

WHY DID THE ARAB UPRISINGS EMERGE? A THREE-LEVEL ANALYSIS*

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Abstract

It has been six years since the beginning of the Arab Uprisings, which began in December 2010. The uprising in Tunisia triggered waves of insurgency against authoritarian and dictatorial regimes across the region. Utilizing a three-level – systemic, indigenous and supplementary– analysis, this study will answer the question “why did the Arab Uprisings emerge?”. At the systemic level, three elements – the French revolution, the San Remo Order and the Camp David Accords– determined the structure of the modern Middle East. Indigenous factors will be analyzed through two dynamics–popular demands and social media. On the one hand, political, economic and social demands will be examined by focusing on deprivation and the third wave of democratization; on the other hand, the influence of social media and the digital revolution in the Arab uprisings will be addressed. The public determination will be analyzed in the last section as the supplementary level, because the uprisings could not have started without the will of people.

Keywords: *The Arab Uprisings, Systemic Factors, Demands, Social Media, Will*

ARAP AYAKLANMALARI NEDEN ORTAYA ÇIKTI? ÜÇ DÜZEYLİ BİR ANALİZ

Öz

Aralık 2010’da başlayan Arap Devrimlerinin başlangıcından bu yana altı yıl geçti. Tunus’ta başlayan ayaklanma, kısa sürede bölgedeki otoriter ve diktatör rejimlere karşı ayaklanma dalgalarını tetikledi. Bu çalışma, “Arap ayaklanmaları neden ortaya çıktı?” sorusunun, üç düzeyli –sistemik, yerli ve tamamlayıcı– analizini yapacaktır. Sistemik düzeyde üç unsur –Fransız Devrimi, San Remo Düzeni ve Camp David Antlaşmaları– modern Ortadoğu’nun yapısını belirlemiştir. Yerli faktörler, iki dinamizm –popüler talepler ve sosyal medya– aracılığıyla analiz edilecektir. Bir yandan, yoksunluğa ve üçüncü demokratikleşme dalgasına odaklanarak siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal talepler incelenecek; diğer yandan, Arap ayaklanmalarında sosyal medyanın ve dijital devrimin etkileri ele alınacaktır. Son bölümde ise tamamlayıcı düzey olarak halkın kararlılığı üzerinde durulacaktır. Zira halkın iradesi olmasaydı bu ayaklanmalar başlayamazdı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Arap Ayaklanmaları, Sistemik Faktörler, Talepler, Sosyal Medya, İrade*

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Introduction

Despite the fact that six years have passed since the beginning of the uprisings, the Middle East is still in turmoil considering the civil wars in Syria and Yemen. It is generally accepted that the first domino fell with the demonstration that had erupted after 26 years old Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire. According to Rami Khouri, on December 17, 2010, a policewoman confiscated Bouazizi's weighing scales for his unlicensed vegetable cart and allegedly slapped him, spit in his face, and insulted his deceased father. When Bouazizi tried to complain to local officials, they refused even to meet him. After he set himself on fire, his action exposed the Tunisian people's widespread discontent and frustration against the regime. While he was in the hospital, anti-government demonstrations spread throughout Tunisia. Ten days after Bouazizi's death, President Ben Ali fled the country.¹ The success of the "Tunisian Revolution" brought about a wave of demonstrations and political upheaval that have affected most authoritarian regimes in the Arab World.²

In Egypt, after the Tahrir Square protests, president Hosni Mubarak resigned in February 2011, ending his 30 years' authority. In Libya, after massive domestic revolts and with the support of the international military intervention, Muammar Gaddafi was killed on October 20, 2011. In Yemen, subsequently, president Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned and was replaced by Abdal-Rabah Mansour al-Hadi in February 2012. Nevertheless, as the Houthi attacks and invasions of some parts of the country are showing, the chaos still continues. Meanwhile, protests in Syria are ongoing as a violent conflict between Syrian government and opposition forces. Also, Bahrain witnesses sporadic internal political struggle, and in states such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia several demonstrations have taken place at times and partial reforms have been implemented.³

No matter how one designates these uprisings— the Arab Spring, the Youth Quake,⁴ the Tsunami of Revolutions, the Revolutions of the Hungry,⁵ the

¹ Rami Khouri, "The Arab Uprisings: Causes, Consequences, and Perspectives an Extended Summary of a Panel Discussion with Rami Khouri", *ICAT, Working Paper Series 1*, March 2014, p.3

² Mohammad Al-Momani, "The Arab "Youth Quake": Implications on Democratization and Stability", *Middle East Law and Governance*, Vol. 3, 2011, p.160

³ Erzsébet N. Rózsa, "The Arab Spring Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference", *Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East-Policy Brief*, No. 9/10, August 2012, pp. 1-3

⁴ Al-Momani, "The Arab "Youth Quake": Implications on Democratization and Stability", pp.169-170

Arab Democratic Spring, the Arab Uprisings, the Arab Awakening,⁶ it is a reality that the main cry of all uprisings was “*al-sha’byuridisqat al-nizam*” (people want to overthrow the regime) and this cry resonated across the Arab world concurrently and triggered a wave of popular protests.⁷ Among different definitions, we choose “the Arab Uprisings” in this study, because it is less controversial.

Most of the studies about the Arab Uprisings concentrate on one or more dimensions of the subject and remain limited especially regarding the question “why did the uprisings emerge?” To answer this question, we will examine the reasons behind the uprisings from a three-level perspective, namely systemic, indigenous and supplementary levels.

Systemic Level

The conflict between continuity and change gives dynamism to history. A conflict occurs in normal periods as an evolution and sometimes revolution. Reasons of a revolution or a political rupture vary, but most of them take place as a popular reaction to rulers and administrations due to poor living conditions. The French Revolution is considered as a milestone in the modern history because of its striking outcomes, nationalism and democracy in particular. These principles spread all over Europe and to other parts of the world through colonialism and imperialism after the second half of the 19th century. However, the long-time colonial heritage and strong tribal bonds led to authoritarian rulers and the lack of demand for change in the Arab world.⁸

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in combination with the end of World War I made it possible that the great powers to carve out the Arab world. Following World War I, via the mandate system (represented a powerful force behind statism and sovereignty), Britain controlled Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, while France ruled Lebanon and Syria. In spite of the fact that most

⁵ Leonid Grinin, and Andrey Korotayev, “Does ‘Arab Spring’ Mean The Beginning of World System Reconfiguration?”, *World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research*, Vol. 68, Noç. 7, 2012, pp. 476-486

⁶ Michelle Pace and Francesco Cavatorta, “The Arab Uprisings in Theoretical Perspective – An Introduction”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Cilt 17, No 2, 2012, 125-138, p. 125; Ella Moore, “Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalisation?”, July 2, 2012, <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/02/was-the-arab-spring-a-regional-response-to-globalisation/>

⁷ Bassel F. Salloukh, “The Arab Uprisings and the Geopolitics of the Middle East”, *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2013, p.40

⁸ Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Arap Devrimleri ve Ortadoğu’nun Yeniden Yapılanması”, *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 3, No. 27, Mart 2011, p.46, 47

Arab leaders embraced the Western-created map, many of the inhabitants of these newly established political units were not pleased and were starting to express a common political identity.⁹

The Arab Uprisings can be seen as a reaction to the Sykes-Picot Agreement shaped between the British and the French in 1916,¹⁰ and the San Remo order (April 19–26, 1920) in the wake of World War I.¹¹ The region was governed as European colonies qua artificial states until they were granted independence in the 1940s.¹² The wave of Arab Uprisings that commenced in 2011 was interpreted by Tarek Osman as “the Arab Uprisings are this generation’s attempts at changing the consequences of the state order that began in the aftermath of World War I”.¹³

A long history of these revolts also can be stretched back to the 1950s. The post-World War I arrangements were revised after Israel’s establishment in 1948 and especially because of the defeat of several Arab regimes in the Six Day War in 1967. This situation turned out the entrenchment of authoritarian regimes (like that consolidation of the police state, rule of intelligence services, corruption in spite of the introduction of economic liberalization in the last two decades) in the Arab world.¹⁴

But the main development, which restructured the Middle East, was the “Camp David Order” in 1978. This new arrangement, with Western support for authoritarian Arab leaders and placed Israel at the center of regional relations, has controlled Middle Eastern affairs for the last three decades. Based on it, the traditional regional system, local dictators placed themselves between U.S. and the Arab peoples in order to resolve any objection and possible threat to the Camp David Order. Thus, this unsustainable arrangement facilitated regional dictators to rule with an iron fist till the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US-led invasion deliberately or not shook the dynamics of the regional order and status quo. For instance,

⁹ Michael N. Barnett, “Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System”, *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3, Summer 1995, pp.492-494

¹⁰ Clive Jones, “Yemen and the ‘Arab Spring’: Moving Beyond the Tribal Order?”, *The Arab Spring of Discontent a Collection from e-International Relations*, 2011, p.18.

¹¹ Muhittin Ataman, “Arab Spring and its Effect on Turkey’s Regional Policy”, *SETA*, No 34, October 2011, p.4.

¹² Moore, “Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalisation?”, <http://www.e-ir.info>

¹³ Tarek Osman, “Why Border Lines Drawn with a Ruler in WW1 Still Rock the Middle East”, 14.12.2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25299553>, accessed 09.02.2015.

¹⁴ Madawi Al-Rasheed, “The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle-East”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 2012, p.675.

Taha Özhan evaluates the effect of occupation of Iraq in the following way; “surely, it would be wrong to consider the occupation of Iraq as the sole mover of political and social mobilization in the Arab world. Even if Saddam had not been overthrown, the dictatorships in the Arab world would not have continued for long to rule at the expense of popular demands. The extreme inequalities in distribution of income, lack of democratic expression channels, governments’ turning into family and party dictatorships, and the continued occupation by Israel created unbearable pressure on the Arabs. The two slogans of the Arab Spring, ‘bread, freedom and dignity’ and ‘the people demand the fall/change of the order’, were sufficient to indicate how much the people demanded change. The order here was referring to the established order in the region, and, as dictators in the Arab world fall one after another, the new regional order is in the making”.¹⁵

Summarily, the Arab Uprisings are directed against the San Remo order formed after the First World War and the system consolidated through the Camp David order by the U.S.-led West. This status quo tried to be continued even then with 9/11 attacks by introducing the greater Middle Eastern project. However, according to the Middle East specialist Muhittin Ataman, “the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq confirmed that any imposition of the Western states will be too costly for them to realize this kind of a project. And then unpredictably, in Tunisia the first Arab revolt broke out as a kind of natural response to the traditional regional system of the Middle East”.¹⁶

In addition to statements on “order”, we can deal with systemic factors from the point of globalization process based on global food prices as connected indigenous factors and whether it overlaps with other revolutions. On one hand, poverty and hunger have ignited revolutions throughout history, on the other hand, less food supply and more demand stand for higher prices. In a fully globalized market, these lead to inflation for shoppers in Cairo, Alexandria, and Tunis.¹⁷ A peak point of “agflation”, a steep rise of the agricultural commodity prices, was observed just in January and February 2011. This explosive global growth of food prices led to the growth of protest moods in most countries of the world. As a matter of course, this gave the protests the force that it was necessary to oust regimes.¹⁸

¹⁵ Taha Özhan, “The Arab Spring and Turkey: The Camp David Order vs. the New Middle East”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2011, pp.56-57.

¹⁶ Ataman, “Arab Spring and its Effect on Turkey’s Regional Policy”, p. 4.

¹⁷ Frida Ghitis, “Globalization Fuels the Arab Uprising”, *World Politics Review*, 2/10/2011.

¹⁸ Grinin and Korotayev, “Does ‘Arab Spring’ Mean The Beginning of World System Reconfiguration?”, p.485.

The wave of uprisings sweeping the Middle East bears a striking resemblance to previous political earthquakes. It resembles in respect of rising food prices and high unemployment to Europe in 1848, and in respect of frustration with closed, corrupt, and unresponsive political systems to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989. But the revolutions of 1848 wanted to overturn traditional monarchies, and those in 1989 were aimed at toppling communist governments. The revolutions of 2011 were fighting something quite different: “sultanistic” dictatorships. Although such regimes often appear entrenched, they are actually highly vulnerable, because the very strategies they use to stay in power make them fragile, not resilient.¹⁹

The Arab Uprisings have also been compared to other historic revolutionary movements like wider global protests, which marked 2011 “the year of indignation”. The demographics of protestors across the Arab Uprisings and these numerous popular revolts (such as Occupy Wall Street protests that expressed outrage over widening inequalities entrenched by the spread of global capitalism as well as unbalanced and exclusionary free market mechanisms) were similar: they were driven by disillusioned youth defending their freedoms and declaring their indignation.²⁰ In a broad perspective, the revolutionaries might have wanted the “downfall of the system” but they commonly did not want to be the ones to replace it.²¹

The processes of globalization worsened existing inequalities and economic hardships; the global 2011 protests were in large measure associated with grievances generated by systems of globalization and “unprotected exposure to imbalanced free market mechanisms”.²² For instance, the major slogan of the Egyptian uprisings “food, freedom and human dignity” exemplified the prevailing deep-rooted problems of political economy in the Arab region. The past two decades have witnessed new dynamics in the political economy of the Arab world, which can be encapsulated as follows: “Neoliberal reform accompanied by corruption and cronyism, high unemployment levels and rising social inequalities, and increasing incidences of social protests”.²³ Even some critical scholars come up with that “the Arab

¹⁹Jack A. Goldstone, “Understanding the Revolutions of 2011”, May/June 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67694/jack-a-goldstone/understanding-the-revolutions-of-2011>.

²⁰ Moore, “Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalisation?”, <http://www.e-ir.info>

²¹ Mark Levine, “Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings”, *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2013, pp.192-193.

²² Moore, “Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalisation?”, <http://www.e-ir.info>.

²³ Nadine Sika, “The Political Economy of Arab Uprisings”, *European Institute of the*

Uprisings are rooted in economic crises that are the product of decades of neoliberal policies adopted by the governments of the region. This labeling of ‘revolutions against neoliberalism’ might be overstating the case”.²⁴ Moreover, it is able to claim that the Arab Uprisings “represent the struggle to end the post-colonial period of successive liberal and autocratic regime”.²⁵

Indigenous Level

The Role of Demands in the Arab Uprisings

The reasons of the uprisings varied from country to country but mostly originated from domestic issues such as lack of democracy, human rights violations, widespread corruption, economic decline, unemployment, extreme poverty, high food prices, and a number of demographic factors such as a large percentage of educated and discontent young people and the centralized system that have marginalized large parts of the population outside the capital cities.²⁶ Inequities, injustices and oppression²⁷ as well as low wages, neoliberalism, and international tutelage can also be shown as causes of the uprisings. In more simple terms, the Arab Uprisings have been generated by a combination of an economic deficit (deteriorating living standards and growing inequality), a political deficit (a lack of political freedoms and public accountability), and a dignity deficit (the alienation of the demographically main age cohorts from the political order in Egypt and Tunisia).²⁸

Aims of protests diversified from the displacement of the regime to the improvement of living conditions. For all that, the ruling elites counteract to the protesters distinctively by introducing top-down reforms and continuing the repression and armed violence.²⁹ After this short introduction, it is necessary to examine indigenous factors in detail. We will try to explain political, economic and social demands with concepts and theoretical phrases based on democratization and deprivation.

Mediterranean, March 2012, p.7.

²⁴ Levine, “Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings”, p. 203.

²⁵ Bassam Haddad, “Syria, the Arab Uprisings, and the Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience”, *A Journal for and about Social Movements*, Vol. 4, No. 1, May 2012, p.115.

²⁶ Rózsa, “The Arab Spring Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference”, p. 1

²⁷ Mohammed Ayoob, “The Arab Spring: Its Geostrategic Significance”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Fall 2012, p.95.

²⁸ Timo Behr and Mika Aaltola, “The Arab Uprising: Causes, Prospects and Implications”, *FIIA Briefing Paper* 76, March 2011, pp.2-4.

²⁹ Rózsa, “The Arab Spring Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference”, p.1.

Huntington's Third Wave of Democratization and the Arab Uprisings

No matter how the Arab revolts were viewed, be it “the fourth wave of democratization”, or the third stage or wave of modern Arab revolutions, the democratization struggle in the region could be observed with reference to the concept developed by Samuel Huntington.³⁰ According to Huntington, “the current era of democratic transitions constitutes the third wave of democratization in the history of the modern world. The first ‘long’ wave of democratization began in the 1820s, with the widening of the suffrage to a large proportion of the male population in the U.S., and continued for almost a century until 1926, bringing into being some 29 democracies. The triumph of the Allies in World War II initiated a second wave of democratization that reached its zenith in 1962 with 36 countries governed democratically, only to be followed by a second reverse wave (1960-1975) that brought the number of democracies back down to 30. Between 1974 and 1990, at least 30 countries made transitions to democracy, just about doubling the number of democratic governments in the World”.³¹

As of 1990s, more than one hundred countries lacked democratic regimes and most of these countries fell into four sometimes overlapping geo-cultural categories: one of them is Islamic countries stretching from Indonesia to Morocco, the others are home-grown Marxist-Leninist regimes, Sub-Saharan African countries and East Asian countries.³² Huntington also asserted that the democratization process occurs in 5 phases, namely a) Emergence of reformers, b) Acquiring power, c) The failure of liberalization d) Backward legitimacy, and e) Coopting the opposition”, and 4 of them take place in the authoritarian regimes.³³

In the light of this theory, we can take Egypt for instance and evaluate its developments. In Egypt, three factors contributed to the protests which began in January 2011: “First, the authoritarian rule of the Mubarak regime allowed only limited political freedoms and moved harshly to crush overt

³⁰FadiElhousseini, “The Arab Spring: Conspiracies or National Will?”, 13 May 2013, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/5992-the-arab-spring-conspiracies-or-national-will>.

³¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.2. No.2, Spring 1991, pp. 12-34, p. 12.

³²Ibid., p.20.

³³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*, USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, p. 127-139.

expressions of opposition. Second, the fact that after two decades of neoliberal economic reforms the Egyptian state was unable to guarantee the population a basic standard of living, called its legitimacy into question. Third, a dramatic change in demographics occurred: since the 1950s, Egypt's population has quadrupled, increasing from 21 to more than 83 million people". Associated with the last element, this rapid growth caused instability in consequence of deteriorating health and educational services, imbalances in the existing social structures, and growing unemployment especially among the middle class youth.³⁴ Official data demonstrated that total number of the unemployed on the vigil of the Egyptian Revolution was about 2.5 million whereas almost half of them were young unemployed people-the youth bulge- aged between 20 and 24, and almost half of them had university degrees.³⁵

If the Arab Uprisings are described as "revolutions against fear", it has rightly reflected the "state of exception" and reduction to "bare life" that characterize the treatment of the most politically and economically marginalized members of society. Every government's primary goal is its own self-preservation. In this perspective, the deaths that precipitated revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt-Mohamed Bouazizi and Khaled Said-reflect precisely how deep the regimes have created "states of exception".³⁶

According to Abbas Baydoun, people, who are exposed to humiliation, poverty and hunger, gathered to demand freedom rather than bread. Because, he claimed, that people comprehended that despotism and corruption were the cause of their hunger.³⁷ Also, according to Yılmaz, the general expectation of people is to take a more effective role in administration and determine the rulers by themselves.³⁸

Meanwhile, some analyses emphasize the differences between the monarchies and sultanistic dictatorship. On one hand, political structures of the monarchies such as Morocco, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf kingdoms are flexible. Besides, monarchs have more room to maneuver to pacify the people. Because, in times of disorder, crowds are more likely to protest for legislative change than for abandonment of the monarchy. On the other hand, sultanistic

³⁴ Rózsa, "The Arab Spring Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference", p. 3,4.

³⁵ Grinin and Korotayev, "Does 'Arab Spring' Mean The Beginning of World System Reconfiguration?", pp.473,477,480,484.

³⁶ Levine, "Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings", p.197.

³⁷ As cited in Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, "Critics and Rebels: Older Arab Intellectuals Reflect on the Uprisings", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2014, p.10.

³⁸ Yılmaz, "Arap Devrimleri ve Ortadoğu'nun Yeniden Yapılanması", p.47.

dictators do not demand ideology and have no purpose other than maintaining their personal authority. But they such as Bashar Assad in Syria, Omar al-Bashir in Sudan, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya, and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen have understood that retaining power is not easy anymore.³⁹

As known, authoritarianism has long been institutionalized in the region, particularly after the end of colonialism. According to Raymond Hinnebusch, authoritarian regimes were able to control social and structural power in the region. “First, personalist leaders hegemonized the ruling elite by basing their trust in the system of certain sects, kin, or classes, increasing nepotism. Second, they co-opted loyalists of different key groups in the region toward their authoritarian rule by distributing rents and patronage. Third, Arab regimes developed strong instruments of repression”.⁴⁰

Actually, past instances of authoritarian rulers can be seen in the region like the 2000-2001 Damascus Spring in Syria, the 2005 Kefaya movement in Egypt, and the 2005 massive Bahrain protests. However, people’s demand for reforms could not be obstructed despite the lack of government transparency and stringent media censorship. Over time, this led many Arab governments to encounter what Habermas called a “legitimation crisis”. It means a loss of confidence and respect that are essential for effective governing. This slow corrosion of regime legitimacy is certainly a critical element to be considered in explaining citizens’ willingness to definitively oppose their autocracies in the Arab Uprisings.⁴¹

Deprivation theory and the Arab Uprisings

Deprivation takes a key role in the Arab Uprisings and it can be evaluated in two types: absolute and relative deprivation. Absolute deprivation means that the absence of material and moral values of people in the absolute manner.⁴² The concept of relative deprivation is related to why men rebel, although Gurr points out several important intervening conditions as well. Gurr advocates that, “relative deprivation, defined as perceived discrepancy between

³⁹ Goldstone, “Understanding the Revolutions of 2011”, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com>

⁴⁰ As cited in Sika, “The Political Economy of Arab Uprisings”, p. 21.

⁴¹ Taylor Dewey and others, “The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring”, *The Report for Defense Intelligence Agency*, Stanford, CA, March 20, 2012, pp. 1-53, p. 4.

⁴² Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Arap İsyanları ve Arap Ortadoğu’sunun Siyasal Dönüşümü”, *Akademik OrtaDoğu*, Cilt 6, Sayı 1, 2011b, pp. 63-75, p. 65.

value expectations and value capabilities”.⁴³Relative deprivation is rather perceptual and this discrepancy can be grown in three types: Decremental deprivation (stable expectation, low capacity); progressive deprivation (firstly for a while high expectation and capacity than decreasing capacity); aspirational deprivation (stable capacity, high expectations). The last type reflects uprisings in Arab region.⁴⁴Protestors’ expectations are arranged from food, housing, livelihoods⁴⁵to freedom (huriyya), social justice (adallahijtima’iyya),dignity (karamah), as well as eliminating corruption and toppling authoritarian rule.⁴⁶

Generally, the uprisings occurred in indiginity countries. In prosperous countries like Gulf states, these uprisings were at a marginal level.⁴⁷ But it does not mean that there are no exceptional situations or samples. For example, oil-rich countries such as Libya have witnessed powerful anti-regime movements while resource-poor Morocco has stayed relatively stable. The conclusion is that the economic demands mirrored a significant aspect of the popular uprisings and how authoritarian elites employed economic modernization tools.⁴⁸

Consequently, major reasons of the Arab Uprisings were catastrophic unemployment and growth in food prices, extreme deprivation and mass poverty caused by economic stagnation. Grinin and Korotayev indicate some structural societal features that generate serious economic and social problems: A regime’s rigidity (trying to control everything); decline of governmental authority and political structure peculiarities (it is commonly monitored among people the accumulation of resentment caused by corruption, preponderance of members of certain clans and cliques, breaches of justice, nepotism, impossibility to realize one’s life plans); ideological preconditions (a combination of protest moods, discontent, hatred, and the desire to shift the burden of responsibility for difficulties and hardships as well as ideological grounds created by inflated expectations for protests and anti-governmental actions).⁴⁹

⁴³ As cited in Raymond Tanter, “Why Men Rebel by Ted R. Gurr”, *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1970, p.726.

⁴⁴ Yılmaz, “Arap İsyanları ve Arap Ortadoğusu’nun Siyasal Dönüşümü”, p.66.

⁴⁵ John Chalcraft, “The Egyptian People Demand the Fall of the Regime”, *The Arab Spring of Discontent a Collection from e-International Relations*, 2011, p.12.

⁴⁶ Levine, “Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings”, p.211.

⁴⁷ Yılmaz, “Arap İsyanları ve Arap Ortadoğusu’nun Siyasal Dönüşümü”, p.65.

⁴⁸ Pace and Cavatorta, “The Arab Uprisings in Theoretical Perspective – An Introduction”, p.131.

⁴⁹ Grinin and Korotayev, “Does ‘Arab Spring’ Mean The Beginning of World System

Social Media as a Kind of Example for the Digital Revolution

While the traditional media emerged as the fourth branch of government or “fourth estate”,⁵⁰ the social media linked to the Internet, are often called “Fifth Estate”.⁵¹ In parallel to the process of globalization, live television broadcasting and internet connections have assisted to increase the awareness of the population about the conditions in their countries relative to other places, and it facilitated to connect Egyptians with the amazing message of the Tunisian revolution that dictators can be toppled. Through Twitter and Facebook, Internet activists provided fuel to catalyst role of economic frustration and anger that turned the revolt into a lasting.⁵² Moreover, a powerful “contagion effect”, influencing at an ideational and emotional level, was seen thanks to satellite broadcasters, mobile phones, the internet, and new social media tools that evade government control.⁵³

The instrumentality of the public sphere as an effective channel for the expression of needs or objections of civil society and ultimately instigating social change is highlighted by Jürgen Habermas and in his public sphere theory. According to Vriese, understanding social media’s influence on shifting dynamics of public sphere facilitates understanding the transformative potential of social media. Vriese emphasizes that ““based on Habermas’ notion of an informal public sphere as one that ‘has the advantage of a medium of unrestricted communication’ and is therefore effective in widening public discourse, and allowing the articulation of collective identities and need interpretation, then the internet is the prime medium to facilitate this process for new online communities and cyberactivists in particular”.”⁵⁴

Notwithstanding, the power of such technology was underestimated and was viewed as “children’s toys” by Arab regimes.⁵⁵ And also there are

Reconfiguration?”, pp. 474-476.

⁵⁰ “Media as the ‘Fourth Estate’”, “<http://www.usfca.edu/fac-staff/boaz/pol326/feb12.htm>, accessed 13.12.2013.

⁵¹ Nic Newman, William H. Dutton and Grant Blank, “Social Media in the Changing Ecology of News: The Fourth and Fifth Estates in Britain”, *International Journal of Internet Science*, Vol. 7, No.1, 2012, pp.6.

⁵² Ghitis, “Globalization Fuels the Arab Uprising”, 2/10/2011.

⁵³ Behr and Aaltola, “The Arab Uprising: Causes, Prospects and Implications”, p.2

⁵⁴ Leila De Vriese, “Paradox of Globalization: New Arab Publics? New Social Contract?”, *PGDT*, No. 12, 2013, pp.118-119.

⁵⁵ Elhousseini, “The Arab Spring: Conspiracies or National Will?”, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com>.

several studies regarding limitations of social media in insurgencies. For example, Richard A. Lindsey points out weak ties that individuals shared via social media, a gap in the level of participation of social media users, the lack of the dynamic of leadership and the internal heading of an insurgency. But, the propaganda is one of the greatest tools for rebels and recruiting new insurgents is made much easier via social media.⁵⁶ So, the important role of social media cannot be disregarded. At least many articles and conferences considering the impact of social or digital media show this reality.

The importance of the internet for Arab civil society was more essential. Because other forms of political communication were inaccessible and many groups were pushed online. The internet enabled the public to reach servers beyond the control of state censors⁵⁷ despite the press and TV were tightly controlled. This modern technology also enabled a younger generation to activate relatively freely in a new virtual world. Thanks to the social media networks connected by Internet, opposition movements gathered adherents. For instance, in Tunisia, mass demonstrations worked as the catalyst for an unlike crowd of labor groups, urban youths, professionals, mosques' communities, and the Muslim Brotherhood to take to the streets.⁵⁸

On one side, social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter facilitated the dissatisfaction fires to be fanned and spread the news to an observing world.⁵⁹ So, it should not be a surprise that Facebook users in the region doubled from 11.9 million to 21.3 million in 2010, according to a survey by the Dubai School of Government. On the other side, it has obtained a virtual space for young people to openly express their frustration with unemployment and corruption.⁶⁰ Thereby, it is not surprise that 60 percent of the population was under 25 years old, as a demographic element reflecting that the Middle East made it ripe for revolution.⁶¹

One of the reasons of unrest in Arab region was shown by the presence of the large number of unemployed youth in Arab nations. Their frustrations

⁵⁶ Richard A. Lindsey, "What the Arab Spring Tells Us about the Future of Social Media in Revolutionary Movements", *Small Wars Journal*, Jul 29 2013, pp.2,4.

⁵⁷ Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and The Arab Spring*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.5.

⁵⁸ Rózsa, "The Arab Spring Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference", p.5

⁵⁹ Alasdair McKay, "Introductory Notes", *The Arab Spring of Discontent a Collection from e-International Relations*, 2011, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Vriese, "Paradox of Globalization: New Arab Publics? New Social Contract?", pp.120,123.

⁶¹ Al-Momani, "The Arab "Youth Quake": Implications on Democratization and Stability", p.161.

were escalated by their inability to express themselves in a tightly controlled police state, political corruption, as well as social and economic problems. For example, the survey conducted by Freedom House, Middle East and North Africa were ranked as the least free region in terms of expression freedom and access to information in 2010.⁶²

Social movement theories make it possible for us to see the impact of social media as a method of facilitation. Stressed by Charles Tilly, political struggle can be taken in three different forms: protest, collective action, and contention. Also, when considered in literature on social movement theory and the case studies, it is important to have strong social ties in protest participation. For instance, the initial organizers and consistent participants in protests were members of civil society organizations such as political parties (The Muslim Brotherhood), trade union, and youth movements.⁶³

As known, the Arab Uprisings appeared in Sidi Bouzid, Tahrir Square, Sana'a, or the Pearl Roundabout in Manama. However, they also involved some revolutionary powers backing activists in the region such as the Arab diaspora, who acted as conduits of local information to the media and public, as well as international communities of supporters from human rights activists, artists, and particularly Internet-related professionals and activists like Tunisia's El Ge'ne'ral and Armada Bizerta, and Egyptian artists Ramy Essam, Massar Egbari and Tanboura.⁶⁴

Dewey and others analyze presence of several general themes in seven Middle Eastern and North African countries; "Protesters have been motivated by similar political grievances. Protesters generally have had the same socioeconomic concerns over high unemployment and rising costs of living. Activists have made great use of social media in organizing themselves, planning protests, and spreading information both in their countries and around the world. Social movement theories demonstrate not only the ways in which traditional mechanisms of mobilizing protesters were used successfully during the Arab Spring, but also how social media bolstered some of these traditional mechanisms to create a strong force for driving and mobilizing collective action in a variety of political environments. Social media successfully

⁶²Ibid., pp.161,170

⁶³ As cited in Dewey and others, *The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring*, pp.9,32

⁶⁴ Levine, "Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings", pp.201,202,206.

garnered significant international attention to protest movements within countries”.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Sean Lynch compares experience of several case studies considering some parameters or variables such as constitution of new political actors and identities, the polarization of political groups, scale shift in a social movement, external resources, internal innovations, diffusion and differentiation of organizations, and democratization level of a country (as it has been proven to promote social mobilization). These cases are the authoritarian states like Tunisia and Egypt, and the monarchies like Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain. While Tunisia was found to positively have six of seven variables and Egypt was found to have all seven in its social movement that ultimately led to the toppling of both autocratic leaders, Morocco was recorded as having only two, Jordan and Bahrain were found to have only three variables in their social movements. According to Lynch, this amounts to an average of a little more than three out of seven for those whose movements did not achieve regime change, and an average of over six variables out of seven for the countries whose social movements achieved their goals.⁶⁶

Supplementary Level

Elham Fakhro and Emile Hokayem have ascribed the emergence of such civil unrest to the significant furtherance of “individual empowerment and collective action”.⁶⁷ It is very important that the flux of individual moods gets to be intolerable and changes to collective action (national will). If it was not unbearable, we could not witness self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi. Actually this reflected sense of frustration and bad mood of many young Tunisians. Afterwards, the spark exposed the others that suffering from the high unemployment, corruption, food inflation and lack of political freedom.⁶⁸

The most crucial factor for the desire of change is the will that is the most important feature for human as well. Meanwhile, Yasin Aktay points out that the role of the internet should not be exaggerated excessively, because it can cause to disregard sociology behind the revolution. According to him,

⁶⁵ Dewey and others, *The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring*, p. 30-31

⁶⁶ Sean Lynch, “The Arab Spring: Understanding the Success of Protest Through Social Movement”, *Spring 2013*, <http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/bitstream/handle/1961/15059/Lynch,%20Sean%20%20Spring%202013.pdf?sequence=1>, pp.8,9.

⁶⁷ As cited in Moore, “Was the Arab Spring a Regional Response to Globalisation?”, <http://www.e-ir.info>.

⁶⁸ McKay, “Introductory Notes”, p.4.

while internet is a part of media, revolution is a consequence of the human will, and also, technology is futile without national will.⁶⁹

Ataman evaluates these upheavals as a kind of Magna Charta and domestic natural self-determination for the Arab people to launch democratization process and voice their demands for economic and social development. But he reminds that “the main problems that Arab people are grappling with are not the result of the policies of Western states, i.e. foreign agents, who were and are still conceived by many in the region as the main cause of political and economic problems. In this respect, claiming that Arab people are not capable of initiating a wave of revolts against their authoritarian regimes should be understood as a kind of Orientalist understanding. The Arab Uprisings are solidly the result of genuine Arab will. Arab people including almost all Islamic movements now begin to realize that it is meaningless to oppose all Western institutions and values. They have begun to utilize all facilities such as technology and democracy in order to achieve what they want”. He also draws attention that “Governments are now in more trouble to exploit natural resources for transferring their societies into charity societies. Their legitimizing forces, mainly the Ulema, are not untouchables anymore for the Arab youth and people in general”.⁷⁰ So, it is clear that if there was not will of people or aggregation of individual wills, the uprisings could not have started as a reflection that they got to be intolerable.

Conclusion

This study aims to deal with the reasons behind the uprisings through a three-level analysis: systemic, indigenous and supplementary levels. This method enables us to make an exclusive analysis. In this perspective, firstly, we analyzed systemic factors under three elements that have shaped modern Middle East such as French revolution, San Remo order and Camp David Accord in addition to September 11. Secondly, the roles of demands and social media were dealt with as indigenous factors. While we are explaining demands, we benefited from democratization and deprivation theories. We also underlined social media as a fifth estate. Finally, we highlighted national will as a supplementary level.

It has been seen for a long time that state security has taken priority over human security within the Arab nations. It brought about drawbacks such

⁶⁹Yasin Aktay, “Devlet Dışı Aktörler ve Ortadoğu'nun Sosyal, Ekonomik ve Siyasal Dönüşümü” *ATCOSS Kongresi*, 2012, <http://www.atcoss.org/tr/newsdetail/devlet-disi-aktorler-ve-ortadogunun-sosyal-ekonomik-ve-siyasal-donusumu/118>

⁷⁰ Ataman, “Arab Spring and its Effect on Turkey’s Regional Policy”, p. 4.

as poverty, diseases, environmental depletion, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.⁷¹ And afterwards, these factors presented themselves as self-immolation and upheavals.

As the famous words of Alexis de Tocqueville “in a revolution, as in a novel, the most difficult part to invent is the end”,⁷² we have witnessed similar developments with the Arab Uprisings. The beginning of them were unpredictable, the results also have been complex with exception of partial success of the Tunisian sample. Besides, the region’s history suggests that popular uprisings entailing a regime change do not guarantee a long-lasting democratic transformation.⁷³

But, understanding the underlying dynamics of the uprisings can be helpful to place all the pieces of the puzzle. If this can be achieved, the Arab people may build a sense of “we-ness” and develop a national identity⁷⁴ without unrest or upheaval. At least, it should be noted that if it diagnoses accurately, it could be easier to reach a solution and peace.

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⁷¹ Al-Momani, “The Arab “Youth Quake”: Implications on Democratization and Stability”, p. 162.

⁷² As cited in McKay, “Introductory Notes”, p. 4.

⁷³ Eric Chaney and George A. Akerlof and Lisa Blaydes, “Democratic Change in the Arab World, Past and Present [with Comments and Discussion]”, *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring 2012, p. 391.

⁷⁴ Barnett, “Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System”, p. 497.

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