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## THE UNITED STATES AND THE ARAB SPRING

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### ABSTRACT

Being independent and having the extreme power, the United States confirms the second and third theories, which are related to the political and military factors on one hand, and human rights and the ineffectiveness of aids on the other. These are applicable in the study presented in the intervention of the US in Egypt which was as the bridge to the US to reunite with the Muslim world after the Arab spring, and the involvement of the second theory related to the political and military factors imposed by the US to keep the region for them under the name of democracy taking into consideration the social culture too. The US was also able to get involved in the replacement of the leader in Yemen, keeping the ruling family in Bahrain, enforcing Gaddafi to resign in Libya, and yielding the atrocity of Assad in Syria without having successful results through these policies. The American foreign policy has a fundamental purpose, which is diffusion of democracy all over the world. Since its birth, the United States was a democratic state; the first cultured and political thinkers who founded the United States came out with an accurate democratic individualist system and an efficient charter to protect it. In their beliefs, Americans think that democratic system is the normal political system because the nations can choose and change the governments and this system defends the rights of human. According to Boone, the United States seeks to spread its stamps of democracy all over the world either by conviction or by force (Boone, 2015). After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, democracy prospered in the world while the Middle East region was still ruled by different dictatorial regimes (Way & Levitsky, 2010). After the attacks of eleven of September, the United States decided to strip the terrorists that support the dictatorial governments in Afghanistan and Iraq through a war and to allow the Arab to elect their governments.

**KEYWORDS :** Democracy , Middle East , United States and the Arab Spring

### INTRODUCTION

The US governments ignored the dictatorial perversions because some of the Arab leaders like those in Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, the Persian Gulf monarchies and Saudi Arabia cooperated with the US. The US eliminated the dictatorial parodies by Yasser Arafat and did not care about the kind of the planned Palestinian government. Following the distorted 2009 presidential elections, the command of Barack Obama disapproved the cruel and destructive government control of favored expositions in Iran (Cooper & Landler, 2009). The analysis of the failure of Obama to help the demonstrator in Tehran has overwhelmed his thought about the suitable response of the US to the disturbances of the Arab World.

Democracy might start in the Middle East because of the public upheaval against Arab dictatorial systems. Citizens all over the world surprised the leaders of the countries with their courage to defy them and their robust state security systems. The Americans, officials and journalists named the events the Arab Spring. The American formal policy was distorted by a major fissure between eloquence and actions. The American oratorical rejoinder to all the crises followed same manner, actions changed extremely.

This study detects, analyzes and demonstrates American conceptions of the upheaval in specific Arab countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria, and changes in proclamations and policies towards them. Thus, these Arab countries represent an important challenge to the US. At first, the president and senior officials requested peaceful democratization. They insisted on dictatorial leaders to listen to the requests of the marchers, set significant political and economic alterations, and abstain from violence. The American actions have been conflicting, unorganized, and disturbing. They have involved "looking the other way", applying diplomatic and political stress on the leaders of Arab countries to assume alterations or to retire, going to military interference. After a short time, the management of Obama changed its tactic to an upheaval in a distinct country or across the region, without giving a persuasive explanations or revealing consideration for the surrounding circumstances. The crises started one after the other and in each situation the policies must be viewed in a wide condition. In addition, eloquence produces anticipations and forms conceptions and images. These seem to be different in each situation, depending on local experiences.

So far, people and leaders across region were thinking about what the

US would do later on. There were many factors that could explain the change in the US policies, including the US relations and concerns in each situation, degrees of violence, appraisal of the system's ability to survive, appraisal of the kind of the disagreement forces, hoists of impact, the positions of other world and regional powers, and the conflict between the government about policies and actions. The analysis is done according to official statements, reports, documents and media coverage. The discussion and the conclusion show an analysis of the lessons and judgments for a persuasive American approach to the continuous and future changes in the Middle East from autocracy to democracy (FRIEDMAN, 2011).

### Egypt: Regime Change – Political Intervention

Egypt became one of the essentials of the US strategy in the Middle East because of the peace agreement that was signed with Israel. Following the 1979 peace treaty, Egypt became the second biggest receiver of US economic and military aid after Israel (Sharp & Jeremy, 2013). The Soviet weapons used by the Egyptian military were replaced by the US with its American military equipment. Hosni Mubarak was a strong and dependable ally for the American governments in the Middle East after the killing of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. For many years, based on the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, the US federation with these two Middle Eastern powers affirmed firmness and temperance. Egypt was chosen by Obama as a main bridge for reunion with the Muslim world. He announced in one of his speeches in Cairo in 2009 his ideas about the American – Arab relations (Office of the Press secretary, 2009). Later on, the relations between the US and Egypt were distorted because of many problems. First, the dictatorial system of Mubarak was based on reserve; according to him, strict actions were needed to reduce the growing impact of the radical anti-government and anti-American Brotherhood. The US did not adequately push for elective-government changes that opposed the Egyptian political system. Second, Mubarak's system was distinguished by perversion and incompetent authority. Third, there was a huge difference between the behaviors towards the US leaders and the behaviors of the ordinary citizens where the US leaders had the right to make their own decisions while the citizens couldn't do it (Pew research center, 2011). It was appropriate for leaders to manage public defeat towards the US.

The revolution in Egypt (Sharp & Jeremy, 2013) was a problem for the US: how to support the demand for change without losing Mubarak and confronting breakdowns in regional stability. According to Landler and Cooper (Cooper & Landler, 2009), the

deal of the US with a post-Mubarak Egypt would be difficult and scary since his administration had been a support of the American foreign policy for 30 years. At first, Obama supported Mubarak but requested the adoption of political changes and an instant break to the savage suppression of the demonstrations (Office of the Press secretary, 2011). Obama applied direct pressure on Mubarak to stop violence and to start political changes, but the violence continued; then the US decided to sacrifice Mubarak in order to save its interest in Egypt and in the whole region and asked him for his resignation (Millet, 2012).

From the beginning, it was clear that there was no other way to complete the challenge and that little could be done to save the Egyptian president (Cook, 2011). The US reactions concerning the situation of the Egyptian president had insured the relations between the US and Egypt and insisted on the right of the Egyptians to protest. According to Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, Mubarak was an ally for the US because of the peace treaty with Israel and regional stability, and the US had supported the transformation for a new government (Hoover 2011). Also, she declared that Cairo had the chance to help the Egyptian people through pursuing political, economic and social changes that can improve their lives and help Egypt develop. This was the same thought of the White House (Office of the Press secretary, 2011). Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden had declared the same thought while addressing the crisis. Biden responded that Mubarak was an ally and he was responsible and reliable to geopolitical interest in the region and the Middle East peace efforts (Murphy, 2012). When the Egyptians government could not stop the demonstrations, the US used pressure on Mubarak to respond the requests of the demonstrators for political changes (Hashim, 2011). White House spokespeople such as Robert Gibbs declared that transition should occur in a quick way and would determine US aid to the country. Thus, Obama concluded that Mubarak must leave and cannot survive. He applied huge pressure on him to back down and on the military to assure his departure.

All the critical statements, conversations with Mubarak, warnings, and diplomatic pressure failed to change the situations and the responses of the Egyptian government. Mubarak dropped on February 11, 2011 after 30 years of dictatorial system when he lost the support of the military and the US (Sharp & Jeremy, 2013).

The US Arab allies, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, knew about the pressure applied on Mubarak to resign and they asked about the reliability of their American ally. Obama was satisfied with the resignation of Mubarak and thought that once the military takeover, the adoption of the main requests of the demonstrators would calm down the stress, but his hopes could not be achieved (Cobban, 2011). Many demonstrators blamed the military for being beside Mubarak in killing protesters and again violence and new waves of mass protests. The ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)<sup>[1]</sup> decided to kill Mubarak in order to satisfy the protesters and regain security in the region. Otherwise, this failed because the public had a little trust in the military and felt that the generals aimed to maintain Mubarak's regime.

Promoting democracy and maintaining the pro-American system in Egypt was the goal of the US. The main suppositions was that Mubarak was not able to change the political system in order to satisfy the protesters and thus he must die; the revolution would be the best opportunity for change to a democratic system; and the secular – liberal demonstrators could form such a regime.

The Muslim Brotherhood stated that it would not have a candidate for president but later on changed its mind after the victory achieved in the parliamentary elections. In June 2012, Mohamed Morsi became president (Kirkpatrick, 2012). On the other hand, SCAF

limited the power of the president and the Islamic parties controlled the revolution.

The outcome of the situation was determined because the Islamic parties were organized and prepared for the elections while the new liberal and secular parties were just starting to act. Even though the US congratulated the Islamic winners, the elections results exhibited new challenges.

#### **Yemen: Regime Preservation – Leader Replacement**

After the 9/11 attacks, the US developed the relations with the strategically existing entities in Yemen. Al-Qaeda existed in Yemen in a strong way and used the weak government with its attacks on soldiers and citizens. Its branch aimed to rule the state and convert it into an Islamic state like Afghanistan under the control of Taliban. The US and Saudi Arabia were worried about the Qaeda ambitions, and helped Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh in his will to defend them. The US provided Yemen with economic and military aid about 50\$ million annually and ensured many democracy projects (Sharp & Jeremy, 2013). Saleh visited Washington to talk about operations that could limit the influence and violence of al-Qaeda. In January and February 2011, strong demonstrations were erupted in the capital Sana'a and this was the cause for Saleh's resignation.

The US spokesperson P.J. Crowley told the reporters that the US government gave the Yemenis the right to reveal themselves in a freeway. Also, the US declared that the changes would eliminate objections similar to those in Egypt. In February, Obama said that he was worried because of the violence resulting from the attacks done by the supporters of the Yemen government and asked the government to stop any attacks on peaceful demonstrations (Jamoul, 2012). Later on, the message of the US had changed directly after the declaration of a onetime mentor of Osama bin Laden named Abdul Majid al-Zindani as a replacement of Saleh with an Islamic-run state. Thus, US started pushing for a preserved exit for Saleh and believed he should hand over power to Vice President Hadi, pending elections. The US and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>[2]</sup> had the same thought, which was the resignation of Saleh. The State Department assured a dialogue that would address the legal concerns of the Yemeni population, including their economic and political needs.

Saleh agreed to apply the GCC agreement in November 2011 because of a huge American pressure. In January 2012, Saleh entered the US for medical treatment (Cooper & Landler, 2009). The US concluded that the best policy for Yemen was the replacement of the unknown leader with one familiar with his government such as Hadi who could assure changes without a system change or the empowerment of extreme anti-US and dangerous al-Qaeda supporters.

#### **Bahrain: Regime Preservation – Regional Military Intervention**

The US was challenged by the protests in Bahrain because the kingdom is the home of the US Fifth Fleet<sup>[3]</sup>. Most Bahrainis are Shiites, they were complaining for years about the governmental discrimination and persecution. Iran supported the Shiite revolution in order to overthrow the pro-Western government. Even though the US supported the royal regime in Bahrain, it supplicated for restrictive use of force and for political reforms (Geopolicity, 2011).

In February 2011, thousands of demonstrators assembled together in the Pearl Roundabout in the Capital city of Manama and requested equality and freedom for the Shiite majority. They also asked the royal family to resign its power to an elected government. After the outbreaks of violence, the opposition groups raised the requests and called for a complete end to the monarchy.

The Bahraini ruler, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, responded with a



combination of corruptions, supervision, legal procedures, collective detentions of activists, expulsions, inverse demonstrations, repression and torture, but all these could not stop the protests. Thus, Hamad asked his allies for an external military intervention: Saudi Arabia sent about 1,200 troops with armored support, and the United Arab Emirates added nearly 800 officers (Bueno De Mesquita and Smith, 2011). This helped to end the protest. Hamad established an independent employment to investigate the events of February and March 2011 and their consequences (Bassiouni, 2011). The Bahrain situation revealed a gap between the eloquence and interest of American. The interest of the US was to support the Bahraini royal family and the Saudi military intervention. However, administrations condemned the use of violence by the Bahraini dictatorial and insisted on reforms without pressing for regime change because it would empower the pro-Iran and anti-US Shiite population.

The Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wanted to reveal support for the royal family and to know how they designed to resolve the crisis. He asked the king to lower the pressure on the demonstrators and work on democratic reform.

Later on, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia thought that the support of America was not enough and the requests for democratic reform were dangerous to the stability of the regime and its efforts to block Shiite and Iranian manipulations.

#### **Libya: Regime Change – International Military Intervention**

At first, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was considered a strange and irregular leader who was guilty of terrorism and violence. Later he became more acceptable to the US and the West because he handed over to the UK two Libyan citizens was charged with the bombing of a Pan American plane in 1988. Also, in 2003, he revealed his nuclear weapons program to the world before renouncing it. In 2006, the US reinstated diplomatic relations with Libya.

In February 16, 2011, huge demonstrations started against Gaddafi. He reacted with massive force causing destruction and violence. Obama disapproved the actions of Gaddafi and said that the bloodshed is terrible and unacceptable; these actions should stop (Office of the Press secretary, 2011). Obama aimed to create close coordination and cooperation with European countries which were Italy, Britain and France. For him, Libya was an important oil and gas producer and it had considerable trade relations with European states, and Europe was concerned about waves of Libyan refugees that tried to escape from the disaster of war. He declared that he would give options to handle the crisis, thus he sent Clinton to Europe to discuss the actions that should be taken to stop the violence.

After the demonstrations on February 25, Obama punished Gaddafi and ordered to freeze all his assets in the US (Myers, Steven & Lee, 2012). Obama and Clinton declared that Gaddafi should hand over power (Quinn, 2011). The call for the resignation of Gaddafi appeared as a change for the US policy because the American administrations assured that the Libyan population had the right to choose who will lead them.

Obama asked Gaddafi to leave Libya because of the growing death number and his call to continue killing. Furthermore, the embassy of America in Tripoli was closed and postponed the limited defense trade between the two countries (Blanchard, 2011). International diplomacy was used by the US, firstly at the UN Security Council<sup>[4]</sup>, to impose punishment and to bring the Gaddafi regime to the International Criminal Court<sup>[5]</sup> (Myers, Steven & Lee, 2012). All the actions discussed above were taken in close deliberation with European leaders. Thus, the US wished that these actions pushed Gaddafi to resign power and leave Libya.

Some of the European allies of the US and Britain were supporting the decision of taking more severe steps such as the intervention of a NATO humanitarian military. They boosted the idea of a no-fly zone over Libya, the same as the US-led forces did in Iraq, to protect the population and opposition forces from the Libyan air attacks. On March 1, the Senate united called the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, forcing Gaddafi to resign and allow the transition to democracy (Friedman, 2011).

Obama rethought about the military option because of the calls of the opposition leaders for help, the continuation of violence, and the calls from the Arab countries. On March 7 and March 10, he ordered the US military to start an intervention with the support of the international community. The Arab officials called the UN Security Council to directly impose a no-fly zone over Libya because the legal government of the country was asking the US and Europe to interfere (Mansour, 2008). The no-fly zone option was discussed between the senior officials (Gilligan, 2011). On the other side, the opposed assessed that the military intervention could destroy the legal struggle of the opposition in Libya and the Arab world would see it as an effort to remove the Arab leader and replace it with a democratic leader like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The military and Gates opposed the intervention because they thought that the army must fight a third war and succeed. The US ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder opposed the no-fly zone because he thought that it was more functional against the fighters than against the ground operations done in Libya (Laub, 2012). However, John Kerry supported the intervention and warned from the possibility of failing to step in and stop the killing (Gilligan, 2011).

Obama thought that the intervention would be enough to persuade Gaddafi to resign (Blanchard, 2011). Also officials tried to convince Gaddafi's generals to stop the fight but later on the US policy towards intervention increased on March 16 and 17 when the Gaddafi forces won in several battles. The UN Security Council imposed a no-fly zone over Libya to protect the citizens. Obama asked Gaddafi to stop all attacks on Libya and withdraw his forces from rebel-held cities otherwise he would face military actions from the US and the European and Arab allies. On March 19, strikes were launched by the US, France, Britain and other allies' countries by sea and air against Gaddafi's air defense system, airfields and ground forces (Gilligan, 2011). On August 20, the opposition forces took over Tripoli and Gaddafi was executed on October 20 (Blanchard, 2011). At the same time, an interim government founded in Benghazi, the National Transition Council, moved to Tripoli and controlled the country.

The end of the Gaddafi system in Libya was a victory for the US and the EU to promote democracy and this victory was seen as warning message for Iran and its allies, Syria and North Korea.

#### **Syria: Harsh Rhetoric – Little Action**

Syria was a close friend of the Soviet Union during the Cold War; it nurtured the terrorism against US leaders and civilians, supported the terrorist organizations Hezbollah and Hamas and indirectly controlled Lebanon. Between 1990 and 1991, the relations improved with Washington; Syria became a member of the US-led union and liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Later on, it was involved in many attempts by President Bill Clinton to broker a peace agreement with Israel.

After the US military intervention in Iraq, the relations became worse again. Syria helped the terrorist to face the attacks of the Americans and Iraqis demonstrators who worked to achieve democracy and stability. It became also a close friend to Iran. On 2005, after the assassination of the pro-Western Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, the American diplomatic relations with Syria were cut

because it was implicated in a clear way in his murder. Bush's strategy was reversed by Obama, who adopted a connection approach design to calm down the pressure on Syria. The correlation policy failed in 2010 when he recovered the diplomatic relations with Damascus.

The savagery of the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad towards the demonstrators in the country surpassed the one used by Gaddafi in Libya. Bashar used severe forces to stop the uprising by killing about 5,800 civilians including women and children and wounding more than thousands in 2011 (CNN Wire Staff , 2011). According to the UN, the total number of people killed reached about 10,000 (UN, 2012) while according to opposition, the number was about 15,000 (Los Angeles Times 2012). The forces of the Syrian President stopped and tortured hundreds of demonstrators. So far, the reaction of the US was not so quick and after several months of murder Obama called for the departure of Bashar al-Assad (Coll, 2011).

The main response of the US was the condemnation of the violence used by al-Assad to stop the demonstrators. Thus, Obama said on April 9 that he condemned the violence committed against the demonstrators by the Syrian government. He added that it is time for the Syrian government to listen to the voices of its citizens that called for political and economic changes (Office of the Press secretary, 2011) .

On May 18, 2011, sanctions against al-Assad and other senior Syrian officials were announced and the Treasury augmented also sanctions on the Syrian and Iranian services and commanders. On May 10, the US imposed economic sanctions on Syrian telecom companies and banks that were related to Damascus (Sharp & Jeremy, 2013). Thus, these sanctions prevented the Americans from doing business with a number of companies such as the Commercial Bank of Syria, the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, and the largest mobile phone operator of Syria which was Syriatel; even the assets with US-based of those companies were frozen. After a week, Obama released an executive order that stopped the property of the Syrian government and prohibited Americans from making business transactions in Syria that included investments and import-export dealings (Philips, 2011). Moreover, the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared a full prohibition on imports of Syrian oil or petroleum products into the US (Office of the Press secretary, 2011).

The ambassador of the US, Robert Ford, played an important and controversial role in the revolution. He was active on the ground and in media combat by criticizing the regime with the aim of avoiding government supervision and reaching as many ordinary Syrians as possible. On July 8, he visited with the French ambassador in the city of Hama to confirm support for the demonstrators (Pew research center, 2011). This action was not welcomed by Assad, he sent the next day a mob to break into the embassy.

On August 23, Ford visited the town of Jassem, which had experienced a government crackdown after popular protests (Rahim, 2011). Assad disapproved the visit of Ford and saw it as inciting unrest. Thus, he prohibited Western diplomats from leaving Damascus and he sent again a mob to attack the US embassy (VOA news, 2011).

The reaction of the US in demanding the resignation of Assad was very slow and hesitant in contrast to the reaction for resignation of Mubarak and Gaddafi. The first call for resignation of Assad was made after the attack of the US embassy in Damascus. On July 11, Clinton said that Assad had lost legality according to the American government and that Syrian officials would be mistaken if they thought that the calls of the US for democratic reforms in Syria would be achieved if the Assad continued his rule (Sly and Warrick,

2011). On August 18, Obama declared in a written statement for the first time that Assad should resign (Office of the Press secretary, 2011). He condemned the violent crackdown, but repeated that the US would not interfere in the affairs of Syria beyond placing political and economic pressure on Assad to depart power.

By the end of 2011, the internal and external pressure on Assad increased; however, Russia and China continued to protest a strong UN resolution against Assad, and there was not any willingness to intervene militarily. The Arab League condemned the violence and sent a deputation to Damascus to examine the status on the ground (Abrams, 2011). The UN sent its former Secretary-General Kofi Annan to find a solution, but all these efforts failed. The violence developed in the mid of 2012 and became a full-scale civil war. The military and political opposition to Assad extended strongly. Fugitives founded the Free Syrian Army, while the various opposition groups were able to produce one representative organization, which is the Syrian National Council. The question about why the US was against intervention to overthrow Assad was explained by the US officials: the rebels did not want the US to intervene militarily. On August 15, 2011, the US ambassador acknowledged to the UN Susan Rice that certifications from the Syrian demonstrators were framing Washington's policies on Syria asking for no military intervention, as reported the US Ambassador in Syria (Fielding & Smith , 2011).

The slow-moving of the US approach to overthrow Assad and the military intervention were linked to the nature of the opposition, the ability of Assad to control the army, and the potential for Syria's allies to react with violence. The opposition's status in Syria has not been clear, and it was very difficult to know what kind of leadership and government could replace the Assad regime; unlike the revolution in Libya, where the armed resistance had formed an alternative viable government.

The hesitancy of the US and the Western to intervene militarily derived from the fear of a regional war. Assad announced that if Syria were attacked by outside forces, he would respond harshly (Bueno De Mesquita and Smith, 2011). He could begin a war with Israel through attacks by Hezbollah and Hamas, or increase support for terrorism in Iraq (Assir, 2011). The attacks on Israel served the interest of Assad and shifted the focus of the world from his own government's violence to the Arab-Israel conflict. Iran would want to keep Assad in power whatever the costs and it could intervene as well against NATO-style military operations. The US, the EU and other regional players preferred a harsh but known and weakened leader such as Assad to alternative scenarios and less predictable leaders. This policy was changed on August 2012 due to the growing number of defections from the Syrian army, improvement of the Free Syrian Army, and unification of the opposition groups.

[1] SCAF: The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is a statutory body of between 20 and 25 senior Egyptian military officers and is headed by Field Marshal Abdul Fatah al-Sisi and Lieutenant General Sedki Sobhi.

[2] GCC: The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, originally known as the Gulf Cooperation Council, is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf, except for Iraq.

[3] The **Fifth Fleet** is a numbered fleet of the United States Navy. It has been responsible for naval forces in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and parts of the Indian Ocean since 1995 after a 48-year hiatus. It shares a commander and headquarters with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) in Bahrain.

[4] The **Security Council** is the **United Nations'** most powerful body, with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and **security**." Five powerful countries sit as "permanent members" along with ten elected members with two-year terms.

[5] The **International Criminal Court** (ICC or ICCt) is an intergovernmental organization and **international tribunal** that sits in The Hague in the Netherlands. The ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the **international crimes** of genocide, **crimes** against humanity, and war **crimes**.

## CONCLUSION

The major factors that impact the US policies were detected in the five case studies above. These include US relations and interests, levels of violence, evaluation of the regime's chance to survive and of the nature of alternative governments, levers of influence, and the policies of other regional and world powers. All these factors in every case give a clear explanation of the wide variation of the US responses to the crises and of the actions taken and not taken.

There is a difference in the relations and interests between the US and Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria. Egypt is the largest Arab state and has been a close friend of the US and a cornerstone for the US strategy in the whole region. Yemen was important because of its strategic location and the danger of the presence of al-Qaeda and ambition to turn it into a new base for radical Islamic terrorism worldwide. Bahrain was important because it has an American base and is an oil producer. The interest of the US in Libya was complicated. At first Gaddafi was a good leader because he took responsibilities against the terrorist acts and voluntarily dismantled his nuclear weapons program. Also Libya is a major oil-producing country. On the other hand, the EU pressed for military action against Gaddafi and the US went along. The interest in Syria was also complicated because of the anti-American activities in Iraq and Lebanon and the strategic relations it had created with Iran.

Western perceptions of the violence played a role in the decision-making process. These perceptions were influenced by the media coverage and it varied from one case to another. In Egypt, Libya and Syria the violence was strongly covered than in Yemen and Bahrain. The realization of highest levels of violence needed more extensive condemnation and action while the realization of lower levels allowed flexibility. As in Egypt and Libya, the realization of highest levels gave rise to direct diplomatic pressure on Egypt and military intervention in Libya. In the case of Syria, military intervention was also justified but not materialized because of the special conditions and circumstances in the country. In Yemen and Bahrain, the realization of lower levels of violence allowed flexibility in achieving democratic reforms.

The evaluation of a regime's chance of survival and of the nature of the opposition also played an important role in the consultations. In Egypt, Obama's administration felt that removal of Mubarak would help to create friendly relations with his successor. In Yemen, the US thought that the regime

would survive and if the opposition took over it would become anti-American. In Bahrain, the US was sure that the regime would survive, but Shiite dominant opposition was not a problem to the US interests. In Libya, the US was uncertain about both the Gaddafi survival and the orientation of the rebels, but decided to boost the NATO's military intervention because of the high level of violence and the Europe initiative. In Syria, the US was also uncertain about the chances of Assad to survive and about the nature, legality and foreign policy of an alternative government.

The US helped to remove Mubarak while the parliamentary and presidential elections created major victories for the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist Salafist party. The prospects for a democracy in Egypt were not sure. Even though the succession in Yemen was resolved, it was not clear if the new president could win against the opposition groups. In Bahrain, the revolution was smashed and the regime stayed stable. On July 2012, the moderate National Forces Alliance won a decisive victory over Islamic parties after the killing of Gaddafi (Gumuscu, 2012). However, it was not clear how the new government would handle both domestic and external policies. In Syria, Assad ruled by force because of the Iranian, Russian and Chinese support and American and Western weakness. It was also not clear if he would survive and what kind of opposition would succeed him.

On September 21, 2011, Obama summarized and evaluated the Arab revolutions and US policy in an optimistic way in a speech to the UN General Assembly. Unlike Obama, American public opinion was not optimistic about the revolutions. The thoughts of the respondents were divided into two categories, one said that the end of the Arab Spring would be good and that the new governments would be democratic and peace-loving in the near future while the others said that it would be bad and that the actions taken in the cases discussed above would affect the American interests (Anti-Defamation league, 2011).

Hillary Clinton argued that it would have been unfair to take one approach in all cases regardless of the circumstances on the ground (Rahim, 2011). She explained that the policy of America was based on other regional interests, including the fight against al-Qaeda, defense of American allies and a secure supply of energy. The US led external responses in the case of Egypt, adopted a cautious approach in the case of Syria and allowed other power to lead in the cases of Bahrain and Libya. Inconsistent and hesitant policies forced the allied and foes to reassess their attitudes toward the US.

The inconsistency was resulted from swaying between idealism and pragmatism. Idealism demands support for every movement and action that is against authoritarian regime and calls for democracy. However, pragmatism prevented support for the demonstrators in Yemen and Bahrain and military intervention in Syria. At last, Obama's worldview of attachment, gratification and public diplomacy affected his determination to criticize and to use penal actions even against the leaders and governments, which were close allies of the US for years.



Another issues stood at the center of the Arab Spring: Democracy and elections. Free elections in several countries brought to power Islamic religious parties. According to the optimistic assumptions, the American officials believed that the new government elected would be beneficial for the US and Western interests if it followed the US instructions in the economic and personal security recovery. On the other side, many examples showed opposite results of the moderation proposition when the Islamists have assumed power in the Middle East; they have not become more moderate. This was the case in Iran, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Gaza, and Turkey.

Americans help to equate democracy with free elections. This cannot be done because democracy exists only when certain conditions, rules and norms are applied. Furthermore, it must have included the basic human rights, equal rights for women and minorities, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, freedom of speech and freedom of the press, religious freedom, and the right to assembly. Most of these conditions are not yet found in the Arab countries that have gone through revolutions or that held free elections. The uprisings in the Middle East represented a major leadership challenge to the US. The promotion of democracy in the Middle East seems to be as difficult as it was at the beginning of the uprisings (Agha & Malley, 2011). The US is the strongest power in the region even after its exit of the Middle East. The images that drive policy more than realities may be a danger for the US allies if they believe the situations and make bad decisions based on them. Thus, it is important to reassess the interests, conditions, past policies, public diplomacy and possible innovation remedies in order to restore American power and influence in the changes in the Middle East.

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