The Arab Spring in the Mirror of Kenneth Waltz’s Three Images of International Relations

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DECLARATION

With the exception of all references and works that have been fully acknowledged, I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of an original research conducted by me under the supervision of Dr. Philip Attuquayefio and that no part of it has been submitted anywhere else for any purpose.

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ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring which began in Tunisia in December 2010 shook the social and political foundations of the Arab world. More significantly, the protests led to the deposition of some Arab leaders who had ruled their countries for many years. This was evident in countries like Egypt where sustained protests brought an end to the almost thirty year rule of an autocrat, President Hosni Mubarak, as well as in Tunisia where President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted after 23 years of rule. The case was no different in Libya where a civil war broke out against President Muammar Gaddafi which led to his deposition and eventual execution. A lot of debate has emerged among scholars in an attempt to analyse the causes of the Arab uprisings. Whilst some advanced the lack of democracy or strong authoritarian regimes as the underlying cause, others blamed it on globalization, poverty, unemployment and to an extent American foreign policy. The diversity in the views expressed on the Arab Spring points to the relevance of explanatory frameworks for an in depth understanding of political phenomena. In “Man, the State and War”, Kenneth Waltz suggests three categories for understanding dynamics in international relations. Using secondary sources and proceeding on the hypothesis that Kenneth Waltz’s framework presents a balanced framework for an objective assessment of the Arab Spring, this study sought to appreciate the Arab Spring through the prism of Waltz’s three images.
CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

The sudden eruption of social and political protests across the Middle East took the world by surprise. While there had been clear warnings – for example, in the 2009 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arab Human Development Report- that the mix of economic stagnation, sky-rocketing unemployment, demographic pressure, corrupt and inefficient government and social and political repression represented a serious threat to the stability of the Middle East, still nobody anticipated the magnitude and latitude of the so called ‘Arab Spring’.\(^1\)

The self immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in December 2010 out of desperation did not only ignite the flesh but the spirit of a revolution that would transform the face of North Africa and the Middle East. The series of revolutionary uprisings in this region is what has become known as the Arab Spring. Bouazizi’s self immolation sparked various violent street demonstrations, later resulting in the fall of the president of Tunisia Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his government.

Through social networking platforms, news about the uprising in Tunisia and the gains recorded in terms of the overthrow of political power, spread through various parts of the world. Arguably motivated by the record of Tunisia, a number of North African countries including Egypt and Libya subsequently launched their own versions of revolutions influenced by their respective conditions. Yet, all aimed at overthrowing long-standing regimes. In Egypt for instance, within a period of 17 days, stretching from January 25, 2011 to February 11, 2011, an amassed group made up of various categories of opposition to the
The longstanding reign of Hosni Mubarak successfully overthrew the regime when in February, 2011, President Mubarak announced his resignation as president of Egypt. This followed the rejection by Egyptians of proposals for early elections and democratic reforms proposed by the Mubarak regime.

The Arab spring in Libya was atypical of the outcomes recorded in Tunisia and Egypt. In that particular country, the refusal of the Gaddafi-led regime to acquiesce to demands to hand over the reins of power plunged the country into a civil war that ended on October 20, 2011 with the arrest and execution of colonel Muammar al Gaddafi.

The diverse nature of the course and outcomes of the Arab spring in various countries has generated a lot of debate as to what might have been the root causes of the series of revolutions that occurred in the Arab world. In most parts, the western media has harped on democracy or the tendency toward democracy as the main cause. In this regard, they blamed autocracy or despotism as the main trigger. Others like Charles Krauthammer also attributes the Arab spring to the pressure mounted by American foreign policy, specifically the Bush doctrine. In his article, “From Baghdad to Benghazi”, he asserts that the Bush doctrine set the premise for the Arab spring. Some scholars have even attributed the uprisings to the inevitable forces of globalization. In her article, Understanding the Arab Spring, Nicola Pratt posits that some scholars view the Arab Spring as a result of globalization of democratic norms, new media technologies, educated and globalised and digital-savvy youth as the main agent of change.

The extent of supposed proliferation of the mass protests in the North African region is somewhat justification to the moniker Arab Spring. It is also suggested to have given the Arab Spring an international dimension. Peter Jones for instance highlights the connection
between events in the various countries as one of the striking characteristic of the Arab spring.

The diversity in the views expressed on the Arab spring points to the relevance of explanatory frameworks to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and by extension a prognostic analysis of its outcomes.

In his book, “Man, the State and War,” Kenneth Waltz adopts three categories for explaining the causes of international conflicts. Waltz refers to these categories as images. The first image argues that wars are caused primarily by the nature of particular individuals such as state leaders. The first image posits that the inherent sinfulness and avariciousness of man is the primary cause of war. To him, as long as man is as he is, war may be anticipated as a natural, recurrent inevitability.

The second image posits that wars are caused by the domestic make up of states. The internal composition of non-democratic states in the world today is an example of how the domestic make up of states causes war. This is also exemplified in the Arab world where the long rule of Arab leaders has also been seen as a trigger of wars.

The third image which Waltz considers as more persuasive contends that the anarchic nature of the international system is the root cause of war. Anarchy in this context is a condition in which there is no sovereign body to govern the interactions between autonomous nation states. Waltz concludes that in anarchy there is no automatic harmony, and that among autonomous states, war is inevitable.
1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kenneth Waltz’s work essentially opines that the international system provides the most comprehensive explanation as a source of international conflict compared to the organisation of states and human behaviour. Yet, in the unfolding of events, it has been suggested that the first and second levels also provide some justification for the nature of the Arab spring. George Joffé for instance intimates that there are quite specific reasons why the insurgencies occurred in the three North African countries. He asserts that the causes for the insurgencies were similar— they lie in the global economic crisis and in the neo-patrimonial political natures of regional states. According to Matthew Zimmerman, the most thorough examination of the proper unit of analysis in international relations is Waltz’s seminal book in 1959, Man, the State and War. In spite of the utility of Waltz’s work, it has not been applied to an understanding of the Arab spring. In the absence of this, it appears that views expressed on the Arab Spring and its consequences are influenced by presumptions outside the context of the relevant theory. According to the 2011 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report for instance, although not an underlying cause of the Arab Spring, the rapid growth in internet penetration and social media networks acted as a driver for protests by allowing new avenues for debate outside state control. Other reports such as these reflect on the manifestation without explaining the fundamental issues of the Arab Spring. The problem the research seeks to address therefore is to unravel the varying interpretations of the Arab Spring, to scrutinise and seek a more thorough understanding of these events in the light of the historic interpretations of Kenneth Waltz.

1.3 Scope of Study

A lot has happened since December 2010 when the Arab Spring started. The Arab Spring spread to other parts of the world, including parts of the Middle East such as Syria, Bahrain
and Yemen. Although the revolutions are still ongoing in some countries like Syria, this study focuses on the insurgencies that occurred in North Africa specifically in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research includes but not limited to the following:

1. To provide an overview of the Arab Spring.
2. To subject the Arab spring to analysis through Kenneth Waltz’s three images of international relations.
3. To draw relevant conclusions.

1.5 Hypothesis

Kenneth Waltz’s three images of international relations present a balanced framework for an objective assessment of the Arab Spring.

1.6 Rationale of the Research

One of the dominant themes in international relations is conflict. Kenneth waltz’s work has become one of the utmost contributions to international relations, especially the dynamics surrounding war and peace. Waltz’s work serves as an analytical tool in describing particular events and interactions among states. This study essentially adds to existing literature in academia, specifically the study of conflicts.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

Hitherto, discourses on armed conflicts focused extensively on inter-state wars while that of intra-state wars remained on the periphery of security discourse. However, after the
termination of the Cold War, intra-state armed conflicts have been on the ascendency. In Africa, the termination of the Cold War brought to the fore, latent tensions, such as predatory governance and economic threats, which have been simmering throughout the period of the Cold War. The evolution of armed conflict has necessitated a scenario where intra-state armed conflict between a central government and non-state actors becomes a subject of international intervention, and where the international intervention facilitates the military objectives of the non-state actors. The above scenario, conceptualized as internationalized civil war, undergirds this research.

Based on the conceptualization of internationalized armed conflict and the causes of intra-state conflicts, three key features of internationalized civil wars are outstanding: causation of intra-state armed conflict can be analyzed from the perspective of internal variables such as the role of specific individuals as well as the attributes of states—individual and state levels of analysis; an intervention by at least one state, either unilaterally or under the aegis of an international institution such as the United Nations (UN); the intervention must be beneficial to the objective(s) of the non-state actor(s), that is engaged in the armed conflict with the central government.

The political crises and the ensuing intra-state conflicts in North Africa, specifically Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, mirror the above mentioned stipulations of an internationalized civil war. The intra-state conflicts were shaped by the dynamic of internal factors ranging from poor state of human security to autocratic rule. However, they were also internationalized in varying degrees. In both Tunisia and Egypt, international intervention was not overt. Nonetheless, it was internationalized as the role of globalization of norms and the possibility of international interventions, to a certain degree, could have accelerated the pace towards the exit from office of presidents Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali of Egypt and Tunisia respectively.
This ‘covert internationalization’ of the conflict was, importantly, beneficial to the cause of non-state actors, a feature of internationalized armed conflicts.

The case of Libya, however, is a classical example of internationalized civil conflict. Undoubtedly, the intervention by NATO was indispensable to the successes of the conglomeration of rebel groups which toppled Muammar Gaddafi, affirming the view that humanitarian intervention in Libya was intimately linked to the demise of Gaddafi. Again, armed conflict in Libya was asymmetric as rebel groups were confronted with the overwhelming military prowess of Gaddafi. Therefore, outside intervention was possibly required to offset the military imbalance. Cumulatively, what is evident about internal armed conflict in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt is that intra-state upheavals cannot be deemed exclusively *intra*, especially when external interventions aid one of the protagonists in the conflict. Nevertheless, it is important to state that an internationalized intra-state conflict could be a facade for global powers to give effect to subjective interests and this can potentially undermined the altruistic objectives of future international interventions.

1.8 Literature Review

In his article, *The Arab Spring, Opportunities and Challenges*, Peter Jones seeks to answer three main questions: what is happening and why; who the main players are and what they want; and what the implications are for the west. The author contends that the drivers of the Arab spring were not a surprise; they had been well known for some time. The combination of authoritarian regimes, the rhetoric of democracy, and a high number of relatively educated but unemployed and powerless youth was definitely detrimental. To him, what surprised most people as in the financial crisis, was the trigger for the events, the rapidity of developments, and the connections between events in one country and those in others. The writer also asserts that the elements of vulnerability include a lethal combination of poverty, lack of
economic opportunity, and a repressive and disliked regime. Jones attributes the present events to a combination of immediate grievances specific to each country, the social and technological changes sweeping the region, and broader historical trends. Nevertheless, the story is quite different in each country. The immediate grievances are largely tied up with the profound lack of economic opportunity that exists in many Middle Eastern countries, particularly for the rapidly expanding young population, and growing aversion with corrupt and repressive regimes. Even in those countries that were presumed to have undergone the beginning of economic liberalization in the last few years, what emerged in most cases was a kind of crony capitalism that was seemingly secure for western investments but did not spread significant economic growth beyond a small elite class.

More systemically, the Arab World underperforms all other regions of the world on virtually all social, political, and economic indices. Fundamental importance is also placed on the distinctions and nuances of the various countries. In Egypt and Libya for instance, the period preceding the uprisings saw solid, if not spectacular, economic growth, which helped to create, especially in the cities, a lower middle class with expectations. It was, however, the profoundly uneven distribution of the wealth, as noted above, that was the primary source of frustration for those who supported the revolution. There was growth, but the bulk of the people did not think it was going to benefit them and so did not feel personally invested in it.

The author concludes that the current upheavals in the region are not going to be over soon. According to Jones, the Arab Spring is a long-term realignment of regional societies and the politics that serve and define them. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that we will necessarily see large-scale upheavals in the streets for years to come. It does mean that we are unlikely to see a settled regional order out of all this soon: it will take time. While there is a
broad set of ideas and grievances that are motivating the so-called Arab Spring, the situation will play out differently in each country based on specific conditions there.

Contributing to the discussion on the causes of the Arab Spring, Kenneth M. Pollack opines that the Arab Spring resulted from many intertwined causes. In his article, Understanding the Arab Awakening, Kenneth M. Pollack gives an overview of the events that led to the wave of revolutions that swept across the Arab world in 2011. The events that begun specifically in Tunisia spread to Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Morocco and beyond and shook the political and social foundations of the Middle East. The writer also gives an insight into what he presumes to be the causes of the Arab Spring. Political, social, economic, juridical and diplomatic problems all contributed to the grievances that finally ignited a wave of protests across the Arab World in 2011. Any analysis of the causes of the Arab Spring according to Pollack should begin with the stagnation of most Arab economies. The Arabs were the laggards in the transformation process. Whilst many economies moved from agrarian to industrialized and information economies, the Arab World was far behind. Their educational system in particular remained stuck in a pre-modern era. Almost ten years ago the United Nations’ Arab Human Development Report first warned that the educational method of the Arab world hindered young Arab minds from thinking critically, producing knowledge, and mastering many technical fields. The educational system has failed to prepare their students for a modern world where information technology is prevalent. The low availability of human capital has affected investment in these countries as most entrepreneurs are only interested in harvesting the region’s plentiful oil and gas resources, investments that have benefited the regimes and their cronies, to the detriment of the majority.

Pollack also points out the role politics has played in the Arab spring. Before 2011, only a few countries including Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine could be classified as democratic.
although their systems of democracy were largely imperfect. The tolerance and encouragement in some instances of corruption by these autocratic regimes indeed aggravated the miseries of the people. As a result, foreign investment and development were replaced by those looking to exploit the region in cahoots with its semi-criminal elite.

According to Pollack, “the net effect has been a raft of ulcerous economic liabilities: unemployment (especially among the outsized youth population); underemployment (especially among the middle class, whose education and status make them believe that they deserve managerial or clerical jobs, rather than driving a taxi or working in a restaurant); yawning wealth gaps; low levels of direct foreign investment outside the energy sector; meagre non-energy exports; disproportionately low levels of international trade; excessive dependence on the public sector for employment; rapid urbanization coupled with inadequate infrastructure development; and heavy outflows of capital, both human and financial. In short, the economies of the Arab world (and Iran) have been failing their people for a very long time”. It can be inferred that most of the uprisings in the Arab world was as a result of the bad governance prevalent in the region.

In her article Demystifying the Arab Spring, Parsing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Lisa Anderson construes the different set of events that produced different results in the three countries. According to her, “The important story about the 2011 Arab revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, is not how the globalization of the norms of civic engagement shaped the protesters’ aspirations. Nor is it about how activists used technology share ideas and tactics. Instead, the critical issue is how and why these ambitions and techniques resonated in their various local contexts. The patterns and demographics of the protests varied widely.” The chronology of the spectacular events in Tunisia did start in
economically and culturally neglected regions (Sidi-Bouzid, Kasserine) triggering a march to the coastal cities of luxury hotels and resort beaches, up to the capital, Tunis. In Egypt, by contrast, urban and cosmopolitan young people in the major cities organized the uprisings. Meanwhile, in Libya, ragtag bands of armed rebels in the Eastern province ignited the protests, revealing the tribal and regional cleavage that has beset the country for decades. Although shared common calls for personal dignity and responsive government, the revolutions across these three countries reflected divergent economic grievances and social dynamics—legacies of their diverse encounters with modern Europe and decades under unique regimes.

Anderson also identifies some of the challenges that lie ahead. In her view, the young activists in each country have been sharing ideas, tactics, and moral support, but they are confronting different opponents and operating within different contexts. The critical distinctions between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya will shape the outcomes of their respective movements. While Tunisia and Egypt grapple in their own ways with building political institutions—constitutions, political parties, and electoral systems—Libya will need to begin by constructing the rudiments of a civil society. While Egypt struggles with the long shadow of military rule, Tunisia and Libya will need to redefine the relationship between their privileged capital cities and their sullen hinterlands. Tempting as it is to treat the Arab uprisings as a single movement, their causes and future missions demonstrate the many variations between them.

Anderson also expresses how these distinctions will be of concern to the United States (US) and its allies. Facing such dramatic and tragic developments in Arab countries with a long tradition of friendship and cooperation, Anderson inquires whether the US old foreign policy
based on “stability” is still workable. Here again, Anderson thinks that for the United States to fulfil its goals in the region, it will need to understand these distinctions, and distance itself from the idea that the Tunisian, the Egyptian, and Libyan uprisings constitute a cohesive Arab revolt.

In his article The Arab Spring: the Root causes, Hamze Abbas Jamoul, outlines some of the root causes of the uprisings that occurred in the Arab world in 2010 by finding out why the Arabs rebelled. Jamoul asserts that the main reasons of the Arab revolts are not limited to internal causes, so it is important to analyze the international causes such as the failure of the war on terror, the Iraqi war and the U.S.A - European strategy of the imported democracy. Another possible reason could be the failure of the peace process in the Israeli- Arabic conflict. Some of the internal causes he identifies include unemployment, corruption and lack of political freedom.

Jamoul makes reference to William Shaub’s article The Roots of the Revolution in Egypt, where Shaub highlighted on the average per –capita and its possible affect on the revolution. According to Shaub, “Egypt has had a massive income gap throughout Mubarak’s control, which is clearly the root cause of the original uprising. One half of Egyptians live on $2/day or less. The average per-capita income in the country is just $6,200.” Jamoul posits that unemployment in the Arab region is also a major source of economic insecurity and for destabilization of any political system.

Jamoul also contends that political and human rights as fundamental for any society. Regrettably, even when most states arrived a very high level of democracy and political rights, the Arab region still suffers from bad political systems based on corruption, state of emergency laws, the lack of free elections and freedom of speech and religious fundamentalism.
The author concludes that after all the internal causes of the Arab revolt, it is important to not underestimate the role of the technology and the social network like Facebook and Twitter, which facilitated the communication between the protesters. It was for this reason that the governments in Egypt and Tunisia shut down the internet during the last protest against Mubarak and Ben Ali, in order to limit communication between protest groups.

The author further avers that the geographical position of many Arab states protagonist of the Arab spring makes it essential to analyse the international causes of the revolts. For instance, Egypt is the biggest Arab state and it is the first state that signed a peace accord with Israel. At the same time Cairo during Mubarak regime enjoyed a solid alliance with the United States in addition to the high influence on Palestinian parties. According to him, to understand better the January 25 revolution in Egypt there is a need to focus on the relations between Israel and Egypt before the revolution. Egyptians have always refused the Camp David peace agreement, and since the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, “calls have grown in Egypt for ending the 1979 peace treaty with Israel a pact that has never had the support of ordinary Egyptians.”

In their article Political Change in the Middle East: An Attempt to Analyze the “Arab Spring,” Martin Beck and Simone Hüser attempt to contribute to the explanation and description of political change in the Middle East with reference to relevant social science theories. According to them, the Arab Spring can be regarded as an event of global historical significance and from its onset in early 2011, it has been understood as a process of political change in the Middle East. The Arab world was the only major area where authoritarian rule could be established region-wide in the twentieth century, and where regimes managed to defy global trends beyond the threshold of the twenty-first century. But in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, internal mass protests forced the leadership to resign within weeks. Inspired by these
successes, popular movements throughout the Middle East were bolstered. They demanded substantial political reform and, in some cases, regime change. After decades of authoritarian rule and political stagnation, popular movements were finally able to destabilize or overthrow a number of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world.

The empirical starting points of their analysis are the following observations. Firstly, several indicators suggest that the Arab Spring is a regional phenomenon. In many Middle Eastern countries, it has challenged the political power of the current regimes in one way or another; it has also dominated the domestic political debate in countries where the Arab Spring has not gained traction. Secondly, a brief glance at the changes in the political map of the Arab world makes it clear that political diversity in the region has increased significantly. Until the Arab Spring, differences between the Middle Eastern political systems could predominantly be found in the degree of their authoritarian character. But now there are two characteristics by which they differ substantially: authoritarian systems versus systems in transition, and stable systems versus unstable systems.

The first explanation the authors give for the Arab Spring is demographic change. They argue that change was inevitable because of the critical socio-economic development in the authoritarian states of the Middle East. According to Volker Perthes (2011), the most important trigger for this change was the demographic development of the Arab World. The mismatch between increased population and employment opportunities especially for university graduates who constituted a large proportion of the population was a huge problem in the Arab world. The unemployment rate for the population cohort between the ages of 15 and 24 was 25.6 percent in 2003, the highest in the world. The consequent lack of prospects,
rising costs of living, and anger over obviously corrupt and repressive rulers compelled this generation rise up against the authoritarian regimes.

Another view according to the authors, held especially by Philip Howard and Muzammil Hussain, attributes the outbreak of the Arab Spring to the access to digital media, including social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and text messages. Advocates of this approach make clear that the dissent between regimes and populations already existed long before the spread of the internet. However, virtual communication gave people an instrument that made it possible for them to share their resentment with like-minded people and to organize movements against authoritarian rulers.20

The authors also posit economic liberalization without political reforms as another cause of the Arab Spring. From a political-economic point of view, the Arab Spring was caused by a fundamental crisis of the authoritarian social contract. The contract had regulated relations between the people of the Arab world and the power systems for decades. This authoritarian bargain implicitly promised the population a minimum of subsidies. In exchange, people preserved some degree of political loyalty to the regime. If this minimum economic safety net guaranteed by the state were no longer maintained, the regime would suffer from a deficit of legitimacy and the authoritarian bargain would collapse. However, the timing of the Arab Spring still cannot be explained, as the crises that led to the failure of the Middle Eastern authoritarian bargain in 2011 had existed for years, if not decades.

Martin Beck and Simone Hüser further examine the political diversification of the Arab world caused by the Arab spring. The Arab Spring disrupted the high degree of homogeneity among stable authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. This means, first, that there are some
countries where authoritarian structures have been shaken to the point that one can speak of transition states. Secondly, certainly not all authoritarian regimes in the Arab world have been disrupted by the Arab Spring. Although no country has escaped the regional debate about the Arab Spring, the ruling houses of some regimes – especially in the Gulf States – have so far known how to keep the foundations of their authoritarian rule intact. Thirdly, there are strong indications that two regime types have been created which have more than short-term potential. On the one hand, not all protest movements in the Arab world have succeeded in forcing the ruling regime into transformation by peaceful means. Some regimes still control – at least temporarily – the levers of power with the help of their repressive apparatuses, yet they have been unable to force the newly formed opposition movements to their knees. A prime example is Syria.

Beck and Hüser also identify four types of political rule that have emerged as a result of the Arab Spring. The first of these is stable authoritarian regimes like Saudi Arabia. Of those states in the Middle East which fall under the category of stable authoritarian, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is regionally and globally the most important regime. To date, the Saudi regime has succeeded in keeping its authoritarian rule stable without implementing substantial liberalization measures. The second type is the unstable authoritarian regimes exemplified by the case of Syria. Although the Syrian opposition had already expressed its discontent with the authoritarian system in the past (for example, the “Damascus Declaration” in 2005), the regime led by Bashar al-Assad had succeeded on previous occasions at stifling major protests and maintaining its stability. In the wake of the Arab Spring, there was massive mobilization by the opposition, which the regime tried unsuccessfully to contain through cosmetic reforms and massive repression. At the same time, however, the regime was able to control the state institutions. Thus, a civil war–like
standoff has resulted. The third type is the stable systems of transitions. An example is Tunisia where within one month, protestors had overthrown a decades-old authoritarian regime. After 23 years as president, Ben Ali was forced to resign in late January 2011. Subsequent developments created a promising political atmosphere for the Constituent Assembly election in October 2011, and the newly elected assembly was tasked with drafting a new constitution and appointing a new government. The final type the writers identify are the unstable transition systems as in the case of Egypt. Similar to Tunisia, Egypt has been in transition since the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Egypt’s transition, however, appears to be less consolidated than that of Tunisia. Since the fall of Mubarak in 2011, the country has been shaken by massive riots, and the state’s reactions have led to substantial political and economic instability. The riots have been primarily directed against the transitional military government, which has delayed or blocked the transition of power to a civilian government.

In conclusion, Beck and Hüser assert that the Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia, inspired civic movements throughout the region and has since shaped the political debate across the region. It is very unlikely that the Arab Spring will lead to consolidated democracies through smooth democratization.

Katerina Dalacoura also contributes to the discourse on the Arab Spring in her article *The 2011 Uprisings in the Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications*. Dalacoura begins her article with the assertion that Arab societies and polities have tight interconnections and share at least some important characteristics. The contagious nature of the uprisings that started in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread to a number other Arab states, helped by these media (among other factors), is confirmation that the component parts
of the ‘Arab world’ are linked by strong internal bonds. Dalacoura further intimates that although there is some level of interconnectedness among the Arab societies, the events of 2011 arose out of profoundly different causes, contexts and resulted in different outcomes.

The author construes that the self-immolation of Muhammad Buazizi on 17 December 2010 in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid which achieved mythical importance as the symbolic start of the uprisings and eventually led to the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia galvanized popular political action in Egypt. Events in Tunisia and Egypt jolted the rest of the region. A few days after Mubarak’s fall, protests against Muammar Qadhafi broke out in Benghazi, Libya’s second largest city, and quickly spread ‘across the whole of the east and to some parts of the west’, although they remained relatively small-scale in the capital, Tripoli. In Bahrain, which faced longstanding political conflict between the Sunni monarchy and a Shiite majority, protests erupted on 14 February resulting, a few days later, in the police storming Manama’s Pearl Square, which was occupied by protesters, and killing seven of them, some asleep in tents. Demonstrations restarted on 21 February, but were met by even bigger pro-government events. Repression radicalized the movement, which called for a republic and a march on the royal palace on 11 March. King Hamad invited Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces, led by Saudi Arabia, into the country on 14 March to help suppress the uprising and declared a state of emergency. In Yemen, following Ben Ali’s ouster from Tunisia on 14 January, small-scale demonstrations demanded President Ali Saleh’s removal. In Syria, the uprising started in March in the southern city of Deraa. Bashar al-Assad’s regime responded harshly, initiating a vicious cycle of repression and further protests and organizing counter-demonstrations.
Dalacoura also posits that an explosive mix of socio-economic problems and widespread and deepening political grievances constituted a common causal thread behind all the uprisings. The longstanding structural problems afflicting the Arab world came to a head prior to 2011 through a combination of persistently high unemployment, especially among youth (and educated youth at that), rampant corruption, internal regional and social inequalities, and a further deterioration of economic conditions because of the global 2008 financial crisis and food price increases.

The six cases of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, where popular uprisings led either to the overthrow of dictators or to serious internal fracturing and contestation, are separated by a sharp divide from the rest of the region, which experienced comparatively minor fallout from those events. The writer also explores the prospects for democratic change in the Arab World as well explains the Islamist factor in the Arab uprisings of 2011.

Dalacoura concludes that just as the events of the Arab Spring have been diverse in their causes and outcomes, so their impact on the region is also varied. Tremendous uncertainty surrounds the Arab Middle East at present. In geopolitical terms, internal political changes in the Arab world will cause shifts in the balance of power across the region, which will affect Iran, Turkey, Israel and the West. With regard to US foreign policy, the impact of the uprisings will be complex but will not profoundly alter its parameters.

The above reviews highlight the diversity of views expressed on the causes of the Arab Spring. A trend that runs through the discussion by the various authors is the non conclusive nature of the suggestion that the apparent lack of democracy was an underlying cause of the Arab Spring. Proceeding on the hypothesis that Kenneth Waltz’s three images of
international relations presents a balanced framework for an objective assessment of the Arab Spring, this thesis will add to the literature on the discussion by advocating a balanced approach.

1.9 Sources of Data and Research Methodology

This paper relied mainly on secondary sources of data including information from textbooks, journals, articles and other e-documents. Qualitative methods were employed to analyse the data collected.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is organised into 4 chapters. The first chapter deals with the research design; the second chapter gives an overview of the Arab Spring; the third chapter consists of a critical analysis of the Arab Spring through Waltz’s three images of international relations, whilst the final chapter gives the summary of findings and provides a conclusion.
ENDNOTES

1 As cited by Yoel Guzansky and Benedetta Berti in their article “Is the New Middle East Stuck in Its Sectarian Past? The Unspoken Dimension of the “Arab Spring”. Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs, Vol. 57, Number 1, Winter, 2013.


3 Pratt N. Understanding the "Arab Spring"--notes from a contribution to a roundtable discussion at the University of Warwick, 24 November 2011. Available at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/people/pratt/research/arabspring/understanding_the_arab_spring.pdf, accessed on 13/02/2013.


5 Waltz, K.N., Man, the State and War (New York, Columbia University Press, 1959)


13 ibid., p. 2.


CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARAB SPRING

2.1 Introduction

The Arab uprisings can be traced to Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution which began with mounting anti-government protests in the country’s interior in December 2010. The protests subsequently spread throughout Tunisia within weeks with the climax of the protests being the resignation of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on January 14, 2001. This revolutionary wave quickly spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria seeing serious challenges to repressive regimes that had appeared steady a few months earlier as they had been for decades. Undoubtedly, there was more to the Arab Spring than the self-immolation incident and simple narration. A series of complex events may have caused the 2010 revolts to escalate unexpectedly. Although there are distinct national nuances in the drivers and triggers, an overview of nature and general politics in the Maghreb region is relevant. This chapter seeks to give a general overview of the North African region. It also highlights some of the unifying characteristics of the Maghreb region, whilst emphasizing the facts why the region has failed to democratize. The chapter further traces the series of events that occurred specifically in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya that led to the wave of protests that swept over the Arab world in 2010.

2.1 An Overview of the North African Region

As the most northern part of the African continent, the North African region according to the United Nations(UN) classification of geographical regions comprises the following countries; Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara. The Maghreb or
Maghrib which is a region of North Africa refers to the five North African nations of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya. Egypt is by some definitions part of the Middle East and is geographically a transcontinental country with the bigger part of the country stretching along the Nile in North Africa while the Sinai Peninsula is in Asia.¹ Geographically, these countries can be classified as African countries because they are situated in Africa. However, historically, socio-culturally, politically and economically, they are Arab nations largely influenced by Islam and the politics of the Middle East more than the exigencies of sub-Saharan Africa. The North African region is often classified in conjunction with the Middle East as the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. For the purposes of this research the North African region will focus on Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

The MENA region possesses some common properties and unifying characteristics such as low levels of democratisation or high levels of authoritarianism, low levels of economic liberalisation and a predominantly Arab or Islamic population. This does not however imply that the region behaves in a uniform or static way. The North African countries are internally diverse, with different cultures and political systems. Some scholars have argued that the elements of regional cohesion have been weakened with the Gulf states for example, forming a distinct regional subsystem characterised by strong economies based upon oil income, conservative monarchical rule and close Western links. Despite its diversity, the MENA region rests on the bedrock of shared culture, and an Ottoman civilization that was subsequently fragmented and overwhelmed by European imperialism, Arab nationalism, and Westernization.²

Until the 18th century, the only independent kingdom in North Africa was Morocco whilst the four states of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria were all provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The concept of a territorial state was absent in the Muslim world before the period of colonialism. Muslims were conscious of ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences among
themselves, but they saw themselves as politically united first under the caliphate and then the later empires and sultanates. The nation-state, and thus nationalism, arose in the Muslim world only as a consequence of colonialism; in Islam, there is no place for a secular state.

Most countries in North Africa came under European colonial rule during the 18\textsuperscript{th} and the 19\textsuperscript{th} century with France, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain being their colonial masters. In general, the French administrative system was more centralized, bureaucratic, and interventionist than the British system of colonial rule. The other colonial powers—Germany, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Italy—used varied administrative systems to facilitate control and economic exploitation. However, no matter the system, they were all alien, authoritarian, and bureaucratic, and distorted African political and social organizations and undermined their moral authority and political legitimacy as governing structures.

It was assumed in the late 1980’s that the principal states of North Africa; Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia would experience a trend towards economic liberalization and political democratisation following the period of decolonisation, in keeping with the trends afoot within eastern Europe and elsewhere. However, misguided economic policies, bureaucratic mismanagement, political corruption, and cultural alienation combined to create a popular demand for change in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Although it seemed for a time that a new and more open politics would transform the region, instead, authoritarian states mobilized to repress the populist opposition led by politicized Islamist movements.

Another feature that attracts much attention the MENA region is the weakness or absence of democratization dynamics compared to elsewhere. In recent decades, the world has seen dramatic increases in democratization known as “waves” of democratization. Many nations in Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa moved to democracies with free and fair elections and the guarantee of individual rights. The MENA region has
regrettably been sidelined in this democratisation process due to one main reason; the Middle East and North Africa remain stubbornly authoritarian. The Middle East also lacks the conditions, such as a democratic political history, high standards of living, and high literacy rates, which stimulated democratic change in, for example, central Europe and East Asia. Ironically, many Arab countries are ruled by authoritarian leaders who are more liberal than the citizenry they lead.\(^7\)

Two major schools of thought have emerged to explain the reasons why the MENA region has failed to democratise: the “Prerequisite” school which examines the democracy deficit of the MENA region and attributes it to lacking economic, political, and cultural necessities for the process of democratization to begin and remain and the “Transitions” school that examines authoritarian regimes as they are rather than what they’re lacking, their adaptive abilities that have allowed them to remain in power.\(^8\)

A major vein in examining the democratisation of the MENA region is the questionable relationship between Islam and democracy. Whilst some scholars are of the view that Islam and democracy are not compatible, others also think otherwise. According to Larry Diamond for example, “The obstacle to democracy in the Middle East is not the culture or the religion of Islam, but rather the regimes themselves and the region’s distinctive geopolitics.”\(^9\) Amos Perlmutter intimates on the other hand that ‘Islam, fundamentalist or otherwise’, is incompatible with liberal, human right-oriented, Western style, representative democracy, so that Islamic movements should be stifled at birth.\(^10\)

Indeed Islam may be viewed as absolutely incompatible with democracy mainly because it is a theocratic system with Allah alone at its head. Allah’s law is interpreted by a ruling body of
clerics. There is no room for a secular political system in which all people are treated as equals.

2.2 The Arab Spring in Tunisia

Extant literature on the Arab Spring typically focuses on how the singular act of self-immolation by a Tunisian spawned a wave of protests across the Arab world. Before the inception of the Arab Spring, however, the Arab World and specifically, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were mired in conditions which could precipitate political upheavals. In Tunisia, for instance, the building blocks of political crises had been laid before the incidence of self immolation. One such building block was the lack of economic opportunities for considerable segments of the population especially the youth. Most crucially, if the hypothesis “that youth are more prone to acts of political protest or violence” is effectual, then the inception of the conflict in Tunisia was bound to happen. The aforementioned was aggravated by attempts to undermine media freedoms within Tunisia, situation that “spawned unprecedented debate within and outside Tunisia over Ben Ali’s police State.”

As the catalyst in the uprisings, the personal tragedy of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia is what is now known to have instigated the Arab Spring in December 2010. Bouazizi’s act of desperation was the spark that reverberated immediately and led to several protests in Sidi Bouzid. Even though at least two other citizens had self immolated in Tunisia in the months preceding Bouazizi, these brutal deaths sparked nothing. The act was symbolic of the dire state of affairs for the Tunisian population; Tunisia experienced widespread unemployment, a highly corrupt judiciary system, poor living standards, and a lack of respect for basic human rights. Bouazizi’s desperate actions led to demonstrations, and while the protests were at first confined to his hometown of Sidi Bouzid they soon spread to the capital Tunis. The protests
were captured almost immediately by social media and quickly proliferated to other areas in Tunisia. As the protests spread to the capital, they were accompanied with larger demand for political liberties, basic freedoms, and dignity including the resignation of their long standing president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his small clan of powerful allies. Demonstrations also broke out in his rural hometown followed by protests in other areas of the country. However, when the protests reached the capital, Tunis, the government responded with even more brutality, arresting demonstrators, activists, and shutting down the Internet. In a bid to control the unrest among the populace, the President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, shuffled his cabinet and promised to create 300,000 jobs, but it was too late; protesters just wanted the regime to fall and its President stripped of any power.

Evidently, the Ben Ali administration was riddled with mal-governance, a symptom of which was the outpouring of grievances by Tunisians and, which triggered ripples across the Arab World. In effect, the underlying causes of political upheavals in Tunisia were as a result of structural variables which had remained latent throughout, the act of self immolation was a trigger that opened a Pandora’s Box.

On January 14, Ben Ali and his family fled into exile and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia. This act marked the end of one of the Arab world’s most repressive regimes. It was a victory for the people and perhaps the first time ever in history that an Arab dictator has been removed by a revolution rather than a coup d’état.14 However, the abrupt departure of Ben Ali from Tunisia into exile appeared to have nipped in the bud, an inclination towards a protracted political transition and possibly, a power vacuum. As a result, Tunisia did not occupy the space of international discourse relative to that of Libya and Egypt. It may be the case that unlike Libya and Egypt, Tunisia did not present any geo-political leverage to preponderant states, such as the United States of America (USA) or Britain. Probably, on the basis of
France’s strong relations with her former colonies, Ben Ali could have been propped-up by France. However, Ben Ali had ruined his relations with France after his obstinate posturing over real political reform. Specifically, the failed attempts by Ben Ali to stifle media scrutiny after a Tunisian journalist, Bin Brik, defied a ban on the publication of articles deemed critical of Ben Ali’s government. This was an important juncture in the trajectory of Tunisia as the attention of the international community was drawn to the poor state of human rights in that country. The Bin Brik factor in Tunisian politics cannot be discounted. Strained relations with France, a symptom of the poor handling of the Bin Brik issue, meant Ben Ali was denied a key diplomatic smokescreen, France, on the international plane. This was crucial because “Ben Ali enjoyed unconditional material and political backing to the detriment of human rights in Tunisia.” Furthermore, it may also be the case that France risked the ire of Tunisians who were united in the desire to break Ben Ali’s stranglehold on power.

Consequently after the fall of Ben Ali, a temporary president and national unity government were in place, the latter comprising opposition members but headed by incumbent Prime Minister, Muhammad Ghannouchi. Close ties with the old regime and political and popular opposition however led to Ghannouchi’s resignation on February 27. Ben Ali was subsequently tried and convicted, in absentia, for a number of criminal offences on July 4. Elections were finally held on 23 October for a Constituent Assembly to rewrite the constitution after two postponements. The largest party, the previously banned Islamist al-Nahda, formed a coalition government headed by Hamadi Jebali, a former political prisoner. On December 13, 2011 Tunisia’s constitutional assembly elected former activist Moncef Marzouki, who returned from exile in France after Fall of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali as president of Tunisia.
Although Tunisia’s massive popular uprising provided the initial spark for the Arab Spring and the country held relatively free and fair elections ten months after its revolution, the interim government has not effectively built public confidence and there is growing skepticism about the political transition. Auspiciously, though, Post-Ali Tunisia, to a certain extent, has witnessed political reform aimed at fast-tracking the pace of democratization and good governance.

Despite Tunisia’s significant democratic progress, the challenges of rampant unemployment, public discontent and low levels of foreign investment will likely prove to be ongoing challenges to the democratization process.

In Tunisia, the “Jasmine Revolution” as it came to be known was the first popular uprising to topple an established government in the Middle East and North Africa since the Iranian revolution of 1979. It was also the spark that ignited and inspired other Revolutions in the region.

2.3 The Arab Spring in Egypt

Renowned for its pyramids and ancient civilisations, Egypt is the largest Arab country and has played a central role in North African and Middle Eastern politics in recent times. On January 25, 2011, sustained protests by hundreds of Egyptians brought an end to the almost thirty year rule of an autocrat, President Hosni Mubarak. The mobilisations which were inspired by events in Tunisia called for an end to corruption, injustice and poor economic conditions. The January 25 revolution was launched by the occupation of Tahrir Square; a former symbolic revolutionary site in Cairo by protesters. The protests which started as a revolt against police brutality and repression on January 25 had evolved by January 28 into a demand for the demise of the regime. Street demonstrations rapidly escalated into a national
revolutionary movement that in 18 days removed Mubarak and his National Democratic Party (NDP) from power. The Egyptian revolution was more violent than the Tunisian Revolution, but it successfully ousted former President Hosni Mubarak after several weeks.

Although in the beginning of the uprising, mass demonstrations in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities, and the occupation of Cairo's central Tahrir (Liberation) Square were met with repression and violence by police and supporters of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), Egyptians broke through the wall of fear and fought back in street battles. On Jan. 27 the government shut down the internet and mobile service providers complied with government requests to suspend service. Efforts by the Egyptian army to restore peace all proved futile and brutal clashes broke out between pro and anti Mubarak groups. In response to the protests that had caused tens of thousands of people to take to the streets, Mubarak appointed intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman as Egypt’s first vice president in 30 years on January 29, installed a new cabinet on January 31 and conceded that he would not run again for president nor would his son Gamal Mubarak after he finished his term in September 2011. All these concessions however failed to mollify the demands of the Egyptians. Despite his reluctance to step down, Mubarak was finally forced to resign on February 11. Mubarak flew out of Cairo to his Red Sea retreat. Hundreds of thousands of people erupted in happiness in Tahrir Square as vice president Omar Suleiman announced that President Mubarak had resigned and called on the army to run the country.

In June 2012 however, Mohamed Morsi, who is backed by the Muslim Brotherhood became Egypt’s first democratically elected president. Contrary to the expectations of Egyptians, Morsi failed to satisfy their ambitions and this led to his ouster on July 3, 2013, just over a
year after he ascended to presidency. Consequently Egypt has been thrown into turmoil as protestors have taken to the streets again.

2.4 The Arab Spring in Libya

With the strong dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt overthrown, it was perhaps inevitable that the dysfunctional dictatorship lying between them—Libya—would face a similar challenge. The situation in Libya however developed quite differently. A few days after Mubarak’s fall, protests against Muammar Gaddafi broke out in Benghazi, Libya’s second largest city, and quickly spread ‘across the whole of the east and to some parts of the west’, although they remained relatively small-scale in the capital, Tripoli.\(^{19}\) The insurgence was led by the National Transition Council (NTC). The Libyan civil war which began immediately on the heels of the Egyptian Revolution was considerably more violent. Rebels in Libya began a civil war against President Muammar Gaddafi, and received support from Europe and the United States of America (USA). Gaddafi was an enemy of Europe and the USA for several decades, and had committed acts of terrorism during the 1980s, most famously, the attack on Pan Am Flight 103 shortly before Christmas, 1988, which killed 270 people.\(^{20}\) The distinguishing feature in the case of Libya was the brutality with which Gaddafi responded to the popular uprisings. Precisely, the trigger for the riot in Benghazi on February 15 was the arrest of a Human Rights Activist, Fethi Tarbel who represented the “relatives of more than 1,000 prisoners allegedly massacred by security forces in Tripoli’s Abu Salim jail in 1996 and what began as a series of peaceful demonstrations turned into confrontations which were met with military force by the Gaddafi regime. A "Day of Rage" was declared for 17 February by the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. Libyan military and security forces fired live ammunition on protestors. After being overwhelmed by protesters, security
forces withdrew from Benghazi on February 18 with some security personnel joining the protesters. The violence in these protests was more extreme than those in Egypt and Tunisia, as the death toll surpassed 230 in less than a week. By the end of February, uprisings in Libya reached the heart of Tripoli, and triggered similar protests across the Middle East. In March, the focus was largely on Libya as the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) powers became involved in what was then considered an outright civil war. Throughout March the rebels in Libya continued capturing towns and making progress towards controlling Libya as a whole. For the next couple of months, the rebels and the powerful nations continued discussions and attempts to peacefully compromise, but were not successful. The protests spread across the country and anti-Gaddafi forces established a provisional government based in Benghazi, called the National Transitional Council with the stated goal to overthrow the Gaddafi government in Tripoli. The rebels in Libya eventually defeated Gaddafi’s forces and killed him brutally.

2.5 Differing Views on the Causes of the Arab Spring.

A lot of debate had evolved among scholars as to what might be the cause of the revolutionary wave that swept over the MENA region in 2010.

Some scholars consider ageing dictatorships as a cause of the Arab Spring. Although economic and political factors were important in explaining the rebellions, the long rule of Arab leaders created discontent among the people and caused them to protest. This is because more competent leadership could have to an extent helped in stabilizing the economic situation existent in these nations.

According to Primož Manfreda, by the end of the 20th century most Arab dictatorships were utterly bankrupt both ideologically and morally. When the Arab Spring happened in
2011, Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak had been in power since 1980, Tunisia’s Ben Ali since 1987, while Muammar al-Qaddafi ruled over Libya for 42 years. Most of the population was deeply cynical about the legitimacy of these ageing regimes, although until 2011 most remained passive out of fear of the security services, and due to an apparent lack of better alternatives or fear of an Islamist takeover.

Others have also attributed the revolution to the global economic influences and domestic economic difficulties. William Shaub, in his article, *The Roots of the Revolution in Egypt*, has highlighted on the average per–capita income and its possible affect on the revolution. He posits that, “Egypt has had a massive income gap throughout Mubarak’s control, which is clearly the root cause of the original uprising. One half of Egyptians live on $2/day or less. The average per-capita income in the country is just $6,200.” 22

Poverty and economic mismanagement have also been cited as the underlying causes of the Arab Spring. Mutually, these factors resulted in high unemployment levels that erupted fury among the Arab citizens. According to Shehab Al Makahleh, unemployment rates have increased in some Arab countries. More people now live below the poverty line and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has failed to match the rapid population increase of around 2.5 per cent a year, pushing the per capita income in the region further down. The ratio of poverty in Egypt is 21 per cent; it is 10 per cent in Tunis and Algeria. The unemployment rate is 14 per cent compared to an international average of nearly 5.7 per cent. Arab countries need to create nearly 40 million jobs by 2020 to tackle unemployment through reforms. 23
Some scholars have even blamed American foreign policy as a trigger for the Arab uprisings of 2010. Specifically, the pursuit of American values and the protection of American interests led to the support of autocratic regimes in the Arab world.

For decades, the United States has sought to “make the world safe for democracy,” while at the same time often supporting repressive, nondemocratic regimes because of national security or economic self-interest. The tension between these two fundamentally distinct policy orientations has become even more pronounced as the United States tries to respond to the Arab Spring uprisings.  

2.6 Conclusion

The Arab Spring has turned into a long season. It began very optimistically as a movement to democratize the Middle East and North Africa. The results have however been otherwise. Egypt is torn between the Muslim Brotherhood and those seeking a more secular government. Tunisia is still unstable and Syria is engaged in a bloody civil war.

The Arab World will never be the same. The forces that have been unleashed are likely to remain critical drivers in regional politics for decades to come. Unless the regimes of the region respond effectively to the underlying grievances that motivated the Arab Spring, it is highly likely that the autocracies that withstood the 2011 wave of unrest will face future waves. Indeed, the region continues to face widespread internal unrest from the first series of protests, and some of the states that survived this round may fall in future rounds unless they are willing to make many of the changes that animated the authors of the Arab Spring to begin with. In that sense, the full impact of the Arab Spring may not be felt for years to come. It is still uncertain why Bouazizi’s sacrifice caused so many Tunisians to take to the streets to demand the regime’s ouster. Perhaps it was simply the poignancy of the gesture. Certainly,
the frustrations and humiliations that drove him to this final deed resonated with a great many of his countrymen. But when thousands of Tunisians succeeded in forcing their dictator, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, to flee for his life, it was a watershed for the rest of the Arab world. Suddenly, Arabs everywhere saw people just like themselves, angry about problems just like their own, defying vast autocracies just like those they lived under, and toppling regimes that had once seemed impregnable. Even those who had long feared that the growing frustration of so many Arabs would inevitably result in explosions of popular unrest never imagined that a revolt in one country, especially a small state, would cause dominoes to topple across the entire region. It was for this reason that the regimes themselves, and not just the rest of the world, were taken by surprise not only when Ben Ali fell, but also when his fall served as the earthquake that sent shockwaves from one end of the Middle East to the other.\textsuperscript{26}

Nonetheless, the promise of the Arab Spring; democratisation of the Arab world may long be realised. Fledgling democracies are struggling to advance or even to maintain control.
ENDNOTES


4 http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-colonization-of-africa.html


15 Sadiki L. op.cit., p. 70

16 ibid., p. 75.


26 Ibid.
CHAPTER 3

THE ARAB SPRING THROUGH WALTZ’S THREE IMAGES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

3.0 Introduction

As indicated in chapter one of this study, political analysts have employed multiple frameworks to explain the causes and manifestations of the Arab spring. In his book, Man, the State and War, Kenneth Waltz presents three categories for explaining the cause of conflicts. This chapter examines the Arab spring through the prism of Waltz’s three images. It is preceded by a review of Waltz’s three images.

3.1 An Analysis of Kenneth Waltz’s Three images of International Relations

One of the major themes in the study of international relations is war. Both classical realism and liberalism, the two theoretical schools that had vied for influence since the 1930s, relied on the first or second images to explain world politics. For classical realists like Hans Morgenthau, war and competition in international relations arose from the hunger for power in 'men' (as they put it); for liberals like Alfred E. Zimmern, war was rife because tyrants were unrestrained by law within and outside their states.¹ As a neo realist Waltz concurs that there is no central arbiter in the international system. However, Waltz locates his explanation of what causes insecurity in the international system at the systemic level. By inference, he underscores the fact that there is no single explanation for what triggers conflicts in the international system. It is in this regard that Waltz attempts to provide a more complete picture on the causes of international conflicts. In his book Man, the State and War, Waltz categorises the causes of international conflicts into three levels he terms images; man, the state and the international system.
The first image, Man is based on the premise that men are flawed and thus wars arise out of weaknesses inherent in man. Waltz suggests that in the first image of international relations “the locus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behaviour of man.”

Waltz asserts that the primary causes of war are the direct result of human selfishness, misdirected aggressiveness and stupidity and, thus, to achieve peace men must be enlightened in their moral-intellectual outlook or their psychic-social behaviour. Waltz also admits to other secondary causes which must be interpreted in the light of these primary factors.

The present difficulties according to Waltz can be attributed to a defect in knowledge. This means that conflicts which constitute the present difficulty occur because people are unaware of what is right. Waltz asserts that people will only demand the right policies when they are aware of what the right policies are. Even though men have good instinct, their present credulity is what may incite them to making wrong decisions. Thus, an effective remedy for war is the education or enlightenment of man. Within this image, Waltz further identifies two groups of first image analysts; the optimists and the pessimists who both agree on the definition of causes but differ on the prospects for transformation. The pessimists include ancients such as Spinoza and Augustine and contemporary observers such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans J. Morgenthau. Not only do the pessimists admit that wars are caused by the inherent nature of man, they also believe that human nature cannot be reformed or modified. Morgenthau agrees power, and the absence of morality, characterises international politics. For Morgenthau, war is unavoidable as human nature is fixed. To them, peace is idealistic. The optimists which Waltz sets against the pessimists include Alexander Leighton, Clyde Kluckhohn and Gordon Allport. Whereas the pessimists of the first-image school give up on man and turn to political remedies, their optimistic counterparts, according to Waltz, “seeing the cause of war in men, seek to change them.”
Waltz also intimates that although the events of world history cannot be separated from the human beings who created them, man cannot be viewed essentially as an independent variable in causing conflicts. This is because in as much as human beings influence the environment, they are equally a product of the environment they find themselves. Waltz concludes that while human nature undoubtedly plays a role in causing war, it cannot by itself explain both war and peace.

The second image Waltz identifies is the State. The key to understanding war and peace here is the internal organization of states. He assumes that the nature of a state’s political institutions, its modes of production and distribution, the quality and origins of its elites, and sometimes the characteristics of its people determine whether that state will be peaceful or belligerent. Thus, the perception here is that defects in states cause wars among them; peace is a product of the good states whilst war stems from bad states. He however lays emphasis on the fact that this approach itself is faulty because it relies on the generalization of one pattern of state and society to explain peace or war in the world. Bad states can lead to war but the reverse that good states mean peace in the world is a doubtful theory. Waltz borrows from Marxism and the international socialist movement in order to explore the implications of the second image.

After discussing the orthodox Marxian doctrine in which the destruction of capitalism leads to the “withering away” of states and thus to the elimination of war, Waltz turns to the revisionists, whom he finds more sophisticated and fascinating. Having witnessed the degree to which World War I led the socialist parties and the proletariat to choose national interests over class interests, Lenin and his European successors felt compelled to seek some modification in their doctrine. For the former, it was sufficient to increase his emphasis on
the need for strong leadership which would show the proletariat where its true interest lay, but for Hobson (whom Waltz selects at his prototype revisionist) something more was required. In place of the “withering away” concept, the revisionist accepted the state as a continuing instrument of social organization, but anticipated reform in state behaviour once the socialists came to power; socialist governments, recognizing the incompatibility of war with the interests of the working class, would never engage in international military conflict. Thus, the cause of war lies not in the mere existence of states (as for Marx), but in the existence of capitalist states.\(^5\) Just as individuals must be examined in the context of society, the actions of states must be examined in the context of the international system—“the international political environment has much to do with the way states behave.”\(^6\)

The third image Waltz identifies is the international system, which is presented in his book as War. The third image emphasizes the anarchical nature of the international system and Waltz infers from Rousseau that “in anarchy there is no automatic harmony,” and that “among autonomous states, war is inevitable.”\(^7\) This implies that the absence of a central authority or the decentralised nature of the international system is responsible for the actions or inactions of autonomous states. In this regard, wars occur because nothing is done to prevent them. Anarchy thus constitutes a permissive or underlying cause of war. For Waltz, ‘in anarchy, security is the highest end.’\(^8\) In an anarchical situation where uncertainty is created, the only way states can survive is through self-reliance. Although a self help system does not eliminate uncertainty, it reproduces insecurity among other states.

Waltz’s principal contention that he advances is that while particular wars cannot be explained without reference to man and the state, the international system is important because it explains the possibility or recurrence of wars. He posits that just as individuals act
upon their immediate interests to the detriment of the general group interests, states also
follow a rational course of action. Harmony in anarchy exists when not only is every state
rational but every state assumes that every other state is rational too. States will use any
means at their disposal in order to pursue their interests, even if it means using force.
Balance of power is very important here because it is viewed not only as a powerful
descriptive device, but as a normative and prescriptive requirement of national survival. “If
some states act on this rule [do whatever you must in order to win], or are expected to act on
it, other states must adjust their strategies accordingly”. Thus, each state will act rationally in
pursuance of its national interest.

It can be concluded from the third image analysis that the most obvious solution to wars is a
world government. Although this remedy is plausible, its practicability is quite questionable.
According to Waltz however, “All three images are a part of nature. So fundamental are man,
the state, and the state system in any attempt to understand international relations that seldom
does an analyst, however wedded to one image, entirely overlook the other two.”

In correlating these three images, Waltz concludes that “The third image describes the
framework of world politics, but without the first and second images there can be no
knowledge of the forces that determine policy; [conversely] the first and second images
describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess
their importance or predict their results.”
3.2 The Arab Spring through Waltz’s Three Images

3.2.1 Man as a Cause of the Arab Spring

According to the first image as earlier indicated, Waltz identifies with those who analyse war from the microscopic level. To him, man is a major cause of war. Inherent characteristics of man including selfishness, covetousness and greed will always cause war. Our miseries are ineluctably the product of our natures. The root of all evil is man, and thus he is himself the root of the specific evil, war. According to the first image, men are not led by the precepts of pure reasoning but by their passions and men who are led by passion are drawn into war. In analysing the Arab spring, it is essential to understand the role of man as the cause of the uprisings which occurred in late 2010 which sought to remove dictators across the Middle East and North Africa.

For many years, the Arab world has boasted a long list of leaders who have been driven by their individual passions and have ruled their individual nations for many years. In the case of Tunisia, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali ascended to presidency in 1987 through a bloodless coup which ousted Tunisia’s first president, Habib Bourguiba, who led Tunisia to independence from French colonial rule. Although Ben Ali was credited with delivering stability and a measure of economic prosperity, he received widespread criticism for suppressing political freedoms.¹²

Tunisia was performing relatively better than other Arab countries in the sense that its economy was more affluent; it had a relatively well educated population as well as the fact that Tunisian women enjoyed more rights. Tunisia's relatively excellent performance in economic, educational, and other indicators however disproved its repressive core. Ben Ali's
government was one of the most ruthless in the Arab world. Ben Ali had arrested and tortured thousands of dissidents, put a virtual stranglehold on the media, and blocked civil society organizations since he came to power in 1987. Specifically, the failed attempts by Ben Ali to stifle media scrutiny after a Tunisian journalist, Bin Brik, defied a ban on the publication of articles deemed critical of Ben Ali’s government was evidence of how media freedoms in Tunisia were undermined.\(^{13}\) This was an important juncture in the trajectory of Tunisia as the attention of the international community was drawn to the poor state of human rights in that country.

The excessive repression that existed in Tunisia was also reflected in the apparent absence of an active Islamist opposition group. This was disparate from what existed in other Arab countries where at least the opposition was known even if association with the opposition was not encouraged. Members of the Islamist Ennahda (“The Renaissance,” in Arabic) movement were largely excluded from the political sphere in the 1980’s and were jailed and exiled in the 1990s. It was on January 30, 2011 that Ennahda’s leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, returned to Tunisia after more than two decades of exile in London. According to Nathan Brown, an Elliott School professor and an expert on the Middle East, the Tunisian regime essentially “squashed out politics”.\(^ {14}\)

The extent of subjugation in Tunisia undoubtedly suggests the greater role it played in inciting and sustaining the revolution than other factors. This does not imply that other factors like economic hardships were insignificant. Political grievances however seemed to prevail over economic ones. Bouazizi’s singular act was apparently ignited only after his town’s governor refused to hear his complaint.\(^ {15}\) Perhaps, if Bouazizi had received a modicum of justice, history might have played out differently. Clearly, the ability of state institutions to address political grievances was also undermined under Ben Ali’s regime.
Ben Ali’s dictatorial and undemocratic style of leadership was also somewhat responsible for breeding resentment among the Tunisian populace. In 1989 and 1994, Ben Ali was the sole candidate, and in 1999 and 2004, his “adversaries” were figureheads. Ben Ali confirmed his dictatorial approach to democracy in 2002, when a referendum on a new constitution allowed him to extend his rule until 2014. According to official results, 99 per cent of the population voted in favour of the constitutional change. Ben Ali went on to pull off landslide wins in two more elections, both of them criticised by human rights groups and the opposition as unfair.\textsuperscript{16}

Another trait of Ben Ali that appeared to have generated public disenchantment was the growing corruption of Ben Ali’s extended family. Though Tunisians may not have been aware of what was happening initially, the advent of technology however revealed the extent of corruption that existed in Tunisia especially among Ben Ali and his family. Serious allegations of financial mismanagement and corruption plagued Tunisia’s financial sector. Ben Ali’s extended family is often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption. Seemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of these relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage. Ben Ali’s wife, Leila Ben Ali and her extended family- the Trabelsis provoke the greatest ire from Tunisians. Along with the numerous allegations of Trabelsis corruption are often barbs about their lack of education, low social status and conspicuous consumption.\textsuperscript{17}

This trend of corruption was captured by the annual “perception of corruption” index maintained by Transparency International, in which Tunisia’s ranking declined from 43\textsuperscript{rd} in 2005 to 59\textsuperscript{th} in 2010, out of a total of 178 countries monitored.\textsuperscript{18}

With all these underlying factors, the Tunisians refused to withdraw their protests even when Ben Ali went on television to acknowledge their hardships and offer concessions. After decades of losing their civil and political rights, they settled for nothing less than regime
change, inspiring many others in the Arab world to follow their lead. The only way they would end their protests was the withdrawal of Ben Ali, the cause of their oppressions.

The case was no different in Egypt. Hosni Mubarak had ruled for close to 30 years after assuming office in 1981, becoming one of the world’s longest serving presidents. As in Tunisia, socio-economic tensions intersected with deep political discontent among almost all sectors of the population, notably including the military. After the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat, Mubarak assumed office and he remained in office until January 2011 when demonstrations all over Egypt calling for an end to his regime forced him to step down.

Though he was a very prominent leader in the Middle East, within Egypt his government was met with strong resentment from protesters who were seeking political and democratic reforms.

Mubarak’s patrimonial style of leadership was one of the factors that triggered the uprisings in Egypt. Until the mass protests that took place, Egypt lacked a vice president. Until January 29 when intelligence chief Omar Suleiman was elevated to the role of vice president, there had been no obvious successor but opposition groups had feared his son, 40-year-old former investment banker Gamal Mubarak, was being groomed for a kind of dynastic inheritance dressed up as a democratic transition. Although Gamal had maintained that he had no intentions of becoming president he had been moving steadily up the ranks of the National Democratic Party (NDP), becoming a leading advocate of economic and political reform.

In the early years of Mubarak’s presidency, there were different hopes; his government fixed infrastructure and provided new roads, sewage facilities and telephone circuits. It solved the problem of bread subsidies, which had previously caused riots, with a reduction in the size of loaves; Mubarak even appeared to be a reformist. In the later years of his presidency, Mubarak was given credit for economic reforms that successfully raised overall growth and
investment. However, these reforms failed to alleviate poverty; some 40% of the Egyptian population continued to live on $2 a day or less. Ultimately, a sense of economic injustice helped create the conditions for the 18-day uprising that unseated Mubarak.\(^{20}\)

In the case of Libya, the late colonel Muammar Gaddafí was only 27 years when he seized power in 1969. Gaddafí’s dictatorship was not micro-managerial; he tended to delegate the running of government. As a populist, he commanded the support of the Libyan people. Yet by the end of the 1970s, hopes of democratic reform had been crushed and Libya had become a brutal police state. One of his preferred methods of repression was public execution. In 1977 for instance, he personally presided over the killing of a young teacher in Benghazi who had participated in a pro-democracy demonstration. In April 1984 of the same month, Yvonne Fletcher was murdered by a shot fired from inside the Libyan embassy in London. Gaddafí also had two undergraduate students from Tripoli University hung in Green Square for “subversion”.\(^{21}\)

The antipathy among Libyans that ultimately caused them to follow the trend of revolution in the North African region can be attributed to one of many factors; corruption. For Libyans critical of Colonel Gaddafí, his greatest crime may have been the squandering of wealth on foreign adventures and corruption. With a population of only six million and annual oil revenues of US $32bn in 2010, Libya's potential is huge. Most Libyans do not feel this wealth and living conditions can be reminiscent of far poorer countries.\(^{22}\) The wealth of the nation only profited the elite to the detriment of the ordinary citizen.

Gaddafí was also perceived as a state sponsor of terror although he had made skeptical moves including signing on to the United States so called “war on terror” as well as announcing that Libya was abandoning its nuclear and biological weapons programmes. A case in point is the Lockerbie case in which He was accused by the governments of the West of having carried
out a revenge attack for Reagan’s 1986 bombardment of Libya. Although Tripoli consistently denied responsibility, pressure steadily mounted over the course of the proceeding years and, in 1998, Gaddafi handed two officers from his security services - Lamin Khalifah Fhimah and Abdel Baset Ali al-Megrahi - over to a specially convened UN court operating under Scottish law in the Netherlands. In late 2001 Megrahi was convicted of the atrocity, while Fhimah was acquitted. Gaddafi supported such activities to the detriment of human security in Libya.

In mid-February, in the eastern city of Benghazi, a traditional hotbed of anti-Gaddafi dissent, a crowd of protesters furious at the arbitrary imprisonment of a lawyer by the regime’s intelligence services, laid siege to an army garrison for three days before breaking through its defences. This was the first victory of what developed into an organised rebellion - Libya’s contribution to the revolutionary eruption sweeping North Africa and the Middle East. As the uprising gathered pace, spreading westward to the coastal oil towns of Brega and then Misrata, Gaddafi’s response was to deliver, with ever increasing intensity, more violence. Unlike Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt, he refused to exit quietly. Eventually, he fled to Sirte where he was brutally executed.

In accord with Waltz, Man can be viewed as a cause of international conflicts and this is evident in the Arab world where various individuals have been responsible for the uprisings that swept the face of the MENA region in late 2010. In as much as the events in the various countries cannot be separated from their leaders, it is however not sufficient to explain the causes of the revolutions from the human nature perspective only. Though a primary cause of the conflict, there were undeniably other factors that fuelled the crises.
3.2.2 The Role of the State in the Arab Spring

The second image of international relations which Waltz views as a cause of international conflicts is the State; the domestic makeup of states is responsible for the dynamics of war and peace. The assumption here is that the nature of a state's political institutions, its modes of production and distribution, the quality and origins of its elites, and sometimes the characteristics of its people determine whether that state will be peaceful or belligerent. Thus, there are “good” states and “bad” states, and bad states can become good (and peace-loving) only by turning to liberal democracy, or socialism, or free enterprise, etc. However, as noted earlier, Waltz emphasizes that this approach in itself is faulty in that it relies on the generalization of one pattern of state and society to explain peace or war in the world. Bad states *can* lead to war but the reverse that good states mean peace in the world is a doubtful theory. The actions of states must be examined in the context of the international system; “the international political environment has much to do with the way states behave”.\(^{25}\)

One of the explanations for the Arab Spring was the demographic conditions that existed in the Arab world. Some scholars have argued that the Arab Spring was inevitable because of the critical socio-economic development in the authoritarian states of the Middle East. According to Volker Perthes,\(^{26}\) the most important trigger for this change was the demographic development of the Arab world. From 1970 to 2010, the population nearly tripled, going from 128 million to 359 million inhabitants. According to the United Nations Development Programme, an estimated 41 percent of these people live below the poverty line,\(^{27}\) and nearly 30 percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 35. Although the current generation is better educated and qualified than the previous one – due to a strengthened education sector and increased networking through digital technology – many are unable to find employment. The unemployment rate for the population cohort between the
ages of 15 and 24 was 25.6 percent in 2003, the highest in the world. Additionally, the labour market offers limited opportunities for university graduates. The consequent lack of prospects, rising costs of living, and anger over obviously corrupt and repressive rulers compelled this generation to rise up against authoritarian regimes. There is clearly a vivid mismatch between demography and economic structure in most countries in North Africa. An overwhelming percentage of the population in this region falls below thirty years and are educated. It is imperative to note that while Arab countries may have failed on multiple fronts, if there is one area where they have had a resounding success it is in expanding access to education. Even if there are questions about the quality of education imparted, many Arab countries, especially those in North Africa, have made impressive strides in educating their young and closing the gender gaps in education. Inevitably, this situation created problems for many countries in the Arab world; there a few jobs for these young graduates. Most North African countries like their Arab counterparts are inward looking. The relative abundance of natural resources in the region has led to the development of the public sector to the detriment of their private sectors which are usually relies on expatriate workers. This situation has not only resulted in youth unemployment but also unemployable youth.

The state is an important economic actor in Arab economies and its functioning rests on a heavy dose of subsidies and economic controls. Most Arab economies are also centralised and comprise bureaucratic systems. Even though these systems have worked well for the ruling elites that thrive with their support, it has failed to deliver the needs of the ordinary citizens. From a political-economic point of view, the Arab Spring was caused by a fundamental crisis of the authoritarian social contract. The contract had regulated relations between the people of the Arab world and the power systems for decades. This authoritarian bargain implicitly promised the population a minimum of subsidies. In exchange, people
preserved some degree of political loyalty to the regime. If this minimum economic safety net guaranteed by the state were no longer maintained, the regime would suffer from a deficit of legitimacy and the authoritarian bargain would collapse.30

According to Martin Beck and Simon Hüser, the timing of the Arab Spring still cannot be explained, as the crises that led to the failure of the Middle Eastern authoritarian bargain in 2011 had existed for years, if not decades. One result of the regional oil boom in the 1970s was the establishment of the rent-based system of “petrolism” in the Middle East. Rents are incomes which are not balanced by labour and capital, and are thus at the free disposal of the recipients. In the 1970s, not only did the incomes generated by rents of the oil-producing states in the Middle East escalate, but, through politically motivated transfers from the Arab oil states to the oil-poor countries of the region, political rentier states also emerged. Because of falling oil prices, the system of petrolism fell into crisis during the last two decades of the twentieth century. The regimes of the Middle East reacted with a relatively complex, but unsustainable, attempt at crisis management, adopting limited economic reforms mostly aimed at enforcing foreign trade. At different stages most countries initiated political liberalization, but then withdrew from it in deliberalization phases. The structural dependence on rents, however, was not overcome. Two of the rentier system’s typical defects appeared (although this still does not explain the exact timing of the Arab Spring): First, the distribution-oriented strategy of the rentier country eventually meets its limits. The productive sectors are neglected and government spending expands (especially with high population growth), while chances to generate compensating income through taxes are limited due to the neglected productive potential. Second, the primacy of the distributional policy is intended to depoliticize society. Therefore, the development of political institutions is neglected in rentier states. Again, this cannot explain the outbreak of the Arab Spring, but
it makes it plausible that once the regimes in the Middle East were confronted with a powerful opposition movement, they did not have the appropriate means to drive those movements on system-compatible paths.31

Political and human rights are fundamental for any society and Arab region lives a situation well described by Hisham Sharabi in his book Neo-patriarchy. “Even when most states arrived a very high level of democracy and political rights, the Arab region still suffers from bad political systems based on corruption, state of emergency laws, the lack of free elections and freedom of speech and religious fundamentalism.”32

The poor nature of political systems existent in the Arab region was certainly a trigger for the resentment that existed among the people and this eventually led to the revolutions in the region. One of the factors that have been identified as a cause of the Arab Spring was the lack of political freedoms.

Alongside economic demands and a call for an end to corruption, protesters have also demanded greater political freedom. According to Freedom House, the Middle East and North Africa has the highest ratio of “not free” countries of any region in the world, at 78% Voice and accountability indicators are consistently low across the MENA region. (UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2009) The region is characterised by limited space for political parties, weak legislatures with little authority, elections lacking legitimacy, tightly controlled media environments and restrictions on freedom of speech.33

Again, although conditions in the various states led to the revolutions, it cannot solely account for the uprisings. Just as the state has much to do with the way humans behave, the international system also shapes the behaviour of states.
3.2.3 The International System and the Arab Spring

In his third level of analysis, Waltz asserts that the roots of international conflicts lies dually in the clash of interests among states and the absence of effective supranational agencies for the regulation of this clash of interests. In as much as states influence the way human beings behave, the international system has much to do with the way states also behave. The ordering principle theorised by Waltz in the third image is the anarchy of the international system so that states do not recognise any sovereign authority that has the right or capability to overrule their decisions. Waltz also defines anarchy as a “permissive” cause of war, arguing that “wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them.”

Pictorially renowned for her ancient relics and as a cradle of civilization, Egypt from a geopolitical perspective remains a key player in the context of Middle East Politics. It is the only country in the Arab World to recognize Israel as a state. Egypt is also endowed with the Suez Canal, a key transportation route for ships globally. Significantly, Egypt enjoys cozy relations with the United States of America (USA), a preponderant actor in the international system, and receives significant amount of aid, economic and military, from the USA. It is in this light that Hosni Mubarak, considered as a key ally of the USA, remained in power for a considerable number of years notwithstanding the paucity of democratization. If Hosni Mubarak’s grip on power was formidable before the Arab Spring, it was because, among other things, his regime had been propped-up by the USA who, for purposes of protecting the interests of Israel, perceived Egypt as a friendly nation in a restive region, Middle East. It could also be argued that Mubarak presidency survived because there was no political alternative. The Muslim Brotherhood, a caliphate-oriented political platform and which could have posed a political threat to Mubarak, was detested by many preponderant states in light of concerns over religious fundamentalism. This is because the Brotherhood had
branded itself as a radical group bent on promoting political Islam, an ideology that is anti-
secular and seeks to emphasize the interrelatedness between religion and the state. If the
international community glossed over the lack of progress on governance within Egypt before
the Arab Spring, it was because Egypt had proved to be relatively stable under Mubarak and
that changing the status-quo would be detrimental to the interests of states including the
USA.

Nevertheless, Hosni Mubarak was bereft of the goodwill that his government had at its
disposal and most importantly, the priceless support of the USA. However, there is no
denyng of the fact that Egyptians were reeling from years of mal-governance under the
watch of Hosni Mubarak. Perhaps, what served as the final straw were the purported attempts
by Hosni Mubarak to groom his eldest son to become president in the foreseeable future.
Confronted with the domino effect of the Arab Spring and most importantly, lack of support
from an influential Egyptian Army, Hosni Mubarak had no option than to resign. Events in
post-Arab Spring Egypt, however, are a marked departure from what happened in the case of
Tunisia. Egypt has witnessed a series of violent protests and demonstrations since the demise
of Hosni Mubarak. Efforts at democratization have been truncated after the military deposed
the Muslim Brotherhood-led government after worsening economic conditions and incessant
protests and demonstrations in the country. It seems as though the Arab Spring has failed to
address the underlying schisms within the Egyptian society. The military has constituted an
interim government to facilitate political transition. The jury is still out over whether the
promise of Arab Spring, deepening good governance and human security, has been attained
in Egypt.

In the case of Libya the third image has a certain degree of relevance especially if the role of
the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is critically analyzed. The leading role of
NATO in enforcing peace in Libya demonstrates militarily, NATO holds the balance of
power in the international system. Also, the fact that the USA is the single largest contributor to NATO reinforces its preponderance in the structure of the international system. The initial revolutions in Libya eventually transformed into an internationally recognized civil war due to the existence of mutually necessary and sufficient variables.

International influence was a key cause of Libyan civil war through multiple mechanisms. Strongly favourable media coverage of the National Transition Council (NTC) and Gaddafi’s longstanding negative image justified international action. Even in rhetoric that described Libya as a civil war as early as February, new organizations and think tanks identified governmental repression as a legitimate reason for NTC violence. Such rhetoric was echoed in policy briefs and lobbyist statements that ultimately led to UN action through Resolution 1973 to establish a no fly zone and allow intervention under the Resolution to Protect to prevent widespread and systematic attacks against civilian populations. This provided the framework for NATO intervention, which solidified both the instrumental capacity of the NTC as well as its anti-regime, pro-democracy identity. French ties to Libya as a sphere of influence, and European pushes for US involvement persuaded US government policy and rhetoric to act in favour of intervention to support the NTC due to fears of regime-led massacres, overwhelming tenuous public support. Such strong international involvement on the side of the NTC, with clear UN codification of NTC legitimacy and NATO military support, defined and separated the opposing sides, delegitimized Gaddafi’s regime and opened space for a policy of NTC military attack. Thus, the underlying condition of Gaddafi’s legacy of withdrawal from the international community, combined with proximate NTC-biased rhetoric and subsequent instrumental and legal support from NATO, the UN, and individual states provided the causal mechanism that, following harsh regime crackdowns and NTC platform development, triggered the Libyan conflict’s development from uprising to war.
With regards to Tunisia, Waltz third level also has some significance in explaining the causes of the Arab Spring. Globalization itself had a major role in fueling the Arab Spring. In an increasingly globalised international system where there is growing interconnectedness among countries and an upsurge in technology, people have access to a lot more information not only from their government but from all over the world. Media coverage, social networks, and Wikileaks contributed massively to increase the fury around the country. Corruption had been a striking feature of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia. Opposition groups and the public often spoke of endemic corruption among the Tunisian ruling elite.

However, the revelations made by WikiLeaks that in June 2008 the U.S. embassy in Tunis said that “Whether it's cash, services, land, property, or yes, even your yacht, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's family is rumored to covet it and reportedly gets what it wants,” gave even greater weight and proof to an already widespread belief that Ben Ali and his wife's family, the Trabelsis, were the "quasi-mafia” often referred to by Tunisians. It added to the long list of grievances against a regime that had been in power for 23 years and had remained unaccountable. The monopolies of state-controlled information were defied through the use of social media including Twitter and Facebook. The uprisings were also brought into the living rooms of social media users across the world.

According to some scholars, the Tunisian protest was neither spontaneous nor unplanned. It was actually the result of a two-year collaboration between young Egyptian and Tunisian activists who exchanged practical tips on how to create disruption in the streets and-more importantly-for their success-how to construct usable planning and communication networks while evading the ubiquitous eye of their repressive regimes.

Social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and of course mobile phones, were widely used to organize the revolts and link the protesters to each other and the outside world. Perhaps
more crucially, media played a role in preparing for the rebellions over a number of years and even decades, by facilitating the circulation of ideas in national and global spaces and challenging state monopolies of information.  

Although not an underlying cause, the widespread use of cell phones and social media, most notably, Facebook and Twitter, were critical to the rate with which the protests spread throughout the country.

3.3 Conclusion

Despite its importance in explaining the dynamics surrounding war and peace, there are however some shortcomings identified in Waltz’s work. The shortcomings are related to the issues raised in the three images.

With regards to the first image; Man, Waltz asserts as earlier indicated that since wars arise because men are flawed, peace can be attained through enlightenment or education to improve the nature of man. This remedy is however not practical in reality. J.W. Burton for instance argues that the remedies provided by Waltz, namely the provision of education to lower the upsurge of international conflicts is not relevant to a real world situation in which power politics and the threat of conflicts are almost constraint and immediate. Burton asserts that Waltz’s proposition of education as a solution to the flaws in human behavior is inappropriate. He argues that whilst international conflicts are daily occurrences because international politics are conducted daily, education is a continuous process which requires a period of time in order to get the desired impact.
Commenting on the second level; the State, the argument that the transformation of undemocratic states to democratic ones will reduce the occurrence of conflicts is somewhat faulty and this is acknowledged by Waltz. If the internal structure of states is a cause of international conflicts, then there must be some universal perfection in all states in order to attain peace. However, it is difficult if not impossible to reach a consensus on what constitutes a good state and what constitutes a bad one.

Considering the third level, Waltz posits that the anarchy of the international system is a cause of war. The only solution to the attainment of world peace therefore is the establishment of a world government. As stated earlier, this remedy is improbable if not impossible.

Ultimately, the three levels are not mutually exclusive; no single level can account for causation. Although there are some weaknesses in Waltz’s work, it offers a relatively balanced perspective to the Arab Spring.
ENDNOTES


6 Waltz K.N. op.cit p. 123

7 ibid p. 186


9 Waltz, K.N. op.cit p. 205

10 ibid p.160

11 ibid p.238


15 ibid


20 ibid


23 op.cit

24 ibid


26 As cited by Martin Beck and Simone Hüser in their article “Political Change in the Middle East: An Attempt to Analyze the Arab Spring.” Available at www.giga-hamburg.de/workingpapers. Accessed on 23/07/2013.


28 op.cit.


30 Martin Beck and Simone Hüser op.cit.

31 ibid


33 “Human Rights and Democracy”, A report by the Foreign and Commonwealth office, United Kingdom, April 2012. p. 14

34 Waltz K.N. op.cit.


CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.0 Introduction

In chapter one of the dissertation, it was suggested that different views and opinions of scholars underpin the causes of the Arab Spring. Using secondary data and following with the hypothesis that Kenneth Waltz’s three images of international relations present a balanced framework for an objective assessment of the Arab Spring, the study sought to subject the Arab Spring to analysis using waltz’s three images. This chapter summarises the research findings and states the conclusions.

4.1 Summary of Findings

One key finding of this study is that internal conflicts can have international dimensions.

In harmony with Waltz, the nature and behaviour of man constitutes a cause of war. This was patent in the Arab region where the long rule and corrupt nature of Arab leaders in North Africa had succeeded in creating acrimony among the population. However, it was realised that the first image, Man was not itself sufficient to explain the causes of international conflicts.

The second image, the State is also important in explaining the causes of international conflicts. The domestic make-up of states including their modes of production and economic systems can cause wars. The undemocratic nature of most Arab economies has created discontent among the populace. Also, other factors like corruption and high levels of unemployment led to the uprisings in the region.
Inferring from Waltz, the anarchic nature of the international system undoubtedly comprises a cause of international conflicts. However, not only does the international system cause conflict but it also does nothing to prevent them from occurring. The overarching importance of the international system is that it constitutes not only an underlying but also a permissive cause of war.

It is vital to know however that these three images are not mutually exclusive in explaining the causes of international conflicts. Yet, they present a balanced framework for analysing the causes of the Arab Spring.

4.2 Conclusions

Kenneth Waltz third “image” of analysis, international or systemic level, underscores the importance of systemic explanations of international politics. Specifically, Waltz’s third “image” is grounded in the structure of the international system, a strand of thought that evinces that the absence of a central arbiter in the international system precipitates war or insecurity, a dysfunction that is ameliorated by the establishment of military alliances. The underlying objective of these military alliances is to forestall the preponderance of any state with regards to military dominance and ultimately, the attainment of balance of power in the international system. It is these alliances which obviate threats posed by the absence of, as noted earlier, a central arbiter. At the heart of this research is whether Waltz’s structural explanations adequately account for the inception as well as termination of the Arab Spring.

In the case of Tunisia, it is apparent that structural variables have limited explanatory value. This is against the backdrop that the inception of political upheavals and it termination was not in response to an urgent need to balance power globally nor the Middle East. It was a manifestation of structural dysfunctions within Tunisia, dysfunctions which range from mal-governance to lack of access to basic necessities of life including food, shelter and clothing.
Eventually, it was the interplay of internal forces which led to the relatively speedy resolution of the crises. These internal dynamics include the fact that Ben Ali had lost significant support among Tunisians and perhaps, the country’s military. To a certain extent, the political crises did not last long enough to spill-over unto the international plane; the crises had all the trappings of an intra-state conflict bereft of any considerable systemic analysis. Even if systemic variables were to be accounted for, then it could be because of the globalization of normative values, such as good governance and democracy, which underlined the rationale behind the ousting of Ben Ali. But these normative values are typically associated with the liberal theoretical construct, not structuralism or neorealist.

Framing the case of Egypt vis-à-vis the third level of analysis mirrors that of Tunisia. In the case of Egypt, the relevance of Waltz’s third level of analysis to the conflict is, at best, limited. This is because the inception of the conflict was steeped primarily at the individual and state levels of analysis. From the perspective of the third level, there is no evidence to indicate that the conflict emerged as a result of balance of power imperatives. In terms of causation, the third level of analysis is limited as the Egypt crises was not a product of systemic variables. The inception of the Arab Spring from Tunisia was precedent and certainly inspired that of Egypt. However, the Arab Spring cannot be said to have attained systemic or ‘international’ status as it was confined to few states in the Arab World. Furthermore, if it is assumed that what happened in Egypt was a reflection of a global wave of democratization, it still does not meet the threshold outlined by Waltz under the third level of analysis: that insecurity is as result of the decentralized or anarchic nature of the international system. Evidently, the crises in Egypt did not emerge because of the existence of a decentralized system; neither does it qualify as ‘international’ in scope.

As a tool for predicting causation, Waltz’s third level of analysis is deficient in explaining the causes of Libya’s Spring. As mentioned already, the individual and state ‘images’ seems to
have provided robust basis for causation. In terms of how the conflict was resolved, the case of Libya proves a contrast to Kenneth Waltz’s prescription; that the establishment of military alliances is required to pre-empt or resolve insecurity. Rather the utility of international institutions and by inference, the UN was critical as the Organization enforced peace to prevent a humanitarian quagmire. In this instance, the UN acted as though it is a ‘central arbiter’ in states’ relations, a point of view that is at variance with the view that the international system is anarchic. Evidently the Arab Spring has canonized the importance of norms and international institutions in the conduct of foreign policy. In the absence of the UN for instance, the Libya case could have become intractable. If NATO was involved in Libya, it did not do so because of considerations about balance of power; it was done in pursuit of Article 43 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, which require member states to faithfully undertake their obligations including providing logistical and military support for the implementation of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions. The UN cannot be a world government. However, the Organization conceivably, possesses considerable authority to regulate the international system.
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