palestine.
27 February	Prime minister resigns in Tunisia after more protests

14 March	Saudi Arabia sends military to Bahrain as protests escalates
18 March	UN Security Council authorises the use of force in Libya
18 March	King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia introduces a multi-billion package of reforms
19 March	Multi-state western coalition begins air and military airstrikes in Libya

13 April	Former Egyptian President is arrested for corruption and abuse of power
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19 May	US and EU impose sanctions on Syria’s President
19 May	Obama gives speech endorsing Arab uprisings apart from in Saudi Arabia
27 May	G8 leaders promise \$20bn of loans and aid to Tunisia and Egypt

3 June	Yemeni President survives assassination attempt
5 June	Egypt’s interim government agrees \$3 billion loan deal with IMF
14 June	Elections in Tunisia postponed
20 June	Former Tunisian President sentenced in absentia

1 July	Moroccans approve in a referendum king’s constitutional reforms
27 July	Britain officially recognises the Libyan rebel Transitional National Council

26 August	Rebels declare victory in Libya and announce interim government
26 August	Egypt brokers ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza

27 September	Egyptian parliamentary election set for 28 November
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5 October	China and Russia veto UN resolution condemning Syrian crackdown
20 October	Colonel Muammar Gaddafi killed by rebels
28 October	Moderate Islamic al-Nahda party wins in Tunisia’s first democratic elections
31 October	Nato ends military operations in Libya

As the revolutions have progressed, doubts have surfaced about the depth of the change. Those in positions of privilege in the region have powerful interests in the status quo to protect and the region's militaries, so important in protecting the old regimes, are not likely to give up their influence entirely. The struggle to bring about change and to protect the gains achieved was always going to be hard.

The countries of the Arab world have much political, cultural and economic background in common and this has contributed to the 'contagion' of the 2010 uprisings to spread quite easily from one to another. But the material conditions in Arab countries are very different from one another and their political scenes also show as many differences as similarities. One of the most important features of some Arab states is that they are divided along sectarian and ethnic lines. These differences will be crucial in determining the outcome of the uprisings. In some countries, a move to a more democratic system will be easier to achieve than in others.

Whatever the outcomes, the revolutions will have a profound effect on regional relations and may shape perhaps the biggest issue in the region, the struggle between Iran and the Shia, and the Arab states and the Sunni Muslims for supremacy. The uprisings are also a crucial moment for Turkey in its plans for regional leadership.

What will the Arab uprisings mean for western policy towards the region? Will the alleged hypocrisy of supporting autocrats in the western camp be swept away along with the likes of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali? This seems unlikely. Is the influence of the west in the region on the decline? That is almost certain.

2 The shared roots of authoritarianism and unrest in the Arab world

2.1 Map of the Middle East and North Africa



Source: University of Texas

2.2 From colonialism to nationalism to Islamism

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, North Africa and the Middle East were dominated by European colonial powers. Political activism among the indigenous populations was, to a greater or lesser extent depending on local circumstances, focused on the anti-colonial struggle. Liberation movements were mainly socialist in outlook, with the notable exception of Morocco, which retained its monarchy.

After the end of the Second World War, the nationalist and socialist movements of the region began to achieve their objectives. Libya had been ruled by Italy until occupation by British and French troops in 1941. It attained independence in 1951. In 1952 Colonel Nasser seized power from the pro-western monarchy in Egypt. In 1956 both Tunisia and Morocco gained independence from France.¹

Algeria was not technically a colony in that it had been annexed by France in 1842, and it had many permanent residents of European descent. In 1954 a war against French rule began which was to last eight years and result in the killing or wounding of about 1 million Algerians.² In 1962 independence was achieved.

By the 1970s the scene was changing rapidly and there was a decline in the influence of Arab nationalism across the region, to be displaced in large sections of the Arab populations by both political and non-political Islam. In 1967 Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian forces were badly defeated by Israel, and the oil crisis of 1974 quadrupled the price of crude oil, catapulting the Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia, to prominence.

The oil-rich Saudi monarchy had never seen a nationalist revolution and its leaders used some of their new-found wealth to promote their conservative interpretation of Islam, in competition with socialism and Arab nationalism. In 1978 Egypt's President Sadat signed the Camp David accords, making peace with Israel. This allowed Egypt to regain control of the Sinai Peninsula. In the opinion of some Muslims this de-legitimised Sadat himself and his National Democratic Party, and in 1981 he was assassinated by members of Islamic Jihad. In 1979, the Iranian revolution toppled the pro-western Shah and established the world's most radical Islamic state, inspiring the supporters of political Islam all over the world.

Also in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Many observers consider the decade-long struggle against the Soviets, supported by western governments, to have been a crucial factor in spreading the most radical and violent tendencies of Islamism throughout the Arab world, as fighters recruited for the war against the Soviets returned to their home countries.³

By the end of the 1980s political events again converged to boost support for Islamism. The Soviet Union was collapsing, and withdrew from Afghanistan in 1990, the same year in which Iraq invaded Kuwait. The presence of US forces in Saudi Arabia and the war to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait inflamed anti-western feelings, reinforcing the notion that there was a conspiracy on the part of rich Christian countries to oppress Muslims.

2.3 Demographics

Economically too, there were powerful forces at work during the 1970s. The generation of the post-war population boom was reaching adulthood in the Arab world and was moving to the cities. As Gilles Keppel, an author and journalist specialising in the Middle East, explained:

In the populations in some countries of the Middle East and North Africa, 70–75% were under twenty-five years of age. The base of the age pyramid was extremely wide. This was a totally new phenomenon – from the 14th century, the majority of the population in the Muslim world had been rural. Now, due to the fact that the countryside could not

¹ The Spanish ended their protectorate of certain Moroccan areas in 1956 and 1958 but retained the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the Mediterranean coast and other areas in the South

² Europa World Year Book 2006

³ See for example *Islamism in North Africa: the legacies of history*, International Crisis Group Briefing, April 2004.

feed its children, it became urban or semi-urban. There was a mass migration from the countryside to the outskirts of the big cities.⁴

The Arab world is one of the world's most-urbanised developing regions. Many Arabs now lived in slums around the biggest cities in severe poverty, deprived of the traditional networks of social support and estranged from the previous generation whose experiences were so different from their own. They also tended to be literate, unlike their parents. This allowed them to read and interpret religious texts without mediation by an Islamic scholar (an *Ulam* or a *Sheikh*). This may have strengthened personal commitment to Islam in some cases, and is thought to have allowed a diversification in the interpretation of Islamic texts. Religious minorities, however, were in decline, as explained in a paper for the Rand Corporation:

Due to variations in birth rates and migration, religious diversity in the Arab world is declining. The dwindling of non-Muslim religious communities reduces the number of citizens making the argument for a secular state. Secular influences in the form of more female participation in education and the labour force and through movies and television now have a greater impact on these societies than religious diversity.⁵

The Middle East still has the second fastest-growing population after Africa south of the Sahara and, according to United Nations estimates, the population of Arab countries will have more than doubled by 2015 compared with 1980, growing from 150 million to 395 million in 2015, and all this against a background of declining areas of agricultural land and diminishing water supplies.⁶ The Arab countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change and desertification.

Population growth rates are in decline everywhere except in the West Bank and Gaza, but the rate of new entrants to the labour market will *accelerate* in the years to 2020; employing them will become even more difficult,⁷ and the expansion of the region's cities will reinforce the other social, political, economic, and security challenges that Arab regimes face, as explained in a recent paper for the Rand Corporation:

Under conditions of rapid growth and large numbers of job seekers, cities will be cockpits for social unrest and political change. As shown by recent events, unbridled urbanization is likely to fuel an already explosive mixture of social discontent because of the proximity of rival ethnic and religious groups within Arab cities (Baghdad and Beirut offer good examples), the erosion of social restraints, and the anonymity conferred by urban areas. Cities are likely to be the leading theater for political violence and terrorism, especially terrorism that aims at a national and global audience.⁸

2.4 Economics

It has been suggested that the structural adjustment policies imposed on Arab countries during the 1980s and 90s as a condition for World Bank and International Monetary Fund support exacerbated social conditions in the poor areas of North Africa and the Middle East, leaving these populations dependent on Islamic organisations for aid. According to Paul Lubeck, a Professor at the University of California:

⁴ Gilles Kepel, *The trail of political Islam*, Speech to the Institut Francais, London, 2002

⁵ Keith Crane, Steven Simon, Jeffrey Martini, "Future Challenges for the Arab world The Implications of Demographic and Economic Trends", Rand Corporation, 2011, Summary

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *The Arab Human Development Report 2009*, *Report in Brief*, p2

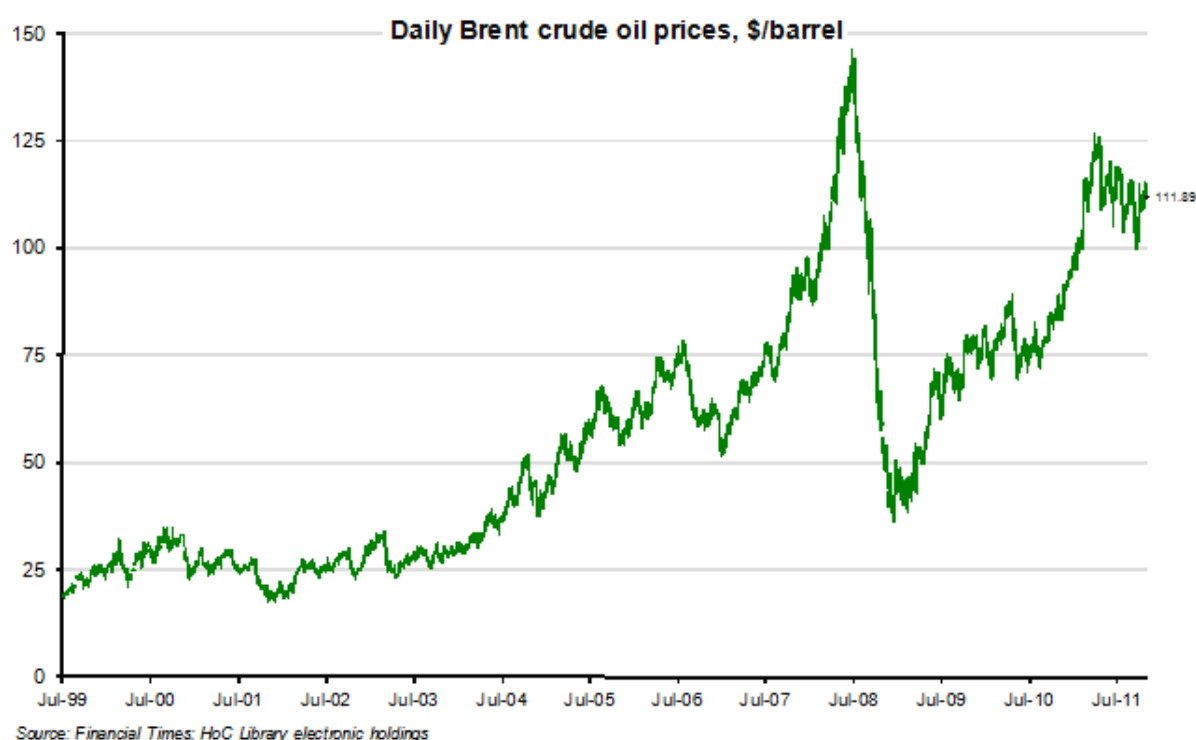
⁷ Keith Crane, Steven Simon, Jeffrey Martini, 'Future Challenges for the Arab world: The Implications of Demographic and Economic Trends', Rand Corporation, 2011, p16. (Rand Corporation is a non-profit international policy think tank)

⁸ Keith Crane, Steven Simon, Jeffrey Martini, 'Future Challenges for the Arab world: The Implications of Demographic and Economic Trends', Rand Corporation, 2011, p79

As a result of structural adjustment, state capacity to co-opt oppositional movements declined and services were increasingly restricted to urban middle class and elite areas. The political and moral vacuum opened up great political opportunities that were seized by the Islamists, who established a social base by offering social services that the various states have failed to provide.⁹

Free market reforms included privatisation. The tendency for nationalised industries and other state assets to be sold at bargain prices to family members and other associates of the ruling elite has been remarked on widely and is taken to be one of the factors in bringing the rulers of Tunisia and Egypt down. Many of the present corruption investigations in Egypt centre on the sale of state owned companies and land to Egyptian investors with low sale prices allegedly off-set by money passed directly to Hosni Mubarak or his family.

For countries with sizeable oil reserves, these developments did not pose such a threat to the stability of the state. With oil prices rising steadily since about 1999 (apart from the collapse in 2008), substantial oil exporters were able to control their economies, build patronage networks and maintain social services. These factors were enough to give large sectors of the population an interest in their regime's survival.



Nepotism was still a problem in richer countries, but the sight of Saudi royals enriching themselves, for example, seemed not to be regime-threatening, most Saudi citizens having at least a relatively comfortable standard of living. On the other hand, impoverished Tunisians contemplating the family of President Ben Ali's wife controlling huge swathes of the economy were angered enough to risk their lives in demonstrations.

Another important factor in the mounting pressures on Arab economies has been the price of food. Food prices had peaked in 2008 and, with the financial crisis, fallen briefly. By the end of 2010, however, general food prices as measured by the Food and Agriculture Organisation's aggregate index had surpassed 2008's highs.

⁹ Paul Lubeck, "Antinomies of Islamic Movements under Globalisation", Center for Global, International & Regional Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, CGIRS Working Paper No. 99-1



Source: [FAO Food Price Index](#)

Extreme weather across the world in 2010 was blamed for very sharp increases in cereal prices during 2010, leading some to point to climate change as a significant factor in the Arab uprisings.¹⁰ Between July and December 2010, the price of wheat on international markets, the most important element of the price of bread in North Africa, rose by 70%. In the last six months of 2010, Egypt received little more than half its normal imports of wheat from Russia, which had restricted imports due to bush fires; imports from Ukraine were also limited. With the prices of other commodities, such as oil, rising too, the downward pressure on the living standards of those with low incomes in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt was marked.¹¹

The fact that economic factors made a significant contribution to the uprisings is illustrated by comparing those countries that have experienced serious trouble with those that have not. As Gregory Gause argues in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*,¹² only Libya of the major hydrocarbon exporting countries has experienced severe unrest. The other countries whose governments are buoyed by export earnings, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have been relatively quiet. Many of these countries have acted to placate potential protests by increasing subsidies, increasing the salaries of civil servants or simply creating more government jobs or giving money directly to citizens.

Money is not the only factor, however. Libya, which has a relatively high per capita income, perhaps shows that extreme repression of the population and depriving it of dignity, together with a regime that remained in place for decades, outweigh a relatively comfortable standard of living. In Algeria, the population's fear of a return to the civil war of the 1990s, which is thought to have killed more than 100,000 people, is likely to have discouraged unrest.

¹⁰ Sarah Johnstone and Jeffrey Mazo, "Global warming and the Arab spring", *Survival* 53 (2), April/May 2011 pp11-17

¹¹ For more discussion of this, see Richard Cincotta, "Socioeconomic Studies" in *Seismic shift: Understanding Change in the Middle East*, Henry L Stimson Center, May 2011

¹² F Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011

2.5 Interminable autocrats and their western supporters

Governments in the Arab world have in general not seen democratic development, while other regions, such as East Asia and Africa south of the Sahara, have made progress in this direction, particularly since the end of the Cold War. But authoritarian governments are not all the same and those in the Arab world have been particularly immobile. Many have been personal dictatorships where the same individual has been in power for record lengths of time. Muammar Qaddafi was in charge of Libya since 1969, and his four-decade rule made him the longest-serving leader in the world, excluding monarchs like Queen Elizabeth II. Several other Arab leaders feature in lists of longest-serving leaders, including President Saleh of Yemen, Sultan Qaboos of Oman, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, all of whom remained in charge for decades.

Not only have individual rulers remained in their posts for years: the inheritance by Bashar al-Assad of the presidency of Syria from his father, Hafez, set an important precedent in the region for 'republican dynasties'. There was widespread resentment, both among the general public and among regime power brokers, at the prospect of Mubarak, Saleh and Qaddafi passing power to their sons or, in the case of Ben Ali, his son-in-law.

The failure to change leadership and the concentration of power within a small circle led to immobilism in policy. Authoritarian regimes do not also have to be unresponsive regimes; China today is an example of an authoritarian regime that regularly changes its leadership without apparent turmoil and is capable of responding actively to changed circumstances.

Given the rapid demographic, economic and technological changes of recent decades, the regimes in the Arab world needed to come up with suitable policy responses. This they generally failed to do. Relying on repressive security services, censorship and patronage to bolster their power, the regimes did little to cater for the thousands of relatively well-educated young people entering the labour market with little chance of success, yet increasingly made aware through new media of privileges enjoyed not only in other countries but also among their own elites.

The relationship between the west and the autocratic regimes in the Middle East stretches back some way. The monarchies of Jordan and the oil-rich Gulf States had a close relationship with both the UK and the US from their creation in the early 20th century, but it was the signing of the Camp David peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979 that brought Egypt close to the United States. This relationship came to epitomise the perceived trade-off between western powers led by the United States and authoritarian regimes in the region. The supposed tacit deal was for the autocrats to maintain stability, discourage attacks on Israel and repress Islamic fundamentalism. In return they would receive aid, especially military aid, and the pressure on them over human rights and democracy would be limited. The US supplied Egypt with some \$2 billion of aid each year, and relied on Egypt to cooperate with Israel on border controls and to take a lead, along with Saudi Arabia, in coordinating the Sunni Arab opposition to Iran.

The EU, too, has been accused of tacitly supporting undemocratic regimes. The EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is intended to make EU aid and market access conditional on improvements in human rights and democratic processes, but many observers say that this policy is hollow. Critics say that cooperation with autocratic regimes over immigration control and violent jihadis has trumped the EU's professed concerns about democracy and human rights. Kenneth Roth, director of Human Rights Watch, was scathing in his denunciation of the ENP:

The ritualistic support of 'dialogue' and 'cooperation' with repressive governments is too often an excuse for doing nothing about human rights. The EU's 'constructive dialogues' are among the most egregious examples of this global trend.¹³

A report from the think tank Open Europe criticises the funding sent directly to corrupt and undemocratic governments, when the ENP states that only those governments that pass strict criteria on good government receive budget support:

The Commission needs to explain how the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes were able to pass its democracy and anti-corruption tests for direct aid funding, while people living under them took to the streets in protest over these regimes' autocratic rule. Indeed, the recent upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria have shown that the EU's prioritisation of stability over democracy has been ill-judged and too simplistic; arguably, the EU has ended up promoting neither.¹⁴

The Freedom Agenda of George W Bush

During the 1990s, terrorist attacks directed at US interests in the Middle East increased. The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism and international terrorism led policy-makers, particularly in the United States, to review the defence of their interests in the region and adopt an approach broadly described as "democratisation". This policy was stepped up after the al-Qaeda attack of September 2001, in a reversal of several decades of support for many autocrats. The new policy was to concentrate on the democracy and freedom deficits in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, in the hope that the promotion of elections as part of a wider strategy of social reform and development would undermine the conditions that lead to Islamic fundamentalism, radicalism and terrorism.

The policy was outlined in some detail by Richard Haass, at that time US State Department Director of Policy Planning, in December 2002. The following extracts from his much longer speech reflect similar sentiments expressed subsequently by other members of the Bush administration:

A democratic world is a more peaceful world. The pattern of established democracies not going to war with one another is among the most demonstrable findings in the study of international relations. This does not mean we cannot have overlapping interests and fruitful cooperation with non-democracies, nor does it mean that we will not have strong disagreements with fellow democracies. But the more established democracies there are, the larger the area in the world where nations will be more likely to sort out their differences through diplomacy...

Muslims cannot blame the United States for their lack of democracy. Still, the United States does play a large role on the world stage, and our efforts to promote democracy throughout the Muslim world have sometimes been halting and incomplete. Indeed, in many parts of the Muslim world, and particularly in the Arab world, successive U.S. administrations, Republican and Democratic alike, have not made democratization a sufficient priority. At times, the United States has avoided scrutinizing the internal workings of countries in the interests of ensuring a steady flow of oil, containing Soviet, Iraqi and Iranian expansionism, addressing issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, resisting communism in East Asia, or securing basing rights for our military. Yet by failing to help foster gradual paths to democratization in many of our important relationships – by creating what might be called a "democratic exception" – we missed an opportunity to help these countries become more stable,

¹³ Human Rights Watch, "[World Report: Governments Soft-Talking Abusers](#)", Press release, 24 January 2011

¹⁴ Stephen Booth, [The EU and the Mediterranean: good neighbours?](#), Open Europe

more prosperous, more peaceful, and more adaptable to the stresses of a globalizing world.

It is not in our interest—or that of the people living in the Muslim world—for the United States to continue this exception. U.S. policy will be more actively engaged in supporting democratic trends in the Muslim world than ever before. This is the clear message of the President's National Security Strategy.¹⁵

In the UK, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office launched its own 'Engaging with the Islamic World' initiative.¹⁶ This aimed to increase understanding of and engagement with Muslim countries and communities, and to work with them to promote peaceful, political, economic and social reform. It also sought to counter the ideological and theological underpinnings of the terrorist narrative, in order to prevent radicalisation, particularly among the young, in the UK and overseas.

Among the influences on the new US policy was the work of a group comprising mainly academics and members of the Arab political class, who produced in 2002 the first of a series of Arab Human Development Reports, under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme, which drew attention to the low level of political freedom in the Middle East. It singled out participatory democracy, women's empowerment and a knowledge deficit in the region as problems to be tackled:

Popular political participation in Arab countries remains weak, as shown by the lack of genuine representative democracy and restrictions on liberties. The relative absence of women in government both reflects and exacerbates the lack of gender of empowerment.¹⁷

The 2002 report concluded that the Arab world was at a crossroads:

... The fundamental choice is whether the region's trajectory in history will remain characterized by inertia, including the persistence of institutional structures and types of actions that have produced the substantial development challenges it currently faces, or whether prospects will emerge for an Arab renaissance that will build a prosperous future for all Arabs, especially coming generations.¹⁸

Between 2000 and 2004, key speeches were made by American officials and political leaders on the issue of democracy in the Middle East. The specific proposals of this campaign were contained in the *Middle East Partnership Initiative* and the *Partnership for Progress and a Common Future in the Broader Middle East and North Africa*, unveiled between December 2002 and June 2004.

The *Middle East Partnership Initiative* of December 2002 proposed an ambitious programme of work. It provided a framework and funding for the US to work together with governments and people in the Arab world to expand economic, political and educational opportunities for all. The initial programme encompassed the more than \$1 billion in assistance that the U.S. government was providing to Arab countries annually, and was designed as a partnership between governments and civil society organisations, and entailed a review of assistance programmes with a particular emphasis on women and children. \$29 million was committed to pilot projects in support of reform.

¹⁵ Richard N. Haass, addressing the Council on Foreign Relations, 4 December, 2002
http://www.cfr.org/publication/5283/towards_greater_democracy_in_the_muslim_world.html

¹⁶ *Engaging with the Arab world* [archived FCO webpage]

¹⁷ UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, p9

¹⁸ UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, p31

The second initiative, the *Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Broader Middle East and North Africa*, proposed a 'Forum for the Future,' to bring together in one forum G-8 and regional foreign, economic, and other ministers for regular discussions on reform, with business and civil society leaders participating in parallel dialogues. To support the initiative, a 'Democracy Assistance Dialogue' was created, involving democracy foundations, civil society groups, and governments from the G-8 and the region, along with other initiatives such as one on literacy and another on private sector development.

The two programmes were not necessarily well-received in the region. In 2004, an assessment of the US reform programmes was made by the United States Institute of Peace.

While the United States has engaged more directly over the past few years to promote reform...its efforts have been directed primarily toward a relatively narrow constituency of liberal, secular, pro-western elites, who do not represent the region's grassroots majority.

However, numerous Arab reform advocates—from Islamists to businessmen—have proposed a rich array of reform initiatives that merit U.S. policymakers' attention. Indeed, U.S. policymakers largely have ignored moderate Islamist voices for reform, even though Islamists retain a strong, populist following in various countries throughout the region.

Ultimately, successful Arab reform efforts must bridge secular and Islamist demands for change. In its quest to promote reform in the region, the United States will need to work with moderate Islamists and ruling regimes in the region. It must sell both on the notion that sustainable reform should be implemented via a gradual process of change that creates transparent and accountable institutions and respects the rule of law.¹⁹

Difficult realities

The Middle East policy of the George W Bush administration ended up being discredited by many commentators. One of its problems, as the report of the US Institute for Peace suggested, was that the George W Bush administration was not enthusiastic about working even with moderate Islamist groups.

In Egypt the Mubarak regime was pressed to hold elections. In 2005, the presidential election was contested for the first time ever and, later, the freest elections yet to the Egyptian parliament were held. Nevertheless, these were seriously marred by arrests of candidates and attacks on protesters. Despite the Egyptian Government's efforts to suppress all opposition, the ruling National Democratic Party lost 93 of the 454 seats in the parliament, most of which went to candidates representing the Muslim Brotherhood. When presidential candidate Ayman Nour, who had come second in the presidential poll, was jailed for five years after the parliamentary election, it was clear that democracy was far from taking root in Egypt. One commentator remarked: "The charade is over. Egypt is going back to an earlier period of repression."²⁰

The Egyptian elections marked a turning point in the democratisation policy. A further demonstration of the contradictions inherent in the policy was provided in 2006, when Hamas won a large majority of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Assembly. Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation by the US and the EU, which quickly moved to restrict aid

¹⁹ Mona Yacoubian and Vahn Zanoval, "[Time for Making Historic Decisions in the Middle East](#)", United States Institute of Peace, 27 Nov 2002

²⁰ "Mubarak Rival Loses Freedom Bid", *Washington Post*, 19 May 2006

to the Palestinian Authority government.²¹ This undermined US and western claims to be in favour of democracy in the region.

One observer known to be critical of the prevailing US policy towards the Palestinian Territories, Alistair Crooke, underlined what he saw as the “perversity” of this approach:

Hamas now has more legitimacy than any ruling government in the Middle East. If you radiate hostility and negativity towards the outcome of elections it will seem very perverse and it will colour and damage engagement in the Middle East.²²

Perhaps the biggest difficulty for the democratisation policy was the invasion of Iraq. While many in Iraq and the region welcomed the removal of Saddam Hussein, the creation of a democratic regime with the assistance of an invasion was never going to be easy in that fractured country. In the event many commentators thought that the post-invasion policies of both the US and the UK contributed to the chaos that ensued. A stable democratic settlement is still some way off, even nine years later.

Along with the difficulties experienced in Iraq went the controversies about the Bush administration’s ‘war on terror’. The decision to remove much of this activity from the normal legal framework, on the basis that the US was at war led to the incarceration of prisoners in the legal ‘no man’s land’ of Guantánamo Bay. It was also used as a justification for the official sanctioning of treatment of prisoners that amounted to torture, according to many. These activities undermined the administration’s claims to sincerity in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Middle Eastern countries.

Some have suggested that, whatever the practical problems, the reality of the Bush doctrine never matched up to the rhetoric:

Underneath his lofty prodemocracy rhetoric and mild prodding of Arab counterparts, business as usual continued for the most part, that is, close U.S. security and economic ties with autocratic Arab allies like Saudi Arabia, the smaller Gulf states, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. The Iraqi intervention was, of course, an enormous endeavour but one rooted in security concerns with democracy added as a goal only very secondarily. The pro-democratic diplomatic pressure on Arab allies, such as it was, lasted only briefly—after the shock of Hamas’s victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections, the Bush administration largely abandoned it.²³

In fact, the Bush administration had already moved away from the more radical aspects of its democracy promotion policies by the mid-2000s. Donald Rumsfeld was replaced as Defence Secretary in 2006 and, as one analyst writes, this was a symptom of a general policy change:

... a subtle but unmistakable return to the ‘good governance’ discourse in place of ‘democracy’ could be observed. Democracy began to be associated, once again, with instability and war rather than being seen as a means of enhancing US security. The power of democracy to defeat terrorism was questioned. With such views came a

²¹ For more information about this time, see the Library Research Paper [Democracy and the Middle East: Egypt, the Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia](#), November 2006

²² “Election result poses dilemma for Bush in his war on terror”, *Financial Times*, 30 January 2006

²³ Thomas Carrothers, “[Democracy Promotion Under Obama: Finding a Way Forward](#)”, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, February 2009, p3

reassertion of the 'culturalist' argument, in other words the view that the Middle East is culturally resistant to democracy.²⁴

Obama's change of emphasis

Rather than openly abandoning democracy and human rights as US objectives in foreign policy – something which no US government could easily do – there was a change of emphasis in the new president's discourse. Quite apart from the contradiction in the previous administration's policies, the US public was perceived to be simply weary of war and confrontation.

The Bush administration's rhetoric may have given the impression that core US interests were being abandoned in favour of promoting democracy. The Obama administration sought to be clear that its foreign policy was pragmatic and realistic, and it was accepted that dealings with autocratic regimes were inevitable in pursuit of this end.

Obama expressed a willingness to engage with hostile regimes such as Iran's and disavowed any US intentions to pursue regime change. While the administration did not abandon democracy promotion, both Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton worried publicly that the previous administration had put too much emphasis on elections in its democracy promotion programme.²⁵

The *Middle East Partnership Initiative* is still alive and part of the Obama administration's policy in the Middle East²⁶ and, in other ways too, it has become apparent that the foreign policy of the Obama administration is not as different from that of his predecessor as some supporters had hoped. Prisoners are still detained in Guantánamo Bay, Obama ordered a surge of troops to Afghanistan, and the US has participated in the military action in Libya. The ambiguity of the differences between the two administrations' approaches to the Middle East and democracy promotion suggest that to look for explanations of the Arab uprisings in the policies of either George W Bush or Barack Obama would be unrealistic; factors closer to home were more important.

2.6 Role of the military

The role played by the army and other security forces has been decisive in determining the speed, depth and direction of change in the Arab uprisings. In both Tunisia and Egypt, it was the openly declared decision of the military not to fire on protesters that signalled the demise of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, respectively.

In other countries, the security forces have not made that decision. While there have been reports of defections and splits in the militaries of countries such as Yemen, Libya and Syria, powerful elements have remained loyal to the incumbent leaders and have fought against the protesters, sometimes with very bloody results.

There are various factors in these differences. The armies of Tunisia and Egypt are relatively professional and were not packed with personal allies of the ruler. They had also overseen changes at the head of the regime when, for example, Ben Ali replaced Habib Bouguiba as President of Tunisia in a coup d'état in 1987 and Mubarak replaced Anwar Sadat following his assassination in 1981. In both these cases, the underlying nature of the regimes remained the same.

²⁴ Katerina Dalacoura, "US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Theoretical Perspectives and Policy Recommendations", Century Foundation, July 2010

²⁵ For a fuller discussion of the early period of Obama's approach to democracy promotion, see Thomas Carrothers, "[Democracy Promotion Under Obama: Finding a Way Forward](#)", Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, February 2009

²⁶ US Department of State, [The Middle East Partnership Initiative](#)

It could perhaps be argued that the relative professionalism, particularly of the Egyptian army, is in part due to the close relationship it has had with the US military and that, ironically, the US military assistance contributed to Mubarak's downfall, as well as to his earlier survival.

In more personalised regimes, as in Yemen, Libya and Syria, the security forces are divided, less professional and led by presidential place men. The leaders of these countries have been in charge as long as the country existed in the case of Yemen, and since the overthrow of the monarchy in Libya. Only in Syria has there been a recent change of leader: from father to son, when Bashar inherited the presidency from his father Hafez al-Assad.

In Libya and Syria elite units of the armed forces are led by members of the rulers' families and these units have remained loyal to the regime, while other branches have defected to the opposition or stayed on the sidelines.

3 The differences that will take Arab countries in different directions

3.1 Divided societies

Egypt and Tunisia are two of the most homogeneous countries in the Arab world. Egypt, which has a long history as a populous and urbanised country, is not divided by tribe, and Muslims in Tunisia and Egypt are overwhelmingly Sunni. (Although Christians make up 10%



Shia areas marked in dark green, Sunni areas in light green
Source: CIA World Factbook

of the population of Egypt, they are politically marginalised and have played little role in either the Mubarak regime or the 2011 uprisings.)

Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, on the other hand, are deeply fractured societies. While rapid urbanisation in recent decades has undermined tribal identity, Libya remains strongly influenced by tribes.²⁷ It is

also historically divided between the east and the west, where the major population centres are, separated by a sparsely populated central region. Colonel Qaddafi fostered rivalries between tribes and regions, particularly through appointments to the armed forces, to strengthen his grip on the military and weaken opposition.

²⁷ Mohammed Hussein, "Libya crisis: what role do tribal loyalties play?", BBC News Online, 21 February 2011

Syria's sects have the following strengths: Sunni Muslim 74%, other Muslim (includes Alawite, Druze) 16%, Christian (various denominations) 10%.²⁸ The Alawites are an offshoot of Shia Islam and include the Assad family. Many leading posts in the armed forces were filled by Alawites, as the regime sought to give the sect an essential stake in its survival. President Assad has warned of sectarian conflict if his regime falls and has sought to garner support from the other minorities.

The Bahraini regime, too, has attempted to bolster its position by using the divisions in society. Bahrain is thought to be about two-thirds Shia, yet the government and the armed forces are dominated by the Sunni elite. The royal family are also Sunnis. With the Sunnis retaining a strong interest in the survival of the monarchy and controlling key positions in the armed forces, the regime had little difficulty in persuading the armed forces to carry out harsh repression against the demonstrators. They were assisted in this by Saudi Arabian forces which, under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, moved in to Bahrain to show that a Shia overthrow of a Sunni monarchy in the Arabian Peninsula was not about to be allowed.

There are divisions other than sectarian in the region. Jordan, for example, has a slight majority of people of Palestinian origin over native Jordanians, and the Palestinians have led the modest protest movements against the Jordanian government. The armed forces, however, have remained loyal to the monarchy.²⁹

It is, however, the Sunni/Shia divide which is most significant and, in some cases, decisive for the future of reform attempts. The question of Iran's intentions hangs over all domestic debates, especially in the Gulf.

3.2 Progress towards democracy?

In some countries, observers are relatively optimistic that local conditions will allow the development of more democratic and open societies.

Tunisia

Many analysts think that the country where the uprisings began has the best chance of completing them and moving towards a genuinely democratic system.

Originally scheduled for March, then July 2011, the first democratic election was postponed again in June, with the new date set for 23 October 2011, after the Independent Electoral Commission made a public statement expressing concern that it would be impossible to complete voter registration and organise polling by July.³⁰

The election will create a constituent assembly that will write a new constitution and prepare for legislative elections. The shape of the new constitution is not clear yet, but Rachid Ghannouchi, the leading Islamist politician, has said that he favours a parliamentary system:

We prefer a parliamentary system over a presidential system because that has been the problem behind what happened in Tunisia, where all the power was concentrated in the presidency, and that led to the concentration of wealth.³¹

Over 90 parties have registered to participate in the election, which will be held using a proportional representation system.³² Nahda is the most important Islamist party and claims

²⁸ CIA World Fact Book, [Syria](#) [visited 10 August 2011]

²⁹ F Gregory Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011

³⁰ "Tunisia Postpones Election, Possibly Aiding New Parties", *New York Times*, 9 June 2011

³¹ "Hope is strongest in Tunisia, where it all began with one man's sacrifice", *Sunday Times*, 29 July 2011

to base itself on Turkey's ruling party, the AKP. The leading liberal party was thought to be the Democratic Progressive Party, a legal party under the old regime but one which boycotted the 2009 election. The postponement may, however, favour the creation of new parties. The Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, the former ruling party, was dissolved in March and several thousand former RCD office-holders are barred from standing in the election.

Polls suggest that Nahda would be the biggest single party but that secular parties would together control more seats, and the two sides would have to work together in the constituent assembly.

In a sign of Tunisia's very liberal attitude towards women's rights compared with its neighbours, all parties at the election will be required to field an equal number of female and male candidates.³³

The interim government has been in financial difficulty, particularly because of a slump in tourism. At the end of May, the G8 offered a package of loans to the government to help it get through its difficulties. Some economists say that painful reforms, such as cutting subsidies, will be necessary to increase economic growth.

Tunisia has been strongly affected by the situation in Libya, with 471,000 refugees crossing the border, according to the Tunisian government,³⁴ and fighting sometimes spilling over into Tunisia. Ex-President Ben Ali is in exile in Saudi Arabia, but his trial *in absentia* began on 20 June.

Despite some political progress, problems in Tunisia remain huge. Optimism about the uprising bringing a better life has slumped, particularly in the interior, where Mohammed Bouazizi lived and burnt himself to death. Unemployment and other economic problems have not gone away; in many cases they have got worse as tourism revenues have collapsed and Tunisia must deal with the thousands of refugees flooding into the country from Libya. There are also particularly worrying weaknesses in the technical preparations for the election of the Constituent Assembly. Both the registration of voters and their education about what they are voting for is seriously lacking.³⁵

The long-awaited election took place on 23 October, as planned. Initial reports were of a high turnout of more than 70%.³⁶ The interim authorities (unlike their counterparts in Egypt) welcomed external observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). An orderly process was reported. According to Riccardo Migliori of the OSCE mission, "The elections were free and observers did not witness any widespread or systematic irregularities." He also praised the conduct of the campaign: "The low-key and generally peaceful campaign period was described by all observers as normal. All competitors were treated on the basis of strict equality."³⁷ The PACE mission also congratulated Tunisia on a "free and fair" election with no more than "minor defects". The mission leader said that the Independent Election Commission had done a "great job."³⁸

³² "Hope is strongest in Tunisia, where it all began with one man's sacrifice", *Sunday Times*, 29 July 2011

³³ "Tunisia Postpones Election, Possibly Aiding New Parties", *New York Times*, 9 June 2011

³⁴ "Tunisia Postpones Election, Possibly Aiding New Parties", *New York Times*, 9 June 2011

³⁵ Duncan Pickard, "Elections in Tunisia Face Credibility Test", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, 27 July 2011

³⁶ "Huge turnout as Tunisia rejoices at first free election", *Independent*, 24 October 2011

³⁷ "No "systematic irregularities" in Tunisia's constituent assembly election: European observers", *Xinhua News Agency*, 24 October 2011

³⁸ *Ibid*

Preliminary indications were that Nahda, the moderate Islamist party had received the largest number of votes, as expected. The party that had once looked like Nahda's main rival, the Progressive Democratic Party conceded defeat and was reported to have done very badly.³⁹ Another secularist party, the Congress for the Republic, emerged in second place. While, as predicted, Nahda's vote looked insufficient for a majority in the constituent assembly, it did appear to be enough to show that the country was likely to move in a more Islamist direction.

With around 40% of the seats in the assembly predicted, Nahda (90 seats) quickly moved to negotiate with secular parties to form a new government. Congress for the Republic (30 seats) and al-Takattol or Democratic Forum for labour and Liberties (21 seats)⁴⁰, another left-of-centre party, were reported to be in discussions. The leader of Nahda continued to make statements intended to reassure secularists that Nahda would not be extreme. With an eye on the tourist industry, he said that there would be no bans on bikinis or alcohol, and no wholesale Islamisation of the banking sector.⁴¹

Egypt

"Mubarak was a curtain; SCAF is the monster we unveiled."⁴² These were the words of a Muslim woman who lost two friends in the bloody repression of the Christian-led demonstration in Cairo in October 2011 against the impunity for those who had destroyed a church in southern Egypt.

Many commentators agree that the Egypt's revolution did not remove the existing regime,



just its figurehead in Hosni Mubarak, and that the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is now attempting to limit the scope of the revolution by controlling it from above. However, given time, Egypt may evolve a more democratic system.

On 19 March 2011, 77.2% of Egyptians, many voting for the first time, agreed to the amended constitution. The strong 'yes' vote came despite well-publicised opposition of the liberal forces in Egypt. The amended constitution limited individuals to two four-year terms as resident and curtailed the president's right to call states of emergency. The referendum also paved the way for parliamentary and presidential elections within six months and abolished the quota for seats for women in the parliament.

Source: University of Texas

The referendum on the constitution was seen as a watershed in the country's revolution. The Yes vote for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' (SCAF) proposals disappointed liberals, who had hoped that elections would be postponed to give new parties the chance to

³⁹ "Moderate Islamist party claims election win in Tunisia", *BBC News Online*, 24 October 2011

⁴⁰ Higher Independent Institute for Elections (Tunisia), [Provisional election results](#)

⁴¹ "Tunisia Islamists to form new government within a month" *BBC News Online*, 26 October 2011

⁴² "There is no problem with the Copts ...", *EUObserver*, 10 October 2011

organise. Liberals also wanted more profound changes to the constitution, which in the event remained close to the Mubarak-era original.

Nevertheless, the referendum itself was considered a positive achievement, with largely orderly voting and a reasonable turnout of 41%.⁴³ The election was monitored by some international and domestic observers, although restrictions on their access to the process were criticised in some quarters.⁴⁴ There were few reported irregularities, although there were some doubts as to whether all the voters fully understood the constitutional amendments they were being asked to approve. There was also criticism of the attempt by some campaigners to whip up religious discord for their own ends during the campaign, and it has also been argued that the Muslim Brotherhood and the more radical Islamist forces wrongly persuaded many people that voting 'no' would abolish the old constitution and its reference to sharia law.⁴⁵

The SCAF's victory was widely attributed to the desire among ordinary Egyptians to move on from what they see as the chaos of the Tahrir Square demonstrations. The priorities among most voters were to enhance security, which has been dubious since the fall of Mubarak and the resulting loss of confidence among the police force, and to stabilise the economy, badly hit by the fall in tourist revenues and foreign investment.⁴⁶

Egypt's State Security Investigations Bureau was disbanded in March⁴⁷ and, in July, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces stated that it would produce a 'declaration of basic principles' to guide the deliberations on the new constitution. At first, liberal voices welcomed this as a guarantee of basic rights that must appear in the new constitution. But, according to the *New York Times*, its main aim appears to be to guarantee the military's rights:

...legal experts enlisted by the military to write the declaration say that it will spell out the armed forces' role in the civilian government, potentially shielding the defence budget from public or parliamentary scrutiny and protecting the military's vast economic interests. Proposals under consideration would give the military a broad mandate to intercede in Egyptian politics to protect national unity or the secular character of the state. A top general publicly suggested such a role, according to a report last month in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm*. The military plans to adopt the document on its own, before any election, referendum or constitution sets up a civilian authority, said Mohamed Nour Farahat, a law professor working on the declaration. That would represent an about-face for a force that, after helping to oust President Hosni Mubarak five months ago, consistently pledged to turn over power to elected officials who would draft a constitution. Though the proposed declaration might protect liberals from an Islamist-dominated constitution, it could also limit democracy by shielding the military from full civilian control.⁴⁸

In September Tahrir Square, which had been cleared of demonstrators in August, was filled once again. Protesters called for the pace of reform to be increased and for military trials of civilians to be ended. The government had re-introduced the Mubarak-era emergency laws on 11 September after the storming of the Israeli embassy by protesters two days previously.

In October, the SCAF agreed to amend the new electoral law after the political parties had threatened to boycott the election, scheduled for 28 November 2011. The transitional

⁴³ "Egyptians vote 'yes' to constitutional amendments", *al-Shorfa online*, 21 March 2011

⁴⁴ "Egypt limits observers' access to referendum vote", Press release, Freedom House, 17 March 2011

⁴⁵ Hazem Kandil, "Revolt in Egypt", *New left Review*, March-April 2011

⁴⁶ "Egypt tries to woo back foreign investors", *BBC News Online*, 2 July 2011

⁴⁷ "High turnout marks 'orderly' Egypt vote", *al-Jazeera online*, 19 March 2011

⁴⁸ "Egypt Military Moves to Cement A Muscular Role in Government", *New York Times*, 17 July 2011

government's proposal had banned party members from standing for one third of the seats in the new parliament reserved for independents.⁴⁹ Two thirds of the seats are to be contested with party lists and proportional representation. Now, party members will be able to stand for the remaining third that will be contested using a first-past-the-post system. It is important because many fear that the 'independents' would in fact be close to the now-banned National Democratic Party; many independents in previous parliaments were in fact NDP place-men.

A poll carried out by *Newsweek/Daily Beast* in July found that the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party attracted the support of 17% of the electorate, making it the most popular party. The top five parties in the poll were as follows:

Support	Political group
29%	Not sure/Undecided
17%	Freedom and Justice Party (affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood)
11%	Al-Wafd Party
7%	National Democratic Party
7%	Free Egyptians Party

Source: "Egypt's Simmering Rage", *Newsweek/Daily Beast*, 26 July 2011

According to the same poll, Amr Moussa, former foreign minister and former secretary general of the Arab League, is the front runner for the presidency, to be decided in March or April 2012. Amr Moussa came in ahead of the other leading candidates: former International Atomic Energy Agency head Mohammed al-Baradei and Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh.

One of the biggest concerns has been the increasing friction between Christians and Muslims. There have been several clashes, resulting in many deaths. The failure of the authorities to grant planning permission for the building of churches is a problem, and has led to the burning or demolition of churches said to have been built with no permission. In October, Christians marched on the centre of Cairo after a church in Aswan, southern Egypt, had been attacked. State television was accused of condoning violence against the Christians and the governor of Aswan's resignation was demanded by the protesters, who said that he had failed to take any action against the perpetrators.

As the demonstration reached the state television company's headquarters, it was attacked by the army, reports say. In the ensuing violence, 24 people were killed, mostly Christians, which made this the bloodiest incident since the end of the major protests. Video apparently showing military police driving an armoured personnel carrier directly at demonstrators was widely shown. Some Christians claimed that the army is in league with Islamic extremists who, they say, have grown increasingly open in their hostility towards the Christian minority since the revolution. Others have blamed elements of the old regime who want to increase sectarian tension to provide a pretext for maintaining the authoritarian nature of the state and limiting change.

While the country's interim prime minister, Prime Minister Essam Sharaf appeared to blame "hidden hands - domestic and foreign - that meddle with the country's security and safety",⁵⁰ finance minister Hazem al-Beblawi tendered his resignation, which was rejected by the

⁴⁹ "Egypt's ruling council to amend election law", *Al-Jazeera Online*, 1 October 2011

⁵⁰ "Mounting hostility behind Egypt's violent protests", *BBC News Online*, 10 October 2011

government. His move may, in any case, have more to do with political manoeuvring in the run-up to November's planned election than anything else. So much violence at such a sensitive time was mourned by liberals as a serious setback for Egypt's revolution.

In Westminster, an EDM criticising the Egyptian government's "failure" to investigate and prosecute attacks on Christians was tabled on 13 October.⁵¹

In one recent article, analysts drew attention to the difference between Egypt and Tunisia, where the second wave of demonstrations led to the dismissal of former regime stalwarts from the interim government:

Egypt has not had its second revolution, and remains governed by an institution—the military—that was long the backbone of the Mubarak regime. With tens of thousands returning to protest across the country on July 8, the frustration with the military regime's performance and a lack of revolutionary dividends has reached a fever pitch. Protesters representing a wide range of factions, from liberal youth movements to the resurgent Salafis, turned out to voice their anger over the military's foot-dragging.⁵²

However, controlling the transition in Egypt will be anything but easy. Parliamentary elections will at least show the strength of two powerful forces: the Muslim Brotherhood and the remnants of Mubarak's National Democratic Party.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the role of the military will remain crucial. As illustrated by the controversy over the 'guiding principles' for the constitution, the armed forces' participation could have ambiguous consequences for democracy activists and for perceived western interests. Larry Diamond argued in *Foreign Affairs* in May 2011 that the US should use its influence with the Egyptian military:

Finally, given its enormous demographic weight and political influence in the Arab world, as Egypt goes, so will go the region. Engaging Egypt will prove vital to any larger strategy of fostering democratic change in the Arab world. Beyond aid and vigilant monitoring of the political process, the United States must deliver a clear message to the Egyptian military that it will not support a deliberate sabotage of the democratic process, and that a reversion to authoritarianism would have serious consequences for the U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relationship, including for future flows of U.S. military aid.⁵³

Diamond went on to argue that Egypt should not be allowed to become a new Pakistan with the military running things behind a façade of democracy and playing a double game.

Morocco

Morocco does not have the financial resources to enable it to 'pay protests off' on the scale of Algeria (see below). Yet Morocco, too, has avoided the worst of the region's unrest. The first explanation for this has to do with the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy. Morocco is a poor country, but it has a strong sense of national identity and historical continuity compared with some other North Africa states. The Alaouite royal house has ruled Morocco (with much interference from European powers) since the 17th century, claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammed, and is said to be widely popular among Moroccans.

⁵¹ EDM 2245, 13 October 2011

⁵² Shadi Hamid and Samuel Plumbly, "Egypt to Remain Military State", *National Interest*, 14 July 2011

⁵³ Larry Diamond, "A fourth wave or a false start: Democracy After the Arab Spring", *Foreign Affairs*, 22 May 2011

King Hassan II came to the throne in 1961 and his rule was marked by fierce repression of his opponents. King Muhammad VI succeeded his father in 1999. On accession to the throne, King Muhammad brought in more conciliatory policies towards opponents of the regime (both socialist and Islamist), allowing exiles to return. The elections in 2002 were the fairest and freest the country had ever seen. Human rights institutions were strengthened, an arbitration body was established to determine compensation for the families of opposition figures who had “disappeared” and thousands of prisoners were amnestied. The King also introduced an important programme of social reforms, the most important of which would



lead to a marked improvement in the position of women, notably the allocation of a third of the seats in parliament to women.

Press freedom, though improved under the new King, was far from complete.

Source: University of Texas

Coverage of the monarchy, the army and the Western Sahara dispute were still subject to strict controls. The officially recognised Islamic party the PJD (Parti de la Justice et du Développement) and the banned al-Adl wal-Ihsan (Justice and Charity Movement) organised a demonstration against the reforms in Casablanca, which was attended by hundreds of thousands.

Source: University of Texas

As well as the high level of legitimacy enjoyed by the monarchy and a relatively open political system, the Moroccan regime has an external dispute with which to unify the populace: Western Sahara. Morocco claims the territory as its own and has made some progress towards having that accepted by the international community. The opponent in this case is Algeria, which supports the Polisario independence movement against Moroccan claims.

At the 2007 election, turnout fell to 37%, indicating disenchantment with the reforms of Muhammad VI and the political system. Nepotism and corruption among the associates of the royal family are regularly blamed for this disenchantment. A US diplomat's comments, revealed in the Wikileaks diplomatic cables, described the “appalling greed” of those close to King Muhammad while another cable said that “corruption is present at all levels of Moroccan society”.⁵⁴

Resentment at economic unfairness and political exclusion brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets in Morocco in the spring of 2011. Although calls for the “end of the regime” were less widespread than in other countries, there was no mistaking the force of the public call for meaningful reform. Repression, although mild by some standards, was significant, as police broke up demonstrations using armoured vehicles and causing injuries to members of the public.

⁵⁴ “WikiLeaks cables accuse Moroccan royals of corruption”, *Guardian*, 6 December 2010

In March the King announced a reform programme and, unlike some other regional leaders, he appeared to be serious about implementing real change. In June the King made a major speech in which he pledged that the majority in parliament would have a right to nominate the prime minister and that the prime minister would have the power to dissolve parliament. Nominating prime ministers and dissolving parliaments were two of the ways in which the Moroccan monarchy has maintained almost absolute control over the government.

Commentators describe the move as probably the most impressive reform response to the Arab unrest:

In a season of growing disillusion—and disastrous televised speeches—the king of Morocco's June 17 national address stood out. It wasn't a great speech, and it fell well short of protesters' demands. But it was a substantive engagement with the opposition. The 47-year-old monarch did not demean his own people or place the blame on foreign conspirators. Instead, he announced a new constitution—one that has the potential to reshape the country's politics. While retaining effective veto power over major decisions, he pledged to empower elected institutions. The prime minister, drawn from the ranks of the largest party in parliament, would have the authority to appoint and fire ministers, as well as to dissolve parliament.⁵⁵

A referendum was held on 1 July, at which the public expressed strong support for the changes. While the reforms are promising, Anouar Boukhars and Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution have pointed out that better democracy depends on a more democratic culture, and that this can be encouraged by western engagement:

Constitutions matter, but what matters more is what people do with them.

This is where Morocco's friends in the west come in. The time for prioritizing economic liberalization at the expense of democratic reform is over. While Morocco may be more "progressive" than most its neighbours, it is still a state that relies on political restrictions and repression, albeit with a subtler touch. The United States and the European Union should stop heaping praise on Morocco for being a model of reform it hasn't yet become. American and EU policy must be re-oriented to focus on a number of critical priorities: freedom of association and speech, constraining the powers of the king and the makhzen (royal court), and strengthening the role of elected institutions, such as parliament. Meanwhile, economic aid, as the new European Neighbourhood Policy states, must be linked to the idea of "more for more" with "precise benchmarks and a clearer sequencing of actions."

King Mohamed has declared his commitment to substantive reform and democratization. It is only fair that the United States and Europe hold him to his own promises. The stakes are considerable. If constitutional reforms lead to separation of powers, independence of the legislature and judiciary, and a monarchy that removes itself from day-to-day rule, the regional implications could indeed be significant. Then—and only then—should Morocco be considered a "model."⁵⁶

Retribution or reconciliation?

With progress in reforming governing institutions so controversial, it is perhaps not surprising that activists who united to bring down old regimes are also united in their desire to bring to justice those who committed offences under those old regimes. In both Tunisia and Egypt, there has been a clamour from both Islamists and liberals for those responsible for violence and corruption to be arrested.

⁵⁵ Shadi Hamid, "The Monarchy Model" *Slate website*, 1 July 2011

⁵⁶ Anouar Boukhars and Shadi Hamid, "Morocco's Moment of Reform?", Brookings Institution, 28 June 2011

For transitional governments, this was an opportunity to court popularity and to establish their independence from the old regimes, and both Tunisia and Egypt moved quickly to mount trials of top officials and lowly members of the security forces alike. Tunisia also signed the Rome Statute in July 2011 and became a state party to the International Criminal Court.⁵⁷

On 19 April, a fact-finding mission reported on the violence of the Egyptian uprising. It found that several regime figures including Gamal and Alaa Mubarak, sons of the deposed president, had organised some of the violence that had led to at least 846 protesters being killed and 6,467 injured.⁵⁸ On 22 May, a Cairo court issued the first death sentence, for a low-ranking policeman who was convicted of randomly firing his rifle into a crowd of protesters and killing at least 20.⁵⁹ The trial of Hosni Mubarak caused violent scuffles inside and outside the court room, with relatives of the victims of the uprising calling for revenge. The authorities decided that some evidence should be taken in private. Among the top defendants in Egypt are Habib al-Adly, the former interior minister, who is charged with conspiring in the killing of protesters and associates of the former president who are charged with corruption.

In August, the former Tunisian security chief begged Tunisians for forgiveness during a court appearance.⁶⁰

Some of the figures arrested in both Egypt and Tunisia are certainly important and some have been convicted of serious crimes. There is a fear, however, that the conviction of former ministers may be no more than a continuation of the process that brought Mubarak down. From this perspective, the 'deep state' is sacrificing some top figures, including members of the Mubarak family, in order to placate the protesters and preserve its underlying economic interests. For example, in Egypt, the former ruling National Democratic Party controlled huge swathes of the country via business interests, central and local government and other networks.

Questions such as how many of the individuals involved with the NDP should be banned and how many should be prosecuted are difficult to answer. Democracy protesters in Egypt and Tunisia do not want their revolutions to become simple coups d'état, where some elements of the elite replace others. On the other hand, the radical de-Ba'athification process in Iraq has been partly blamed for the chaos that followed the 2003 invasion. While neither Egypt nor Tunisia is such an inherently fractious country as Iraq, few would want to invite disorder by undermining essential state structures.

Some analysts worry that an over-concentration on retribution plays into the hands of those who want to frustrate change. The interests of social peace must also be considered, and widespread indiscriminate revenge against anyone involved in former regimes would undermine that. Clare Spencer of Chatham House argues that the way that abuses of the past are addressed in Tunisia and Egypt is vital for the outcome of other situations, such as Libya and Syria, and that the west should pay more attention to this process:

The unsystematic muddling through that currently characterises the redress of past abuses in Egypt and Tunisia needs to receive more attention from the outside world. There are models of transitional justice that new generations could draw on, from South Africa to Chile, and even Morocco, to demand that their interim authorities strike an appropriate balance between justice and social peace. Equally, if Libya is to thrive post-Gaddafi, then what happens in Egypt and Tunisia will influence the credibility of

⁵⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Foreign Secretary welcomes Tunisia Ratifying the Rome Statute", Press release, 26 June 2011

⁵⁸ "[Fact-Finding Commission Issues Report on Violence Against Protesters](#)", Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, 20 April 2011

⁵⁹ "Egypt sentences policeman to death in protester killings", *Washington Post*, 23 May 2011

⁶⁰ "Tunisia: Arrested Official Begs for Forgiveness in Court", *New York Times*, 11 August 2011

moves towards change. Former presidents in waiting elsewhere in the Middle East, above all Syria, will also be watching to see how quickly former regimes reinvent themselves.⁶¹

3.3 Difficult cases?

There are some countries where the sectarian and regional makeup of the population suggests that real democracy is not a likely outcome. The sectarian divisions in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, and Yemen's lack of regional cohesion, mean that an easy transition to more representative system is not possible. In each of these countries the Sunni/Shia, Persian/Arab dispute has undermined trust and any sense of national unity.

Bahrain

Bahraini protesters continued to be tried and convicted for weeks after the demonstrations were suppressed and in June eight prominent activists were given life sentences for their participation in the demonstrations. In preparation for a national dialogue on political reforms, the government did make some concessions, including ending the controversial practice of holding protesters' trials in military courts. However, it has refused to bow to opposition demands that all detainees should be released and that all charges connected with the protest should be dropped.

The Bahraini Government opened an independent commission into the disturbances of early 2011 on 29 June. Amid disturbing allegations of detention and torture of Shia doctors who had treated injured protesters, the establishment of the commission reportedly received a relatively positive response from some Bahraini civil society groups. The commission's membership includes international representatives such as Sir Nigel Rodley, a former International Criminal Court judge. The body is chaired by Professor Bassiouni – who in 1992-94 chaired the UN Security Council's commission investigating war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.⁶² It was due to report not later than 30 October 2011, but delayed its report date to 23 November.

Despite the credibility of the commission's membership, many opposition figures are reported to be sceptical as to whether the Bahraini Government will make information available to it and whether the commission will accuse any senior government officials of wrongdoing.

In a blow to reconciliation efforts, the largest Shiite party, al-Wefaq, withdrew in July from the dialogue on reforms, saying that the government was not serious about addressing Shiites' demands for rights and greater political freedom.⁶³ This was symptomatic of the country's problems, with trust between the ruling Sunni royal family and the Shiite majority almost nonexistent.

While there may be some moves towards reform, many think that these will be little more than gestures, largely to appease the United States, which has applied heavy pressure on the Bahraini Government.

The Shiite protesters are in a difficult position, since the Saudis and the other Gulf governments have made it clear through their intervention that they will stand by the Khalifas and are not prepared to see the Bahraini royals fall. True democracy in Bahrain would almost inevitably lead to the Khalifas losing power; it is not likely to happen. The Saudis withdrew

⁶¹ Claire Spencer, "You've ousted an Arab autocrat. Now what?", *Financial Times*, 25 July 2011

⁶² "'International investigation' into Bahrain unrest opens door to reconciliation amid the scepticism", *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol 35, 904, 8 July 2011

⁶³ "Shiite Party In Bahrain Leaves Talks With Rulers", *New York Times*, 18 July 2011

the bulk of their forces at the beginning of July 2011, showing some confidence that the uprising was, for now, over.⁶⁴

Pressure from the US has something to do with an American desire not to look hypocritical, having called for Hosni Mubarak to stand down and having taken military action in Libya. With the American Navy's Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain and the west's desire to maintain reasonable relations with the oil-rich Gulf States, serious western action to ensure reform in Bahrain is unlikely.

The legitimacy of the Bahraini Government is seriously compromised and it is not clear that the present policies will repair it. The severe repression employed by the authorities has calmed the situation for the time being, but more may be necessary to maintain that calm. With overt Saudi support for the monarchy (and probably tacit US support too), however, a fully democratic outcome in Bahrain is not in prospect.

Yemen

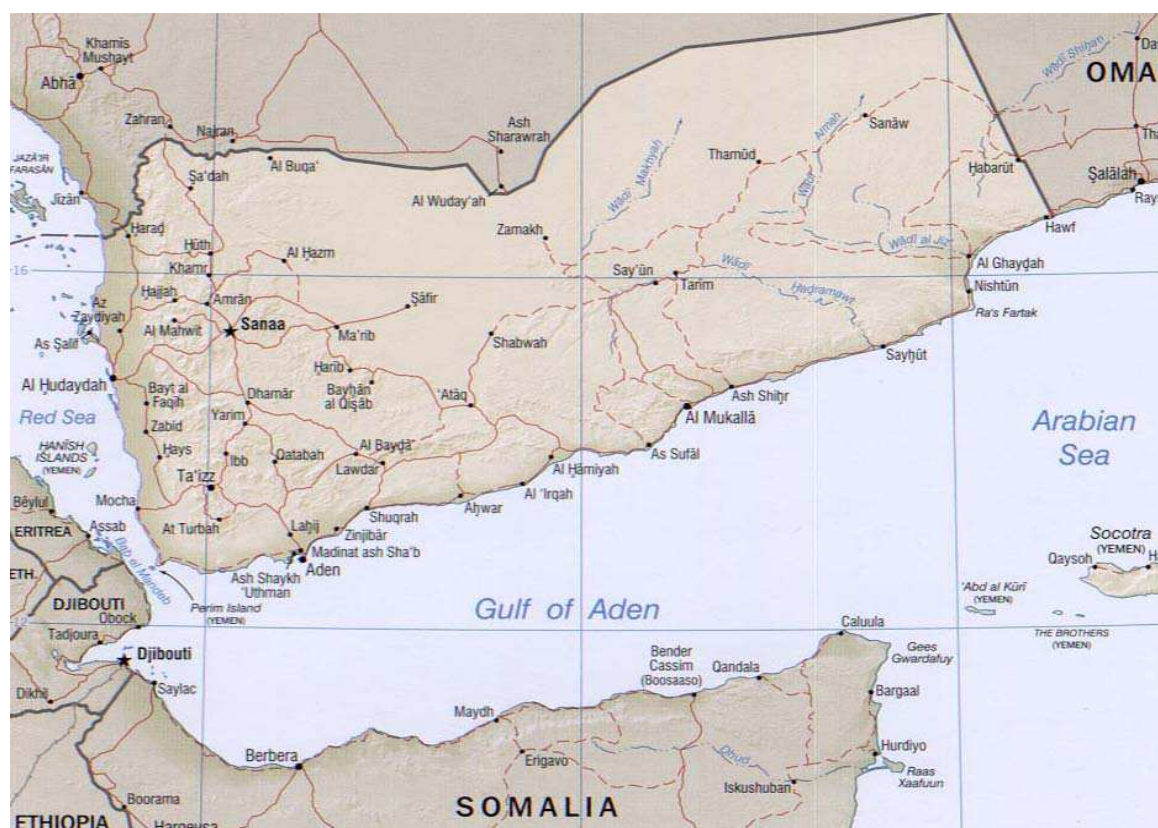
Regional and tribal rebellions, some allegedly with the involvement of members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, are gaining strength in Yemen, to the consternation of western diplomats.

The defection of the powerful general Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar from the president's camp was a turning point, after which the conflict looked increasingly like a civil war, but President Saleh, who was injured in a rocket attack on 3 June 2011, refused to resign. President Saleh was released from hospital in Saudi Arabia in August 2011 but, at the time of writing, had not returned to Yemen, needing to recuperate further, according to a Yemeni diplomat.⁶⁵

Saleh and his supporters have refused to contemplate any transition until an election has taken place. Opposition leaders are unwilling to cooperate with Saleh at all, and are calling for him to step down and, so far, the governing party's calls for early elections are gaining no traction.

⁶⁴ "Saudi Forces To Withdraw From Bahrain", *New York Times*, 29 June 2011

⁶⁵ "Yemeni President, Hurt in Bombing, Leaves Saudi Hospital", *New York Times*, 8 August 2011



Source: University of Texas

Disappointed democracy demonstrators fear that the democracy movement in Yemen has been hijacked by powerful figures close to the regime, who are jockeying for the succession when President Saleh finally leaves. Most discussion centres on the Ahmar family. They are not related to General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who is Saleh's half brother. But the powerful Ahmar family includes Hamid al-Ahmar, a prominent businessman and member of the Islah party, who is reported to have paid demonstrators in Sana'a.⁶⁶

Sadiq al-Ahmar is now head of both the Ahmar family and the Hashid tribal federation, said to be the second most powerful in the country.⁶⁷ Another brother, Hussein al-Ahmar, was a member of the President's ruling party until his resignation in February.

The fighting signals an end to a deal that has kept Yemen united since 1978, when Saleh assumed the presidency backed by Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar. Abdullah al-Ahmar died in 2007 and his sons are said to be vying to take over.

Other tribal leaders pledged their support for Saleh,⁶⁸ as the conflict increasingly took on tribal and regional overtones, as well as being focussed on existing members of the elite. Saleh's eldest son, Ahmed Ali, and his nephews Tarik, Yahya and Amar are also positioning themselves for the succession. Ahmed heads the elite Republican Guard, Yahya commands Yemen's Central Security Forces.

In contrast, the democracy movement remains fragmented and without a clear leader, and looks increasingly marginalised. Some democracy campaigners think that the government

⁶⁶ For more detail about the various forces in Yemen, see the Library Standard Note [Yemen on the brink of civil war?](#), June 2011

⁶⁷ "Background: Saleh's eroding support", *al-Jazeera*, 28 February 2011

⁶⁸ "Yemeni President Rallies Tribal Support", *Wall Street Journal*, 27 February 2011

feels more threatened by non-violent protest than it does by the tribal and regional armed struggles, and is spending more energy suppressing demonstrations than fighting separatists in the north and south of the country.⁶⁹

It is difficult to imagine a transition to genuine democracy in Yemen. The country has too many factions, too many weapons, too many problems. Yemen's history as a unified state is short and the government's control of national territory has generally been tenuous. Regional and tribal rebellions, some allegedly with the involvement of members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, are gaining in strength. The traditional method of holding the country together has been patronage, but the money that has backed this approach is running out.⁷⁰

Given the forces that are positioning themselves to compete for power, and Yemen's very weak democratic culture and divided polity, the likelihood that the demands of pro-democracy demonstrators will be fulfilled seems small. At best, the country will avoid a fully-fledged civil war and the transition to a stable replacement for the current regime will take place relatively quickly. It is quite possible, however, that instability and conflict will persist for some time.

The reaction of Saudis will be important, but some experts claim that their favourite, General Mohsen al-Ahmar, is not a viable option because he is too implicated in the existing regime. It is also not clear that he would win western support. But then there has been no clear indication of what alternative leader the west would support.

3.4 Spending their way to stability?

Arab societies that are richer, less divided along sectarian or religious grounds, or whose leaders enjoy more popular legitimacy, have been able to avoid the level of instability that has affected countries such as Yemen. Most governments in the region have promised reform. In addition, some governments have announced massive expenditure, the creation of government jobs, pay rises for government employees or simply handing out cash.

Algeria

Algeria is a special case in the region. It had a serious experiment with democracy in 1991 and, when the military could not accept the likely victory by the Islamists and cancelled the election, the resulting civil war was marked by atrocities and resulted in the deaths of more than 100,000 people. Even this paled compared with the war of independence from France from 1954 to 1962, where estimates of the number of dead range from some 350,000 to 1.5 million.⁷¹ Fear of a return to such levels of violence is thought to have played a part in keeping Algeria relatively peaceful.

Nevertheless, the government of Abdelaziz Bouteflika has implemented some reforms and also spent some money to try to ensure its survival. In February 2011, Bouteflika lifted the state of emergency that had been in place for 19 years. This move may have been a tactic to out-manoeuvre General Muhammad Mediène, long the regime's military strong man. There are reported to be significant tensions between Bouteflika and Mediène.⁷²

There were large pro-democracy demonstrations in Algeria, some ending in riots, particularly in February. The regime promised talks on reforms, and the National Commission for Consultations on Political Reforms first met in May. However, in a pattern repeated across the region, the commission was composed of regime insiders and, although it took evidence

⁶⁹ "Yemen on the brink of Hell", *New York Times magazine*, 20 July 2011

⁷⁰ For more background on Yemen's economic difficulties, see the Library Standard Note [Yemen](#), 23 July 2010

⁷¹ Wikipedia, [Algerian War](#) [visited 11 August 2011]

⁷² "Don't count your dominoes", *Economist*, 19 February 2011

from a range of opposition leaders, many of these had little legitimacy with the average Algerian.⁷³ The commission's task is simply to collect complaints and suggestions for reform, and then to present a catalogue to the president. Bouteflika would then propose a plan to implement reform or not, a decision to be made by him alone.

Commentators are generally unimpressed by the reform process. One US-based academic said that the regime has no intention of implementing anything radical:

Observers say the political-military elites, or le Pouvoir - "the Power" - are attempting to present the illusion that political negotiations are taking place across the board.

Yet as one source close to the government told me, at the end of the process any "change will not be radical; it is planned by the system".⁷⁴

Few have much faith in the political reform process. It is the export of hydrocarbons and the government's earnings from that that has enabled it to protect itself from the sort of unrest seen in other countries.

According to the Algerian press, more than one million new jobs were created in Algeria in the first half of 2011, with the results being largely attributed to public investment of more than \$28.8 billion.⁷⁵ These figures are from the Algerian government and may be an exaggeration. However, there is more investment to come and it seems likely that the economic stimulus is significant in fending off calls for reform. Algeria, along with Tunisia and Morocco, lifted import tariffs and customs duties on a number of foodstuffs in 2011, leading to a rise in wheat imports of 128% in the first half of 2011 compared with the same period in 2010.⁷⁶

For some analysts, however, these measures are superficial and a day of reckoning will come for Algeria. One commentator argues that governments in the region are stuck in the past and that Algeria is one of the worst examples, making it vulnerable to overthrow:

Now that the clock has finally struck for Mubarak in Egypt, other states in the region suffering from PTD [postcolonial time disorder] remain vulnerable to revolution. Algeria -- a regional power, U.S. ally, and major energy producer -- is foremost among them.⁷⁷

Gulf monarchies

Apart from Bahrain, the Gulf monarchies have not been threatened by extreme turmoil. Some, such as **Kuwait**, have relatively open systems. Indeed Kuwait, which has been ruled by the Sabah family since 1752, is the most democratic nation in the region. Its parliament has substantial powers to review the workings of the government and is far from supine. Political parties are formally banned and candidates stand in a personal capacity but, in practice, political groups do exist. Kuwait recently authorised a budget of \$70 billion in spending, the bulk of which is destined for fuel subsidies and salary increases for public employees.⁷⁸ In January, the Kuwaiti government announced the distribution of four billion

⁷³ Abdelkader Cheref, "Algerian 'Reforms' Are All Smoke, But No Real Substance", *Middle East Spectator Blog*, 1 July 2011

⁷⁴ Abdelkader Cheref, "Algerian 'Reforms' Are All Smoke, But No Real Substance", *Middle East Spectator Blog*, 1 July 2011

⁷⁵ "Plus de 1 million d'emplois créés", *L'Expression* (Algeria), 10 August 2011

⁷⁶ "Wheat Imports Rise by 128% in Algeria", *IHS Global Insight*, 28 July 2011

⁷⁷ James D Lesueur, "Postcolonial Time Disorder", Council on Foreign Relations, 11 February 2011

⁷⁸ "Seeking to Avoid Uprising, Kuwait Escalates Budget", *New York Times*, 1 July 2011

US dollars in cash, or \$3,650 per citizen, as well as a programme of free food handouts until March 2011.⁷⁹ **Bahrain** has also handed out cash to families.

Saudi Arabia has also escaped severe unrest despite an entirely autocratic political system. A planned 'day of rage' in March came to nothing, as security forces flooded the streets to smother any demonstrations. There was significant unrest in the Eastern Province, home both to most of the kingdom's substantial Shia minority and to most of its oil reserves. More than 150 were arrested.

Saudi Arabia has spent an extra \$130 billion, or a budget increase of about 40%, to raise salaries, invest in housing and finance religious organizations. Saudi Arabia has also been deploying its formidable financial firepower in neighbouring countries, where it wants to damp down political unrest. The kingdom has promised \$10 billion each to Bahrain and Oman to help create jobs and offered \$4 billion in soft loans to Egypt.⁸⁰

Should the spending of money fail, the Saudi Arabian authorities appear to be preparing for unrest. In July 2011, a draft law was publicised which would give the state sweeping powers to detain suspects without charge, to hold them incommunicado for 120 days with the possibility of extension by a special court. Criticism of the king or crown prince would carry a minimum prison sentence of ten years. The draft law was presented as a measure to deal with terrorist suspects, but human rights activists fear that it may be used to suppress any kind of dissent. A spokesman for Amnesty International said:

This draft law poses a serious threat to freedom of expression in the kingdom in the name of preventing terrorism. If passed it would pave the way for even the smallest acts of peaceful dissent to be branded terrorism and risk massive human rights violations.⁸¹

Saudi Arabia's interior minister Prince Nayef (whose ministry would be operating the new powers) is a conservative in comparison with the present King, Abdullah, and is likely to succeed him on the throne. Some analysts think that King Abdullah's tentative political reforms may be stopped by Prince Nayef if he takes over, and that the new law is one of Nayef's preparations for his succession. A Saudi civil rights activist said:

This man has a history of abusing his authority. Under this law he could jail anyone he has a disagreement with and leave them there. Articles that do impose limitations on the law are vague. It is very dangerous.⁸²

The indications are, then, that Saudi Arabia has succeeded for now in avoiding turmoil, but that more trouble may lie ahead.

The **United Arab Emirates** authorities have arrested a number of activists critical of the regime. A petition was circulated in April calling for the Federal National Council, which has advisory powers only, to be given a legislative role and for all UAE citizens to be given the vote. Five prominent Emiratis were arrested in April 2011. According to one expert, the fact that the government released a statement saying that the activists had been arrested for opposing the government and threatening national security was an advance:

I'm quite happy about the statement because, in the past, the government would have tried to get away with branding this as an Islamist plot, or that those arrested were in

⁷⁹ "Can the Gulf's generous welfare model be sustained in the long term?", Vol. 35 no. 900, 13 May 2011

⁸⁰ "Gulf reins in foreign spending", *Financial Times*, 21 July 2011

⁸¹ "Terror law could be used as iron fist to crush opposition, rights activists claim", *Times*, 23 July 2011

⁸² "Terror law could be used as iron fist to crush opposition, rights activists claim", *Times*, 23 July 2011

possession of drugs or alcohol. But they know they can't do that now because everyone's Tweeting and writing about it.⁸³

At the same time the UAE has followed the Gulf pattern of spending to avert unrest. Even in the smaller oil-rich countries, not all citizens are necessarily wealthy (not to mention the thousands of expatriate workers on whom the Gulf states depend, some of whom live in extreme poverty and difficult conditions).⁸⁴ In the UAE, the northern emirates are much poorer than the south of the country. Money from Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the south went towards President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed al-Nahyan's \$4.4 billion fund for infrastructure in the Northern Emirates, created in 2008. In March, further additional expenditure of \$1.6 billion was announced, to improve water and electricity supply to the impoverished northern emirates such as Ras al-Khaimah, where power cuts are commonplace and many buildings have no access to mains electricity at all.⁸⁵ Many of the opposition critics, including some of those arrested in April, come from the northern emirates.

There have been some minor moves towards political opening in the Gulf. **Saudi Arabia** decided that from 2015, women would be allowed to vote in elections for the relatively powerless municipal councils. Women will also be eligible for nomination to the consultative council, or Shura.⁸⁶ **Qatar** announced in November 2011 that it would be holding its first national election in 2013. Two thirds of the seats on an advisory council will be elected by universal suffrage.⁸⁷

Jordan and Morocco to join the Gulf Cooperation Council?

The two monarchies in the region with the smallest financial resources are Jordan and Morocco. While Morocco appears to have embarked on a serious programme of reform, Jordan's moves have been less clear, leading some to describe them as typical of the manoeuvrings of authoritarian governments aiming to buy time rather than genuinely to relinquish some power. In January, the capital of **Jordan**, Amman, began to experience demonstrations. Responding early to the unrest, King Abdullah sacked his recently-appointed government and installed a new one. Marouf al-Bakhit, a retired general, was named as Samir Rifai's successor. Al-Bakhit was encouraged by the king to speed up the reform process. In February 2011, Jordan revised its 2011 budget to allow extra spending of \$682 million on social programmes, aiming to calm increasing protest over rising food prices. The increased expenditure pushed the budget deficit over the target, to 5.5% of GDP.

As well as quickly dismissing the unpopular government, King Abdullah also established in 2011 a national dialogue: a panel of experts to consider constitutional reforms. The panel presented its report in August 2011 and its proposals included the establishment of a constitutional court, independent electoral oversight, measures controlling the powers of security courts and making it more difficult for the monarch to dissolve parliament. While the changes, if implemented, would be far less radical than those proposed in Morocco and would do little to reduce the King's wide-ranging powers, they would go some way to meeting the demands of the opposition.

However, King Abdullah has initiated reform programmes many times before during his 10-year reign. The programmes have not produced many profound reforms. This failure to make genuine reforms has been blamed on the economic interests of a powerful class which would

⁸³ "UAE cracks down on dissent amid calls for reform", *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 35 no. 899, 29 April 2011

⁸⁴ See for example "Saudi Arabian torment of migrant workers at mercy of abusive 'madams'", *Guardian*, 25 June 2011

⁸⁵ "Abu Dhabi turns attention to potential ticking time-bomb in the Northern Emirates",

⁸⁶ "Women in Saudi Arabia to vote and run in elections", *BBC News Online*, 25 September 2011

⁸⁷ "Qatar elections to be held in 2013 – Emir", *BBC News Online*, 1 November 2011

be damaged by reform. In a paper for the Carnegie Endowment, Marwan Muasher argued that this class was blocking reform efforts of the monarchy.⁸⁸

Jordan's rulers benefit from a number of factors which have protected them from instability. They have a certain amount of legitimacy derived from their claim to be descended from the Prophet Mohammed; the family was originally a high-ranking clan from what is now Saudi Arabia. Secondly, Jordan is divided roughly equally between 'East Bankers', from what used to be called Transjordan, and 'West Bankers', Palestinian refugees from Israel and the Occupied Territories. There was a short civil war in 1970 when radical Palestinians resident in Jordan tried to overthrow the monarchy. This bloody conflict has contributed to a sense among most Jordanians that they do not want to allow instability to return.⁸⁹

Added to those factors is Jordan's essential role in the Middle East's geopolitics. It is Israel's last steady ally in the region and essential to Israel's security. At the same time, is a valuable ally to the Gulf states, not only joining them in the pro-western camp but providing a buffer between Saudi Arabia and pro-Iranian Syria.

In May 2011, a surprise announcement came from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The six-nation club of monarchies from the Arabian Peninsula said that it was to look favourably on Jordan's application to join and would also issue an invitation to Morocco (which had never asked to join). This was unexpected to many, since Saudi neighbour Yemen has been trying unsuccessfully to join for years. Morocco, on the other hand, is about as far from the Gulf as it is possible for an Arab country to be.

The outcome of the GCC overtures to Morocco and Jordan is not yet clear. After the GCC announcement, Moroccan King Muhammad VI used a speech marking the 12th anniversary of his rule to call for an improvement of relations with Algeria and say that Morocco "remains committed to building the Maghreb Union as a strategic choice". He did not mention the GCC offer.⁹⁰ The Jordanian reaction was far more positive. Jordanians hope that the economic advantages of joining its rich neighbours will be enormous, enabling Jordan to do more to spend its way out of political trouble. Morocco, too, would expect to see economic advantages from membership.

Government critics both in Morocco and Jordan are opposed to the move, seeing it as aimed at stopping political reforms. Osama el-Khalifi, of Morocco's 20 February Movement, said that the move looked like an attempt "to build a coalition against countries that have succeeded in making a change".⁹¹

Is the high-spending model sustainable?

Research has indicated that Saudi Arabia will need high oil prices to sustain the expenditure increases that it has announced. According to the study by the Institute of International Finance, the break-even oil price for the Saudi budget was \$68 in 2010 but has risen to \$88 for 2011 expenditure and will be \$110 in 2015. Only ten years ago, the break-even oil price was \$20 to \$25 a barrel.⁹² States with smaller reserves are likely to find themselves under even greater pressure over their budgets, especially Oman and Bahrain (and of course Yemen, although Yemen never had the energy resources to allow it to be as generous as the richer monarchies).

⁸⁸ Marwan Muasher, "A Decade of Struggling Reform Efforts in Jordan: The Resilience of the Rentier System", Carnegie Paper, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, May 2011

⁸⁹ "Rifts in the valley", *Financial Times*, 15 August 2011

⁹⁰ "Moroccan king renews call to mend ties with Algeria", *Reuters Africa*, 30 July 2011

⁹¹ "Gulf states' overtures delight Jordan", *Financial Times*, 13 May 2011

⁹² "Saudi budget could require high oil price", *Financial Times*, 31 March 2011

Saudi Arabia has traditionally been the anchor of OPEC and has resisted pressure from Iran and Venezuela, among others, to cut production quotas and keep prices as high as possible. It has often used its spare capacity (it is the only oil-producing country that has significant spare capacity) to increase production and stop oil prices from rising; this activity has clear benefits for the west. Analysts worry that increasing expenditure demands, not just politically motivated but also the result of a growing population, will give Saudis an interest in higher prices that could prove difficult to resist. Increasing spending may calm unrest; there is a danger that cutting it in future years might have the opposite effect.

Concern has also been expressed at the long-term effects of raised expenditure on these countries' economies. Creating more government jobs and increasing public sector salaries could have the effect of increasing the 'dependency culture' among Gulf citizens and could militate against the widely-shared aim of diversifying Gulf economies and creating a more dynamic private sector. Combine those problems with demographic changes that flood the labour market with young people and an oil price that is, at present, heading downwards, and it seems likely that Gulf spending programmes could hit serious problems in the medium term.

3.5 Armed conflict

Two of the region's countries quickly descended into what looked increasingly like civil wars. The rule of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and Bashar al-Assad in Syria may have been particularly unpopular and lacking in legitimacy, especially since both regimes looked like 'republican monarchies' where the throne remained in the family. Neither of these rulers was without his support in the country, however, and both proved surprisingly resilient as a result. Nor is it clear that the opposition forces in either country are more democratic than the existing regimes or that any new governments would necessarily protect human rights.

Libya



The case of Libya shows that oil wealth and a relatively high standard of living are not enough to ensure the survival of a regime. Living conditions in Libya were generally good before the present conflict. The UN Development Programme's Human Development Index is a measure of standard of living which combines national income per capita with health and education indicators.⁹³ On this measure, Libya offers a high level of development to its citizens. Indeed Libya has the highest value of any African country and in fifth position in the Middle East and North Africa region, beaten only by UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait.

The good living conditions of the Libyan population, however, did not buy much legitimacy for the Qaddafi regime.

Source: University of Texas

⁹³ UNDP, *The Human Development Index (HDI)*

Colonel Qaddafi's brutal repression of dissent, evisceration of Libyan public institutions and his personalised rule ensured that. Qaddafi's idiosyncratic style included spending large sums on the African Union, of which he wanted to be a leading light. It also involved preparing for what the expected inheritance of the leadership of Libya by one of his sons.

Libya seems to demonstrate that the search for dignity as much as the price of bread has driven the Arab uprisings. A monarchy that has been in place for centuries and claims religious legitimacy, such as Morocco's, appears far less of an assault on the dignity of the populace than a revolutionary leader who plans to bequeath his leadership to a son, as happened in Syria and might have happened in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. In all these countries, corruption was also strongly associated with the public exasperation with their governments.

The intervention of NATO forces, mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, appeared to be ended with the death of Muammar Qaddafi on 20 October 2011.⁹⁴

Source: University of Texas

While some were warning that there might remain pockets of resistance, sporadic outbreaks of violence or even guerrilla warfare for some time, attention turned to the tasks ahead for Libyans in setting up a new government and rebuilding the country.

The country was officially declared as 'liberated' on 23 October, and a series of steps that has been planned for some time was to begin. The members of the Transitional National Council have stated that they will not stand at elections, due to take place in June 2012. The plan for Libya's transition is as follows:

- Form a new cabinet within 30 days.
- Hold the first election within eight months, or by June 2012
- Form a national council in line with the election result
- The national council drafts a new constitution within 60 days and
- sets up an interim national government to run the country until the first presidential elections are held.
- Hold a referendum on the proposed new constitution
- Once the constitution is approved, hold the first presidential election.⁹⁵

The future direction of the country is still therefore supposed to be subject to a national debate. However, president of the TNC Mustafa Abdul-Jalil surprised observers when he said in a speech announcing the liberation that sharia law would be the basis for the country's legal code; that restrictions on polygamy would be lifted; and that interest payments would be controlled, in line with Islamic financial law.⁹⁶ Even more disturbing was the

⁹⁴ For more detail on Libya, the Security Council resolution and the NATO intervention, see the following Library Standard Notes: 5909, *Military operations in Libya*; 3139, *The cost of international military operations*, 5911, *The Security Council's 'no-fly zone' resolution on Libya*; 5916, *The interpretation of Security Council resolution 1973 on Libya*; 5886, *UK relations with Libya*

⁹⁵ "Libya declares liberation days after Gaddafi death", *Washington Post*, 24 October 2011

⁹⁶ "Libya's New Leaders Look to the Future After Declaring "Liberation", *IHS Global Insight*, 24 October 2011

revelation that 53 Libyans, apparently Qaddafi supporters, had been found massacred after the surrender of Qaddafi's home town of Sirte.⁹⁷

Acting Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril announced on 23 October his resignation, as he had previously promised.

The job of uniting and controlling the disparate military forces that carried out the rebellion will be perhaps the toughest task facing the new authorities. Many militias will be reluctant to disarm unless they trust the political process to produce a safe and fair resolution and one in which they can participate. Indeed, while other countries have recognised the authority of the TNC as the government of Libya, within Libya it may only be seen as one of many political forces, with armed militias occupying parts of the capital Tripoli and other parts of the country.⁹⁸ The military spokesman for Misrata, for example, has said that his fighters do not take orders from the TNC.⁹⁹

In a development which underlined how seriously the TNC is taking the risks to stability (and potential challenges to its authority) after the fall of Qaddafi, Abdel-Jalil made a formal request on 26 October for NATO to extend its mission until at least the end of the year. It was not clear exactly what this extension of mission would involve, given a presence on the ground would be the most significant contribution to stabilising Libya. On the same day, a Qatari general said that Qatar had deployed ground troops to Libya and that there were "hundreds in every region".¹⁰⁰

Gareth Stansfield for Chatham House pointed to the similarities between the situation in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein and Libya:

In a very considerable way, the lessons of Iraq clearly have not been learned very well, to date. The National Transition Council has proved to be unable to limit the worst excesses of its various militias, much as the Iraqi leadership failed to do which led to one of the most devastating civil wars seen in the region in recent years.

Make no mistake, while not wracked with the Sunni-Shi'a cleavage which divided Iraq in the years following Saddam's downfall, Libya still has to contend with there being a range of political groupings. Some of these are regionally based, such as between Benghazi and Tripoli, with some commentators reflecting, perhaps too romantically, that these map on to older provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.¹⁰¹

Sir Richard Dalton of Chatham House wrote that Libya is well-placed to be able to deal successfully with the enormous challenges ahead:

Above all there is Libyan national spirit, community cohesion and talent. There is momentum behind the civilian leadership provided by the National Transitional Council – an embryonic government that controls vast financial reserves, is bringing the oil and gas industries back on stream and can maintain the transfer payments and salaries on which millions depend. The NTC is already signing reconstruction contracts, and the international reception could not be warmer, with many offers of practical support from abroad. Libyans will build the capacity to use help without being swamped by it.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ "Libya: Apparent Execution of 53 Gaddafi Supporters", Human Rights Watch press release, 24 October 2011

⁹⁸ "Qaddafi's death in perspective", *Stratfor*, 20 October 2011

⁹⁹ "Qaddafi's end, Libya's new start", *Observer*, 28 August 2011

¹⁰⁰ "Libya's Mustafa Abdel Jalil asks Nato to stay longer", *BBC News Online*, 26 October 2011

¹⁰¹ Gareth Stansfield, "Libya's New Era: Lessons from Iraq", Chatham House, 21 October 2011

¹⁰² Richard Dalton, "Libya's New Era and UK Engagement", Chatham House, 21 October 2011

Sir Richard advised British officials to be patient in seeking more information about the death of WPC Yvonne Fletcher and the Lockerbie bombing: “Asking the right questions at the wrong time risks the wrong answer.”

Syria

While the situation in Syria is closer to government oppression of an unarmed public than currently in Libya, there are reports that Syrian opposition forces are increasingly likely to be armed and sometimes with outside assistance. According to Middle East expert Alistair Crooke, two important forces behind events are Sunni Islamist radicals and Syrian exile groups in France and the US, which support experienced urban guerrillas who fought in Iraq to infiltrate protests to attack Assad forces, as in Jisr al-Shagour in June 2011, where they inflicted heavy casualties. Crooke said that, despite the image of an unarmed uprising portrayed in the western press, some rebels were funded and trained by the US.¹⁰³

Promises of reform.

On 19 April 2011, the government announced an end to the state of emergency in place for 48 years. It also increased subsidies on essential goods¹⁰⁴ and, on 31 May, announced an amnesty for political prisoners, but very few prisoners were released and mass arrests continued. Other reform proposals, such as a draft law proposing to allow political parties



other than the Ba'ath party, have been greeted without enthusiasm. The opposition has pointed out that, according to the draft law, parties must not only “bolster society’s national unity” but also abide by the constitution which describes the Ba'ath party as the “leading party in the society and the state”.¹⁰⁵ Since fear of the Sunni majority is one of the bedrocks of the Assad regime, it is difficult to see how any of Bashar al-Assad’s promises of reform can lead to real democracy and the consequent empowerment of the Sunnis.¹⁰⁶

In November 2011, Syria announced that it had accepted an Arab League proposal to bring armoured vehicles off the street and end the violence against the protesters. Damascus said it would

Source: University of Texas

release all political prisoners and begin a dialogue with the opposition within two weeks. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon welcomed the development, but noted that the Assad regime had not honoured similar undertakings in the past.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ “Strike on Syria is technically feasible, former French general says” EUobserver, 10 August 2011

¹⁰⁴ “Syria cuts diesel price by 25 per cent”, *Financial Times*, 26 May 2011

¹⁰⁵ “Syrian reform à la Bashar Al Assad: Too little, too late”, *al-Arabiya News Online*, 26 July 2011

¹⁰⁶ For more background on the situation in Syria, see the Library Standard Note [Unrest spreads to Syria](#), June 2011

¹⁰⁷ “Secretary-General hopes Syria will carry out Arab League plan to end crisis”

While neither reform nor repression is likely to guarantee the regime's survival, Bashar al-Assad is unlikely to leave power quickly.

The divided nature of Syrian society, where the ruling elite is drawn from the Alawite minority (an offshoot of Shiism), has allowed the regime to give a stake in its survival to the minorities in Syria, including the Christians. By putting Alawis in positions of authority in the security services and spreading fear of sectarian chaos (as seen in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein) the Assads have ruled for decades. As well as being a divided society, Syria is in the grip of a single political party, the Syrian Ba'ath Party, sister to Saddam's party in Iraq.

Continued repression, however, may present growing practical problems. While the majority of career soldiers are Alawis, most of the lower ranks are filled with conscripts, who reflect the country's Sunni majority. On the other hand, the President's brother Maher controls the Presidential Guard, the Republican Guard and the Fourth Armoured Division and these forces are composed almost entirely of Alawis. Although it is not clear exactly what is happening in Syria, conscripts in the regular army are thought to be reluctant to fire on their fellow Sunni demonstrators and may simply disappear. The regime has therefore relied on the elite Alawite units controlled by Maher al-Assad to repress uprisings. But that allows the suppression of demonstrations in only a few towns at a time. The regime has not had enough reliable security forces at its disposal to prevent dissent from emerging in other centres.

Reports of defections from the army began to emerge in June 2011. In July, the creation of the Free Syrian Army was announced and this is thought to be a genuine and growing challenge to the government's authority. The leader of the dissident group is General Riadh Asaad, who is based in Turkey and he claims to have 10,000 soldiers under his command and has discussed the possibility of a no-fly zone in northern Syria.¹⁰⁸ It is difficult to verify such claims. Turkey has not ruled out the possibility of creating a buffer zone in northern Syria.

Added to the limits on the regime's security forces, analysts say that the Syrian economy is highly vulnerable and may sharply reduce the regime's repressive capacity. Syria is reliant on a small oil production industry. Oil provides about a quarter of government revenues, though that proportion is declining because of dwindling reserves. Existing reserves will be exhausted in 18 years, according to calculations by BP.¹⁰⁹ Added to weak oil production, the uprisings have hit tourism badly. Tourism provided 12% of Syria's gross domestic product in 2010, jobs for some 11% of the workforce and much-needed foreign exchange reserves. Foreign investment, particularly from the Gulf, has also declined.¹¹⁰

Taken together, these economic difficulties could hit the regime in two ways: they make it more difficult for the Syrian government to offer economic 'sweeteners' to the population (Syria, like its neighbours, has relied on this tactic). Secondly, the interests of the middle class, which so far has been against change for fear of the alternative, may lead it to abandon the regime if the economy goes into a sharp decline.

Relations with neighbouring states

External support for the Assad regime is also crumbling quickly. Turkey's policy of 'zero problems' with neighbours has been called into question by the increasing chaos over its southern border, in Syria. In the past, the Turkish-Syrian relationship was the flagship of the new Turkish foreign policy, as Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan developed a close relationship

¹⁰⁸ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Signs of civil war in Syria", *Strategic Comments*, Volume 17, Comment 38 – October 2011

¹⁰⁹ "Syria soon to offer first oil shale bids", *Bloomberg*, 20 May 2011

¹¹⁰ Natacha Yazbek, "Economy may prove tipping point for Syrian regime", *Middle East Online*, 23 June 2011

with Assad, their cabinets holding joint meetings and Turkey becoming Syria's biggest trading partner, with visa-free travel. Turkey even tried to mediate a peace deal between Syria and Israel. That Turkey valued its relationship with the Syrian government is shown by the patience shown towards the Assad regime by the Turkish government but, as calls to embark on genuine reform were ignored, this patience ran out. In June 2011 Erdogan described killings of protesters as "savagery".¹¹¹ Turkey is hosting tens of thousands of Syrian refugees who have fled the violence and, at first, prevented them from talking to the press. Later, however, Turkey relented and allowed the stories of brutality to become public, in another sign that Turkey would no longer acquiesce to the violence. In November 2011, Turkish foreign minister Davutoglu said that Turkey was preparing targeted sanctions against the Assad regime.¹¹²

Saudi Arabia, too, abandoned its early attempts to stay out of the conflict. Using uncharacteristically harsh language, King Abdullah called for the Syrian government to "stop the killing machine", saying, "Either it chooses wisdom on its own or it will be pulled down into the depths of turmoil and loss."¹¹³ King Abdullah may have had an eye on his own 'street' as much as anything in this, but it constituted a significant blow to Assad's support. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait withdrew their ambassadors to Damascus for consultations. It has been rumoured for some time that the Saudis, with the UAE and Kuwait, are quietly financing elements of the Syrian opposition.¹¹⁴

Even Iran, al-Assad's closest ally, appeared to back away from him in September 2011. The Iranian government had previously echoed the Syrians in blaming 'foreign conspiracies' and Iran was also widely suspected of helping Syria in its repression. There were also reports that Tehran provided finance to al-Assad's government to ease pressure on the Syrian currency.¹¹⁵ In September, however, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said, "A military solution is never the right solution," and called for talks.¹¹⁶

The intensity of the government's crackdown and the number of resulting deaths have not stopped the demonstrations. Given the failure of repression to clear the streets of demonstrators, many have concluded that these tactics will not save the Assad regime. This suggests that a slow erosion of the regime's support, as economic problems mount and the loyalty of the Alawite sect comes into question, is the likely trajectory of Syria in the medium term.

International reaction

For some time, western leaders avoided calling for al-Assad to leave power, reportedly in the hope that he was arguing for reform against hard-line elements within the regime. As it became clear that promises were not being followed up, western policy towards Syria and Bashar al-Assad hardened. Both US and EU sanctions imposed at the beginning of May had avoided imposing travel restrictions on Bashar al-Assad himself, although other members of his government had been affected. In mid-May, the US administration changed its policy and included the Syrian president on the list of those affected by sanctions. The EU followed suit a week later, on 23 May 2011.¹¹⁷ In August, the European Union imposed sanctions against

¹¹¹ "Thousands flee Syria across Turkish border", *Independent on Sunday*, 12 June 2011

¹¹² "Turkey set to impose Syria sanctions", *Financial Times*, 2 November 2011

¹¹³ "Saudi King Abdullah to Syria: 'Stop the killing machine'", *Washington Post*, 8 August 2011

¹¹⁴ "Middle East: Analysis", *Guardian*, 9 August 2011

¹¹⁵ "Iran urges Syria to halt crackdown", *Independent*, 8 September 2011

¹¹⁶ "Iran urges Syria to halt crackdown", *Independent*, 8 September 2011

¹¹⁷ "EU sets sanctions to add to pressure on Assad", *Financial Times*, 24 May 2011

the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's external arm, the Quds Force, stating that the Quds Force was providing equipment and other support to the Syrian government.¹¹⁸

United Nations

The United Kingdom and France began preparations to table a Security Council motion at the end of May. An initial draft was circulated on the 29th. Encountering resistance from Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Russia, who reportedly feared that the resolution would pave the way for the launch of a military operation against the Assad regime as had happened in Libya, the EU countries toned down the language in a second draft circulated on 8 June.¹¹⁹ The new version added a clause saying "the only solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process," with the intention of making it clear that a military solution was not intended. It also removed a line saying the UN was "determined to prevent an aggravation of the situation." The new draft regretted "violence against security forces" and called on "all sides to act with utmost restraint ... and refrain from reprisals."¹²⁰ Despite prolonged negotiations, the resolution was not passed. Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary William Hague ruled out any military intervention, saying that there was no international appetite for military action, especially from the Arab nations whose support was vital to the passage of the UN resolution concerning Libya. He said that there was "not a remote possibility" of a similar Security Council resolution on Syria.¹²¹

On 3 August the Security Council issued a statement condemning "the widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities" but also urging "all sides to act with utmost restraint, and to refrain from reprisals, including attacks against state institutions."¹²² To agree the statement took days of debate, with Russia and China reported to be reluctant to condemn the Syrian authorities, wary that the Security Council should not be used to pave the way for western military intervention.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights decided in August 2010 to initiate an investigation into abuses in Syria. Arab states such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia voted in favour of the motion to initiate the investigation while Russia and China, among others, voted against.¹²³ The UN said in October 2011 that more than 3,000 people had been confirmed dead, including at least 187 children.¹²⁴ The commissioner said:

Family members inside and outside the country have been targeted for harassment, intimidation, threats and beatings. As more members of the military refuse to attack civilians and change sides, the crisis is already showing worrying signs of descending into an armed struggle.¹²⁵

Both the United States and the EU sharply increased the economic pressure on the Assad regime with a new round of sanctions. On 18 August, the US administration imposed sanctions banning the import of oil from Syria and shortly afterwards the EU started to draw up plans for a similar embargo. Analysts said that an EU ban would be for more effective than a US ban because 95% of the oil exported from Syria goes to European customers.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ Council of the European Union, "Tougher sanctions against Syria", Press notice, 23 August 2011

¹¹⁹ "EU softens Syria resolution in bid for UN support", *EUobserver*, 9 June 2011

¹²⁰ "EU softens Syria resolution in bid for UN support", *EUobserver*, 9 June 2011 (includes full text of the second draft resolution)

¹²¹ "Hague: Syria military action 'not remote possibility'", *BBC News Online*, 1 August 2011

¹²² "Syria: Security Council condemns rights abuses and use of force against civilians", United Nations Press release, 3 August 2011

¹²³ "Human Rights Council Condemns Syria Crackdown, But What is Next?", UN Dispatch, 23 August 2011

¹²⁴ "UN human rights chief urges immediate action on Syria as death toll passes 3,000", UN press notice, 14 October 2011

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ "EU prepares to target Syrian oil industry", *Financial Times*, 20 August 2011

There was some controversy in the UK, when British Middle East minister Alistair Burt said that the Government was not convinced by the case for a blanket oil import ban by the EU. He said:

Our view is that sanctions must continue to be targeted on those who support the regime. Sanctions should be considered on the basis of what will have most effect on changing that situation or improving the situation for the Syrian people.

He went on:

We've not take a decision on oil. It's got to be discussed because to be effective it's got to work collectively with the rest of the EU. What we are doing is increasing the pressure in a manner which does not enable a Syrian spokesman to say 'You are damaging the Syrian people'.¹²⁷

The shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander responded by saying that he was "deeply concerned" at the government's "equivocation" over oil sanctions.¹²⁸

Plans for a Security Council resolution were not dropped and a new draft circulated by western powers in late August called for sanctions against certain Syrian firms and a referral of the government's crackdown to the International Criminal Court.¹²⁹ Russian support for the Assad regime appeared to be weakening, as the Russian government issued more strongly-worded condemnations of the violence.

Two Middle East specialists recently set out five steps for the Obama administration which, they say, could hasten the downfall of the regime:

1. The United States must begin with a strong declaratory policy announcing that it is now working to build the best possible bridge to a post-Assad Syria.
2. Washington should then convene a conference of interested powers, in conjunction with Turkey and France, to develop a Syrian "contact group" devoted to establishing a stable order and to preventing a power vacuum. Crucially, such a contact group should also seek to involve Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.
3. The United States must work with other key actors to help turn the Syrian opposition into the nucleus of a transition government. As the experience with the Libyan opposition forces has shown, engagement with the Syrian opposition movement would prove invaluable to increase its effectiveness and professionalize its efforts.
4. The United States must promote defections from the Syrian security services with an eye both to convincing Assad to leave and to preserving the Syrian Armed Forces as a future national institution. In doing so, Washington must warn officers, down to the brigade level, that they are being monitored and that they will be held personally accountable for the atrocities that are committed under their command. (This should not be a bluff.)
5. The contact group should take all available steps to starve the regime of cash and other resources, including taking a leadership role on preventing the regime from generating revenue from oil exports.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ "UK backs further Syria sanctions", *BBC News Online*, 21 August 2011

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ "UN faces call for sanctions against Syria as protesters taunt Assad", *Independent*, 23 August 2011

¹³⁰ Michael Doran and Salman Shaikh, "Getting serious in Syria", *The American Interest*, 29 July 2011

3.6 Special cases?

One lesson from the different paths taken by uprisings across the region is that every country is a special case where different conditions on the ground lead to very different outcomes. There are countries, however, that appear to have been affected far less by the Arab uprisings. Lebanon and Iraq seem to be in a different category from their neighbours, perhaps because their populations are concerned so much with internal traumas that they are less likely to be affected by upheavals in the region. Another factor may be that Lebanon and Iraq have the most democratic systems in the Arab world.

Lebanon

Lebanon has not suffered the same political immobility as Egypt or Tunisia over recent decades. Far from it: the tiny and relatively developed country went through chaos and bloodshed. Lebanon is a deeply divided society which has experienced a catastrophic civil war, and fear of a return to fighting is reported to be widespread. There have been no reports of any unrest in response to the uprisings elsewhere in the region.

Lebanon may already have had its 'Arab Spring', except in this case it was called the 'Cedar Revolution'. There was widespread outrage when the former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated by a bomb in 2005. The resultant pressure forced Syria to withdraw its troops and an election was held in mid-2005. Rafiq's son Saad Hariri led the pro-western faction that took control of the parliament.



Source: University of Texas

However, Hizbollah, the Shiite armed militia, remained the strongest military force in Lebanon and, when the international tribunal set up to investigate the killing of Rafiq Hariri looked as if it might accuse Hizbollah of being behind the killing, sectarian tensions began to build in Lebanon. Several anti-Syrian figures were assassinated and the unity government began to fracture. Syria's influence had never gone away and Lebanon's much larger neighbour began to re-assert its dominance. After much political wrangling, the pro-western Prime Minister was replaced by one much more favourable to Hizbollah and Syria, despite the pro-western bloc again winning another majority in the parliament in 2009.

Some analysts have warned that what look like democratic revolutions in the region could end up being as short-lived as Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution'. The unrest of 2011 could have profound implications for Lebanon, however. Hizbollah's main supporter is the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, whose continued rule in Syria is in doubt. If the Assad dynasty were to fall, Hizbollah's would probably be left with Iran as the only remaining supportive government. A Sunni Syrian government could use the same levers to dominate

Lebanon as the Assads have. This time, however, it could be to undermine Shiite Hezbollah, the organisation suspected of ordering the killing of popular Sunni leader Rafiq Hariri.¹³¹

Iraq

Iraqi politics are still racked by divisions between Shiites and Sunnis and between Arabs and Kurds.¹³² Like Lebanon, Iraq remains traumatised by its recent past; it also shares with Lebanon a turbulent recent history rather than the persistence of a stultifying and oppressive regime such as those of Egypt or Libya.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has condemned the violence in Bahrain, while remaining relatively quiet on the situation in Syria. He has also been pursuing closer economic ties with Syrian neighbours to the North west. Analysts have suggested that this is a symptom of increasing Iranian influence over the Iraqi Government. The Shiite theocracy in Iran has close ties with the Shiite majorities in both Bahrain and Iraq, and is the main ally of the Alawite-dominated regime in Damascus.

In August 2011 al-Maliki appeared to criticise the uprisings in Arab countries, saying that Israel was likely to be the beneficiary of the weakening of Arab governments:

There is no doubt that there is a country that is waiting for the Arab countries to be ripped and is waiting for internal corrosion. Zionists and Israel are the first and biggest beneficiaries of this whole process.¹³³

The Iraqi government is concerned that unrest may spill over from Syria into Iraq. The violence in Syria also has the potential to destabilise Iraq's Kurdish areas; instability in Turkey's Kurdish region increased steadily through the summer of 2011 and this could spread to Iraqi Kurdistan. In late August, Turkish air force and artillery attacks on alleged rebel bases in Northern Iraq killed "up to 160" separatists.¹³⁴

If Iraq is not suffering from unrest inspired by the 'Arab Spring', that does not mean that it is stable: in August, 42 apparently coordinated bomb attacks killed some 90 people and injured hundreds more. Analysts suspected al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia of the attacks, with some suggesting that it was an attempt by the Sunni group to frighten the Iraqi government into allowing US forces to remain in Iraq, thus giving al-Qaeda a 'legitimate' job to do in Iraq.¹³⁵

4 Political currents across the region

It is essential to understand how different conditions in each Arab country will shape developments. However, just as they share much of their history, political currents can cross the increasingly permeable cultural and intellectual borders of the Arab world easily. This section looks at the prospects for some of these currents.

4.1 Islamists

Are some Israelis right to suggest that the uprisings could lead to theocratic regimes? There are reasons to believe that this is not the most likely outcome: Iran experienced a genuine revolution in 1979, whereas the Egyptian regime has not been removed, although it operates in a very different environment and with changing personnel. In other countries, such as Libya, more profound regime change has taken place and the eventual replacement could be

¹³¹ For more discussion of this, see Bruce Riedel, "Hezbollah's Triumph and Agony", *Daily Beast*, 23 July 2011

¹³² For more information on Iraq, see the Library Standard Note [Iraq at the creation of its new government](#), of January 2011

¹³³ "Iraq Leader Says The Arab Spring Benefits Israel", *New York Times*, 19 August 2011

¹³⁴ "Turkish airstrike campaign 'killed 160 Kurdish rebels'", *BBC News Online*, 29 August 2011

¹³⁵ "Threat Resurges In Deadliest Day Of Year for Iraq", *New York Times*, 16 August 2011

a radical Islamist regime. But the environment has changed dramatically since 1979 and many of the forces that provoked the Arab uprisings will ensure that those countries that have experienced uprisings will chart entirely new courses.

These are forces such as increased levels of education in some countries, growing youth populations and the end of information isolation both within Arab societies and between those societies and the outside world. Add to that the accelerating pace of change of the world at large and it becomes clear that the static nature of the Arab regimes, their failure to bring in new policies or new leaders to respond to change, was a principal cause of the uprisings. To exchange an Arab nationalist dictatorship for a totalitarian Islamist regime would be difficult in these circumstances.

A recent study suggested, in any case, that Islamic parties are not necessarily overwhelmingly popular in Muslim-majority countries. Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi of the University of North Carolina pointed out that there have been many elections in Muslim-majority countries, for example in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, where Islamist parties have stood. They found that Islamist parties tended to proliferate, splitting the Islamist vote, but that even the votes for the various parties were combined, they seldom exceeded 15% of the total vote. Another interesting finding was that Islamist parties tended to do better in the first elections after repressive secular regimes had monopolised power. In later elections their appeal faded.¹³⁶

Imposing Islamist authoritarianism, then, is not easy. Neither may it be what Islamist parties in the region want to do. The region's Islamist organisations are relatively pragmatic; they have had to be in order to survive. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was prepared to abandon the political process entirely when threatened with destruction by Mubarak. Then again, it was prepared to engage in Egypt's electoral process when a partial opening emerged in 2005.¹³⁷ Most Islamist parties are also not unified, many of them having the same sort of generational split within them that has been one of the roots of the Arab uprisings themselves.

Nevertheless, Islamists remain the most organised political forces in many countries in the region and will probably have influence in any democratic governments that emerge. But in most cases they will form part of coalition or national unity governments, rather than forming majority governments. Once actually in government, however, a new set of constraints and incentives will prevail. None of the Islamist parties in the region even plans to run a full electoral list; the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, for example, has explicitly stated that it will not seek to dominate parliament.

They have moved to support democracy in recent years (in contrast to al-Qaeda and other fundamentalists).

Despite popular support in the Arab world for the implementation of sharia, for example, many Islamist groups, including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, have gradually stripped their political platforms of explicitly Islamist content. In the past few years, instead of calling for an "Islamic state," for example, the Muslim Brotherhood began calling for a "civil, democratic state with an Islamic reference,"¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi, "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?", *Journal of Democracy*, April 2010, Vol. 21 No. 2, p54

¹³⁷ For more information about this time, see the Library Research Paper *Democracy and the Middle East: Egypt, the Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia*, November 2006

¹³⁸ Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists: How Islamists Will Change Politics and Vice Versa", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

Despite moves to embrace democracy, the main purpose of the region's Islamist parties will remain to promote as much sharia law as they can and to implement socially conservative legislation, including segregating the sexes. Their foreign policies and, in particular, their view of Israel and Hamas (the Palestinian affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood) will remain at some distance from those of the west. As one commentator put it recently:

When it comes to foreign policy, mainstream Islamists have rhetorically retained much of the Muslim Brotherhood's original Arab nationalism and anti-Israel politics. Today's Egyptian and Libyan Muslim Brotherhoods and Tunisia's al Nahda refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist and call for the liberation of all of historic Palestine. They also view Hamas not as a terrorist group but as a legitimate force of resistance.¹³⁹

Many in the Arab world and elsewhere think that the west is guilty of hypocrisy when dealing with Islamists. Egyptian activists recently alleged that western attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, are inconsistent. They ask why western commentators are always concerned that the Brotherhood may introduce some form of Islamic government into Egypt and sharia law, yet Saudi Arabia, which implements an extremely strict version of sharia law and whose political system is almost entirely closed, gets a relatively good press.¹⁴⁰ This argument is supported by commentators such as Nader Hashemi, who writes that western geo-strategic interests in the region have determined the west's attitude to Islamist parties rather than their propensity for repression. He suggests that the relationship between Islam and the state in the Arab world has yet to be determined in a democratic environment and that this will lead to major battles.¹⁴¹

Egypt

Commentators have pointed out that the Tahrir Square 'revolution' was very different from the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The mood of the demonstrators was generally non-violent and non-nationalistic. It was not led by any religious figure and was marked by diversity and tolerance.

During the early weeks of the Tahrir Square demonstrations, the Islamists and the liberal reformists in Egypt had tried to a certain extent to coordinate their activities, with the common aim of bringing Mubarak down. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood kept a relatively low profile during the demonstrations and stated that it did not want to dominate parliament and would not present a candidate at the presidential election. The MB wanted to usher in a democratic system in which it could participate in power, but it also wanted to maintain the support of the Egyptian armed forces and of western powers for that process.

Recently, the differing goals of the two camps have led the MB to adopt increasingly strident positions. While the MB originally promised to contest no more than a third of the seats in the parliament, it has recently increased this proportion to a half.¹⁴² On 29 July, the MB staged a massive demonstration in Tahrir Square calling for the new constitution to be Islamic. This has led some observers to suggest that Islamist forces could hijack the revolution. Essam al-Erian, vice president of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice political party, has reiterated that the party is not intending to field a candidate for presidency and, furthermore, will not support anyone from the party to run for the presidency.

¹³⁹ Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists: How Islamists Will Change Politics and Vice Versa", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

¹⁴⁰ "Egypt in Transition", Chatham House workshop report, April 2011

¹⁴¹ Nader Hashemi, "The Arab Revolution of 2011: Reflections on Religion and Politics", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No.2, Spring 2011, pp. 15-21

¹⁴² Paul Salem, "Islamist Protests in Egypt Question Fate of Arab Spring", *al-Hayat*, 4 August 2011

It remains to be seen whether the broad base of the early Tahrir Square demonstrations will be played out in the new Egypt. It is still possible that the uprising will ultimately be suppressed by the military establishment and that no profound change of regime will take place in Egypt. This scenario might open the way for Muslim Brotherhood participation in the Egyptian government, under the tutelage of the military.

The guiding principles for drawing up the new constitution may have an important impact on the fate of Islamists in Egypt. The principles state that Egypt is a “civil democratic state”, while recognizing Islam as the state religion, Arabic as its official language and the principles of Islamic Law as the primary source of legislation.¹⁴³ The role of the Egyptian military is limited to protecting national sovereignty and security. The defence of democracy or the ‘civil’ [taken by many to mean ‘secular’] nature of Egypt is not mentioned, and there is at present no intention to insert such a clause. However, in August 2011, the Chief of Staff of the army told a group of intellectuals that the “civil nature of the state is a matter of national security.”¹⁴⁴

Most liberal parties have generally welcomed the principles document as a defence against what they fear: the domination of the constitutional assembly by Islamists. Liberals fear that such an assembly would draw up a constitution with strong elements of Islamic theocracy. Islamist parties have rejected the principles and have refused to meet the government to discuss it.

Some liberal commentators have criticised the principles as paving the way for an excessive role for the military, which may lead to military coups.

The Muslim Brotherhood and more fundamentalist groups demonstrated in July 2011 in favour of sharia law. The fact that the demonstration was dominated by fundamentalists, whose support has been estimated at about 10%-20%, shocked some liberal Egyptians.¹⁴⁵ This level of support raises the prospect of a fundamentalist/Muslim Brotherhood coalition capable of taking a majority in parliament.

Islamists may moderate their policies when operating in a democratic environment

If the Arab uprisings lead to genuinely democratic political environments, then Islamist parties will have to deal with public opinion and other groups in a new way. As suggested above, this will shape new relationships between religion and the state in the region. It will also change the Islamist parties.

In their study of the electoral performance of Islamist parties, Kurzman and Naqvi found that, over time, the election manifestos of Islamist parties tended to give an ever higher priority to such liberal aims as women’s and minority rights and to downgrade the importance of the implementation of shari’a, bans on interest payments, jihad and opposition to Israel.¹⁴⁶

Some argue that the Islamic state has become a less popular option, particularly since the early years of this century. Mainstream Islamic opinion rejected al-Qaeda’s strategy, and the growing repression in Iran, especially with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, reduced the attraction of the Islamic republic to many Muslims. Asef Bayat commented:

Post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic or secular; a post-Islamist movement dearly upholds religion but also highlights citizens’ rights. It aspires to a pious society within a

¹⁴³ “Crisis brewing over constitutional principles”, *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 24 August 2011

¹⁴⁴ “Crisis brewing over constitutional principles”, *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 24 August 2011

¹⁴⁵ Mark Urban, “Egypt’s Islamists mobilising mass support”, *BBC News Online*, 3 August 2011

¹⁴⁶ Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi, “Do Muslims Vote Islamic?”, *Journal of Democracy*, April 2010, Vol. 21 No. 2, p57

democratic state. Early examples of such movements include the reform movement in Iran in the late 1990s and the country's Green Movement today, Indonesia's Prosperous Justice Party, Egypt's Hizb al-Wasat, Morocco's Justice and Development Party (PJD), and Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Each was originally fundamentalist but over time came to critique Islamist excess, its violation of democratic rights, and its use of religion as a tool to sanctify political power. They all eventually opted to work within the democratic state.¹⁴⁷

But even Bayat accepts that the Salafis may regroup and grow in importance in countries such as Egypt. He concludes that the democratic forces in the region have to work as hard as anti-democratic opponents to win the public over.

Washington appears to accept that it will increasingly have to work with Islamists in the region. It quickly commissioned a report on the different Islamist groups.¹⁴⁸ This identified wide policy and ideological differences between them and will help inform the administration's policy in the coming months.

Hillary Clinton expressed the administration's inclusive policy at a speech to the UN Human Rights Council in March. She also alluded to the fear that anti-democratic forces could use the democratic process to get into power:

Political participation must be open to all people across the spectrum who reject violence, uphold equality, and agree to play by the rules of democracy. Those who refuse should not be allowed to subvert the aspirations of the people. And leaders cannot claim democratic legitimacy if they abandon these principles once they are in power.¹⁴⁹

Of course, US politicians must tread carefully, given their complex relationship with Egyptian public opinion.¹⁵⁰ Like their Israeli counterparts, they must now take more account of the views of the average Egyptian. One administration official said anonymously: "Do you really think that if we announced ourselves as the enemy of the Muslim Brotherhood that this is going to do anything except help the Muslim Brotherhood?"¹⁵¹

4.2 Global violent *jihadis*

How has the wave of unrest in the Arab world affected the prospects of violent *jihadis* such as al-Qaeda and its offshoots? The international *jihadi* group was widely reported to be in decline in recent years, as opinion polls in most Muslim countries showed growing rejection of terrorist tactics.¹⁵² The killing of Osama bin Laden by US Navy Seals in May 2011 may have contributed to this decline, along with the killing of several other top al-Qaeda leaders, particularly in Pakistan, in recent months. US officials claimed that the death of Atiyah Abd al-Rahman in August 2011 was a particularly significant blow to the organisational capabilities of the central al-Qaeda leadership.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Asef Bayat, "The Post Islamist Revolutions: the Revolts in the Arab world Mean", Snapshot, *Foreign Affairs*, 26 April 2011

¹⁴⁸ "U.S. prepares for possible rise of new Islamist regimes", *Washington Post*, 4 March 2011

¹⁴⁹ [Speech by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at UN Human Rights Council](#), 3 March 2011

¹⁵⁰ See the section on implications for UK, EU and US policy for comment on a [poll](#) that showed that the US was surprisingly popular, with two thirds of Egyptians preferring the US as a friend of Egypt over either Iran or Russia.

¹⁵¹ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Danger: Falling Tyrants", *The Atlantic*, June 2011

¹⁵² For more information about this, see the Library Standard Note [Global violent jihad](#), December 2011

¹⁵³ "Al-Qaeda deputy killed, says US" *Financial Times*, 29 August 2011

But many think that the Arab uprisings are a bigger blow than the deaths of senior figures, especially since the central leadership of al-Qaeda was becoming less important relative to the 'franchised' offshoots, such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen.

A blow against terrorist ideology and tactics?

"This revolution is a repudiation of al-Qaeda," was the opinion of Senator John McCain during a visit to Cairo on 27 February 2011.¹⁵⁴ Many commentators have pointed out that the Arab uprisings have doubly challenged al-Qaeda's position. Firstly, they seem to show that the Arab public wants to move to more inclusive, democratic government rather than al-Qaeda's extreme interpretation of an Islamic caliphate. Secondly, they seem to show that peaceful demonstrations achieved more in getting rid of autocratic and unpopular governments than countless bombings.

Both these assumptions remain to be tested by time. Real public opinion is difficult to establish in countries such as Egypt and it will probably take more than one election to begin to get a clear picture of it. Secondly, it is not yet clear how successful the peaceful demonstrations have been in genuinely getting rid of unpopular regimes. Again, it will take some time to establish the extent to which 'regime change' has been brought about in countries like Egypt. It may well be that a clearer break has been achieved in Libya, and not by peaceful demonstrations.

US support for the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia may lead to a more favourable image for Washington on the Arab street, undermining al-Qaeda's 'far enemy' characterisation. This too, remains to be seen.

It does seem safe to assume, however, that the desire for dignity was a great driving force behind the uprisings. This desire for dignity will probably translate into demands for legitimate and participatory government with a strong democratic element; al-Qaeda's extremist version of Islamist ideology is at odds with such demands. For one commentator, the blow to al-Qaeda ideology delivered by events in Egypt and Tunisia is clear:

... al-Qaeda believes that democracy is blasphemous, arguing that it places man's word above God's. So if Tunisia's emerging democratic movement does not soon hand power over to clerics that implement an Islamic state, then -- according to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) -- "the duty upon Muslims in Tunisia is to be ready and not lay down their weapons." Al-Qaeda's message is clear: secular democracy is as abhorrent as secular dictatorship.

Even more ominous for al-Qaeda is the way in which Ben Ali and Mubarak fell. Al-Qaeda leaders insist that violence carried out in the name of God is the only way to force change. Zawahiri had long demanded that Egyptian youths either take up arms against the Mubarak government or, if that proved impossible, "go forth to the open arenas of Jihad like Somalia, Iraq, Algeria and Afghanistan." Youths in Tunisia and Egypt did not heed his call; the protesters were peaceful and largely secular in their demands. As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said of al-Qaeda's leaders, "I hope they were watching on television as Egyptian young people proved them wrong." A number of prominent jihadist scholars, such as Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Hamid al-Ali, echoed her, praising the protesters' courage and endorsing the revolutions despite their largely secular demands.¹⁵⁵

Another blow to violent *jihadis* could be the likely inclusion of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in new governments. This could deny space to more extreme groups. As to

¹⁵⁴ Daniel Byman, "How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

¹⁵⁵ Daniel Byman, "How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists", *Foreign Affairs*, My/June 2011

whether groups like the Muslim Brotherhood act as a block on radicalisation or on the contrary can act as a 'conveyor belt' has been discussed.¹⁵⁶ Many commentators conclude that the Brotherhood should be allowed to struggle against the ideas of the *Salafi-jihadis*, but that no-one should be under the illusion that the Brotherhood is in any way a liberal group. Suggestions that the Brotherhood in Egypt has been moving to ally itself to *Salafi* groups to ensure a more Islamic outcome of Egypt's transition undermine that conclusion. A massive demonstration in Tahrir Square in July 2011 organised by the Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafi* groups showed that the Brotherhood and more extreme elements do have common interests. A popular chant of the crowd was "Islamic, Islamic! Neither secular nor liberal!"¹⁵⁷ *Salafis* are not necessarily terrorists, however.

The spread of democracy may undermine the ideological foundations of global violent *jihad*, but despite the high profile of al-Qaeda and its offshoots, these groups do not commit the majority of terrorist acts in the world. Regionalist and separatist groups, taken together, are far more prolific terrorist forces. For example, there was not a single *jihadi* plot reported to Europol, the EU policing agency, in 2009, while 237 separatist plots were reported.¹⁵⁸ As the situations in Northern Ireland and eastern Turkey show, democracy is not enough to deter terrorism and the patchwork of cultures and identities in the Middle East may be a fertile territory for separatism.

A more permissive environment?

On balance it seems likely that more democracy in the region will undermine the ideological foundations of violent groups. The easing of authoritarian rule, however, may well bring a more permissive environment and, at least in the short term, this may bring an increase in violence both from global *jihadis* and from local groups with separatist or other grievances. The global *jihadis*, represented by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, appeared to have no role in the Libyan conflict, however.¹⁵⁹ More worrying are reports that stockpiles of weapons were looted during the conflict. Algeria, Mali and Niger have expressed concern that weapons, including thousands of shoulder-held anti aircraft missile launchers (MANPADS) could fall into the hands of terrorist groups.¹⁶⁰

As Daniel Byman writes, some of the authoritarian regimes in the region were effective at suppressing militants and the US has taken advantage of that:

Arab tyranny has often served U.S. purposes. U.S. counterterrorism officials have worked well with authoritarian leaders because their regimes have generally had a low bar for imprisonment and detention. The United States could send a suspect captured in Europe to Egypt and be assured that he would be kept in jail. This low bar also meant that many minor players and innocents were swept up in security-service roundups. The Egyptian regime was even willing to threaten the families of jihadists, putting tremendous pressure on militants to inform, surrender, or otherwise abandon the fight. Assuming that a truly democratic government comes to Egypt, the easy incarceration of dissidents and ruthless threats against militants and their families will disappear.¹⁶¹

It is perhaps reasonable to assume that whatever democracies may emerge from the present turmoil, they will want to retain at least some of the authoritarian tools of the past, particularly given the divided nature of many Arab societies and the potential for an upsurge in separatist

¹⁵⁶ See for example M Lynch, "Islam divided between *Salafi-jihad* and the *Ikhwan*", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33: pp467-487, 2010

¹⁵⁷ "Egypt's Islamists Show Their Might and Numbers, Demanding Religious Law", *New York Times*, 30 July 2011

¹⁵⁸ Europol, *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, 2010, annex 4. For more on this, see the Library Standard Note *Global violent jihad*, December 2011

¹⁵⁹ "Al-Qaeda - 10 years on", Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, 1 September 2011

¹⁶⁰ "After Ghaddafi - Libya enters a new era", Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, 16 September 2011

¹⁶¹ Daniel Byman, "How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

violence. Nevertheless, many former terrorists were released from jail after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, and many other *ex-jihadis* returned to the country.¹⁶² Add to that the fact that the police and the internal security service in Egypt are demoralised and ineffective and it is clear that there is at least a short-term risk of increased violence. This pattern may be followed in other countries.

There are other reasons for concern, however. Michael Scott Doran argues that the increase in participation will bring with it the possibility of more transnational interference between Arab states, and global terrorist groups could make use of this:

The balance of power between state and society is shifting. As popular participation in politics expands -- and as the power of the police state recedes -- two interconnected dynamics will accelerate: one, the number of politically significant actors within each state will increase; two, some of these actors will establish relationships across international boundaries. Malign and disruptive forces will benefit from this change. Transnational movements hostile to the interests of the United States -- such as al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood -- will find fertile new fields to plow. Even more worrisome, the porousness of Arab politics will give states greater opportunities to meddle in the affairs of their neighbors. This will take many forms: indirect cultivation of constituencies located across frontiers, the formation of loose networks of direct association, overt construction of proxies (on the model of Iran and Hezbollah), and covert sponsorship of terrorism. Considerable friction will result. Years will pass before a stable order emerges.¹⁶³

On the other hand, some argue that a complete collapse in Yemen might be helpful, as it would allow the US military more latitude to enter the country and act against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (APAQ), the offshoot of al-Qaeda that is generally regarded as the most serious threat to the US and its western allies.¹⁶⁴ The perceived threat from Yemen is not diminishing: in August it was reported that AQAP was trying to design a weapon using the nerve agent ricin, the poison that was used to kill Georgi Markov in London in 1978. There is no indication, however, that AQAP had much success. In October 2011, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was reported to have retaken control of Zinjibar, an important provincial capital in southern Yemen.

The US Department of Defense is reported to agree with the notion that the Arab uprisings have undermined al-Qaeda's political strategy, but to be concerned that prolonged struggles in Bahrain, Yemen and Syria have the potential to be useful for al-Qaeda recruitment.¹⁶⁵

4.3 Liberal reformers

The prospects for liberals, secularists and reformers in the region are still unclear. **Tunisia** is the country that first got rid of its dictator, and what is happening there may be a guide to what will happen in other countries. Al-Nahda ('rebirth' in Arabic) is the main Islamist party in Tunisia and was banned under the Ben Ali regime. Polling suggested that it would gain no more than a quarter of the vote at the general election that is expected to take place in 2013.¹⁶⁶ On the strength of that support, however, it was possible that al-Nahda would be the biggest single party because the liberals and secularists were divided and disorganised. In the election, the Progressive Democratic Party, thought to be the leading secularist party did

¹⁶² Gideon Rachman, "Into the thickets of the Arab spring", *Financial Times*, 10 May 2011

¹⁶³ Michael Scott Doran, "The heirs of Nasser: Who Will Benefit From the Second Arab Revolution?", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

¹⁶⁴ "Regional Al-Qaeda affiliates shaped more by Arab Spring than Bin Laden's death", *Gulf States Newsletter* 902, Vol. 35, 10 June 2011

¹⁶⁵ "US military redraws 'war on terror'", Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, 27 September 2011

¹⁶⁶ "Treading Gingerly in Tunisia", *Times*, 23 August 2011

much worse than expected, some said because it was too closely associated with the old regime. The Congress for the Republic, a new liberal party, came second in the poll after al-Nahda, with 14% of the vote and the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties came third with about 10%. The three parties were in discussion on forming a coalition in the constituent assembly, with the Islamist al-Nahda clearly in a dominant position, having received 41% of the votes.¹⁶⁷

This problem for the liberals was demonstrated in **Egypt** when Islamists mounted their vast show of strength in Tahrir Square and other city centres on 29 July 2011. While the demonstration, which attracted perhaps a million people, had always been planned as an Islamist event, secular/liberal groups thought they had reached an agreement with the organisers that divisive slogans would be avoided, stressing the unity of purpose of all popular movements. In the event, slogans hostile to liberals and secularists were widespread. A statement released after the event complaining of the “flagrant violation” of agreements was signed by no fewer than 28 secular and leftwing groups.¹⁶⁸ Liberal parties have attempted to present a united front at the forthcoming elections, but it is not clear that they are getting their message across to the electorate.

Educated and IT-connected young people were at the forefront of the demonstrations that overthrew both Ben Ali and Mubarak, and the expectation, perhaps particularly in Europe and the United States, was that they would continue to lead the process after the dictators had fallen. The impression is gradually gaining strength, however, that the liberal forces were not as numerically strong as at first thought (this is particularly true in Egypt, perhaps less so in Tunisia). Also, the liberals in the region have no single organisation to offer the support that the Muslim Brotherhood can provide. The inability quickly to unite around a single political party has become glaringly obvious. This is perhaps a result of the lack of a single overarching theme such as Islam, but it also comes from the lack of experience that is the result of years of oppression.

In Egypt the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, in charge of the country since the fall of Mubarak, has retained control of the situation and has dragged its feet on reform. The referendum on a modified constitution presented by the SCAF, passed by a large majority of voters in March, was widely interpreted as being little-changed from the Mubarak era constitution. The timescale proposed for elections was criticised for being intentionally tight, to deny liberal forces the time to organise themselves into parties and to campaign. The election timetable was subsequently eased, but the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups campaigned for a Yes vote in the referendum seemed to confirm the suspicions of some that the military and the Islamists are to an extent collaborating to exclude the liberal reformers in Egypt.

Particularly worrying for liberals in Egypt is the increasing tendency for their opponents to associate them with foreign interference in Egypt. The SCAF has ordered banks to report any transfers of funds from abroad to activists and rights groups and has accused some reformist groups of being controlled by foreign interests.¹⁶⁹

In July, the SCAF excluded international election observers from the election to be held in November 2011, saying that foreign observers would undermine sovereignty.¹⁷⁰ Reformist

¹⁶⁷ Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Elections (Tunisia), [Provisional election results](#)

¹⁶⁸ “Islamist show of force deepens rift in Egypt”, *Financial Times*, 30 July 2011

¹⁶⁹ “Now what? They came together to topple Mubarak, but can Egypt’s revolutionaries agree on what comes next?”, *Guardian*, 13 August 2011

¹⁷⁰ “Egypt’s military rulers ban foreign election observers”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 July 2011

groups said that this was the same tactic Mubarak favoured, and that without foreign observers, the election might not be fair or transparent.¹⁷¹

Allied to this xenophobia and perhaps equally appealing to many Egyptians, especially poorer ones, is the notion that order must be re-established quickly. With precarious livelihoods, many Egyptians justifiably fear for their future if there is a prolonged period of uncertainty and instability. The strong victory of the SCAF's referendum proposals was widely attributed to this fear, and the desire for order may favour larger and more authoritarian forces (the Brotherhood and former NDP).

In **Syria** liberals and secularists are included in the National Salvation Council set up in exile in Turkey in July 2011. How they would fare in the event of the fall of the Assad regime is not clear at this stage. There is little sign that the regime seriously intends to implement any of their demands for reform.

4.4 Women and sexual politics

The role of women in the changing Arab societies will be crucial. They surprised some outside observers by taking an active role in the demonstrations in the region's unrest, not only in demonstrations but also in the industrial unrest that played an important part in the Arab uprisings. In 2007, for example, women factory workers had staged major strikes in the city of Mahallah, Egypt.¹⁷²

In Egypt and Tunisia women were highly visible in demonstrations and, in **Tunisia** at least, it seems that they will be ensured a significant place in the country's politics in the future. A Personal Status Code was passed in 1956, giving Tunisian women rights that were unique in the Muslim world, including the right to vote and to be elected to parliament, equal pay with men, access to mixed-gender education and even divorce. In 1993 'honour crimes' — in which women were targeted and sometimes killed by members of their own family for transgressing social norms — were made criminal offences.

These moves ensured that rights for women in Tunisia were already significantly stronger than in any neighbouring country and the interim government appears to be keen to build on that tradition. In May the Tunisian interim government announced that all parties would be required to present an equal number of men and women as candidates for the constituent assembly, making it the first country in the region to establish gender parity in this way. The election will be based on a proportional system, with party lists. In Tunisia parties will be obliged to intersperse women and men equally on their lists, so that to put the women in the bottom half of the list and so make their election unlikely is not allowed.

The leader of al-Nahda, Rachid Ghannouchi, has in the past criticised Tunisia's relatively progressive Personal Status Code on the grounds that it is irreligious, and recently he threatened to hang a leading woman activist in Tunis' central square for suggesting that the new Tunisian constitution should be based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights rather than sharia law.¹⁷³ He has also said that women's rights are a fact of life in Tunisia and will have to be accepted; and that he supports the right of a woman to be president, unlike his colleagues in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. It is probably true that the education levels of Tunisian women and their high workforce participation rates would indeed be difficult to undo.

A Tunisian women's rights campaigner said that Islamism and women's rights were not necessarily incompatible:

¹⁷¹ "Egyptian generals block poll observers", *Daily Telegraph*, 22 July 2011

¹⁷² Fatma Naib, "North African women on the barricades", *Africa Renewal*, August 2011

¹⁷³ Isobel Coleman, "The future of women", *World Today*, August/September 2011

People assume that Islamism would interfere with women's rights and freedom. But this is not necessarily correct. When Islam came to mankind, women used to work and played an active role in society. So I don't understand why people assume that the presence of an Islamist political party will lead to the exclusion of women.¹⁷⁴

However, she accepted that the interpretation of Islam by religious parties might lead to the erosion of women's position:

People look at the examples of Algeria and Iran. History has proven that there is no guarantee that an Islamic party such as al-Nahda will secure women's rights. Even if they say they are for women's freedom, there is no guarantee they will keep their word on anything after they come into power. This is the case with all politicians.¹⁷⁵

In **Egypt** the position of women is weaker. Although many women participated in the demonstrations which brought down Hosni Mubarak, they sometimes confronted great danger. Some women arrested by the security forces when Tahrir Square was cleared of demonstrators on 9 March were subjected to forced virginity tests. Unmarried women who failed the tests were charged with prostitution.¹⁷⁶ In another notorious incident, women demonstrating on the occasion of International Women's Day in March were attacked by groups of men, who told them that their demands were un-Islamic and to "Go home. Go and wash clothes."¹⁷⁷

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has shown itself to be distinctly conservative in its approach to women's representation, as in other fields. The reservation of 64 parliamentary seats for women under the old electoral law was abolished by the SCAF. In its place is a provision that every party list must include at least one woman. This is a much weaker requirement and allows parties to put a woman somewhere at the bottom of their list where they are not likely to be elected. The SCAF also decided not to include any women on the committee that drafted changes to the constitution. There is only one woman in the 28-member cabinet.

Egyptians are generally reported to be more conservative, less highly-educated and more religious than Tunisians and the role of women in Egyptian society is more traditional than that of their Tunisian counterparts. The Muslim Brotherhood's official political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, said in March 2011 that it would stick to its refusal to nominate a woman for president of Egypt but implied that it would not seek to impose this on other parties. A leading figure was quoted as saying:

Our adherence to the jurisprudential opinion refusing the appointment of women or Christians as president does not mean we impose this opinion on the people, who have inherent jurisdiction in this regard.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the announcement that a woman, Buthaina Kamel, would be standing for election as president was a first for Egypt. Importantly, the younger generation among Muslim Brotherhood activists appears to be much more receptive to strengthening women's rights than the old guard.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Fatma Naib, "North African women on the barricades", *Africa Renewal*, August 2011

¹⁷⁵ Fatma Naib, "North African women on the barricades", *Africa Renewal*, August 2011

¹⁷⁶ "Egyptian general admits 'virginity checks' conducted on protesters", *CNN Online*, 30 May 2011

¹⁷⁷ "In Egypt's Tahrir Square, women attacked at rally on International Women's Day", *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 March 2011

¹⁷⁸ "Brotherhood sticks to ban on Christians and women for presidency", *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 14 March 2011

¹⁷⁹ United States Institute of Peace, *Women and the Arab Spring*, 5 May 2011

Yemen has seen a very strong presence of women in demonstrations against the Saleh regime. In April 2011, the president said that it was un-Islamic for women and men to mix in anti-government protests, and that therefore women should go home. This provoked a furious reaction from Yemeni women, thousands of whom appeared on the streets two days later to demonstrate their opposition. One of the most high-profile activists there is the human rights activist Tawakel Karman. As the protests progressed, Karman was arrested, beaten and humiliated by the state media but continued to be active. She became a household name in Yemen as a result.¹⁸⁰

It seems likely that the anti-government protests in Yemen will mark a watershed in Yemen's social attitudes. Contemplating the protest camp in the centre of the Yemeni capital Sana'a, Tawakel Karman said that she was amazed: "I could never have imagined this. In Yemen, women are not allowed out of the house after 7pm, now they are sleeping here."¹⁸¹

In **Libya** violence against women became a serious issue in the conflict. Allegations that rape was being used as a tactic became widespread. Libyan women played a less conspicuous role than those in Egypt, Tunisia or Yemen, perhaps because the protests turned so quickly into an armed insurrection in which the danger of death, injury or rape was much more immediate. Libya, like Yemen, is a deeply traditional society and it seems unlikely that women will quickly move into prominent political positions.

The President of the Transitional National Council Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, in his speech announcing the liberation of the country after the death of Colonel Qaddafi, made some policy decisions including the lifting of the restriction on polygamy in place under the Qaddafi regime. In the past husbands had been required to request permission from their wives before marrying another wife. A women's rights activist said:

I was extremely upset by this. Women were arrested, raped, victimised and abused in this war in every sense. They started this revolution. And suddenly they were now limited to wives, mothers and sisters. We thought it was a huge joke.¹⁸²

In **Syria** women have played a significant role in demonstrations against the government, on one occasion blocking roads to demand the release of their male relatives from the custody of the Syrian secret police; on another holding an all-women march to demand democracy.¹⁸³

In **Morocco** women's rights were relatively advanced, with significant reforms made by King Muhammad VI shortly after his accession to the throne.

Gay people

Homosexuals are reported to have participated in the Tahrir Square demonstrations in Egypt, and to be experiencing mixed fortunes since then. According to reports, the police are no longer using websites to entrap gay people looking for contacts and arrest them. Meeting places such as bars are now more visible in Cairo. There are still police raids, however, and gay people are worried about the possibility that fundamentalist Islamists will be more influential in the future and that the repression of the Mubarak era will be re-instated.¹⁸⁴

In other countries, the situation for gay people is probably worse. One Syrian activist doubts that political change in Syria would lead to any improvement in the situation of gay people:

¹⁸⁰ "Yemen protests: Women take centre stage", *BBC news Online*, 21 April 2011

¹⁸¹ "Yemen protests: Women take centre stage", *BBC news Online*, 21 April 2011

¹⁸² "Interim leader shocks with talk of Islamic law", *Financial Times*, 25 October 2011

¹⁸³ "An Arab spring for women", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 26 April 2011

¹⁸⁴ "Egyptian gays buoyed by uprising", *Washington Post*, 20 August 2011

Sheikhs still emphasize that death penalty is the Islamic punishment for gay men. A more open society regarding sexuality needs years, if not decades, of work after Syrians get the freedom they aspire to have.¹⁸⁵

The London-based editor of the website Gay Middle East agreed that the uprisings may make life even more dangerous for gay people:

Many gay activists are very scared that the reality of their oppression could get worse.

For example, in Egypt and Tunisia there was a lot of hope initially that there would be a more tolerant civil society. Now it seems that the impetus for change will be hijacked by conservative forces who will make the situation worse for gay people and other minorities.

In Syria and other countries, there's a fear that gay people could be used as sacrificial lambs.¹⁸⁶

5 Economies since the uprisings

5.1 Economies

A recent study estimated that the effect of the uprisings on the economies of the Arab world had been a net positive \$38.9 billion.¹⁸⁷ While government revenues in Libya and Yemen plunged 84% and 77% respectively, revenues in oil-producing countries had climbed with the rising oil price attributed in part to the uprisings, leading to the surprising estimate of the region's overall gain.

However, the damage done to those economies where revolutions have taken place, set against the high expectations for improvements in standards of living fostered by those revolutions, remains a serious problem for the region. Also problematic is the desire for justice to be done in relation to corruption. Some businessmen have been prosecuted for illegal dealings with the past regimes and, in Egypt, some privatisation deals have been re-opened because of suspicions that they benefitted regime insiders excessively. The uncertainty spread by such actions has had a chilling effect on the economies of the region as some businessmen are reported to be nervous, even if they are innocent of any crimes.¹⁸⁸

14.8 million tourists arrived in **Egypt** in 2010. In the first month after the revolution, the number fell by 80%.¹⁸⁹ According to the tourism ministry, 2011 will probably finish about 25% down on the previous year but that still entails a loss of more than \$3 billion to the economy. The slump in tourism has been a major drag on the economy, which contracted 4.2% in the first quarter of 2011. Unemployment rose to 12% from 9% over the same period, and the government's budget is under pressure due to low tax receipts, with a deficit of 10% this year, a fifth higher than planned.¹⁹⁰ A substantial inflow of foreign investment before the revolution has ground to a halt.

In June, Egypt negotiated a \$3 billion standby facility with the International Monetary Fund. Three weeks later, however, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces withdrew from the deal, not wanting to leave successor governments burdened with debt. Egypt may change its

¹⁸⁵ "Will gays be 'sacrificial lambs' in Arab Spring?", *CNN online*, 27 May 2011

¹⁸⁶ "Will gays be 'sacrificial lambs' in Arab Spring?", *CNN online*, 27 May 2011

¹⁸⁷ *Rethinking the Arab Spring*, Geopolicity, October 2011

¹⁸⁸ "Shaky hands syndrome; A jittery Egyptian cabinet and a push for retribution against business are making investors despair", *Financial Times*, 10 October 2011

¹⁸⁹ "Can Egypt Overcome Its P.R. Problem?", *New York Times*, 6 November 2011

¹⁹⁰ "Torrents in Arabia", *Financial Times*, 22 October 2011

mind again and accept the IMF loan.¹⁹¹ A \$2 billion loan from the World Bank was also turned down and the government trimmed its expenditure plans.

Over October and November 2011, financial ratings agencies downgraded their ratings on Egyptian government bonds, citing the government's difficult fiscal position, the slow pace of reforms which might encourage growth, and political uncertainty, which was making improvements to the economy difficult.¹⁹²

Tunisia, too, has some very difficult economic and financial issues to deal with. Gross Domestic Product growth is at about 1.5% at present, though the government hopes to boost it nearer to 4% next year.

The **Syrian** economy is being watched closely for signs of strain that might undermine the rule of the Assad family. Public expenditure was raised by about 20% in response to the demonstrations that began in March 2011, and the government was forced to spend more than \$2 billion in foreign currency reserves defending the value of the Syrian currency. There has also been a dramatic flight of capital from the country. The government responded with the imposition of a ban on imports in September, aimed at conserving foreign currency. The EU's embargo on Syrian oil imports had a significant effect on the economy, which is forecast by the IMF to shrink by 2% in 2011.¹⁹³ More signs of strain emerged in the autumn, as Total and Shell, the biggest international oil companies operating in Syria, stopped getting payments for the Syrian oil they produce.¹⁹⁴ One industry source said, "My sense is the government has no cash."¹⁹⁵

Yemen is the country in the gravest economic danger. The World Food Programme warned in October 2011 that rising food prices, severe fuel shortages and political instability were combining to put about 3.5 million Yemenis (about one in seven) in danger of starvation.¹⁹⁶

5.2 A Marshall Plan for the region?

There have been calls for a comprehensive and region-wide aid plan to set the economies of the region straight. Most of the economies in the Middle East and North Africa have both immediate financial needs and longer-term need for investment in infrastructure. Investment should create jobs and kick-start badly-needed growth, giving disgruntled young people hope that the region is moving in the right direction.

The Group of Eight leading nations pledged some \$20 billion to Egypt and Tunisia in May 2011, but there have been complaints that, of that money, Egypt received \$500 million and Tunisia nothing at all.¹⁹⁷ In September, the G8/G20 pledged \$38 billion in fresh assistance, to take the form of loans, bilateral aid and debt forgiveness.¹⁹⁸ The list of recipients was expanded to include Jordan and Morocco as well as Tunisia and Egypt. While Libya was not included, a team from the IMF would be sent to Libya to discuss future cooperation when the security conditions permitted.

¹⁹¹ Ambassador William Taylor, "[Special Briefing on U.S. Support for the Democratic Transitions Underway in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya](#)", US State Department, 3 November 2011

¹⁹² "Moody's Downgrades Egypt's Debt Ratings by One Notch", *IHS Global Insight*, 4 November 2011

¹⁹³ *World Economic Outlook*, International Monetary Fund, September 2011. See Appendix 3 for statistics for 2010 statistics and forecasts for 2011 and 2012

¹⁹⁴ "Syria stops oil payments to Shell and Total as tensions grow", *Financial Times*, 11 November 2011

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ "More Yemenis Slip Into Hunger As The Country Faces A Serious Humanitarian Situation", World Food Programme press release, 12 October 2011

¹⁹⁷ "G-8 Nations Pledge New Aid to Arab Spring Economies", *New York Times*, 11 September 2011

¹⁹⁸ HC Deb 13 October 2011, c495-8

A more comprehensive and generous scheme is unlikely to materialise. Firstly, a grand plan for the region could not be devised while some countries are still in the throes of disorder. Which countries would receive aid? Would Syria and Bahrain, for example, be included?

Secondly, strong and transparent political and economic institutions would be necessary to administer the aid properly. It will be some time before donors will have that confidence, even in Tunisia, which seems to be progressing most smoothly.

Thirdly, who would provide the money? Western governments are in no position to provide much, since they are in the midst of their own financial crisis. The hydrocarbon-rich Gulf states could do a lot, but they are unlikely to want to set up a high-profile regional scheme, preferring to work discreetly with individual governments. The Gulf states will want to ensure that their money does not end up furthering Iran's perceived ambitions, which could lead to any funds being delivered bilaterally, with conditions.

The present circumstances mean that countries that want to encourage and influence the transitions in the region are likely to rely on other measures rather than just aid or loans. The US State Department appointed a special envoy in October to coordinate the US response to events in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. He said that, in financially difficult times, the US might offer enhanced market access, debt forgiveness and capacity-building projects in the area of democracy and elections.

In a recent article for the *Washington Quarterly*, Uri Dadush and Michele Dunne argue that access to western markets is the most important way in which Europe and the US can respond:

The best instruments available are enhanced trade agreements that not only promote market access, but even more importantly maximize competitiveness-enhancing and job-promoting reforms in the Arab countries.

...

Analogous to the process that successfully drew the formerly planned economies of Eastern Europe to liberal democracy, what is needed is a new and compelling vision for closer and more equitable economic relations both among Arab countries and between them and the trans-Atlantic community.¹⁹⁹

6 Non-Arab perspectives

6.1 Iran

Iran initially welcomed the Arab uprisings. Strategically, the upheaval had the potential to remove long-term adversaries such as President Mubarak of Egypt and consequently weaken US influence in the region. Politically, Iran has tried to appropriate the Arab uprisings as akin to the 1979 Islamic revolution. The Iranian opposition Green Movement, however, brought hundreds of thousands onto the street in February in support of the North African uprisings (with a clear sub-text that events in North Africa should be linked to the 2009 Iranian opposition's demonstrations against the contested election results). Hundreds were arrested and one person killed, according to the police, and the Green Movement's two leaders Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi were placed under house arrest.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Uri Dadush and Michele Dunne, "[American and European Responses to the Arab Spring: What's the Big Idea?](#)", *The Washington Quarterly*, 34:4, pp.131-45

²⁰⁰ "Huge obstacles face resurgent opposition after Iran marches", *Financial Times*, 16 February 2011

The Green Movement's revival proved short-lived, however. In a triumphant gesture after Mubarak's departure, Iran sent the first warship through the Suez Canal for 31 years to announce its military presence in the Mediterranean. In his March 2011 New Year's address, Supreme Leader Ali Khamanei welcomed the uprisings, saying, "This widespread awakening of nations, which is directed towards Islamic goals, will definitely become victorious."²⁰¹

Iran hopes that the Arab Spring can strengthen the anti-western bloc in the region, which includes Iran, Syria, Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As a Persian and Shiite state, it is difficult for Iran to exert influence over its Arab and largely Sunni-majority neighbours. By appealing to pan-Islamism and the anti-western, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist sentiments of many in the region, Iran has managed to overcome these limitations to a certain extent and to appeal to the 'Arab street'.²⁰²

The removal of pro-western dictatorships should in theory give greater voice to Arab public opinion and act in Iran's favour; evidence that the fall of pro-western dictators in the region could indeed favour Iran came when Egypt moved in April 2011 to improve relations, broken off in 1980. Egyptian Foreign Minister said that, "Egypt is open to all countries and the aim is to achieve common interests," and that Egypt welcomed "opening a new page with Iran."²⁰³

Iran's strategic outlook from the uprisings was promising, then, until the demonstrations in Syria started to gain momentum. While welcoming the uprisings against governments allied to the west, Iranian officials blamed "agitators" hired by Israel for fomenting unrest in Syria and spreading propaganda in the west.²⁰⁴

According to William Hague, Iran has helped the Syrian government to control its uprising. In June, the Foreign Secretary denounced the Iranian government for sharing the techniques used to suppress Iranian protests after the 2009 election: "...there is plenty of evidence that Iran is exporting these same repressive techniques to its long time ally Syria, as Syria's rulers brutalise their people to cling to power."²⁰⁵ According to western sources, Iran sent riot control equipment and trainers to Syria, a claim which the Syrian government denied.

With the failure of the Assad regime to suppress the protest, signs of unease in Tehran increased. The uprisings in neighbouring countries have the potential not only to delegitimise the Islamic Republic but also to increase sharply Iran's isolation. If the Syrian regime is to survive it will have to accede to some of the demands of the Sunni majority; this might mean a downgrading of relations with Shiite Iran. Also worrying for Iran is the unity agreement between Iranian ally Hamas and pro-western Fatah in the Palestinian Territories, which could lead to a further weakening of Iran's anti-western bloc.

On 28 August, President Ahmadinejad issued his strongest call yet for Damascus to heed the demands of the protesters. Significantly, he mentioned western ally Yemen in the same breath as Syria: "Either in Yemen, Syria or any other country, people have some legitimate demands and governments should answer them as soon as possible."²⁰⁶

While the demonstration in February marked a high point for unrest in Iran linked to the Arab spring, some say that the Islamic regime is worried about the possibility of further trouble and has started a spree of executions, many nominally for drug crimes. According to human rights group Amnesty International, Iran announced 190 executions between January and

²⁰¹ "Arab spring has changed the game for Iran", *Guardian*, 18 May 2011

²⁰² For more discussion of the Iranian bloc's prospects, see Michael Scott Doran, "The heirs of Nasser: Who Will Benefit From the Second Arab Revolution?", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

²⁰³ "Egypt ready to 'open new page' in relations with Iran", *Haaretz*, 4 April 2011

²⁰⁴ "Syrian army cracks down on protesters as government delays concessions", *Guardian*, 28 March 2011

²⁰⁵ "Foreign Secretary: our attention has not been diverted from Iran", FCO press release, 11 June 2011

²⁰⁶ "Iran calls on Syrian President to consider protesters' demands", *Independent*, 29 August 2011

the end of June 2011, with 130 more reported executions unacknowledged by the government. The recent crackdown has also seen opposition leaders placed under house arrest.

A former US ambassador to Iran is quoted as saying that the high rate of executions is clearly linked to a fear of upheavals in neighbouring countries spreading to Iran:

It is no coincidence that Iran's increased staging of public executions came at the same time protest movements were gaining steam through the Middle East. What better way to keep Iranians from having 'dangerous ideas' like those of their neighbours?²⁰⁷

The Arab uprisings may be having a deeper effect on politics in Iran. A power struggle is being waged between supporters of President Ahmadinejad and those of Supreme Leader Khamanei that some attribute to diverging strategies for dealing with the Arab Spring and the Iranian nuclear programme.²⁰⁸

According to some analysts, President Ahmadinejad, in spite of his reputation in the west for fiery denunciations of the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel, would like to claim credit for easing Iran's international isolation by striking a deal with the west over Iran's nuclear programme. Supreme Leader Khamanei, on the other hand, is reported to think that an even more intransigent stance is the best way to protect the regime.²⁰⁹

6.2 Turkey and the 'Turkish model'

Turkey's potential to be a role model for Middle Eastern countries in transition from authoritarianism has been much discussed. Protesters in Arab countries, including Tunisian opposition leader Rachid al-Ghannouchi and Tariq Ramadan, grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, have highlighted the importance of the 'Turkish model' in inspiring 2011's protests.²¹⁰

Turkey is a prosperous country of growing regional influence which has shown that it is possible for an Islamic country to move away from authoritarianism and to achieve deepening integration with the world community. As such, Turkey is attracting attention across the world. The vibrant private sector in Turkey contrasts with the often stultifying nepotistic state control of Arab economies. Turkey's political attraction stems from its demonstration that it is possible to combine Islamism with elections and a genuinely democratic (though far from perfect) system.

Turkey's EU accession process, doomed though it may be, raises the prospect of an Islamic country joining the mainstream of rich 'western' nations. Analysts have also argued that the fact that Turkey's democracy is still in the process of development has made it easier for Arab interlocutors to associate with the Turkish experience. Talking to western democracies, on the other hand, is more likely to lead to Arabs feeling patronised, which limits the effectiveness of that dialogue.²¹¹

Turkey's economic growth has been based in part on its 'zero problems with neighbours' foreign policy. Improving relations with neighbouring governments has allowed Turkey to establish a network of contacts and to gain contracts, for example, that might be closed to

²⁰⁷ "Iran's judicial killing spree seems designed to subdue civil unrest", *Guardian*, 8 July 2011

²⁰⁸ For more information on recent politics within Iran, see the Library Standard Note [Power struggle in Iran](#) of July 2011

²⁰⁹ For an example of this argument, see "Overtures and anger in Tehran", *Washington Post*, 6 May 2011

²¹⁰ Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey's "Demonstrative Effect" and the Transformation of the Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No.2, 2011, pp. 33-55

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p40

those who did not have access to the right officials. The resulting spread of Turkish business influence in countries such as Syria and Libya has made the successful Turkish model ever more visible in the Arab world. In Libya alone, there were 25,000 Turkish workers before the uprising and billions of dollars' worth of contracts.²¹² The Arab uprisings, then, are an opportunity for Turkey to maximise its influence in the region, encouraging reformists to look to the Turkish model when designing new political systems.

The uprisings also present distinct threats to Turkey's stability and to its external relations. Firstly, the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy is at government level, and resulted in a sharp improvement with the Assad regime in Damascus, for example, and a corresponding growth in trade. The possibility that the Assads and other friendly regimes could be overthrown puts that policy at risk. This has given Turkey a greater stake in the *status quo* than some protesters might think. When Turkey initially opposed military intervention in Libya, the Turkish flag was burned in Benghazi and demonstrators tried to overrun the Turkish consulate.

Secondly, Turkey is not immune from the instability that is spreading among its neighbours, particularly in Syria. The Erdogan government was initially relatively quiet about the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, cautiously waiting for the major powers' lead before calling for leadership changes. Turkey was likewise very patient with the Assad regime until the unrest there began to spill over Turkey's southern border. Along with other countries, Turkey hardened its tone throughout the summer. When a tank assault on the town of Hama resulted in perhaps 45 deaths, the Turkish deputy Prime Minister said that Syria could no longer be Turkey's friend, "I'm saying this on my behalf, what's going on in Hama today is an atrocity ... Whoever carries this out can't be our friend. They are making a big mistake."²¹³

The problem for Turkey is to preserve Turkish 'soft power', a product not only of a successful economy and democracy but also of increasingly public criticisms of Israel. To do this, Sunni Turkey must be seen to stand by the largely Sunni protesters in Syria. At the same time it must do what it can to preserve its privileged contacts with Arab governments and prevent turmoil from undermining its own stability. There has been talk in Kurdish circles, a minority based in the east of the country that has long resented Turkish rule, of a Kurdish uprising against Turkish rule, inspired by the Arab uprisings.²¹⁴ Increasing violence was observed in the Kurdish region, with artillery and air strikes killing 106 alleged Kurdish rebels in August 2011.

Despite the potentially destabilising effect of the uprisings on Turkey, it seems likely that they will offer strategic opportunities to the country. An optimistic view of the situation might foresee increasingly democratic, possibly moderate Islamist governments spreading across the region, establishing freer, more rules-based economies and improving relations with the outside world. If that happens, it will be in no small part due to the influence of the 'Turkish model'. One writer has even gone as far as to describe the region's "Turko-Persian future".²¹⁵ There may be darkening clouds over Iran's part in that future, but Turkey's prospects could be bright.

²¹² Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey and the Arab Spring", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Q&A, 26 April 2011

²¹³ "Syrian tanks kill 45 in Hama, death toll reaches 90", *Reuters*, 4 August 2011

²¹⁴ "Kurdish problem in the middle of the Arab Spring" *Hurriyet*, 22 August 2011

²¹⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, "Beyond the democratic wave in the Arab world: the Middle East's Turko-Persian future", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13 No 2, Spring 2011

6.3 Israel

“When some people in the west see what’s happening in Egypt, they see Europe 1989. We see it as Tehran 1979.”²¹⁶ This was the reaction of a senior Israeli official to the early stages of the uprising. There was a hope in some circles in early 2011 that the Arab uprisings might be an opportunity for new thinking and possibly progress in the troubled peace process with the Palestinians. This hope soon faded as the instability spread and it became clearer that Israeli opinion was not ready for any important moves in such a time of uncertainty.

Peace treaties

The clearest danger to Israel is the potential abrogation of the only two peace treaties signed between Arab countries and the Jewish state. As long as the rule of King Abdullah in Jordan remains secure, the Jordanian treaty will probably survive, but the situation in Egypt is less clear. Governing Egypt without the consent of Egyptians became a lot more difficult with the fall of Hosni Mubarak. Most Egyptians favour the Palestinian cause and are generally hostile to Israel. Whether and how that current of opinion will be expressed by future governments is difficult to predict. The Muslim Brotherhood has been ambiguous about the peace treaty but the Egyptian military has close contacts with Israeli and US officials and still receives the \$1.3 billion military assistance every year from the United States.²¹⁷ One leader of the Brotherhood said early in the process, “after President Mubarak steps down and a provisional government is formed, there is a need to dissolve the peace treaty with Israel.”²¹⁸ Other leaders of the organisation have suggested that, though they do not agree with it, they will not do anything to change it. It seems likely that the Egyptian military would veto any move to undo the treaty with Israel, and that this may be the biggest ‘red line’ for Egypt’s move towards democracy. An attempt to cross that line could well provoke a crackdown by the military.

Perhaps a more immediate concern for Israel is the day-to-day security relationship with both Egypt and Jordan. Israel depends on Jordanian cooperation to stop infiltration into the West Bank, and on Egypt to patrol the Sinai and its long border with Israel (although the Sinai is partially demilitarised in line with the provisions of the 1979 peace treaty).

King Abdullah seems a more genuine friend of Israel than was Mubarak, for example, and Israelis have warmed to him. But a slight majority of the Jordanian population is of Palestinian origin, and the monarchy’s pro-Israel policy is not popular. A more democratically-based government in Jordan might not cooperate so enthusiastically with Israel on border security.

The situation along the Egyptian border, which includes the southern border with the Gaza Strip, is even more sensitive. After the fall of Mubarak, there were serious incidents along the Sinai border, leading to a crisis in relations. On 18 August gunmen crossed the Sinai border into southern Israel and killed seven Israelis. Israeli security forces then gave chase and killed some of the gunmen but also, according to Egyptian accounts, five Egyptian security officers. Israel initially blamed Egypt for failing to control the Sinai, but the furious reaction from Cairo led Israeli officials to pursue a more conciliatory line, expressing regret for the incident and promising an investigation into the incident.

The episode not only showed the potential for an increased security threat from Egypt, where the police are demoralised and crime in general has increased. It also showed that officials in Israel are increasingly aware of the need to take Egyptian public opinion into account.

²¹⁶ “Israel wary of transition in Egypt, concerned about regional stability,” *Washington Post*, 2 February, 2011

²¹⁷ US Department of State, Background Note: [Egypt](#)

²¹⁸ Quoted in Daniel Byman, “Israel’s Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring”, *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2011, p125

Gaza and Hamas

The government of Hosni Mubarak helped Israel in its policy of fighting against the Palestinian Islamist organisation Hamas. Hamas is related to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak saw repression of Hamas not only as a fulfilment of its commitment in the peace treaty between the two countries to act against acts of violence originating in each other's territory,²¹⁹ he also saw it as an extension of his domestic repression of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007 and Israel's subsequent attempts to put pressure on Hamas by blockading the enclave, a network of smuggling tunnels developed under the border between Israel and Egypt. Although there were periodic Israeli complaints about Egyptian laxness in enforcing the blockade during the Mubarak era, Israel muted these complaints because they were aware that the situation could be a lot worse, and that Mubarak was expending considerable amounts of political capital cooperating with Israeli pressure on Hamas. In the last year of Mubarak's rule, he had gone some way to meeting Israeli requests by building a barrier at the border, reportedly supplied by the US, that extended some distance underground, making tunnel-digging more difficult.²²⁰

After Mubarak's fall, the extent of his government's influence in maintaining the blockade became clear, as the interim government announced that it would permanently open the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Israel to Palestinians. As well as officially letting Palestinians cross the border with minimal administrative restrictions, Egypt turned a blind eye to smuggling and a building boom ensued, fuelled by a flood of building materials entering Gaza.²²¹

The increase in traffic across the Rafah border may not be entirely innocent: Israel believes that weaponry aboard a ship seized in May 2011, including anti-ship missiles, originated in Iran and was destined for Hamas in Gaza.²²² Another Israeli concern is that militants could enter Gaza via Rafah in order to carry out attacks against Israel.²²³

If Israel were to take military action to prevent this from happening, Egypt might be drawn into confrontation with Israel on its own territory, or face domestic pressure to enter the conflict on behalf of the population of Gaza.

The political effects of the Arab Spring may affect Hamas directly, as the organisation worries increasingly about its public support. The Hamas/Fatah unity agreement has partly been attributed to Hamas's need for support; the division between Hamas and Fatah was not popular with Palestinians and the unity agreement increased support for Hamas.²²⁴ Concern to shore up its support has also been blamed for Hamas's decision to fire more than 30 mortars at Israel on 18 March 2011, justifying the attack as revenge for an Israeli airstrike that killed two Hamas members. The organisation wants to bolster its credentials as a resistance organisation, according to this theory.²²⁵ However, such tactics on the part of Hamas would not be supported by recent findings on Palestinian public opinion, which show that a clear majority of the public wants any unity Palestinian government to follow Mahmoud

²¹⁹ [Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt](#), 26 March 1979, Art. III

²²⁰ "Egypt starts building steel wall on Gaza Strip border", *BBC News Online*, 9 December 2009

²²¹ "Smuggling drives Gaza's building boom", *BBC News Online*, 3 August 2011

²²² "Navy intercepts ship with Iranian arms bound for Hamas", *Jerusalem Post*, 15 March 2011

²²³ "Israel slams Rafah reopening", *Agence France Presse*, 29 May 2011

²²⁴ [Palestinian Public Opinion Poll 40](#), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 20 June 2011

²²⁵ Daniel Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring", *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2011, p131

Abbas's policy in relation to Israel rather than that of Hamas, for fear of a return of international sanctions.²²⁶

Another factor prompting the unity agreement is Hamas's fear that it may lose one of its few allies and supporters: the Assad regime in Syria.

Hizbollah and Syria

Also threatened by the uprising in Syria is the Lebanese Shiite militia. The Assad regime is Hizbollah's principal sponsor and without Syrian help, Iranian support for Hizbollah would be far harder to deliver. The threat to Bashar al-Assad is therefore very serious for Hizbollah, and has provoked a response from the organisation's leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah, who had previously expressed support for the regime and echoed the regime's line about foreign armed groups, said in August that the regime should introduce reforms and that the Syrian uprising would have serious implications for the region if not resolved peacefully.²²⁷ If the uprisings bring down the Assad regime, Hizbollah could be seriously weakened and this would dramatically change Israel's security situation on its northern border.

Any improvement in Israel's security, however, would depend on what sort of government replaced the Assad regime. While the fall of Assad might weaken both Hamas and Hizbollah, any new regime in Damascus might further destabilise the organisations and end the Assad regime's restraining influence on them, as one analyst argues:

Relations between Syria and Israel are governed by many rules, most of which are unspoken but are nevertheless quite real. So while Syria supports Hamas, it also places limits on the Palestinian group's activities. In Lebanon, Syria backs the anti-Israel Hezbollah, but also checks its activities when Damascus fears escalation. Changes in Syria could bring to power a new government that does not know these subtle rules and, again, plays to popular opinion rather than strategic reality.²²⁸

Daniel Byman concludes that Israel has much to lose from the Arab uprisings:

As most of the above concerns suggest, Israel is a status quo power in many ways. While Israelis bemoan their situation, the country's position is strong. Terrorism is down from the high levels of ten years ago. Israel is the military giant in the region. Its economy is strong and growing stronger. So change, even if it means the toppling of regional foes, risks rocking this prosperous boat.²²⁹

7 Military Balance in the Middle East and North Africa

Before the Arab uprisings in early 2011, the geopolitical order in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) essentially positioned Iran and its allies Syria, Hizbollah and Hamas, against the traditional, and generally pro-US, Arab powers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the other nations of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC),²³⁰ although Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have sought at times to play a balancing role between Iran and its US-backed Arab neighbours. Israel has largely maintained a unique position in that it is supported by the United States and the west, but regionally has been relatively isolated. In 1979 Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt, although their relationship has often been described as a 'cold peace'. Turkey is also an influential non-Arab country in the region, being situated at the crossroads between the Middle East, the Caucasus and Europe.

²²⁶ [Palestinian Public Opinion Poll 40](#), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 20 June 2011

²²⁷ "Defiant Syrians to Assad: Qaddafi's Fate Is Warning", *New York Times*, 27 August 2011

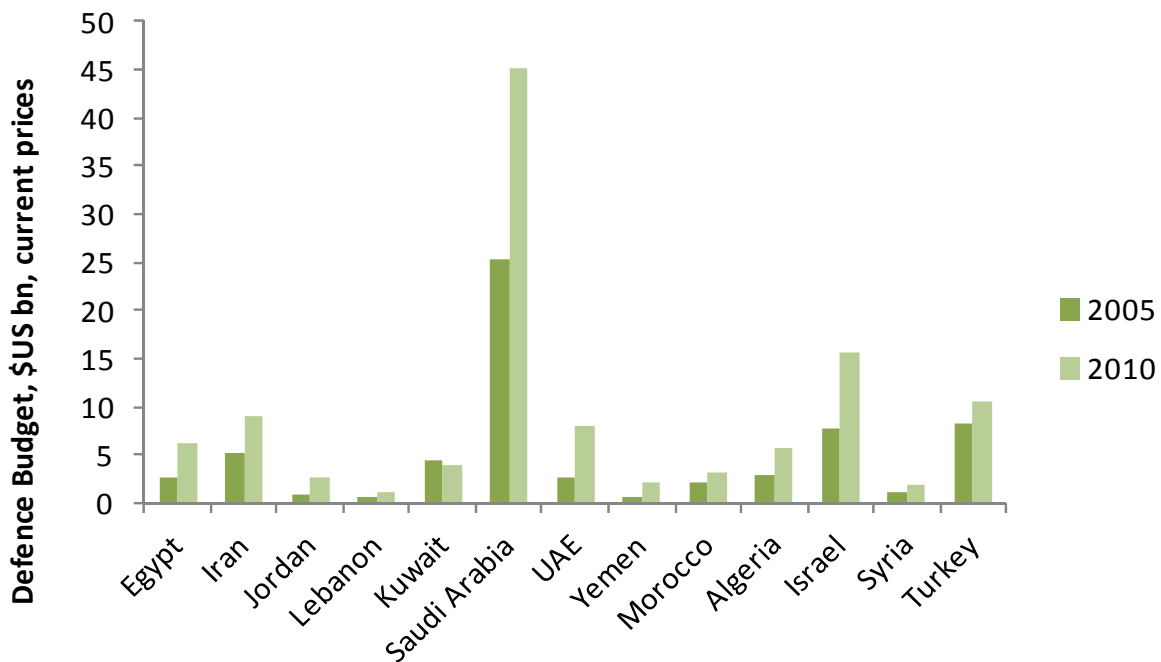
²²⁸ Daniel Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring", *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2011, p128

²²⁹ Daniel Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring", *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2011, p129

²³⁰ Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar

In terms of military capabilities, the dominant powers in the region were Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Egypt and to a lesser extent, UAE. Iraq's military was rendered largely ineffective after the US-led conflict in 2003 and subsequent period of post-conflict reconstruction. However, it is the regional balance of power politics that have dominated the defence policies of each respective country and military capabilities are configured accordingly. No country has a true 'blue water' expeditionary capability²³¹ that would allow for power projection on a global level, but they retain forces that are focused on internal security, territorial and littoral defence,²³² and regional power projection.

Although an all-out arms race between the dominant military powers has not really developed, each country has sought to maintain military parity with its neighbours. In order to do so, and thereby inadvertently also achieving a degree of stability in the region, the majority of countries have sought to offset the capabilities of their neighbours through the development of niche assets. Israel has sought the ultimate security guarantee through the development of a de facto nuclear weapons capability and technologically advanced conventional capabilities;²³³ Saudi Arabia has sought technological superiority in terms of its air assets at the expense of its overall manpower levels; Egypt has retained one of the largest military forces in the region in terms of manpower; while Iran has sought to compensate for the overall weakness of its albeit sizeable conventional military forces, in particular in its air power, by establishing sophisticated ballistic missile assets, and a highly trained and highly effective Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Naval Force. It also has a suspected nuclear weapons programme.



²³¹ 'Blue water' is a term used in maritime geography to refer to the deep waters of the open ocean. A 'blue water force' has the ability to project naval force across the open ocean.

²³² Littoral defence is the defence of coastal sea areas and the area of land that is susceptible to influence or support from the sea.

²³³ Israel's nuclear capability is discussed in greater detail in Library Research Paper RP10/42, *Progress towards nuclear disarmament*, June 2010

7.1 Military Comparisons

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has consistently been the largest defence spender in the region, with a budget three to four times larger than Israel's and five times larger than its main strategic competitor Iran. In 2010 the defence budget for Saudi Arabia was an estimated \$45 billion, an increase of \$3 billion on the previous year.

In terms of manpower, however, the Saudi military is small with only 108,500 regular forces and no reserve capacity, although it does have an additional 100,000 National Guard personnel who are well equipped with armoured infantry vehicles and artillery and 16,000 personnel assigned to air defence duties. What it lacks in manpower, however, it makes up for in the technological superiority of its assets; a reflection of its large defence budget. Saudi Arabia does not share a land border with Iran, and therefore its maritime and particularly air assets are significant. It has several principal warships and a sizeable littoral defence force of fast patrol craft and corvettes equipped with missiles, while its air force is equipped with significant numbers of modern air defence and ground attack fast jet aircraft including the Tornado, Typhoon, F-5, and F-15.

Military modernisation continues to be a priority for the Saudi government as a means of supporting an increasingly assertive foreign policy and to meet regional security challenges, mainly from Iran. According to some analysts Saudi is expected to commit \$86 billion to military procurement between 2010 and 2015.²³⁴ Equipment priorities during that period include the procurement of new main battle tanks, medium-lift helicopters, additional Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft (deliveries began in 2009 and are expected to conclude in 2019), hawk advanced jet trainer aircraft, an upgrade to the Saudi Air Force's Tornado fleet, multi-role tanker/transport aircraft and air-to-air-missiles. Saudi Arabia has been linked to various new frigate and destroyer programmes as part of efforts to develop a 'blue water' capability for its Navy. In 2010 Saudi Arabia also agreed a 10-year deal with the United States, worth \$60 billion, for the procurement of aircraft, including 72 F-15 multi-role strike aircraft due for delivery from 2013, and advanced weapon systems. The deal is part of a broader US programme, first established under the previous Bush administration, to provide Middle Eastern allies with advanced missile defence systems in order to address the growing threat from Iran. Although the UK and US have historically been Saudi Arabia's principal arms suppliers, the Kingdom has also recently sought to diversify its supplier base.

Iran²³⁵

A constant feature in any assessment of Iran's military capabilities is the sheer quantity of force that it possesses and in particular its manpower strength, which is currently estimated at 523,000 active personnel, nearly a quarter of which is Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps personnel (125,000). The reserve strength of the armed forces is an additional 350,000, while the Basij paramilitary resistance force has been estimated in excess of 1 million personnel when mobilised. With these numbers, Iran has the largest potential military manpower capability in its region.

What is less certain, and the subject of much debate, is the combat effectiveness of those forces. While many commentators consider Iran's military to be capable of regional power projection and deterring or defending against conventional threats from some of Iran's neighbours, its ability to project power beyond its immediate sphere of influence or against more militarily capable countries has been regarded as questionable. As Anthony

²³⁴ "Navigating the emerging markets – Saudi Arabia", *Jane's Industry Quarterly*, March 2011

²³⁵ Greater detail on Iran's conventional military capabilities and its nuclear weapons programme is available in Library Research Paper RP09/92, *An introduction to the Islamic Republic of Iran*, December 2009 and Library Standard Note SN06039, *Iran's nuclear programme: an update*, July 2011.

Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies has suggested, Iran is not a weakling, but neither is it capable of major aggression or becoming a regional “hegemon” if it meets effective resistance from its neighbours and the US.²³⁶

A significant proportion of Iran’s armed forces is made up of conscripts who traditionally receive little military training and therefore possess marginal military effectiveness. A large part of Iran’s conventional arsenal is also western, and in particular US-sourced, such as the majority of its fast jet aircraft fleet. Consequently, the availability of spare parts, in-service support, upgrades and training for that equipment has been minimal in the last few decades. Much of Iran’s equipment inventory has degraded rapidly and is becoming increasingly obsolete.

For the size of Iran’s armed forces, the defence budget is small. In 2010 the defence budget was estimated at \$9.02billion, one fifth of the size of the Saudi defence budget in that year. However, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) the data on military expenditure in most Middle Eastern countries is uncertain.²³⁷ Iran in particular does not include spending on the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in its official defence budget. This is despite the fact that, with ground, air and naval forces as well as a missile unit, it accounts for a major share of Iran’s military capacity.

Indeed, a number of analysts have argued that the sophistication of certain Iranian capabilities and assets and the support it has received for its ballistic missile programme from North Korea, China and Russia has allowed Iran to compensate for weaknesses elsewhere in its conventional forces, in particular in its air power. The **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps** (IRGC) is one such capability. It is a separate organisation from the Regular Armed Forces, although its activities run in parallel and are co-ordinated by the Armed Forces General Staff. The IRGC is considered, on the whole, to be well trained, well armed, highly motivated and politically influential, thereby giving it a privileged access to funding and resources.

Its presence within Iranian society is also vast and in recent years the IRGC has attained considerable economic influence; a position some have argued advocates viewing the IRGC less as a traditional military entity and more as a domestic actor. Within that Corps the IRGC’s Naval Force, which is the only arm of the IRGC that has its own military assets, is considered particularly effective. In September 2008 the IRGC’s naval forces assumed responsibility for defending Iran’s interests in the Persian Gulf, while the Iranian Navy has been tasked with defending Iran’s interests and boosting its presence in the Gulf of Oman and the Caspian Sea. Utilising the IRGC’s naval force in particular, Iran has the short term ability to affect asymmetrically activity in the Gulf region, and specifically in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz which links the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman and through which 40% of the world’s crude oil supply passes.²³⁸

Iran’s **Al-Quds force** is also thought to comprise anywhere between 5,000 and 15,000 elite IRGC personnel. It is responsible for extra-territorial operations, in particular the alleged training, equipping and financing of foreign groups and organisations such as Iraqi-based militants, Hamas, Hizbollah and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. It is also reported to operate a worldwide intelligence network that has assisted in the past in procuring WMD-related

²³⁶ Anthony Cordesman, *Iran: hegemon or weakling*, 28 February 2007

²³⁷ SIPRI Yearbook 2011, p.187

²³⁸ The only other outlet from the Gulf is the Saudi Arabia pipeline to Yanbu on the red Sea, although this pipeline can only handle approximately five million barrels per day. Closure of the Strait would therefore create serious problems for the oil market. However, it is acknowledged that any disruption would be short term and unlikely to have a lasting impact on global oil supplies or the overall military balance due to the overwhelming military superiority of the US in the region.

technology for Iran.²³⁹ Analysts report that the Iranian government gives the Quds force priority when providing equipment and training and views it as central to Iran's ability to conduct asymmetric warfare, largely within its regional sphere of influence.

Modernisation of these military assets has been a priority for the last few years. Maritime assets have been strengthened with the procurement of additional fast attack patrol craft, midget submarines, swimmer delivery vehicles and the development of anti-ship missile systems, a trend which is likely to continue since the IRGC's assumption of sole responsibility for defending Iran's interests in the Persian Gulf. However, the force could potentially operate further afield in the future if provided with suitable sealift or basing facilities.

There have also been indications that Iran is seeking to modernise other aspects of its conventional capabilities, in particular its obsolescent assets. Iran's relationship with Ukraine, but more particularly with Russia and China, has proven crucial in this regard. In December 2005 Russia announced that it had entered into an agreement with Tehran for the upgrade of attack aircraft, air defence missile systems, patrol boats and T-72 tanks, a deal which drew considerable international criticism in light of ongoing discussions over Tehran's ballistic missile capabilities and wider nuclear programme. In January 2007, the then Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, confirmed that his country would consider further requests by Tehran for the procurement of defensive weapons, as Russia considered that such equipment was not covered by UN sanctions restricting Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and technology.²⁴⁰

More recently Iran is also reported to have expressed an interest in developing a longer-range strike capability, possibly as an alternative means of delivering a nuclear payload other than via its ground-launched ballistic missile programme. Nevertheless that ballistic missile programme has continued apace, while Iran continues to be suspected by the international community of developing a nuclear weapons programme.

Egypt

Egypt's military has consistently been a dominant force in domestic politics and currently the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces forms the interim government. Historically, the military has been configured for internal security, territorial defence and some regional power projection. This is reflected in the size of the military which, in terms of manpower, is significant. Active personnel total 468,500 of which 73% are ground forces and 17% are air defence personnel. In addition, there are 479,000 Reserves, which again are dominated by ground forces, and almost 400,000 paramilitary personnel. In total, Egypt has a potential military manpower of in excess of one million personnel, second only to that of Iran in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Egypt also has impressive military hardware and a mixture of western, Russian and Chinese-sourced capabilities, although modernisation, until recently, had taken a back seat to increasing the size and capabilities of its ground forces.²⁴¹ The Army consequently possesses a significant number of main battle tanks, armoured infantry and reconnaissance vehicles. Although the Navy, in terms of manpower, is small, it retains 12 warships (eight frigates and four tactical submarines), patrol and coastal combatant vessels, mine warfare vessels and landing ships capable of both littoral defence and regional power projection. Equally, the Air Force has one of the largest fast jet fleets in the region,²⁴² and the Egyptian

²³⁹ Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses", *US Congressional Research Service*, 6 August 2009

²⁴⁰ "Russian missiles delivered for Iran", *Defense News*, 16 January 2007

²⁴¹ "Egypt mulls JF-17 co-operation and signs for more F-16s", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 4 March 2010

²⁴² Alongside Israel and Syria.

armed forces are also one of the few militaries in the region to possess an unmanned aerial vehicle capability.

In the last few years attention has turned toward modernising Egypt's ageing assets, in particular its air defence capabilities. However, that modernisation has relied heavily on US military aid through its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. During the years of the Bush administration Egypt was reported to have received approximately \$1.3 billion in military aid annually, which accounts for a significant proportion of the country's military budget. In 2010 that defence budget was approximately \$6 billion, the fifth largest in the region. Egypt is second only to Israel in the amount of military assistance it has received from the US.

Through the FMS programme, Egypt requested in 2009 the sale of 24 F-16C/D aircraft, along with requisite weapons and equipment, several advanced reconnaissance systems and a variety of defensive aids and communications equipment, in a deal reported to be worth \$3 billion. That deal followed an earlier request for the sale of 12 Apache attack helicopters and associated weapons and equipment.²⁴³

Israel

Due to its unique status in the region, Israel has historically placed great emphasis on defence and security. It has consistently been the second largest military spender, behind Saudi Arabia and ahead of Iran, and in 2010 allocated \$15 billion to the defence budget. Supported by the US, it has also received significant military assistance which is reflected in the technological superiority of its assets, in particular in its ground and air capabilities.

From a manpower perspective, Israel has the third largest potential military force in the region after Iran and Egypt. Although it only has 176,500 regular personnel, 75% of whom are ground forces, and a paramilitary force of 8,000, those forces are supplemented by over 565,000 reservists, half a million of whom are ground troops. The active force is overwhelmingly comprised of conscripts, except in the Air Force, although unlike many conscripted forces these personnel are considered well trained, well equipped and highly effective.

Ground assets are sizeable, reflecting the priority Israel places on internal security and the defence of its borders. The Army has over 3,500 main battle tanks, more than 10,000 armoured personnel carriers and 5,000 artillery pieces. The Air Force has 460 combat-capable fast jet aircraft in the air defence, attack and forward ground attack roles, all of US origin. It also has a number of maritime patrol, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft and electronic intelligence aircraft, as well as 81 attack helicopters (US Apache and Cobra). It also has a significant unmanned aerial vehicle capability, domestically designed and manufactured.

In comparison its maritime assets are small, both in terms of manpower and capabilities. Its naval fleet centres around three Dolphin-class tactical submarines procured from Germany in the 1990s, and a patrol and coastal combatant fleet of 57 vessels, including three corvettes equipped with surface-to-air and anti-ship missiles. A further two Dolphin-class submarines are reported to be under construction in Germany, for delivery to Israel in 2012 and 2013.²⁴⁴

As outlined above Israel has also sought to ensure its ultimate security through the development of an undeclared nuclear weapons capability.

²⁴³ "Egypt requests F-16 sale", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 October 2009

²⁴⁴ "Germany willing to fund 6th Dolphin-class sub for Israel", *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 July 2011

United Arab Emirates

Like Saudi Arabia, the UAE has been largely pro-western and views Iran as its main strategic competitor. UAE is concerned about Iran's general intentions in the region, but has also been locked for decades in a diplomatic dispute with Iran over the sovereignty of the Tunb islands in the Persian Gulf.

UAE has therefore adopted a similar approach to Saudi Arabia in terms of its military capabilities, although on a much smaller scale. It retains minimal manpower, which is skewed heavily in favour of ground forces, although the individual Emirates do retain some degree of independent force, such as the Dubai Independent Force. However, UAE compensates for its limited manpower with its military assets, in particular its ground forces which are well-equipped, and its air capabilities, which include advanced F-16 and Mirage fast jet ground attack aircraft, and Apache attack helicopters. UAE also retains a significant air defence capability. Maritime capabilities are concentrated solely on littoral defence and there are no principal warships in the fleet.

Like many of the Gulf states, modernisation of the military is a priority for UAE, which is reflected in its \$7 billion defence budget for 2010: the fourth largest in the region and only slightly smaller than Iran's. Modernisation priorities include the acquisition of a new fast jet fleet, possibly the Rafale or Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, and the procurement of a submarine capability intended to address the perceived threat posed by Iran's increasing fleet of small coastal submarines. UAE has been seen to be developing a close relationship with France with a view to military co-operation. In 2008 the two countries signed an agreement under which France is helping UAE in developing its civil nuclear programme. In exchange, both countries agreed to boost military and defence industrial co-operation, including the stationing of French naval units in UAE.

7.2 Prospects in the aftermath of the Arab Spring

As one of the most pro-western leaders in the region and a valuable ally of Saudi Arabia, President Mubarak's fall in Egypt is regarded as having done the most to challenge the regional balance of power. More than an indication of declining US influence in the region, it has ratcheted up the regional competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Iran views the change in domestic politics in Egypt as an opportunity to influence the future dynamics of the region and redraw old pro-US/anti-US alliances. Indeed, relations between Iran and Egypt have improved in the last few months. As Kayhan Barzegar of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School has argued, it would be significant, both regionally and internationally, for Egypt to establish a balanced and close relationship with Iran. It would empower Egypt's negotiating stance in relation to Israel and could prove vital to the issue of comprehensive nuclear disarmament in the Middle East, of which Egypt has been a longstanding advocate.²⁴⁵

A number of analysts, including Chester Crocker of the United States Institute of Peace, have suggested that the Arab Spring is likely to "lead to the re-emergence of Egypt as a leading Arab power" and that Egypt could feasibly emerge with a more independent-minded foreign policy, and one that is less in line with Saudi Arabia's strong stance against Iran.²⁴⁶

In contrast, Saudi Arabia and the GCC states appear determined to maintain the status quo and counter the regional aspirations of Iran, thereby ensuring continued stability in the

²⁴⁵ "Iran's interests and values and the Arab Spring", Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 20 April 2011. Egypt's efforts to promote comprehensive nuclear disarmament and establish a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East is examined in greater detail in Library Research Paper RP10/42, *Progress towards nuclear disarmament*, June 2010

²⁴⁶ Chester Crocker, *The Arab Spring*, United States Institute of Peace, 25 April 2011

region.²⁴⁷ In March 2011 Saudi Arabia and UAE both deployed troops to Bahrain, under the guise of a GCC mutual defence agreement, in response to Shia-led uprisings against the ruling Sunni monarchy. More recently Saudi Arabia also invited Jordan and Morocco to join the Gulf Co-operation Council, in what was seen as an effort to shore up its position against Iran. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have also both announced multi-billion dollar investment and aid packages for Egypt and Yemen in an effort to further Saudi and Qatari interests in the region and roll back Iranian influence. The aid package to Egypt, for example, was reportedly based on Egypt not mending ties with Iran.²⁴⁸

As an article in *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst* in June 2011 noted:

The Saudi and UAE reaction to Bahrain is emblematic of an increasingly muscular GCC approach to the uprisings, driven by deep-seated fears of Iranian attempts to expand Tehran's influence in the region. Such attempts to 'export the revolution' to Shia populations in Bahrain, Kuwait, and the east of Saudi Arabia, along with territorial ambitions in the Persian Gulf, were a major issue in the 1980s, but how serious Iran is today about such ambitions is an open question [...]

The increasingly warm ties between Iraq and Iran are partially responsible for the militarised GCC reaction to the crisis. With a powerful Iraq no longer in place to check Iranian ambitions, the Gulf states feel that they have been forced to step into this void.²⁴⁹

How this new geopolitical order will unfold is not yet clear and the region remains in flux. Much will depend on the fate of President Assad in Syria and how Turkey chooses to respond to events in its near abroad. As Paul Salem, Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center has observed: "despite their sweeping repercussions for both domestic and international players, the Arab uprisings have not led to a dramatically new regional order or a new balance of power. This could change, particularly if developments continue to escalate in Syria".²⁵⁰ What the majority of commentators are agreed on, however, is that the outcome of the Libya conflict will be largely irrelevant to any future geopolitical order. Aside from access to its oil reserves, there is little strategic interest in Libya and it is not a pivotal country for the balance of power in the Middle East and North Africa. As Professor Michael Clarke of RUSI has noted:

The fact is that the future of Libya is not strategically very important to the Europeans in general, still less to Britain in particular. The growing chaos in Syria or Yemen, the simmering tensions in Bahrain, the fate of Egypt's fledgling democracy, are all more strategically important to Britain than anything that happens in Tripoli. The future of these countries will weigh in the stability or chaos that prevails in the Middle East as a whole for the coming era.²⁵¹

Syria and Turkey

Militarily Syria is a middle-ranking power in the region and uses its Army, which comprises the majority of its personnel and assets, largely for maintaining internal security and territorial defence. However, it is not Syria's military capabilities that will determine any future balance of power in the region, but how it evolves politically in the immediate future. The collapse of the Syrian regime under President Assad would have significant repercussions for Iran's

²⁴⁷ Roula Khalaf, "Eight lessons of the Arab spring", *Financial Times*, 28 July 2011

²⁴⁸ "Making peace after the Arab Spring", *British Israel Communications and Research Centre*, August 2011

²⁴⁹ "Iran's fortunes and the Arab Spring", *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 15 June 2011

²⁵⁰ Paul Salem, "Arab Spring has yet to alter region's strategic balance", *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 2011

²⁵¹ Michael Clarke, "Un-strategic victory in Libya", *RUSI Commentary*, June 2011

ambitions, being Iran's only regional ally and the country, through which it channels most of its assistance to Hamas and Hizbollah. As the article in *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst* noted:

While Tehran stands to benefit from the Bahraini government's woes, the collapse of weakening of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria would be devastating for Iran's position in the Levant. Syria is a critical supply route for Iranian arms to Hizbollah in Lebanon, and holds important symbolic value as one of Iran's long-standing allies in the Arab world [...]

Should Assad, a member of the minority Alawite sect, fall, any subsequent government is likely to be dominated by Syria's Sunni majority and therefore less well disposed to ally with Iran or act as a willing conduit of Iranian arms to Hizbollah. This means Iran has much to lose should Assad fall, not only in Syria, but also in Lebanon and Gaza where Iran supports Hamas.²⁵²

Paul Salem has also argued that the countries that deposed pro-western dictators are not likely to move closer to Iran, thereby undermining its attempts to re-shape old alliances. He argues that in the future Egyptian and Tunisian foreign policies are more likely to resemble Turkey's in becoming more independent while remaining allied with the west.²⁵³

This view of Turkey as an aspirational regional player is shared by Henri Barkey of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. While he argues that Turkey's economic and political systems would be difficult for these countries to emulate, he does acknowledge that the rise of Turkey's ruling AKP and its attitude toward its neighbours appeals to the Arab world and could be an inspiration for others on how to reform effectively.²⁵⁴

Indeed, Turkey has long sought to be a force for stability in the Middle East and North Africa, given its position at a strategic crossroads between the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, and as the only Muslim country in NATO.²⁵⁵ Its regional foreign policy has been one of "zero problems" with its neighbours and, in order to strengthen relations, Turkey has entered into dialogue with Iran, Syria, Libya and Iraq over the last few years. Since 2009 Turkey has also been conducting border protection exercises with Syria and in 2010 signed a defence framework agreement with Saudi Arabia. However, despite their shared strategic interests, Turkey has adopted an increasingly anti-Israeli stance in the last few years. At the beginning of September 2011 Turkey expelled the Israeli Ambassador and suspended all military agreements with Israel in response to Israel's military raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla in May 2010 in which nine Turkish activists were killed.²⁵⁶

Yet, while Paul Salem suggests that many of the Arab Spring countries will aspire to follow the same path as Turkey, he also argues that Turkey itself has "bungled the opportunity to take advantage of this historic shift to bolster its influence in the Arab world" and that "this could have been Turkey's moment in the Middle East; the moment was lost".²⁵⁷

²⁵² "Iran's fortunes and the Arab Spring", *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 15 June 2011

²⁵³ Paul Salem, "Arab Spring has yet to alter region's strategic balance", *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 2011

²⁵⁴ Henri Barkey, "Turkey and the Arab Spring", *Carnegie Endowment for International peace*, 26 April 2011

²⁵⁵ Turkey's military capabilities are discussed in detail in Library Research Paper RP08/90, *Turkey Today*, December 2008

²⁵⁶ Further information on Turkey's foreign policies over the last few years is available in Library Research Paper RP08/90, *Turkey Today*, December 2008 and Library Briefing SN06035, *Turkey's 2011 elections and beyond*, July 2011

²⁵⁷ Paul Salem, "Arab Spring has yet to alter region's strategic balance", *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 2011

George Protopapas of the Research Institute for European and American Studies agrees that Turkey's most significant challenge going forward will be to define its role in the new Arab order as a regional soft power.²⁵⁸

8 Implications for UK, EU and US policy

Much has been made of the change in relations between the west and countries such as Egypt, where western-backed dictators have fallen. The assumption is that relations will inevitably deteriorate when Arab foreign policies are formulated in a more democratic way. western policy in relation to Israel is unpopular in the Arab street. More broadly, however, the US and other western countries may be more popular. One poll, published in April by the International Republican Institute, showed that the United States was strongly preferred to Russia or Iran as a partner for Egypt. Only China was preferred to the United States as a country that respondents would prefer Egypt to be closer to, according to the poll.²⁵⁹

Despite the difficult history of relations between the west and the Arab world, then, it would appear that there are opportunities to enhance relations with whatever new democracies emerge from the uprisings. Most western leaders acknowledge that the future of the region is in the hands of Arabs, but a well constructed policy on the part of western countries could mean friendly relations in the future.

8.1 Consistency at last?

Much of the criticism of western policy towards the Arab world concerns its alleged hypocrisy and inconsistency. western governments, critics allege, have traditionally made statements in favour of democratisation in the region while in practice they have supported regimes which committed the most egregious abuses of human rights and allowed no democratic participation, as long as those regimes supported western interests such as maintaining a supply of oil and protecting Israel.

The call in February by President Obama for Hosni Mubarak to step down was interpreted as marking a shift away from the old policies of securing stability by supporting authoritarian regimes, in favour of a new position 'on the right side of history' supporting the people in their quest for democracy and dignity.

This may have been a decisive moment for US and western policy towards Egypt, but it probably did not mark the beginning of a new consistent approach to all the regimes in the region. The fact that western governments (and others in the region) still fear instability was demonstrated by the widespread reluctance to call for President Bashar al-Assad to step down in Syria, despite the vicious crackdown on dissent that, at the time of writing, has cost more than 3,000 civilian lives and has seen countless arrests of demonstrators, summary executions and torture, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council.²⁶⁰

The west may run out of patience with the Assad regime, as former ally Turkey appeared to do, although military action remains extremely unlikely. The real test for a consistent western policy is how it is applied to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi royal family was reported to be infuriated that Obama had 'abandoned' its former ally Hosni Mubarak.²⁶¹ The west, despite regular calls for reforms, appears unlikely to abandon the Saudi royal family even if serious trouble does happen there. The likely negative consequences for the other Gulf monarchies,

²⁵⁸ George Protopapas, "Turkey's geopolitical interests and Middle East revolts", Research Institute for European and American Studies, 10 August 2011

²⁵⁹ [Egyptian Public Opinion Survey April 14 – April 27, 2011](#), International Republican Institute, 2011, pp 31-2

²⁶⁰ ["UN human rights chief urges immediate action on Syria as death toll passes 3,000"](#), UN press notice, 14 October 2011

²⁶¹ "Arab Leaders Feel U.S. Abandoned Egypt's Mubarak", *National Public Radio Online*, 9 February 2011

for oil supplies and for the battle to contain Iran are probably too great for the west to consider such a move. The Saudi military mission to shore up the Bahraini monarchy, for example, could have been treated far more harshly by the west. In the event Hillary Clinton simply said that Bahrain had the right to request help from the GCC countries.²⁶²

Although the US denies it, the US approach to different regimes in the region is inconsistent, and is likely to stay that way. Interviewed in June 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton rejected the suggestion that there was any inconsistency in US policies:

I wouldn't accept the premise. I think we believe in the same values and principles, full stop. We believe that countries should empower their people. We believe that people should have certain universal rights. We believe that there are certain economic systems that work better for the vast majority of people than other systems. I think we're very consistent.

She went on:

We live in the real world, and there are lots of countries that we deal with because we have interests in common, we have certain security issues that we are both looking at. Obviously, in the Middle East, Iran is an overwhelming challenge to all of us. We do business with a lot of countries whose economic systems or political systems are not ones we would design or choose to live under. We encourage consistently, both publicly and privately, reform and the protection of human rights. But we don't walk away from dealing with China because we think they have a deplorable human-rights record. We don't walk away from Saudi Arabia.²⁶³

However, some disagreed, arguing that the inconsistencies in policy are evident. Ruth Santini commented for the Brookings Institution:

Washington and Brussels have not consistently condemned all those Arab states unwilling to undertake political reforms but whose allegiance has served the west for decades to ensure regional stability, peace with Israel, and flows of trade and oil. Even if pro-status quo rulers, currently stepping up the repression of their oppositions across the Middle East and the Gulf, are considered to be on life support, this has not implied a fundamental re-thinking of how U.S. and European strategies need to change. Both seem intent on preserving relations with some of their key regional authoritarian allies, especially the Gulf monarchies. Neither the U.S. nor Europe has drawn the conclusion that a consistent regional foreign policy in respect to dealing with autocrats is now required: Obama never mentioned Saudi Arabia in his speech, and Catherine Ashton and other European statesmen are reformulating EU policy by targeting only selected countries in MENA outside the Gulf.²⁶⁴

8.2 Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan?

Western policy is still very much marked by the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the most important of the lessons from Iraq is that a society whose fractures have long been covered over by an oppressive regime is likely to shatter when that regime is toppled. Far from building a national identity, the regime of Saddam Hussein had exacerbated hatred between the various components of Iraqi society.

²⁶² "Clinton renews US commitment to GCC security", *Kuwait News Agency*, 19 March 2011

²⁶³ Jeffrey Goldberg, *Danger: Falling Tyrants*, *The Atlantic*, June 2011

²⁶⁴ Ruth H Santini, "The Transatlantic Relationship After the Arab Uprisings: Stronger in North Africa, Shakier in the Middle East?", Brookings Institution, 9 June 2011

This lesson is particularly relevant today in the case of **Syria**. Syria resembles Saddam's Iraq not only because it is a repressive Ba'athist one-party state with a history of massacres against dissident groups but also because Syrian society is deeply divided along sectarian lines and is ruled by an elite that does not come from the majority. Another echo of the Iraqi experience is that Syria is an important piece of the strategic balance in the region and the survival or otherwise of its regime is highly significant to the fortunes of Iran. The lesson from Iraq in relation to the Syrian uprising, then, is not to bring down a regime when, firstly, that may result in internal chaos and bloodshed and, secondly, your enemies may gain a strategic advantage. Of course, in the case of Syria, the Assad regime is Iran's main ally in the Arab world and, at first sight, its downfall would be a major blow to Iran and Hizbollah, and therefore an advantage to the west. The problem is that the Assad regime has been useful to the west in maintaining stable relations with Israel. Any replacement regime might undermine that stability with unknown consequences both for Israel and Iran.

In **Libya** the lessons from the west's experience in Iraq led to a greater insistence on unequivocal backing from the United Nations Security Council for military action.²⁶⁵ This having been secured with the abstention of Russia and China, western leaders such as David Cameron stressed that the military action would be in accordance with Security Council resolution 1973 and would, therefore, be entirely legal:

The action will be limited by what the UN Security Council resolution says. As far as I am concerned, there are two absolutely clear bases for action—one is necessary measures to put in place a no-fly zone, and the second is necessary measures to prevent the deaths of civilians. In everything we do, we must be guided by clear legal advice underneath that UN Security Council resolution.²⁶⁶

The British government, keen to underline the legality of the mission, also promised to make a summary of the legal advice on the military action available to Parliament,²⁶⁷ although in the event some were disappointed about the brevity of the note.²⁶⁸

As the campaign progressed, however, there were many accusations that NATO countries were not, in fact, complying with the terms of the resolution. The aim of regime change, while not spelt out, was clearly in the back of western leaders' minds and this was not authorised by Resolution 1973. Leon Panetta, for example, said during the Senate hearings to confirm his appointment as the new Secretary of Defence, "If we continue the pressure, if we stick with it, I think ultimately Gaddafi will step down."²⁶⁹ The clearest breach was probably the violation of the arms embargo that the resolution imposed. It was widely reported that some Gulf states had been arming the rebels and, on 5 September 2011, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen admitted that he knew that France had supplied arms to the rebels.²⁷⁰

The provision in the resolution that excluded a "foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory"²⁷¹ also spoke to the importance of gaining regional support for the operation. The resolution also explicitly recognised the importance of the Arab League in maintaining peace and security in the region.²⁷² US relations with the Muslim world and with some European allies are widely thought to have been severely damaged by the intransigent

²⁶⁵ For more on the UN Security Council Resolution see the Library Standard Notes [The Security Council's no-fly zone resolution on Libya](#) of March 2011 and [Interpretation of Security Council 1973 on Libya](#) of April 2011

²⁶⁶ HC Deb 21 March 2011, c702

²⁶⁷ HC Deb 21 March 2011, c706

²⁶⁸ [UK government note on legal basis for military action against Libya – full text](#), 21 March 2011 [published on the *Guardian* website]

²⁶⁹ "Panetta's confirmation appears safe", *Washington Post*, 10 June 2011

²⁷⁰ "Libya weapons deals raise questions about Gaddafi aftermath", *EUobserver*, 6 September 2011

²⁷¹ [UN Security Council 1973 of 2011](#), Operative paragraph 4

²⁷² *Ibid*, Operative paragraph 5

approach of the George W Bush administration's approach to the invasion of Iraq, where allies felt that their opposition was completely ignored. In the case of Libya, the moral support of the Arab League was crucial in allowing the passage of the resolution and the practical support of certain Arab states, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, was highly significant during the campaign itself.

Both Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that it is relatively easy for a group of powerful western nations to bring down the government of a smaller and weaker developing country; rebuilding a nation, on the other hand, is immensely difficult and expensive, requiring a detailed knowledge of that country that outsiders are unlikely to have.

As well as being intended to placate Arab opinion, Resolution 1973's prohibition of "a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory" was probably an indication that the US, the UK and France had no appetite for taking control of Libya and then being drawn into a protracted nation-building operation such as proved so difficult in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is perhaps by refusing to take over full responsibility for Libya after the fall of the Qaddafi regime that the western powers have chosen to respond to another lesson of the Iraq conflict. That lesson was the failure of post-conflict planning in Iraq. Rather than develop a comprehensive plan for what to do after the fall of Qaddafi, western powers appeared to put their faith in the capability of the Transitional National Council's interim government to maintain order and promote national reconciliation. Whether that faith is misplaced remains to be seen. The relative calm prevailing in Benghazi and other TNC-held parts of Libya was a positive signal about the capacity of the TNC to keep order. Reports of *jihadi* participation in rebel militias and of tribal divisions were perhaps not so positive. Libyan society is not as divided as Iraq's, however: the number of Shiites in Libya is negligible.

8.3 Liberal interventionism revitalised by Libya?

The idea of intervention by foreign forces to prevent massive human rights abuses has had something of a bumpy ride. The United Nations and the wider international community failed to prevent catastrophes in Rwanda and Somalia in the 1990s but later, there were arguably successful interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo. In 1999 there was an intervention by Australia in East Timor that was widely perceived as successful and, in 2000, the UK military intervention stabilised Sierra Leone.

In the new decade, however, the notion, now dubbed 'liberal interventionism', hit some deep potholes.²⁷³ The aim of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was not to prevent human rights abuses but to remove the Taliban government that had facilitated al-Qaeda's plans to carry out the 11 September terrorist attacks in the USA. Nevertheless, the failure of that action to result in a quick and decisive success tarnished the concept of interventionism. Even worse was the invasion of Iraq. There was perhaps not much that was 'liberal' about the intervention in Iraq, based as it was on the incorrect supposition that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and, perhaps, on the desire to influence the region's oil supplies. All the same, the Iraq operation led to chaos within the country and a horrifying outbreak of violence.

The intervention in the Libyan crisis was a risky venture and many people cautioned against it.²⁷⁴ Critics were worried about the possibility of a military stalemate between the two sides, and about 'mission creep': exceeding the remit of the Security Council resolution and being drawn into a difficult nation-building process. They did not want to repeat the mistakes of Afghanistan and Iraq.

²⁷³ For more on interventionism, see the Library Research Paper [Reinventing humanitarian intervention: Two cheers for the Responsibility to Protect?](#), June 2008

²⁷⁴ See the [debate on Security Council resolution 1973](#) in the House of Commons, 21 March 2011

When rebel forces took control of the Libyan capital in late August 2011, it appeared that the worst pitfalls of the military intervention had been avoided. The allies continued to claim that the action had been legal. Not a single life had been lost by any member of NATO. The collapse of the Qaddafi regime had in the end been quite rapid and, as television pictures showed jubilant crowds in the centre of both Tripoli and Benghazi, an impression, at least, was created that the rebellion was a broad-based popular uprising rather than one side of a civil war.

All this might suggest that liberal interventionism will have a much smoother road ahead after Libya. Many analysts, however, have cautioned that this is unlikely.

Firstly, many of the factors behind the apparent success of the operation may turn out to have been unique to Libya. The international consensus behind action to thwart Colonel Qaddafi was particularly easy to assemble because he was uniquely unpopular in the Arab world. The same could not be said of the dictator and rights abuser Hosni Mubarak, for example.

Secondly, Qaddafi's overthrow did not pose a great threat to stability in the region. Geographical isolation as well as political isolation made him a relatively easy target

Thirdly, the physical conditions in which the Libya campaign was fought were ideal for preventing heavy military forces from attacking towns: most of the population in Libya lives near the coast, there are few major roads and the country is open. Destroying tanks and artillery from the air in these conditions is relatively easy.

Fourthly, the traditional division of Libya into east and west provided a solid core of opposition in the east to Qaddafi's regime, whose centre of gravity was in the west.

Lastly, to quote Michael Clarke of the Royal United Services Institute, this was "a comparatively small operation against a weak and crazy opponent."²⁷⁵

NATO

As well as the specifics of Libya there is another factor. NATO is the most likely body to carry out interventions with the authority of Security Council resolutions. Even if such military actions are not under NATO command, the forces of NATO members are likely to be at the heart of them. The success of the Libyan campaign did not come easily or quickly and many observers say that it left NATO looking weaker, rather than stronger. NATO members were not united: the US was reluctant to take a leading role in the action and some member states refused to participate or even criticised the action publicly.

Partly as a result of the disunity of purpose, NATO's firepower was left looking distinctly unimpressive. It is reported that NATO's European members ran out of ammunition early on in the operation.²⁷⁶ It was also suggested that the alliance did not have enough fast jets at its disposal to maintain the operational tempo necessary to bring about a rapid collapse of Qaddafi's forces, and there were few attack helicopters available to provide support to ground forces.

8.4 Economic reconstruction

Governments and commentators agree that the economic reconstruction of countries such as Egypt will be crucial to the prospects for democracy and human rights in the region. For Ruth Santini, the US approach emphasises economics particularly strongly:

²⁷⁵ Michael Clarke, "Curious victory for NATO in Libya", Royal United Services Institute, 24 August 2011

²⁷⁶ "NATO runs out of munitions", *Agence France Presse*, 16 April 2011

The U.S. and EU's MENA policies now imply a "reset" on two issues: the kind of democracy to be supported and the new U.S.-EU policy toward the region. Washington and Brussels share the same agenda on these two points, albeit with different emphases. They are putting their weight behind the two transitions, identifying common actions and trying to bring the rest of the international community together to demonstrate a real (especially financial) commitment to these states' successful recovery. President Obama's understanding of the kind of democracy the U.S. stands for in the region is a comprehensive one, based on the three pillars of economic opportunities, political reforms, and minority rights. The parallel he made between a prosperous economy in Tunisia and Egypt acting as a democratizing magnet for the rest of the region and the European enlargement in the 1990s to the former Eastern European communist states is illustrative. Washington sees the success of the Tunisian and Egyptian transitions as dependent on significant economic growth based on innovation and accountable and efficient institutions, generating youth employment and a virtuous circle between modernization and democratization. Europe is endorsing a more political approach, emphasizing the need to support the construction of 'deep democracies', acknowledging the urgency of favouring economic reconstruction, as signalled by the creation of a European task force for the southern Mediterranean, which is composed by members of the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other international financial institutions. The challenge ahead for an effective European and American engagement in economic development in the MENA will have to focus on helping enhance intra-regional trade and financial relations and overcoming an under-developed economic intra-regionalism.²⁷⁷

8.5 US

On 19 May, President Obama set out a clear policy of supporting the revolutions in the Arab world. In a speech at the State Department in Washington, he pledged support from the US for the advancement of the rights of individuals in the region rather than friendly regimes:

So we face a historic opportunity. We have the chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator. There must be no doubt that the United States of America welcomes change that advances self-determination and opportunity. Yes, there will be perils that accompany this moment of promise. But after decades of accepting the world as it is in the region, we have a chance to pursue the world as it should be.

Of course, as we do, we must proceed with a sense of humility. It's not America that put people into the streets of Tunis or Cairo — it was the people themselves who launched these movements, and it's the people themselves that must ultimately determine their outcome.

Not every country will follow our particular form of representative democracy, and there will be times when our short-term interests don't align perfectly with our long-term vision for the region. But we can, and we will, speak out for a set of core principles — principles that have guided our response to the events over the past six months:

The United States opposes the use of violence and repression against the people of the region. (Applause.)

²⁷⁷ Ruth H Santini, "The Transatlantic Relationship After the Arab Uprisings: Stronger in North Africa, Shakier in the Middle East?", Brookings Institution, 9 June 2011

The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders — whether you live in Baghdad or Damascus, Sana'a or Tehran.

And we support political and economic reform in the Middle East and North Africa that can meet the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people throughout the region.

Our support for these principles is not a secondary interest. Today I want to make it clear that it is a top priority that must be translated into concrete actions, and supported by all of the diplomatic, economic and strategic tools at our disposal.²⁷⁸

The US took a strategic decision to support the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The decision was not welcomed by allies such as Saudi Arabia, which saw the calls for Mubarak to step aside, for example, as the abandonment of a long-standing ally. The Saudi regime fears that it, too, could be threatened by popular unrest and quickly dumped by the US.

The decision to come out in support of protest movements was a gamble that it was impossible to avoid. If the uprisings lead to improved conditions for the populations and governments that are friendly towards the United States, that gamble will have paid off. If different incompetent and authoritarian regimes replace the old ones, and they are hostile to US interests, then the administration will have damaged relationships with countries such as Saudi Arabia to no advantage.

Many analysts call for speedy action to influence developments in the region. Working with Islamist parties before they get closer to power is one suggestion:

To guide the new, rapidly evolving Middle East in a favourable direction, the United States should play to these instincts by entering into a strategic dialogue with the region's Islamist groups and parties. Through engagement, the United States can encourage these Islamists to respect key western interests, including advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process, countering Iran, and combating terrorism. It will be better to develop such ties with opposition groups now, while the United States still has leverage, rather than later, after they are already in power.²⁷⁹

8.6 EU

The EU's main policy vehicle for the countries of the Middle East and North Africa has been the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The House of Lords European Union Committee provided a succinct description of its purpose in 2006:

The EU first developed the European Neighbourhood Policy in the context of the 2004 enlargement, so as to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its eastern neighbours. The basic idea of the ENP is that the EU offers its neighbours closer co-operation across a range of policies and better access to its single market. In return, it asks the participating countries to implement economic and political reforms based on "common values" such as democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development.

The ENP seeks to replicate the success of the enlargement process by offering incentives on the basis of conditionality, without, however, offering the prospect of membership. Originally, the ENP was designed mainly with the new eastern

²⁷⁸ Barack Obama, "[Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa](#)", 19 May 2011

²⁷⁹ Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists: How Islamists Will Change Politics and Vice Versa", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

neighbours in mind, most notably to bind Ukraine closer to the EU without giving a "membership perspective". Following political pressure from the southern Member States, the EU included all its immediate neighbours, including those in Northern Africa and the Middle East which are included in the EU's Barcelona process. In 2004, the ENP was extended further to the countries of the Southern Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on the basis that the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey share borders with them.²⁸⁰

From the beginning, however, there were criticisms of the policy. A group of non-governmental organisations wrote the European Commission in 2007, setting out the problems that they perceived with the policy which included the alleged failure to give democracy and human rights a high enough attention:

We welcome the fact that environment has become a key dimension of a strengthened ENP, both at national and regional level. We were nevertheless concerned that the "common values" at the heart of the ENP, such as rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights and democratisation, as well as core elements of EU external policies, such as sustainable development, poverty eradication and gender equality, were not highlighted as key dimensions of a strengthened ENP aiming at peace, stability and prosperity. These issues should be kept high on the agenda of a strengthened ENP and be a priority in the implementation process.²⁸¹

Economic liberalisation had, for the NGOs, sometimes been prioritised at the expense of fair economic development:

A free trade area in itself should not be the aim of a strengthened ENP, but should be an instrument to support fair economic development and the rule of law in the regions concerned. The strengthened policy should refrain from supporting policy reforms that have negative impacts on the most marginalised in the region. The political and social components of the ENP should therefore not be compromised for the sake of enhancing economic liberalisation and free trade agreements.²⁸²

These alleged shortcomings of the ENP coincide with widely-accepted reasoning about the cause of the uprisings of 2011: many analysts have pointed to:

- failure to implement real democratic reforms;
- failure to protect human rights;
- economic liberalisation without strengthening the rule of law leading to marginalisation and nepotistic control of the region's economies;
- widespread poverty.

In May 2011, the think tank Open Europe published a report echoing many of the concerns aired by the NGOs in 2007.²⁸³ It also criticised the level of direct budget support to Arab governments when some of them were "clearly corrupt". The report welcomed the Commission's proposals for change and set out 10 recommendations for improving the ENP and policies towards the Middle East and North Africa:

²⁸⁰ House of Lords European Union Committee, 53rd Report of Session 2005-06, [The Further Enlargement of the EU: threat or opportunity?](#), HL Paper 273, 23 November 2006, paras 236-7

²⁸¹ [Joint letter from non-governmental organisation representatives on the ENP to Benita Ferrero-Waldner of the European Commission](#), 8 October 2007

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ [The EU and the Mediterranean: good neighbours?](#), Open Europe, May 2011

- Make ENPI contributions voluntary [for EU member states]
- Include some “negative” conditionality
- Set realistic and achievable targets
- More market access
- Scrap rules of origin for products from the region
- More aid geared towards boosting trade
- Tighter controls on how money is spent
- More focus on civil society
- Drop the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach
- Scrap the Union for the Mediterranean²⁸⁴

In May 2011, the Commission admitted that “recent events and the results of the review have shown that EU support to political reforms in neighbouring countries has met with limited results” and promised that a “new approach must be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”.²⁸⁵ The policy would also be supported by an extra €1.2 billion for the following two years, and on top of that, more funding would be forthcoming from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank.

The extra funding will, according to the Commission, be more conditional. In a speech in June 2011, the Commissioner responsible for the ENP set out what he described as “the central benchmarks against which the EU will assess progress and adapt levels of support to its partners”.²⁸⁶ Those benchmarks are:

- free and fair elections;
- freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media;
- the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial;
- fight against corruption;
- security and law enforcement sector reform and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces.²⁸⁷

He mentioned a number of other criteria and said that, in future, action plans worked out with neighbouring countries would contain a limited number of achievable priorities and set out clear sequences of actions to achieve them.

In October 2011, William Hague expressed his support for the new ENP and said that it could be an important boost for reform:

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p19-22

²⁸⁵ European Commission, “[A new response to a changing neighbourhood](#)”, Joint communication, COM(2011)303, 25 May 2011

²⁸⁶ Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, ‘[Revolutionising the European Neighbourhood Policy in response to tougher Mediterranean revolutions](#)’ Round table discussion organised by Members of the European Parliament, Brussels, 14 June 2011

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

We helped to secure a revised European neighbourhood policy, which makes an ambitious offer of much deeper economic and trade integration and more explicitly conditional financial assistance, and the G8 has pledged \$38 billion for the region. In both cases, we want to see policy turned into action, so that the whole of Europe and the G8 can act as magnets for change. The Arab spring has brought conflict and uncertainty, but it undoubtedly has the potential to bring about the greatest single advance in human freedom since the end of the cold war.²⁸⁸

8.7 UK

Conflict prevention

The Government's *National Security Strategy* (NSS) made fostering stability throughout the world a top objective in minimising threats to the UK, and its companion the *Strategic defence and Security Review* (SDSR) committed the Government to tackle such threats at source.²⁸⁹

According to the British Government, the rapid developments in the Arab world not only show the need for a foreign policy that is responsive to changes, but also one which recognises that stability can only be achieved through legitimate institutions that can respond to people's needs and manage tensions in a peaceful way, and therefore acts to foster those institutions across the world.

Announcing the publication in June 2011 of the Government's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*, which gave more detail on how the UK intends to pursue the objectives set out in the NSS and the SDSR, Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the "Arab Spring" showed the need for early engagement and flexible responses in overseas action:

The "Arab Spring" has highlighted the need for a strategic UK approach to early engagement in places at risk of instability, and to be prepared for a fast, flexible and integrated Government response.

The "Building Stability Overseas Strategy", which is being published online today on the websites of all three Departments, sets out clear, achievable proposals for how we can improve the way we identify, prevent and end instability and conflict overseas by using our diplomatic, development, defence and security tools, and by drawing on Britain's experience, relationships, reputation and values. We will prioritise action on those fragile and conflict-affected countries where the risks are high, our interests are most at stake and where we know we can have an impact.²⁹⁰

Arab Partnership Initiative

The Government's main instrument for putting these proposals into practice in the Arab world is the Arab Partnership initiative. The initiative was announced on 8 February 2011 with initial funding of £5 million. The *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* explains:

The Arab Partnership Initiative is the joint FCO/DFID approach to the Arab Spring. Launched as a £5 million FCO fund in February 2011, it was expanded in May to £110 million over four years in recognition of the historic opportunity presented to support the building of a more stable, open and prosperous Middle East and North Africa

²⁸⁸ HC Deb 13 October 2011, c495-8

²⁸⁹ *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, HM Government, Cm 7948, October 2010; *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, HM Government, Cm 7953, October 2010. For discussion of the NSS and the SDSR, see Library Research Paper 11/10, *UK Defence and Security Policy: A New Approach?*, January 2011

²⁹⁰ HC Deb 19 July 2011, c97-8WS

region. The Arab Partnership includes an FCO-led Participation Fund (up to £40 million) and a DFID-led Economic Facility (up to £70 million).

The Participation Fund is working across the countries of the region to support meaningful political reform, in partnership with civil society, parliaments, the media and judiciary. Programmes to support political transitions in Egypt and Tunisia are already underway. In Tunisia, for example, ahead of Constituent Assembly elections, the UK is working in partnership with the BBC World Service Trust and international and local civil society organisations to ensure freedom of expression is protected in legislative frameworks, and to build capacity for balanced and accurate reporting during elections.

The Economic Facility will provide technical assistance to support economic reform, and help to build more open, inclusive, vibrant and internationally integrated economies. This assistance will also contribute to strengthening the rule of law and voice/accountability. It will focus on those countries embracing reform, starting with Egypt and Tunisia, and then broadening out to countries such as Jordan and Morocco.²⁹¹

The Arab Partnership works by inviting proposals from organisations for projects that support the six principal objectives of the initiative: political participation, rule of law, corruption, public voice, youth employability, private sector development.

The first bidding period was 27 March to 28 April 2011; further bidding opportunities will become available.²⁹² A list of successful projects from the first round of bidding is available on the FCO website.²⁹³ Funding totalling £6 million was awarded to a range of political capacity-building projects run by bodies including the BBC World Service, Electoral Reform International Services and the British Council.

Libya Stabilisation Response Team

The Government's Stabilisation Unit has also been involved with the Transitional National Council in Libya to enhance the TNC's governance capacity. The UK-led first Stabilisation Response Team was sent to Benghazi on 23 May 2011, including British, Italian and Danish experts for a three-week mission. Its task was to help the TNC in providing services to the population and to build understanding of the stabilisation needs of Libya with a view to assisting with the United Nations' planning for post-conflict actions.

International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said that it was important to plan ahead for a stable Libya:

The UK has provided immediate humanitarian help for those affected by the conflict in Libya, from helping migrant workers return home to providing medical and emergency food supplies. We will continue to do so, but the international community also needs to start thinking strategically about what is needed now to help lay the foundations for a stable, secure Libya.

That's why an international Stabilisation Response Team is now on the ground in Libya to assess what support the country may need. Future plans could range from rebuilding the economy and infrastructure to supporting the National Transitional Council to deliver services for the people of Eastern Libya and ensuring that people are safe and secure.

²⁹¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*, FCO, July 2011, p29

²⁹² FCO website: Arab Partnership [visited 3 August 2011]

²⁹³ [List of projects funded under the Arab Partnership Initiative](#)

Stabilisation will ultimately be led by the UN, with strong multilateral support from the region and elsewhere.²⁹⁴

Arms sales

The Arab uprisings called the UK's arms exports policy into question. Prime Minister David Cameron visited Tahrir Square in Cairo in February 2011, during which he met protesters and gave a speech in which he regretted the west's support for repressive regimes. The visit was controversial, however, because on the same trip Mr Cameron had led a delegation including eight defence and aerospace companies to the Gulf States of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.²⁹⁵ While these countries are not the most repressive in the region, their records on democracy and human rights are mixed, and some commentators questioned the wisdom of speaking in favour of a democratic revolution in Egypt so soon after promoting arms sales to Gulf monarchies.

The UK's export licensing scheme came under close scrutiny and a number of licences that had been issued for exports to countries such as Libya and Bahrain were queried.²⁹⁶ As concerns mounted about repression in these countries, the Foreign Secretary announced to the Foreign Affairs Committee a review of the Government's policy and practice with regard to the export of equipment that might be used for internal repression, in particular crowd control goods.

The initial results of the review were announced on 18 July 2011, and William Hague said that it found that there was no evidence that British-supplied equipment had been used in suppressing Arab pro-democracy protests:

Consultations with our overseas posts revealed no evidence that any of the offensive naval, air or land-based military platforms used by Governments in North Africa or the Middle East against their own populations during the Arab spring, were supplied from the United Kingdom.

However, the review also concluded that further work is needed on how we operate certain aspects of the controls. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has responsibility for our export licensing operations. The Secretary of State and I will consider how this should be done, and once that process is complete I will update the House on our proposals.²⁹⁷

In October, the proposals for modifying the export controls regime were announced by Mr Hague in a statement to the House of Commons:

The Government propose to introduce a mechanism to allow immediate licensing suspension to countries experiencing a sharp deterioration in security or stability. Applications in the pipeline would be stopped and no further licences issued, pending ministerial or departmental review.

We also propose the introduction of a revised risk categorisation, based on objective indicators and reviewed regularly, that keeps pace with changing circumstances; enhances our assessment against all export control criteria, including human rights violations; and allows specifically for ministerial scrutiny of open licences to ensure that the benefits of open licensing can be maintained while keeping the associated risks to

²⁹⁴ Department for International Development, "[First ever international Stabilisation Response Team deployed to Libya](#)", Press release, 23 May 2011

²⁹⁵ "Trade route leads PM into awkward dilemma", *Financial Times*, 26 February 2011

²⁹⁶ For a description of the UK export licensing regime, see the Library Standard Note [UK Arms Export Control Policy](#) of 21 October 2010

²⁹⁷ HC Deb 18 July 2011, c77-9WS

acceptable levels. This will increase oversight by Ministers, including of individual licence applications.²⁹⁸

The government regularly reviews licenses already granted, as well as reviewing current applications. A record of licenses granted and revoked is published in the *Strategic export controls: Quarterly Reports* and made available on the BIS website.²⁹⁹ The latest report is for [April to June 2011](#).

The House of Commons has a Committee on Arms Exports Controls (CAEC). The [latest report](#) from this committee was published on 22 March.³⁰⁰ The Government published a [response to the committee report](#) in July 2011.³⁰¹

In a debate on the reports of the CAEC, chairman Sir John Stanley raised the matter of export licences to Arab countries. He said that the Government's approach to Saudi Arabia was very different from its approach to other countries in the region:

...I believe that the Government are skating on thin ice in their present policy of the non-revocation of a single arms export licence to Saudi Arabia. I understand the reasons for that policy, but regret that so far the Government have been less than forthcoming—indeed, pretty much non-forthcoming—about the real reasons why they treat Saudi Arabia so differently from those other countries to which I have referred. I am in no doubt about the reasons behind the Government's policy: there is an intelligence dimension, an oil dimension and a British business interest, all of which are perfectly relevant and legitimate ministerial considerations. I believe, however, that the Government would do better to be open with the House and the Committees about why their policy towards Saudi Arabia is so conspicuously different from that applied to the other countries in question.³⁰²

On 19 October, Amnesty International released a report on the lessons for arms control from experiences in the Middle East and North Africa.³⁰³ A spokeswoman said that Europeans, Russians and the US had supplied large amounts of weaponry to repressive governments in the region, and that this highlighted the “stark failure of existing arms export controls” and underlined the need for an arms trade treaty.³⁰⁴

Arms sales to the region have also been controversial in the United States. Larry Diamond argued in *Foreign Affairs* in May 2011:

When Arab governments turn arms against peaceful protesters, the United States and Europe should stop supplying them with weapons. western countries have been selling (or giving) regimes, such as Saleh's in Yemen, the tools of repression, including tear gas, ammunition, sniper rifles, close-assault weapons, and rockets and tanks. Although Saleh may have been a valuable asset in the fight against terrorism at one time, he has become a liability. By ending such trade, the United States would firmly send the

²⁹⁸ HC Deb 13 October 2011, c41-2WS

²⁹⁹ BIS website, [Strategic Export Controls and Statistics](#)

³⁰⁰ CAEC, [Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls \(2011\): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2009, Quarterly Reports for 2010, licensing policy and review of export control legislation](#), HC 686 2010-11, Ordered to be printed 22 March 2011

³⁰¹ [Strategic Export Control: Her Majesty's Government's Annual Report for 2009, Quarterly Reports for 2010, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny Response of the Secretaries of State for Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, International Development and Business, Innovation and Skills](#), Cm 8079, July 2011

³⁰² HC Deb 210 October 2011, c342WH

³⁰³ [Arms Transfers to the Middle East and North Africa: Lessons for an Effective Arms Trade Treaty](#), Amnesty International, October 2011

³⁰⁴ [“Arms trade to Middle East and North Africa shows failure of export controls”](#), Amnesty International press release, 19 October 2011

message to the leaders of Bahrain (another recipient) and Yemen that if they are going to violently assault and arbitrarily arrest peaceful demonstrators for democracy, they are at least not going to continue doing so with U.S. guns.³⁰⁵

9 Conclusion

The term 'Arab Spring' has stuck. If the events of 2011 were being named now, however, something less optimistic might be chosen. As the temperature drops, it is increasingly evident that there are many problems that must be overcome before we can talk confidently of a move towards the democracy, transparency, and political and economic inclusion for which protesters have died and continue to lay down their lives.

Nonetheless, while the uprisings have struck a chord across the region because Arab societies have a shared history and many similar characteristics, the differences between them are immense and these will determine the outcome of recent upheavals more than any outside intervention.

One of the most important differences between Arab states is that some are cohesive but many are divided along sectarian, tribal and ethnic and regional lines. Unlike, say, the difference between Catholics and Protestants in England, which have faded over the centuries, the divisions in the Arab world are very sharp, not least because the regions autocrats have often played on them to cement their rule.

Another important distinction between Arab states is that in some, the rulers enjoy much more legitimacy and public support than in others, partly because some autocracies have been more benevolent while others have been responsible for vicious and widespread repression. One problem which all Arab regimes have shared to a greater or lesser extent is that of nepotism and corruption. Combine this with rising unemployment and food prices, and the mixture has been toxic to Arab citizens' sense of dignity and hope for advancement. As well as being a crucial factor in provoking the uprisings, corruption and nepotism are perhaps the biggest obstacle to the revolutions achieving their goals, because the ruling elites have such powerful economic interests to preserve. As Marwan Muasher of the Carnegie Endowment argued in relation to Jordan, the rentier class that has been created in many Arab societies will fight to keep its privileges:

Much research has been done on the creation of rentier and semi-rentier systems in the Arab world, whereby the state relies on rents from such non-productive sources as oil or external assistance. Such rents, however, are also specifically utilized to provide privileges to the political elite in exchange for its loyalty. These groups, developed by many Arab systems over decades, support the existing order because it occupies a privileged position that would be compromised by merit-based systems, rather than ones based on clientelism and patronage.

In the case of Jordan, this group has become so entrenched, powerful, and ossified that it is now not only resisting such reform from below but—more dangerously—from above. In other words, these elites have become recalcitrant, self-appointed guardians of the state who believe they alone should decide how the country ought to evolve. They have no qualms about opposing the directives of the leaders or systems that created them in the first place if those leaders are seen as adopting policies that threaten their interests.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Larry Diamond, "A fourth wave or a false start: Democracy After the Arab Spring", *Foreign Affairs*, 22 May 2011

³⁰⁶ Marwan Muasher, "A Decade of Struggling Reform Efforts in Jordan: The Resilience of the Rentier System", Carnegie Paper, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, May 2011

Corruption and nepotism have played an immense role in the demise of such dictators as Ben Ali and Mubarak. They are also thought to be behind the higher than expected success of Islamism in Tunisia and in Egypt. Voters want to give control to clean hands and it appears that they have more confidence in the Islamist parties in this respect. Studies have suggested that this may only be a honeymoon between Islamists and the electorate, however, and that secularist parties and policies may become more popular over time.

The spectre of a coming clash between Arabs and Persians, or between Sunni and Shia, hangs over the whole process. This is why the Sunni/Shia divide in countries like Bahrain and Yemen will paralyse any reform moves and one of the reasons why no dramatic democratic reforms are likely in Saudi Arabia or the other Gulf monarchies (the other factor being oil).

The Iran factor is also highly significant in Syria. Sunnis in Lebanon, Egypt and the Gulf states would probably like to see a Sunni-led government in Damascus (and rumours have circulated about outside support for the Syrian demonstrators). They would also probably hope that such a government would end its special relationship with Shia Iran. Nevertheless, the prospect of chaos on an Iraqi scale, coupled with the stability along Syria's Israeli border maintained by the Assad regime, mean that many observers are nervous about the future in Syria. The Security Council is very unlikely to pass any resolution that goes further than criticising violence and calling for dialogue; western governments are very unlikely to intervene in Syria.

Fear of sectarian strife is not confined to Syria, as the prospects for minorities have been worrying in other countries. Christians in Egypt are thought to be under greater threat since the fall of President Mubarak; the Egyptian authorities are accused of fomenting discord between Christians and Muslims in order to make a return to authoritarianism more popular. The position of women, too, is not guaranteed to be better after the revolutions than before.

One area where many analysts are agreed is on terrorism carried out in the name of Islam. Al-Qaeda's message that violence was the only way to protect Islam, and that if it was impossible to wage violent *jihad* within one's own country, then Muslims should go out and find opportunities to go and fight the enemies of Islam in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The uprisings of 2011 showed that it was possible to bring down powerful regimes at home, using non-violent methods, while al-Qaeda's strategy produced few tangible results. The popularity of al-Qaeda had already been declining for some time. The death of Osama bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki is thought to be far less significant to the future of global violent *jihad* than the Arab Spring.

While the uprisings undermined al-Qaeda's rationale, the fall of authoritarian regimes in the region may make it easier for terrorists to operate, as new governments may rein in the oppressive police tactics that were once widespread. Western governments will be keen to maintain the best possible intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation with the governments of the region to prevent a serious deterioration.

However, it is perhaps the economic performance of economies such as Egypt's that is the most pressing concern. Expectations were raised by the revolutions, as people on the street hoped for a sharing-out of the resources monopolised by the ruling elites. In reality, unemployment has been forced further up by the turmoil and the economies of the region will take a long time to improve. Western governments will be keen to offer cooperation, though on what terms is not clear.

In the end, all that western governments will be able to do is offer cooperation, rather than dictate what direction the countries of the Middle East and North Africa take. The failure of the European Neighbourhood Policy to encourage change, even when 'friendly' dictators

were in charge, is illustrative. Now, in a much more volatile situation where the voice of the 'street' has become louder, events will be even more difficult to influence. And there can probably be no single plan in western capitals for what any influence should achieve, as US analyst Jeffrey Goldberg argued recently:

Creating an overarching doctrine suitable for the moment is an almost impossible task, particularly during a crisis that demands from American policy-makers analytical humility, doctrinal plasticity, and a tolerance for contradiction. Analytical humility is called for because the trajectories of the Middle East's revolutions are still difficult to discern, and because it is not yet clear that tyranny is, in fact, in permanent eclipse. Doctrinal plasticity, which in a less value-neutral way could be called hypocrisy, is a necessity because, while it is true that President Obama, to the surprise of many, has shown himself to be more of a liberal interventionist than a cold-eyed realist, it is also true that America retains fixed, and vital, interests across the Middle East, interests that have already forced America to side with monarchs over the masses they rule. And a tolerance for contradiction is vital not only because America's democratically elected government is scrambling to keep monarchs on their thrones, but because people across the Middle East are embracing American ideals—freedom of speech, financial transparency, leaders who are chosen by the people and are accountable to them—while at the same time distancing themselves from America itself, and rejecting American assumptions about what freedom is meant to look like.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Jeffrey Goldberg , Danger: Falling Tyrants, *The Atlantic*, June 2011

Appendix 1 – Regional defence spending

Country	Military Budget 2005-2009			Manpower			Paramilitary forces				
	US\$ bn	Army	of which conscripts	Reserve	Navy	of which conscripts		Reserve	Air force	of which conscripts	Reserve
NOTES											
Algeria	20.610	127,000	80,000	15,000	6,000			14,000			187,200
Bahrain	2.737	6,000			700			1,500			11,260
Egypt	17.770	310,000	205,000	375,000	18,500	10,000	14,000	30,000	10,000	20,000	397,000
Iran Iranian Revolutionary Guards	37.480	350,000 100,000	220,000	350,000	18,000 20,000			30,000			50,000
Iraq	4.100	238,010			2,605			5,167			
Israel	49.220	133,000	107,000	500,000	9,500	2,500	10,000	34,000		55,000	8,050
Jordan	7.863	88,000		60,000	500			12,000			10,000
Kuwait	21.400	11,000		23,700	2,000			2,500			7,100
Lebanon	3.795	57,000			1,100			1,000			20,000
Libya* pre-war	4.680	50,000	25,000	40,000	8,000			18,000			
Morocco	12.490	175,000	100,000	150,000	7,800			13,000			50,000
Oman	18.880	25,000		6,400 (Royal Guard)	4,200			5,000			4,400
Qatar	9.860	8,500			1,800			1,500			
Saudi Arabia	169.840	75,000		100,000 (National Guard)	13,500			20,000			15,500
Syria "Air defence" 40k active, 20k reserve	7.900	220,000	Number unknown	280,000	5,000		4,000	30,000		10,000	108,000
Tunisia	2.409	27,000	22,000		4,800			4,000			12,000
Turkey	45.020	402,000	325,000	258,700	48,600	34,500	55,000	60,000		65,000	102,200
UAE	36.830	44,000			2,500			4,500			
Yemen	5.374	60,000	Number unknown		1,700			3,000			71,200

Country	Assets											
	Land assets		Principal Combatant Ships			Other Naval Assets		Fast Jets		Helicopters		Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
	Main Battle	Armoured Infantry Fighting	Destroyer	Frigate	Submarine	Patrol/Coastal	Amphibious landing craft	Fighter	Ground Attack Aircraft	Attack	Multi-role	UAVs
Algeria	1,082	1,040	-	3	3	61 (inc Coast Guard)	3	37	118	33	64	-
Bahrain	180	25	-	1	-	10	9	12	21	22	-	-
Egypt	2,383	390	-	8	4	50	12	156	238	150	70	Yes
Iran	1,613	610	-	-	15	100	23	189	108	50	30	-
Iranian Revolutionary Guards	-	-	-	-	-	95	4	-	-	-	-	-
Iraq	212	434	-	-	-	38	-	-	-	-	32	-
Israel	3,501	-	-	-	3	57	1	168	292 (plus 200 in reserve)	81	-	Yes
Jordan	1,044	303	-	-	-	7	-	49	53	25	13	-
Kuwait	293	450	-	-	-	10	-	-	39	12	13	-
Lebanon	326	-	-	-	-	11	2	-	6	-	9	Yes
Libya	800	1,000	-	2	2	16	7	187	180	35	11	-
Morocco	380	70	-	2	-	39	5	33	33	-	19	Yes
Oman	117	206	-	-	-	11	6	-	26	-	16	-
Qatar	30	40	-	-	-	21	1	12	-	8 (Anti-Submarine)	31	-
Saudi Arabia	565	780	3	4	-	30	8	120	161	12	16	-
Syria	4,950	2,450	-	-	-	32	3	158	309	36	35	-
Tunisia	84	-	-	-	-	25	-	12	-	-	10	-
Turkey	4,503	650	-	17	14	52	46	87	339	37	-	Yes
UAE	471	430	-	-	-	16	28	-	142	30	23	-
Yemen	790	200	-	-	-	20	4	12	67	8	-	-

Appendix 2 – Arab countries in the UN Human Development Index

Country	Human development index (HDI) value 2005	Life expectancy at birth (years) 2005	Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older) 1995-2005	Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary education (%) 2005	GDP per capita (PPP US\$) 2005	Life expectancy index	Education index	GDP index
HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT								
33 Kuwait	0.891	77.3	93.3	74.9	26,321	0.871	0.871	0.93
35 Qatar	0.875	75	89	77.7	27,664	0.834	0.852	0.938
39 United Arab Emirates	0.868	78.3	88.7	59.9	25,514	0.889	0.791	0.925
41 Bahrain	0.866	75.2	86.5	86.1	21,482	0.837	0.864	0.896
56 Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0.818	73.4	84.2	94.1	10,335	0.806	0.875	0.774
58 Oman	0.814	75	81.4	67.1	15,602	0.833	0.766	0.843
61 Saudi Arabia	0.812	72.2	82.9	76	15,711	0.787	0.806	0.844
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT								
86 Jordan	0.773	71.9	91.1	78.1	5,530	0.782	0.868	0.67
88 Lebanon	0.772	71.5 ..		84.6	5,584	0.775	0.871	0.671
91 Tunisia	0.766	73.5	74.3	76.3	8,371	0.808	0.75	0.739
104 Algeria	0.733	71.7	69.9	73.7	7,062	0.778	0.711	0.711
106 Occupied Palestinian Territories	0.731	72.9	92.4	82.4 ..		0.799	0.891	0.505
108 Syrian Arab Republic	0.724	73.6	80.8	64.8	3,808	0.811	0.755	0.607
112 Egypt	0.708	70.7	71.4	76.9	4,337	0.761	0.732	0.629
126 Morocco	0.646	70.4	52.3	58.5	4,555	0.757	0.544	0.637
134 Comoros	0.561	64.1 ..		46.4	1,993	0.651	0.533	0.499
137 Mauritania	0.55	63.2	51.2	45.6	2,234	0.637	0.493	0.519
147 Sudan	0.526	57.4	60.9	37.3	2,083	0.54	0.531	0.507
149 Djibouti	0.516	53.9 ..		25.3	2,178	0.482	0.553	0.514
153 Yemen	0.508	61.5	54.1	55.2	930	0.608	0.545	0.372
WITHOUT HDI RANK								
Iraq	..	57.7	74.1	59.6 ..		0.545	0.692 ..	
Somalia	..	47.1 ..	..	..		0.368 ..	..
All developing countries	0.691	66.1	76.7	64.1	5,282	0.685	0.725	0.662
Least developed countries	0.488	54.5	53.9	48	1,499	0.492	0.519	0.452
Arab States	0.699	67.5	70.3	65.5	6,716	0.708	0.687	0.702
East Asia and the Pacific	0.771	71.7	90.7	69.4	6,604	0.779	0.836	0.699
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.803	72.8	90.3	81.2	8,417	0.797	0.873	0.74
South Asia	0.611	63.8	59.5	60.3	3,416	0.646	0.598	0.589
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.493	49.6	60.3	50.6	1,998	0.41	0.571	0.5
Central and Eastern Europe and the CI	0.808	68.6	99	83.5	9,527	0.726	0.938	0.761
OECD	0.916	78.3 ..		88.6	29,197	0.888	0.912	0.947
High-income OECD	0.947	79.4 ..		93.5	33,831	0.906	0.961	0.972
High human development	0.897	76.2 ..		88.4	23,986	0.854	0.922	0.915
Medium human development	0.698	67.5	78	65.3	4,876	0.709	0.738	0.649
Low human development	0.436	48.5	54.4	45.8	1,112	0.391	0.516	0.402
High income	0.936	79.2 ..		92.3	33,082	0.903	0.937	0.968
Middle income	0.776	70.9	89.9	73.3	7,416	0.764	0.843	0.719
Low income	0.57	60	60.2	56.3	2,531	0.583	0.589	0.539
World	0.743	68.1	78.6	67.8	9,543	0.718	0.75	0.761

Source: UNDP, HDR 2007/2008, Table 1: 229-232.

* Data for Iraq and Somalia are from the HDRO online database at [<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data>].

Appendix 3 – Arab countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2010

Rank	Country	Score ¹
19	Qatar	7.7
20	United Kingdom ²	7.6
28	United Arab Emirates	6.3
41	Oman	5.3
48	Bahrain	4.9
50	Jordan	4.7
50	Saudi Arabia	4.7
54	Kuwait	4.5
59	Tunisia	4.3
85	Morocco	3.4
91	Djibouti	3.2
98	Egypt	3.1
105	Algeria	2.9
127	Lebanon	2.5
127	Syria	2.5
143	Mauritania	2.3
146	Libya	2.2
146	Yemen	2.2
154	Comoros	2.1
154	Russia ²	2.1
172	Sudan	1.6
175	Iraq	1.5
178	Somalia	1.1

¹Lower score = more corrupt

²For comparison

Source: [Transparency International](#)

Appendix 4 – Regional economic performance

	Real GDP			Consumer Prices ¹			Current Account Balance ²			Unemployment ³		
	Projections			Projections			Projections			Projections		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Middle East and North Africa	4.4	4	3.6	6.8	9.9	7.6	7.7	11.2	9	...	...	...
Oil Exporters⁴	4.4	4.9	3.9	6.6	10.8	7.6	10.6	15	12.4	...	...	...
Islamic Republic of Iran	3.2	2.5	3.4	12.4	22.5	12.5	6	7.8	7.1	14.6	15.3	15.6
Saudi Arabia	4.1	6.5	3.6	5.4	5.4	5.3	14.9	20.6	14.2	10	...	...
Algeria	3.3	2.9	3.3	3.9	3.9	4.3	7.9	13.7	10.9	10	9.8	9.5
United Arab Emirates	3.2	3.3	3.8	0.9	2.5	2.5	7	10.3	9.2	...	...	...
Qatar	16.6	18.7	6	-2.4	2.3	4.1	25.3	32.6	30.1	...	...	...
Kuwait	3.4	5.7	4.5	4.1	6.2	3.4	27.8	33.5	30.4	2.1	2.1	2.1
Iraq	0.8	9.6	12.6	2.4	5	5	-3.2	-0.9	-1.2	...	...	...
Sudan⁵	6.5	-0.2	-0.4	13	20	17.5	-6.7	-7.3	-7.6	13.7	13.4	12.2
Oil Importers⁶	4.5	1.4	2.6	7.6	7.5	7.7	-3.9	-4.8	-4.7	...	...	...
Egypt	5.1	1.2	1.8	11.7	11.1	11.3	-2.0	-1.9	-2.2	9	10.4	11.5
Morocco	3.7	4.6	4.6	1	1.5	2.7	-4.3	-5.2	-4.0	9.1	9	8.9
Syrian Arab Republic	3.2	-2.0	1.5	4.4	6	5	-3.9	-6.1	-6.1	8.4	...	...
Tunisia	3.1	0	3.9	4.4	3.5	4	-4.8	-5.7	-5.5	13	14.7	14.4
Lebanon	7.5	1.5	3.5	4.5	5.9	5	-10.9	-14.7	-13.8	...	...	...
Jordan	2.3	2.5	2.9	5	5.4	5.6	-4.9	-6.7	-8.4	12.5	12.5	12.5
Memorandum												
Israel	4.8	4.8	3.6	2.7	3.4	1.6	2.9	0.3	0.7	6.7	5.9	5.8
Maghreb⁷	3.5	2.9	3.9	3.1	3.1	3.8	4.4	4.9	3.7	...	...	...
Mashreq⁸	4.9	0.8	1.9	9.6	9.6	9.5	-3.6	-4.5	-4.7	...	...	...

¹ Movements in consumer prices are shown as annual averages.

² Percent of GDP.

³ Percent. National definitions of unemployment may differ.

⁴ Also includes Bahrain, Libya, Oman, and Republic of Yemen. Excludes Libya for the projection years due to the uncertain political situation.

⁵ Projections for 2011 and later exclude South Sudan.

⁶ Includes also Djibouti and Mauritania.

⁷ The Maghreb comprises Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. It excludes Libya for the projection years due to the uncertain political situation.

⁸ The Mashreq comprises Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syrian Arab Republic.

Source: World Economic Outlook, International Monetary Fund, [September 2011](#), p99

Appendix 5 – Detailed chronology

2010

7 December	Wikileaks publishes US cables regarding corruption in Tunisia
17 December	Street vendor self-immolates after food cart and produce is seized

2011

1 January	Al Qaeda bomb attack kills 21 people outside Church in Alexandria
14 January	Zine el Abidine Ben Ali steps down as President of Tunisia
17 January	Protester sets himself on fire outside Egyptian parliament in Cairo
23 January	Arrest of prominent female anti-government activist Tawakul Karman sparks fresh protests in Egypt
25 January	Protesters gather in Egypt for a demonstration named a “day of revolt”
26 January	Egyptian police and army crack violently crack down on supporters
27 January	Thousands protest in Yemen as the biggest anti-government protest in a decade takes place in Sana’a
28 January	Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak makes his first television appearance after four days of protest but refuses to stand down. He sacks the government and pledges to implement democratic reform

1 February	Egyptian President pledges to step down at the next election
2 February	Yemeni President states that he will not seek re-election and that his son, Ahmed, would not succeed him
11 February	Hosni Mubarak resigns as President of Egypt
12 February	Over 2000 protesters rally in central Algiers for a day of pro-democracy protests are beaten up by armed police and security forces
14 February	Biggest protests in Iran since 2009 election as thousands of protesters clash with riot police
15 February	Bahrain’s main opposition party withdraws from parliament in protest at brutal police tactics
21 February	British Prime Minister visits new Egyptian interim government
21 February	Two Libyan air force pilots defect to Malta
21 February	Thousands protest peacefully in Morocco for an end to corruption
25 February	Protests erupt across the Middle East and North Africa: In Iraq, in Mosul and Basra; in Yemen in Sana’a; in Egypt, to Tahrir Square; in Tunisia; in the Jordanian capital Amman; in Bahrain, in the capital Manama; and in Palestine
27 February	Prime minister resigns in Tunisia after more protests
27 February	Libyan rebels take control of Zawiyah near the capital Tripoli

6 March	British special forces captured in Libya by farmers
7 March	Saudi Arabia bans public protests in response to Shia demonstrations
9 March	Soldiers fire in crowd of protesters in Yemen
10 March	Yemen President tries to defuse anti-government protests with democratic concessions
14 March	Saudi Arabia sends military to Bahrain as protests escalates

15 March Thousands protest in Gaza and the West Bank for unity between Fatah and Government of Algeria increases the wages of public sector workers

15 March Government of Algeria increases the wages of public sector workers

18 March UN Security Council votes in favour of resolution authorising the use of force in Libya

18 March Yemeni President declares 30 day state of emergency after protest massacre

18 March King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia introduces a multi-billion package of reforms

19 March Multi-state western coalition begins air and military airstrikes in Libya

20 March Yemeni President sacks cabinet amidst continued anti-government protests

23 March Security forces kill 6 people in Syria

23 March NATO takes military command of Libya's no-fly zone

23 March Yemeni President brings in emergency legislation against protests

25 March Protest moves to cities around Syria including Deraa, Aleppo and Damascus

25 March Suspect in the murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher is arrested in Libya

29 March Syrian President sacks his cabinet and hints at reform

31 March Al Qaeda release statement welcoming protests in Arab countries

7 April A Jordanian man sets himself on fire outside the prime minister's office in Amman

8 April President Saleh rejects calls by Gulf states to stand down

9 April Thousands turn out to protest in Syria in the biggest demonstrations so far. The army fire indiscriminately into the crowd killing at least 22 people

12 April Dozens of Syrian soldiers shot by own security forces after refusing to fire on protesters

13 April Former Egyptian President is arrested for corruption and abuse of power

13 April Arab nations unite in condemnation of Gaddafi's regime in Libya

15 April The US rejoins the international effort in Libya

18 April Sunni demonstration targeted in Iran in the south-western city of Ahwaz, 12 people are killed, 20 injured and over 20 were arrested

19 April Syria lifts state of emergency laws

21 April The Obama administration approves the use of missile-armed Predator drone planes to help NATO target Gaddafi's forces in Libya

25 April NATO attempt "assassination" of Gaddafi as bombs hit his compound

28 April Hundreds of MPs from the Syrian ruling Ba'ath party resign en masse in protest at the increasing use of force

4 May International Criminal Court prosecutor seeks warrants against Gaddafi regime

8 May Violence between different religious groups breaks out in Cairo

9 May EU imposes sanctions on Syria including an arms embargo but not penalising Assad personally

11 May Bahrain state oil company sacks 293 employees for taking part in protests

15 May Israel security forces kill 12 pro-Palestinian protesters on the borders with Syria and Lebanon

15 May Fundamentalist crowd attacks Christians in Cairo

19 May bin Laden praises Arab Spring in posthumously released tape

19 May US and EU impose sanctions on Syria's President

19 May Obama gives speech endorsing Arab uprisings apart from in Saudi Arabia

20 May Yemeni president announces he will hold early elections

25 May	UK Apache attack helicopters deployed to Libya
27 May	G8 leaders promise \$20bn of loans and aid to Tunisia and Egypt
27 May	Egypt opens Rafa crossing between Gaza and Egypt
28 May	UK trains Saudi elite Special Forces
30 May	Gaddafi meets with South African President Jacob Zuma to broker truce

1 June	41 people are killed by government security forces in Sana'a
3 June	Yemeni President survives assassination attempt
5 June	Israeli and Syrian troops in border clash
5 June	Egypt's interim government agrees \$3 billion loan deal with IMF
14 June	Elections in Tunisia postponed
20 June	Former Tunisian President sentenced in absentia
29 June	Bahraini King orders independent inquiry into human rights abuses during protests

1 July	Moroccans approve in a referendum king's constitutional reforms giving more power to parliament
1 July	Biggest day of demonstrations across Syria, with 200,000 turning out in Hama
6 July	Libyan rebels launch attacks against pro-Gaddafi security forces
7 July	Yemeni President makes first TV appearance after assassination attempt
11 July	Government loyalists break into French and US embassies in Syria
17 July	Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf sacks ministers in the face of continued protests at the pace of reform
25 July	Syrian cabinet introduces a draft law for rival political parties
27 July	Britain officially recognises the Libyan rebel Transitional National Council and releases £91million in frozen oil funds to the TNC
28 July	Al-Qaeda's new leader Ayman al-Zawahiri praises Syrian protesters
30 July	Libyan rebels' chief of staff murdered by rebel Islamist-linked militia within the anti-Gaddafi armed forces
31 July	Syrian troops massacre hundreds in Hama on the eve of Ramadan

1 August	Egyptian troops retake Tahrir Square from protesters demanding faster pace of reforms
3 August	Mubarak goes on trial charged with corruption and protesters' deaths
8 August	Saudi king recalls diplomat from Syria and calls for an end to the violence
9 August	International envoys travel to Syria to help stop crackdown on protesters
14 August	Syrian gunboats bombs port city of Latakia and tanks shell the city, causing scores of deaths
15 August	Judge adjourns Mubarak trial after violent clashes outside the courtroom
16 August	Libyan interior minister defects from Gaddafi regime
18 August	UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay calls for Syrian leaders to be referred to ICC
19 August	Israel launches rockets into Gaza in retaliation of attacks in Eilat
24 August	Rebel fighters enter Gaddafi compound
26 August	Rebels declare victory in Libya and announce interim government
26 August	Egypt brokers ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza

2 September	EU imposes sanctions on Syrian regime
10 September	Israel evacuates ambassador from Egypt after attack on embassy
12 September	Prominent Syrian activist Ghiyath Matar dies after being arrested and tortured
15 September	Military council reactivates emergency laws in Egypt after Israeli embassy stormed
18 September	Yemeni troops fire heavy weapons on protesters killing at least 26
23 September	Yemeni president returns from Saudi Arabia
25 September	Yemeni president orders ceasefire and calls for early elections
25 September	Saudi Arabia to give women the right to vote from 2015
27 September	Ruling military council announces parliamentary election in Egypt for 28 November
29 September	20 doctors jailed for treating injured protesters in Bahrain
29 September	Saudi activist Najla Hariri saved from lashing for flouting ban on women driving
29 September	Yemeni truce ends with heavy shelling in capital

4 October	Turkey imposes sanctions on Syria in protest at violent crackdown
5 October	Retrials ordered for medics jailed in Bahrain for treating injured protesters
5 October	China and Russia veto UN resolution condemning Syrian crackdown
6 October	Egypt's ruling military generals unveil plans to stay in power
7 October	Russian president speaks out against Syrian regime
9 October	Military crackdown at Cairo Christian protest causes 26 deaths
10 October	Iranian opposition leader Karroubi released from house arrest
11 October	China publically criticises Syrian regime over ongoing violence
12 October	Israel apologises for deaths of Egyptian soldiers
17 October	Jordan king sacks prime minister over corruption allegations
17 October	Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is released by Hamas after five years
19 October	Iran denies US claims of Saudi ambassador assassination plot
20 October	Colonel Muammar Gaddafi killed by rebels
24 October	US withdraws Syrian ambassador over fears for his safety
24 October	Gaddafi and his son Mutassim are buried in secret location in the desert
28 October	Moderate Islamic al-Nahda party wins in Tunisia's first democratic elections
31 October	Prominent Egyptian blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah arrested by military
31 October	Nato ends military operations in Libya

1 November	Qatar announces plans to hold first ever national election to an advisory body
2 November	Syria accepts peace plan proposed by Arab League