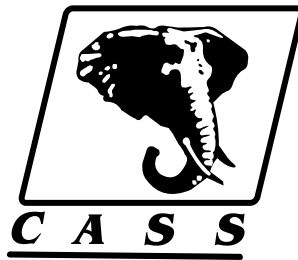


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CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES

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PROCEEDINGS OF SEMINAR

ON

THE ARAB SPRING :  
MEANING, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

24th February, 2012

# CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES

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## PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEMINAR

The Seminar on “The Arab Spring : Meaning, Causes and Implications was held on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 in the New Auditorium of Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA).

Air Marshal (Retd) S. Kulkarni, Director of the Centre welcomed the distinguished speakers and all those present. He said that the Seminar has been organized with financial assistance from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Lt Gen (Retd) Amit Mukherjee, Member of the Governing Council of the Centre made his exhaustive Opening remarks as the Chairman of the Seminar. He said that being located astride the intersection of the Mediterranean, African and Arab World and with its rich hydrocarbon resources, the Middle-East and North Africa is one of the key geo-strategic regions of the world. It dominates the vital sea passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean through the strategic choke points of the Suez Canal. This has made the region vitally important for uninterrupted global energy flows and commerce. He said that the Junisian Jasmine Revolution triggered the Arab democratic awakening. Egyptian President was forced to resign. The impact of the sudden unexpected Arab Spring was felt in the entire Middle-East and North Africa starting from Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Syria and the monarchies of Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. Qaddafi ruthlessly eliminated any opposition to his regime and took significant steps in upgrading socio-economic conditions in Libya. But he was demonized by the USA and NATO forces and aerial war was launched as “humanitarian war” for bringing about a forcible regime change. He said that the Syrian Sunni uprising has highlighted the larger Shia-Sunni power struggle. In the process of democratic transition in Egypt, the resurgence of political Islam has surfaced. The military still appears to be a stake-holder in the power struggle. Elections have been held and efforts are on for hammering out a new democratic constitution for the country.

He further said that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been affected by the Arab Spring, the Palestinians demanding review of unfair treaties of the past.

Shri KP Fabian, IFS (Retd), former India's Ambassador in Iran, author of the book, "Diplomacy : Indian Style" – 2012 was the main speaker in the first session on "Perspective on the Arab Spring and India". He said that Arab awakening runs across the Arab world in their search for freedom and democracy, the first step being namely to get rid of the dictator. The rulers were ruling or misruling and ruining their countries for too long. Elections were held from time to time, but they were neither free nor fair. Crony capitalism prevailed. There was much praise for the dictators from the Western establishment and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Western governments applied double standards. In the case of Bahrain, they silently endorsed military crackdown led by Saudi Arabia and in the case of Libya, the West bombed Gaddafi out of office. He said that the West was taken in by surprise by the exploding Arab awakening. The Arab Human Development Report since 2002, published by the UNDP was ignored. The state is often the main threat to human security. Civil society is suppressed. Mohamad Bouazizi's act of self immolation and violent response of the regime on peaceful marchers triggered the protest. A spontaneous and leaderless movement of people toppled the Tunisian dictatorship and established a pluralistic democracy through fair and free election. The immense size of the opposition to the regime brought about Egyptian President Hosne Mubarak's resignation. The West has realized that no Libya type intervention is possible in Syria. China and Russia have extended support to Assad regime. He said that Israel has to rewrite its geopolitical strategy based on Mubarak's support. Israel should reconsider its policy towards the Palestinians, agree to a Palestinian state with appropriate boundaries. He said that India should broadly welcome and endorse the Arab awakening and establish cordial relations with the New Arab world, and lend a helping hand in building a democratic polity, only when it is requested.

Shri Navdeep Singh Suri, Joint Secretary, Public Diplomacy Division of MEA made his presentation on "The New Media as a

Factor in the Arab Spring : An Examination” in the Second session. He said that Face Book (FB) has become popular amongst the people, specially the youngsters in the age group of 15 to 29, accounting for 75 percent of the users. Elaborating on the social media and its impact in Egypt, he said that the Twitter Revolution organised protests, let people know that they would not be alone sticking their necks out, set agenda, hooligans versus looters with police IDs, transformed the chaos into uprising and brought pressure on Washington to dump Mobarak. He cautioned that Twitters could also pose dangers ; what if revolution is not successful, like the Myanmar crackdown. He further said that governments were getting smarter in tracking. He said that the picture that emerged was too diffused and innovative. The Googletalk used to bypass restrictions on Twitter in Egypt. He posed a question, does social media, democratic by instinct represent a public commons, or the true global commons. He said that listening is as important as speaking and by listening we establish relationship and create stability. So, can we evolve from “Need to Know” to “Need to Share”. He said that close to 200 million people use Twitter. This interface with citizens is a force multiplier. Publicity Division is making use of this. The evacuation of Indians from Libya generated a positive response from the media. He informed that the Publicity Division tries to find answers to Who (audiences), What (messages) and How (tactics), and assists through its outreach, Nation Branding.

In the third Session, Dr. Fazzur Rahman Siddiqui, Research Fellow, ICWA, New Delhi spoke on “The Arab Spring and Regional Variations : Likely Scenarios” in the third session. He said that the demographic upsurge is an expression of aspiration of young people for freedom, prosperity, and dignity. This protest of millions around the Arab presents a call for social justice, equality and national sovereignty and dignity and reflects people’s flight from culture of authoritarianism. The trajectory of these protest movement varies from region to region. Its impacts are overriding and decisive. In Syria, it is the sectarianism that has dominated the course, while in Egypt and

Tunisia, it is Islamism that reigns the political space. In Libya and Yemen, tribal conflict has emerged as the Arab Spring. Internet & electronic media gave it breathtaking expanse & space.

He said that the region was subjected to economic deficit, rise of a new bourgeoisie-crony capitalism, political deficit, nepotism that established a client-patron relationship, which resulted in dignity deficit. Most of the Arab rulers had surrendered the national sovereignty to the dictates of foreign powers. The Arab spring has resulted in the emergence of Political Islam as an inevitable force to negotiate its space in the new emerging socio-political order, bringing about a radical transformation into political ideology of Islam.

He said that Syria is prone to Shiite conflict. The conflict in Syria has received different reaction from neighbouring countries. The global community is equally divided on the issue of Syria. Russia and China have vetoed UN Security Council resolution condemning the crackdown of the Syrian regime against the opposition. In the absence of Arab support, the western powers called for international intervention that ultimately led to Gaddafi's removal and finally to his death. Concluding his presentation he said that Arab Spring has triggered a process of renegotiation of past, present and future and a new movement for transformation of history has begun.

The main speakers briefly interacted with the audience in each session after their presentation. At the end of the three sessions, one hour was allotted for General Discussion. This witnessed a very close interaction of the audience with the main speakers, full of probing questions and comments and answers, some of them supplemented by the Chairman, who gave his concluding remarks. It was felt that the entire world is going through a fast changing economic, social and political environment and the subject of this Seminar would remain relevant for some time and needed to be taken up for such seminars in the near future.

## WELCOME BY DIRECTOR

AIR MARSHAL S. KULKARNI

Air Marshal (Retd) S. Kulkarni, Director of the Centre for Advanced Strategic Studies welcomed the dignitaries on the dais and every one present in the auditorium.

He said that he was happy that Lt Gen (Retd) Amitav Mukherjee, a member of the Governing Council of the Centre is chairing the seminar. He has done an exhaustive study of the subject of the Seminar, "The Arab Spring : Meaning, Causes and Implications" and has kept himself abreast of the developments. Air Marshal S. Kulkarni said that we are fortunate to have Ambassador KP Fabian, IFS (Retd) to make his presentation on "Perspective on the Arab Spring and India" in the first session. He served in the Indian mission in Iran. He was Joint Secretary (Gulf). He published "Common Sense on war in Iraq in 2003 and "Diplomacy : Indian Style (2012). He has written and spoken extensively on West Asia and North Africa and is engaged in writing a book on "Arab Spring".

Shri Navdeep Singh Suri, Joint Secretary, Public Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs would be making his presentation on "The New Media as a Factor in the Arab Spring : An Examination" in the second session. He has served in India's diplomatic missions in Cairo, Damascus, Washington, Dar es Salaam and London. He has written on India's Africa policy, on Public Diplomacy and on the IT outsourcing industry.

Dr. F.R. Siddiqui, Research Fellow, ICWA, New Delhi would be making his presentation on "The Arab Spring and Regional Variation : Likely Scenarios". He is engaged in writing a book on "Arab Spring and Future of Political Islam".



Air Marshal S. Kulkarni said that all the dignitaries, the Main Speakers have agreed to interact with all the members in the audience and also during the General Discussion for which one hour has been allotted. Lt Gen (Retd) Amitav Mukherjee, after the General Discussion would be giving out his closing remarks as Chairman of the seminar. He further said that we look forward to an interesting and thought provoking seminar.

## OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

LT GEN AMIT MUKHERJEE, PVSM, AVSM

### THE ARAB SPRING : MEANING, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

#### BACKGROUND

The Middle East and North Africa is one of the key geo-strategic regions of the world due to its location astride the intersection of the Mediterranean, African and Arab worlds and its rich hydrocarbon resources. The region's domination of the vital sea passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean through the strategic choke point of the Suez Canal, has made the region vitally important for uninterrupted global energy flows and commerce. Historically, some of the most ancient civilizations of the world such as the Egyptian, Phoenician, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Carthaginian, Byzantine, Greek and Roman, have left their imprint on its peoples, stretching from the Maghreb to the Persian Gulf. The region is unique as the origin of the world's three great monotheistic religions i.e, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, frequently in violent conflict with each other, despite their common heritage of "people of the book". It is therefore ironic that in the greater part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries and particularly in the post-colonial period and even after the Cold War, this civilizational region remained untouched by the winds of democracy and became an ocean of authoritarian monarchies and despotic regimes, generally supported and propped up by the West.

Tunisian Jasmine Revolution. The trigger for the Arab democratic awakening was provided by a relatively innocuous incident of self immolation of a poor vegetable seller, Muhammad Bouazazi on 17 December 2010 in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, in desperate protest against his humiliation by the repressive Tunisian police and

the feared loss of his livelihood. Demonstrations erupted in the neighbouring cities aided by Tunisian trade unions and internet based social networks. The Tunisian Army sensing the intensity of public anger, signaled to President Zine El Abedine Ben Ali that it would not take any action against the protestors. As a countrywide general strike unfolded on 14 January 2011, the kleptocratic President was encouraged to flee to Saudi Arabia, the bastion of autocratic monarchy, after 23 years of absolute power. Thus, it took just 28 days of mass public protest for the “Jasmine Revolution” to remove what was touted in the West, to be a “model” of stable despotism.

Egyptian 25 January Revolution. The overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia galvanized popular political action in neighbouring Egypt, starting on 25 January 2011, with spontaneous protests spearheaded by students, members of civil society and suppressed political groups. It soon coalesced into a massive public outpouring in Tahrir Square in Cairo, defying violent counter measures by President Hosne Mubarak's police and paramilitary forces. The Egyptian 25 January Revolution was unique in that it was largely secular and non violent involving millions of protestors from all socio-economic and religious backgrounds, demanding the overthrow of the dictatorial Mubarak regime. After futile attempts at using violent force to quell the demonstrations which caused approximately 840 deaths, and a desperate and unsuccessful rearguard action in appointing Omar Suleiman, an ex general and intelligence chief as president, Mubarak was forced to resign on 11 February 2011 ending 30 years of despotic rule. He handed over power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces [SCAF] led by Field Marshal Hussain Tantawi, a long time Mubarak protégé and Defence Minister and was flown off the resort of Sharm- Al- Shaikh, under military protection. The new military ruler suspended the constitution and both houses of parliament on 13 February 2011 and declared that the military would rule for six months after which elections would be held along with the framing of a new constitution, a promise which has only been partially fulfilled, so far.

## CASCADING EFFECT OF THE JASMINE AND 25 JANUARY REVOLUTIONS

The impact of the sudden and unexpected Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt was immediately felt in the entire Middle East and North Africa, starting from Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Syria and spread to the monarchies of Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. The reverberations of this democratic awakening were also felt in distant lands in the disturbed Islamic Southern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation and the authoritarian regime in China. It also inspired the Palestinians to launch a renewed campaign for their long pending demand for Palestinian statehood on 23 September 2011 at the United Nations. The major cascading effect of the Arab Spring was felt on Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria, each following different trajectories based on the specific political environment prevailing in these authoritarian regimes.

### Yemeni Uprising and Insurgency

Soon after President Ben Ali's ouster, mass demonstrations and disturbances broke out in Yemen, led by the youth and civil society activists against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33 years dictatorial rule. The existing internal conflicts with Al Qaida militants along with a violent separatist movement in the South and an ethnic Houthi tribal rebellion in the North, provided Saleh with an alibi to prolong his despotic rule, using snipers and brute force to quell the demonstrations, with active Saudi support. Saleh's rule was also prolonged by American endorsement of the repressive Yemen regime, guided by its fixation on the post 9/11 Global War on Terror and its extensive employment of US Special Forces Predator Drone strikes against Al Qaida targets in South Yemen. Following a bombing attack, Saleh was seriously injured on 03 June 2011 and was evacuated to Saudi Arabia for treatment and recuperation. Over a seven month conflict ridden period between March and October 2011, 225 Yemenis were killed and over 1000 wounded due to indiscriminate firing by Saleh's security forces. Once the winds of change were clearly discernible, Saleh was motivated by Saudi Arabia and the US to hand

over power to power to the Vice President Abdu Rabbu Mansur Al Hadi after a Presidential Election on 21 February 2012. The internal security situation and the ethnic conflict, though quelled to some extent, still remains unstable under authoritarian rule, coupled with intensified US drone strikes against Al Qaida targets in the eastern and southeastern provinces.

### Bahrein Shia Uprising [14 February Revolution]

Within three days of the ousting of President Hosne Mubarak, popular protests broke out in Bahrain on 14 February 2011, by the oppressed Shia majority against the authoritarian Sunni monarch, Hamad Bin Isa Khalifa who put down the agitation by violent force with many casualties. As the protests gained momentum in the form of mass civil resistance with over 150,000 agitators congregating at Manama's Pearl Monument , demanding a republican form of government, King Hamad declared martial law and a state of emergency and invited the Gulf Cooperation Council's [GCC] Peninsular Shield Force to intervene. In immediate response, a combined military force comprising 1000 Saudi mechanized troops and 500 UAE paramilitary armed police entered Manama, to suppress the Shia uprising using brute force. This had the tacit approval of the US who has powerful strategic stakes in Manama, where the powerful US Naval Fifth Fleet is based, to keep vigil on Iran's growing power in the Persian Gulf and also to ensure the security of the disturbed oil rich Saudi Eastern Province which has a Shia majority. The political instability in Bahrain continues with no immediate prospect of democratic transformation.

### Libyan Civil War and Regime Change

Unlike Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain, the Arab Spring did not spread to Libya in the form of a mass uprising against the 42 year old despotic regime of Muammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi's long authoritarian rule has been a study in contrasts. He was a highly eccentric ruler who created a new party-less political system called "Jamahiriya", a

strange concept of “direct democracy” devoid of any state political structures and freedom or real democracy. He nationalized Libya's lucrative oil industry and eliminated the American and British military bases granted by the erstwhile pro- Western monarch King Idris during the Cold War. He was a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause to the extent of supporting their terrorist actions against Israeli interests. He championed the objectives of pan-Arab and pan-African unity which went against the fundamental strategic interests of the West of controlling the vast energy resources in the Middle East/North Africa and the rich mineral resources in the larger African continent. He was therefore a prime target for demonisation by the West and was soon categorized by the US as a “rogue state”.

While ruthlessly eliminating any opposition to his regime, Qaddafi took significant steps in upgrading the socio-economic conditions of Libya, which included the highest per capita GDP [PPP] of \$ 13,800 in Africa, high literacy rate of 82%, increased life expectancy of 78 years and abundant gold and foreign exchange reserves. He was detested by the Arab monarchies as he considered them to be quasi- client states and flunkies of the West. In the hope of normalizing relations with the West and removal of US economic sanctions, Qaddafi gave up his WMD programme in December 2003 and paid handsome compensation for the Lockerbie terrorist bombing.

The ouster of Hosne Mubarak in Egypt provided the trigger to certain rebel groups in Benghazi and adjoining cities to launch an agitation against corruption and better housing in the Eastern region on 15 February 2011. This was broken up with brute force by Qaddafi's security forces and accompanied by an intemperate Qaddafi style threat of dire consequences if peace was disturbed. The twin revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in January and February 2011 provided the perfect opportunity for the US, and NATO to revive their demonisation of Libya and launch a concerted information campaign of regime change in Libya, employing the dubious doctrine of “right to protect” [R2P]. . . The modus operandi was a rushed UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on 17 March 2011, with the ostensible

objective of protecting Libyan civilian lives against attack or threat of attack by Qaddafi's forces, by establishing a "No Fly Zone" and a naval arms embargo. The BRIC [Brazil, Russia, India and China] countries along with Germany abstained in the voting on UNSCR 1973. Unfortunately the veto wielding permanent members of the Security Council, Russia and China were lulled into merely "abstaining" and did not veto this controversial resolution.

Since there was an absence of mass public uprising and large segments of the Libyan Army and power elite remained loyal to Qaddafi, the internal situation imploded in a full scale civil war. Rebel forces under an umbrella group, National Transitional Council [ NTC ], comprising dissident émigré groups, political and military defectors and certain alienated tribal militias with clandestine support from the West and the Gulf monarchies, took control over the Eastern provinces, after fierce fighting with the Libyan Army.

UNSCR 1973 was quickly translated into a full fledged aerial war against Libya using the combined military might of NATO and the US in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean region. The NATO led air war started on 19 March 2011 with 117 Tomahawk cruise missile strikes and hundreds of PGM based air strikes aimed at destroying Libya's military infrastructure, air defence system and key government installations. This was accompanied by intense close air support attack missions on Qaddafi's forces battling the rebel militias, backed up by clandestine Special Forces from UK/ France and some of the Gulf States. This battle of attrition lasted for eight months with more than 10000 air strikes employing approximately 7700 bombs and PGMs, resulting in the destruction of 5900 military targets, which ultimately turned the tide against Qaddafi's beleaguered Army after considerable blood shed and civilian casualties. The Civil War ended with Qaddafi's brutal killing by the rebel militias on 20 October 2011 following precision air strikes by NATO aircraft on his retreating convoy. The irony was that this R2P based "humanitarian war" resulted in approximately 25,000 – 30,000 killed and 50,000 wounded on both sides including thousands of civilian casualties that the UNSCR1973 resolution was meant to protect!

The post Civil War situation remains unstable and grim with the West sponsored National Transitional Council unable to control over 100 tribal and city based militias who have emerged as mini warlords dispensing instant justice in their respective domains. The political situation has assumed crisis proportions after a unilateral declaration of autonomy by tribal and militia leaders in oil rich Eastern Libya, raising the spectre of a renewed civil war, which makes the democratic transition uncertain and challenging.

### Syrian Uprising

The impact of the Arab Spring on Syria has been complex and violent due to its geo-strategic location, its history of repressive despotic Alawite minority rule led by a father and son combination [Hafez al Assad and Bashar al Assad] over a Sunni majority, spanning a total period of 41 years. Triggered by the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions, the Syrian uprising started on 26 January 2011 with a peaceful agitation in the southern city of Deraa against the oppressive regime of Bashar al Assad, and spread like wildfire to a large number of towns such as Homs, Hama , Aleppo and even some parts of the capital Damascus. Emulating his father, Hafez al Assad [who had ruthlessly suppressed a Muslim Brotherhood led Sunni armed uprising in 1982 with over 20000 casualties ], Bashar al Assad hamhandedly responded with maximum military force, unleashing a vicious cycle of protest, counter protest and violence which soon transformed into an insurgency with the help of significant number of Syrian Army deserters. This led to the formation of a rebel Free Syrian Army [ FSA ] and the Syrian National Council [SNC], based in neighbouring Turkey with logistic assistance from Western intelligence and the Gulf States. Over the last one year, Bashar Assad has employed maximum fire power using artillery and air power against insurgents who have fortified themselves in built up areas in some Syrian cities in the West and South, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides including large number of civilians, estimated to be around 7000 to 8000 and approximately 2000 to 2500 security forces casualties, so far.

The Syrian Sunni uprising has highlighted the larger Shia-Sunni power struggle in the Middle East, with the Sunni Muslim Gulf



monarchies led by Saudi Arabia and Qatar actively campaigning for political support of the rebel Syrian National Council and regime change and Iran backing up the beleaguered Assad regime with support from Russia and China. Concerted efforts made by US and NATO countries in the UN Security Council [UNSC], to pass a Chapter 7 UNSC resolution sanctioning military intervention, replicating the Libyan model, has been foiled so far by the Russian and Chinese veto. An Arab league sponsored Observer Mission also failed to establish peace due to intransigence on both sides and the Gulf states adopting a pro-rebel posture. To circumvent the UNSC, at the initiative of France, a 70 nation "Friends of Syria" conference was held in Tunisia on 24 February 2012 to pressurize President to relinquish power, legitimize the status of the SNC and pave the way for regime change. The results of the conference were inconclusive without any agreement on a clear action plan to end the violence or arming the SNA with heavier weapons. Russia and China did not attend the meeting while the Syrian government condemned the holding of the conference and dubbed it as an initiative of the "Enemies of Syria". A follow up meeting of the "Friends of Syria", is planned to be held in Turkey in May 2012.

Currently all eyes are set on the ex UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's appointment as a Special Envoy of the UN/Arab League, to negotiate with all parties involved in the Syrian crisis and find a way of ending the violence and establishing peace and stability in Syria. Kofi Annan formulated a Six Point Peace Plan in March 2012 which included a ceasefire by both the warring sides and cessation of all violence, followed by an inclusive Syrian led dialogue and political process, to be facilitated by a UN appointed interlocutor and 300 UN Military Observers. In spite of best efforts of Kofi Annan and the UN Supervision Mission [UNSIM] in Syria, the cease fire has been patchy, and mutual bloodletting is continuing with the government forces gradually giving ground to the rebel forces. According to UNSIM sources, the situation is rapidly descending into a full fledged civil war with Syrian government forces desperately attempting to retake lost cities and territories, employing heavier weapons and the rebel fighters getting more military and logistic support across the Turkish border.

## Arab Monarchies

Besides, the major ethnic conflict in Bahrain, the Arab Spring had varying degrees of impact on the authoritarian Arab monarchies in the Gulf and North Africa. Immediately after the democratic upsurge in Tunisia and Egypt, there were protests of a moderate intensity in Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Morocco, demanding end to corruption, better governance, civil liberties and representational rule and transformation into constitutional monarchy. The response from these monarchies ranged from removal of corrupt ministers, change in the governing cabinet, fresh elections and promise of political reform.

In Morocco, the intensity of public protests compelled King Mohammed to amend the repressive constitution in September 2011 and hold fresh elections in November 2011. As in Egypt and Tunisia, the Islamic Justice and Development Party emerged victorious winning the maximum number of 107 seats out of 395 and therefore formed a coalition government with two other likeminded parties. Morocco's political evolution into a constitutional monarchy is still some distance away, as the king retains the vital portfolio of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and retains his power as Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

In Saudi Arabia, after single but shocking episode of self-immolation, there were some mild protests between January and March 2011, which were put down with a heavy hand by Saudi security forces. The Arab democratic upsurge in Tunisia and Egypt and the consequent brutal crackdown by the Sunni Bahreini monarchy on Shia agitators with the help of 1000 strong Saudi mechanized forces, triggered large scale Shia protests through 2011 and 2012, in the oil rich Eastern province of Al Qatif which was suppressed with a heavy hand by Saudi security forces. A brave attempt by 10 Saudi intellectuals to form a political party demanding an end to absolute monarchy, led to their immediate arrest and release only after they had been forced to retract their demands. Sensing the gathering winds of change in the Middle East, the Saudi monarch King Abdullah announced a generous package of \$ 10.7 billion for the people, including writing off of loans, unemployment benefits, cash for

housing loans, and a 15% hike in salaries, to pacify the politically suppressed people. However political repression continues relentlessly with the continued banning of political parties and the Grand Mufti issuing a “fatwa” declaring the holding of public protests and agitations as un-Islamic!

## ROOTS OF THE ARAB SPRING

The phenomenon of Arab democratic awakening, also called the Arab Spring has certain common roots, relating to the spread of despotic rule in the entire Middle East and North Africa and its consequences, duly modulated by the historical experience of each affected state. The roots of the Tunisian Jasmine and the Egyptian 25 January Revolutions have a great degree of commonality, whereas in Libya and Syria, the uprisings have been complicated by external intervention, resulting in violent insurgency and civil wars. However, there are a large number of political, socio-economic, historic and strategic factors which contributed to the Arab democratic awakening.

• **Political Factors.** A variety of political factors have contributed to the growing alienation, disillusionment and disgruntlement among the masses in the Arab states:

Subversion of the constitution, to facilitate unchallenged authoritarian rule.

- Marginalisation of multi party democracy and establishment of virtual single party rule and monopolization of all power.
- Imposition of draconian “Emergency laws” and subversion of the “rule of law” and consequent denial of basic freedom and justice, resulting in the creation of virtual police states.
- Promotion of “cronyism” in the political and economic domain generating a culture of corruption and nepotism.
- Subversion of the Judiciary and the Criminal Justice system.
- Absence of liberalization of the absolute monarchies and into a constitutional form with a democratic framework.

- Attempts at institutionalizing dynastic rule in despotic regimes such as Egypt and Libya.

### Socio-Economic Factors

- Establishment of a perverse form of “robber baron” type of “mafia capitalism” in the framework of an undemocratic authoritarian regime, involving massive enrichment of the ruling elite and their families and cronies.
- World Bank and IMF inspired neo-liberal socio-economic policies which resulted in excessive concentration of wealth among a small ruling elite and their cronies and opening up the economy to foreign multi national companies, with simultaneous cuts in public expenditure, resulting in large income disparities, and economic hardship on the common man resulting in high rates of poverty.
- High inflation, particularly in food prices creating large scale dissatisfaction with the ruling government.
- Massive unemployment among the educated youth coupled with their disillusionment and alienation from the ruling elite.

### Historic Factors

One of the distinct features of the Middle East and North Africa, is its unique historical heritage as part of the “fertile crescent” which dates back to the ancient cradles of civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Carthage in the Maghreb. The Persian, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine empires which followed ruled over this region and finally the great Islamic wave after the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, left a rich and diverse cultural impact. The people inhabiting this region have therefore inherited many of these civilizational and cultural values which are cherished with a great pride.

**The Colonial Impact.** The late 19<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed the weakening of the great Ottoman Turkish Empire which embraced all

of North Africa and the Middle East. The North African provinces of the Ottoman Empire became the first targets of European colonialism with Egypt grabbed by Britain, Algeria and Tunisia colonized by France, and Libya, by Italy. Due to the close proximity of the Maghreb to Southern Europe, a serious attempt was made by colonial powers such as France and Italy to carry out a demographic invasion of Algeria, Tunisia and Libya . For instance, by the end of the Second World War, Algeria had around 1.5 million French “colons” who owned lucrative land and property and were despised by the Algerian nationalists. In the bloody Algerian Revolution that followed from 1954 to 1962, approximately 1 million Algerians were killed. Libya suffered a similar experience with Italian colonizers, which resulted in a brutal 20 years [1911- 1931] War of Independence in which more than 250000 Libyans perished. Later, during Mussolini's fascist regime, grandiose imperial plans were made to integrate the Libya provinces of Cyreinea and Tripolitania into a Greater Italy, which fortunately did not fructify as the Italy was on the losing side in the Second World War.

The process of colonial domination was transformed into a neo-colonial form after the breakup of the Ottoman Turkish Empire at the end of the First World War, when the Arabs were betrayed by Britain and France and its Middle Eastern provinces were carved off into puppet monarchies under British and French control. The Balfour Declaration by the Britain, unilaterally promised the Zionists a Jewish homeland in Palestine without consulting the Arabs, which only added to the enormous Arab anger and resentment. After the creation of Israel in 1948, this became the root cause of an intractable Arab- Israeli conflict which is still continuing. The main legacy of exploitative colonial rule by both Ottoman Turkish and the European colonial powers, was the marked absence of development of democratic institutions and the propping up of an array of authoritarian monarchies and despotic rulers as long as they served Western strategic interests.

**Subversion of Arab Nationalism.** Arab nationalism rose in a nascent form in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and picked up pace after the break

up of the Ottoman Turkish Empire after the First World War. After a rearguard action by the ex colonial powers and their establishment of pliant manufactured monarchs and authoritative rulers in the Middle East and North Africa to retain their strategic domination, a new wave of Arab nationalism spearheaded by young Arab military rulers such as Nasser, Saddam Hussain and Qaddafi, overthrew these pro West monarchies in Egypt, Iraq and Libya. However, tragically due to the absence of development of democratic institutions, these revolutionary military regimes retained the authoritative political structures inherited by them from the colonial era. After an initial phase of nationalistic euphoria and socio-economic reform, these Arab nationalistic states degenerated into authoritative regimes which stamped out all forms of dissent and democratic freedoms and ultimately generated popular discontent.

**Impact of the Cold War.** The onset of the Cold War had an adverse effect on the evolution of these states from monarchies and authoritarian regimes into democracies. The discovery of oil created a vicious competition for control and exploitation of this strategic resource by the large oil multi nationals totally supported by the Western Powers. In the process, the democratic transition of this region was sacrificed at the altar of the strategic interest of dominating the production and exploitation of oil. The inevitable outcome was the propping up of repressive despotic regimes, ignoring the growing democratic aspirations of the people.

There was also a concerted effort by the USA post- Camp David, to change the non-aligned posture of states such as Egypt and forge strategic alliances with them in order to secure peace in the Arab Israeli conflict and protect Israel's strategic interests, in exchange for generous economic and military assistance. Authoritarian states such as Iraq, Libya, Iran and Syria which did not fall in line were demonized and branded as "rogue" states. The dire need for addressing the democratic aspirations of the people, was deliberately ignored, creating a deep sense of disillusionment and disappointment with the despotic rulers as well as their Western benefactors who never raised a voice of protest against the blatant display of despotism. The strategic

imperatives of the Cold War and the markedly biased pro-Israeli strategic posture of the US in the Middle East, further eroded its credibility among the Arab masses.

## CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

**The Fallacy of Democratic Deficit.** The Middle Eastern and North African Arab states have been considered by many political scientists to be immune to the several waves of democratization which has transformed the political scenario in large parts of Asia, Africa in the post colonial era and in Eastern Europe, after the break up of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Certain Western analysts have argued that democracy was incompatible with the principles of Islam and its deep sectarian divisions. This thesis however does not hold water as there are thriving democracies in Islamic countries such as Turkey, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The fact is that the Middle East and North African region has experienced earlier democratic revolts against Western sponsored authoritarian rule in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine in 1919 - 1920 and in Syria in 1925-1927, after the imposition of the League of Nations mandate. In a second phase, in the 1950s and 1960s puppet monarchs installed by the Western powers were overthrown by popularly supported military revolutions in Egypt, Iraq and Libya. The present democratic awakening is therefore part of the ongoing historical process of the slow and painful transition from despotic rule to a more liberal and democratic political order. It also needs to be understood that the transition to democracy after centuries of authoritarian and despotic rule, is a slow and tortuous process due to resistance from the forces of status quo and internally and externally generated vested interests. Depending on the individual internal dynamics of these countries and the pattern of political and economic deprivation, the nature of this revolutionary transition has followed different trajectories in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria.

**Tunisia.** After the Jasmine Revolution, among all the Arab states, it is Tunisia which has made maximum progress in its difficult transition towards democracy with minimum violence and turmoil. The old

oppressive state structures and corruption apparatus of Ben Ali's regime along its propaganda machine, have been totally dismantled with the full support of the Army. Ben Ali's political party [RCD Party] which monopolized power at the centre and the provinces, have been disbanded. Ben- Ali has been tried for his crimes in absentia and found guilty. After a brief spell of interim government, the existing constitution, deformed and subverted by Ben Ali, has been superseded and elections held to a Constituent Assembly on 23 October 2011 with a record turn out of 90%, to frame a new constitution. The biggest surprise of the election verdict, was the emergence of a moderate Islamist Ennahda Party securing 89 seats of the total of 217 seats and the consequent formation of a coalition government led by Rashid Ghannouchi [a respected Islamic scholar who had been exiled by Ben Ali for 22 years in London] along with two other left centre secular parties. Three State Commissions have been established to undertake political reform, democratic transition, and investigation of the abuse of power by the Ben – Ali regime and its acts of embezzlement and corruption.

To allay fears of a fundamental Islamic government in future, the Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali of the Ennahda Party, has declared that the new constitution would not be based on the Sharia and would maintain the moderate and secular nature of Tunisia. A year's time has been given to write the constitution and a deadline to hold general elections by 13 June 2013. Considering the strong historical secular traditions of Tunisia since its independence in 1956, and notwithstanding the grave economic challenges, the future transition of Tunisia into a modern democratic state with some Islamic characteristics, appear to be bright.

Egypt. Compared to the relatively smooth and turmoil free democratic transition in Tunisia, Egypt is still in the throes of a difficult and bumpy process of democratic transformation with periodic mass public protests and continuing repression by the security forces controlled by the interim rulers in the form of a military junta, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces [ SCAF ] . As discussed earlier, in Egypt it is the military which has totally



dominated political power right from Colonel Nasser's 1952 Revolution to the 29 year despotic rule of Hosne Mubarak [an Air Chief Marshal in the 1973 Yom Kippur War]. During this long period of military domination of Egyptian politics, the Army has inevitably developed deep vested interests not only as the nation's saviour, but also secured vast privileges and lucrative commercial interests, which the military seeks to protect and preserve. This has manifested in the slowing down of the process of democratic transition, fueling public anger, resulting in a cycle of repression by the security forces, triggering even more public protests.

The second great challenge confronting the democratic transition is the unexpected resurgence of political Islam in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood sponsored Freedom and Justice Party[FJP] and the fundamental Salafist Nour Party, winning more than 70% of the seats in the Egyptian parliamentary elections held in November 2011. Overall, the Islamist parties won 358 seats out of a total of 498 seats in the Lower House raising apprehensions of a radical Islamist regime succeeding the Mubarak despotic government. The Upper House [Shura Council] elections that followed in January 2012, saw a similar Islamist wave with the FJP and the Nour Party winning 150 out of 180 seats. The overwhelming success of the Islamist parties have been attributed to the superb countrywide organizational network of the Muslim Brotherhood/ FJP, their social activities among the masses, and the contrasting lack of cohesion and leadership of the newly emerged secular parties. The direct outcome of the election results has been the domination of the 100 member Constitution Drafting Committee by the majority FJP and Nour Party raising the likelihood of a greater Islamic colour to the new constitution. The other interesting development is the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to field a candidate, Khairat Al Shater for the May 2012 Presidential Elections. This is a departure from the Brotherhood's pledge not to field a presidential candidate to allay fears of dominating power and has therefore been criticized by both liberal secularists and the SCAF. With a FJP President, Lower House Speaker and an overwhelming majority in both houses of parliament, there is a distinct possibility of the Muslim Brotherhood totally dominating the future course of Egyptian politics. There is also a sense of

disillusionment and apprehension among large sections of the youth who had filled Tahrir Square and the left liberal parties and the minority Coptic Christians, on the possibility of creation of an intolerant Islamic political dispensation after the Presidential Elections in June 2012.

Libya. Libya faces enormous challenges in its path to democratic transformation. After the violent regime change enabled by massive US/NATO military intervention along with a variety of rebel militia, so far, the interim government steered by the National Transitional Council [NTC], has been unable to stabilize the fragmented political situation and exercise control over the volatile conflict ridden security environment. Qaddafi's unique "Jamahiriya" [state of the masses] which eliminated all political parties and the normal institutions of governance of a modern nation state, has made the task of democratic transition even more difficult. The declaration of autonomy by the eastern province of Cyreincia and the overall lack of security due to violent actions by various rebel militia groups, have eroded the effectiveness of the central authority of the NTC and made the transition to democracy extremely difficult. The promised elections to a Constituent Assembly in June 2012, the drafting of a new Constitution and the holding of Parliamentary and Presidential elections thereafter, are fraught with uncertainty.

Except for the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood which is well organized, the emergence of secular political parties is in its infancy, which has been further complicated by the rise of regionalism and tribalism. The transition from Qaddafi's Jamarrihiya to a stable and peaceful democratic order is aggravated by the proliferation of large quantities of arms and ammunition looted by rebel militias and criminal elements from Qaddafi's numerous armament depots, which are being used for various separatist and criminal activities, creating a great sense of insecurity among the citizenry. There are also fears that these looted arms and particularly large quantities of Russian origin manportable surface to air missiles might fall into the hands of Islamic jihadist terrorist groups in North Africa and the Middle East with dangerous consequences.

Syria. Compelled by the rapidly deteriorating security situation and a near civil war like conditions in the year long armed conflict between the rebel Syrian National Army and the Syrian security forces, President Bashar Assad's government promulgated a new Constitution which was approved by a controversial referendum in February 2012 in a disturbed environment. The new Constitution incorporated two major changes. The first was the introduction of a multi party political system, which was a departure from the earlier monopoly of power enjoyed by the Ba'ath Party for over 40 years of authoritarian rule. The second change was the introduction of a separate Presidential election and limiting the tenure of the President to seven years with the provision for one extension of tenure. In a severely adverse security environment, fresh Parliamentary elections were held in May 2012 as per the new Constitution which reelected Bashar Assad to power. This entire process of formulating a new “liberal” constitution and the holding of fresh elections has been severely criticized by the Arab League and the West as a sham, designed primarily to legitimize Bashar Assad's despotic regime. It was a case of too little too late. Syria's transition to democracy is bound to be slow and painful and will depend on the outcome of the ongoing civil war and the nature of the consequent political dispensation.

## STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Rise of Political Islam. One of the major outcomes of the ongoing Arab democratic upsurge has been the emergence of Islamic political parties in practically all the Arab countries affected by the Arab Spring , particularly so in Tunisia and Egypt. This is despite the persecution and banning of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist organizations by the despotic rulers right from the early days of Arab nationalism in the 1950s. .The recent electoral triumphs of the Muslim Brotherhood sponsored Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia have created deep apprehension in US and Europe of a possible geopolitical realignment from a markedly pro- western posture to a more independent Arab- centric future policy on contentious issues such as the Arab- Israeli Conflict, the Palestine

problem and the Western demonisation of Iran and Syria.

An islamised Maghreb and Middle East, based on the Sharia with fundamentalist characteristics, is a prospect which is looked upon with great degree of unease in the democratic world. After an initial effort to save the Mubarak regime, the Obama administration came out in support of the Tahrir Square mass uprising and advised Mubarak to relinquish his Presidency heeding the voice of the people. Since then the US Administration, displaying great diplomatic agility, has been actively engaging the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic Ennahda in Tunisia, to ensure continuity of the pro Western posture of these countries.

In future, the advent of political Islam as a dominant political force in the Maghreb and the Middle East may raise the prospect of a united pan- Arab political entity, unsuccessfully attempted by Nasser and Qaddafi, and which the US and the NATO countries have always endeavoured to prevent, to preserve their global strategic interests of domination of the Middle East and North Africa and control over its rich energy resources.

**The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Palestine Problem.** The Camp David Accords and the consequent 1979 Egypt - Israel Peace Treaty brokered by USA, was highly unpopular in the Arab world as it did not do justice to the Palestine problem, and which ultimately led to the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The Arab Spring has already signaled the popular demand for reviewing these treaties with sporadic acts of terrorism by the Sinai Bedouins astride the demilitarized Sinai – Israeli border. The formation of a full fledged democratic government in Egypt after the presidential elections, is likely to put greater pressure on the US and the obdurate Israeli government to render justice to the Palestinian people and accelerate the creation of a viable independent Palestinian state. However, the existing dire economic situation in Egypt and its dependence on large doses of US economic/military aid and loans from the World Bank/IMF [also dominated by the US ], may inhibit any drastic pro Palestinian actions by the newly elected Egyptian

government

Energy Security. Any move by a future radical independent Egyptian government to restrict oil flows and trade/commerce through the Suez Canal would be intolerable to Western strategic interests and may result in a major conflict and trigger the use of military force by US/NATO, with the possibility of a wider armed conflagration enveloping the Middle East. Considering the fact that approximately 4000 oil and CNG tankers transit the Suez Canal every year to fuel the economies of the Asia- Pacific countries as well as Europe and US, and the economic and military dependence of Egypt on the US, such a possibility is highly unlikely.

The forcible regime change in Libya after a bloody civil war, will enable the Western oil multi nationals to dominate the exploitation of Libya's abundant reserves of light crude oil, much sought after by the European countries on the Mediterranean littoral. The interim NTC government is likely to dispense oil/gas exploitation contracts on priority to companies of those countries such as France, Italy, UK and US who provided maximum support to the NTC in the civil war against Qaddafi and gave early recognition to the new NTC based regime.

Islamic Jehadi Terrorism. The emergence of Islamic parties dominating the political scene in the "Arab Spring" affected countries, is likely to reduce the level of counter terrorism cooperation, such as the controversial American "rendition" programme involving torture and illegal interrogation of suspected Al Qaida and other Jehadi terrorists , carried out by the erstwhile pro- West authoritative regimes. The advent of extreme Islamic fundamental political parties such as the Salafist Al Nour party which won a surprising 25% of the seats in the Egyptian parliamentary elections, may be a precursor to the rise of Jihadism with the possibility of greater support to terrorist groups such as Al Qaida in the Maghreb, Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Qaida in Iraq, Al Shabab in Somalia, and the numerous Taliban and other jihadi terrorist groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The infiltration of Al Qaida elements in the unstable political situation in Libya and the recent, terrorist attacks in the Syrian capital, reportedly by the Al Qaida in Iraq, are indications of proliferation of Jehadi terrorism, which may complicate and delay the transition of Libya and Syria into functioning democracies.

## CONCLUSION

The Arab Spring is an important milestone in the tortuous history of the Middle East and North Africa, after centuries of subjugation by the Ottoman Turkish Empire and brutal European colonial rule and exploitation which followed. The democratic transition is bound to be slow and painful due to the vested interests of the remnants of despotism, aided and abetted by the forces of status – quo in the shape of the Arab monarchies and their Western supporters. The final shape and texture of this fascinating political transformation has been complicated by the rise of a moderate version of political Islam in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, perhaps on the Turkish model. This may be precursor for greater strategic autonomy being exercised by these newly elected Islamic democratic governments which is bound to have a great impact on the resolution of contentious issues such as the Palestine problem, the Shia- Sunni divide in Iraq, Syria and Bahrain, Iran's nuclear quest and the dangerous stand-off between Iran and Israel/USA.

In the long term, the Arab democratic upsurge is bound to infect the authoritative monarchies in the Arabian Peninsula and the Maghreb in an evolutionary manner, starting with Morocco, Oman and Kuwait and subsequently in UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and finally the bastion of Islamic despotism, Saudi Arabia.

## SESSION I

PERSPECTIVE ON THE ARAB SPRING  
AND INDIA

Chairman : Amit Mukherjee  
Main Speaker : KP Fabian

PAPER PRESENTED BY AMBASSADOR  
KP FABIAN, IFS (RETD)

## THE ARAB SPRING : WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

It is indeed a high privilege to address this intellectually alert gathering of scholars and defence and foreign policy specialists brought together by the prestigious CASS that has established a singular reputation among the think tanks in India. I read the proceedings of the seminar held by CASS in November 1994 on the theme, THE EMERGING CHINA: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA. I was struck by the depth of analysis and found it an outstanding contribution to strategic thinking in India. I do recall that the late R D Sathe, my ambassador in Iran where I served from 1976 to 1979 was intimately associated with CASS after retiring as Foreign Secretary. The synergy that CASS generates by bringing together distinguished participants in different walks of life is indeed remarkable.

Why do we call it “The Arab Spring”? Is it because the spring is transient? Is there an implication that the Arabs after a while will go back to autocracy? Is there not much civilizational arrogance on the part of the West when it looks at Arabs? Eminent Western scholars such as Bernard Henri- Levi and Francis Fukuyama have argued that Islam is incapable of embracing modernity and liberty as it never had a Renaissance and a Reformation. Fukuyama who proclaimed the End

of History as the Cold War and the Communist system collapsed has assessed that Islam is incapable of accepting liberal democracy. One may remark en passant that but for the Arab Civilization's preserving the works of Plato and Aristotle lost in Europe there would have been no Renaissance. Similarly, but for the Indian decimal system transmitted by the Arabs the scientific progress in Europe would have been delayed. In any case to expect that all other civilizations should go through the same stages as the West is to demonstrate a pathetic and perilous ego-centric predicament.

It would be more correct to speak of an Arab Awakening that runs across the Arab world even as different countries have taken different paths in their search for freedom and democracy. Even as the paths are different, the first step is common, namely, to get rid of the dictator.

There are a few commonalities:

- a) The rulers were ruling or misruling and ruining their countries for too long. Egypt had three rulers in sixty years; Tunisia had two in fifty years. Gaddafi ruled Libya from 1969 till his overthrow in 2011. Yemen's Saleh ruled for thirty years till he was eased out.
- b) There were elections from time to time, but they were neither free nor fair. Any party likely to do well in a free and fair election was banned. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia.
- c) There was much praise for the dictators from the Western establishment and the international bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF, dominated by the West in varying degrees. The Boston Consulting Group in a survey of Africa lauded Tunisia as a "Lion of Africa". In its 2010 Tunisia Review the IMF praised Tunisia's "business environment and improving competitiveness of its economy."



There was a crude variety of crony capitalism in Tunisia as well as in Egypt. For example, Leila Trabelsi, the Tunisian President's wife, was active in business through her family. The US Ambassador's report to Washington as 'wikileaks'd' reads as follows:

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 Trabelsi corruption are often barbs about their lack of education, low social status, and conspicuous consumption. While some of the complaints about the Trabelsi clan seems to emanate from a disdain of their nouveau riche inclinations, Tunisians also argue that the Trabelsis' strong arm tactics and flagrant abuse of the system make them easy to hate. Leila's brother Belhassen Trabelsi is the most notorious family member and is rumored to have been involved in a wide range of corrupt schemes from the recent Banque de Tunisie board shakeup to property expropriations and extortion of bribes. Leaving the question of their progenitor aside, Belhassen Trabelsi's holdings are extensive and include an airline, several hotels, one of Tunisia's two private radio stations, car assembly plants, Ford distribution, a real estate development company, and the list goes on. Yet, Belhassen is only one of Leila's ten siblings, each with their own children. Among this large extended family, Leila's brother Moncef and nephew Imed are also particularly important economic actors.

The Tunisians knew, but were too scared to speak out. What about the freedom – of- expression loving Western media? Why is it that they did not carry out any investigative studies? The answer is obvious.

What is said about Tunisia applies *mutatis mutandis* to Mubarak's Egypt. The West was glad to confuse between crony capitalism and liberal, open market.

In the case of Gaddafi after his rehabilitation following payment of \$ 8 million to each passenger who died in the Lockerbie crash, the United Kingdom's Prime Minister Blair opened up business dealings with Libya with much alacrity and others followed. The world knew that Gaddafi was a dictator; but doing business with him was enormously profitable.

- d) President George Bush's ill- begotten GWOT(Global War on Terrorism) required associates and the dictators gladly joined in. They accepted and facilitated the notorious 'rendition' proceedings with utter contempt for human rights and rule of law. The thought of President Bush was that 9/11 had changed the world and the distinction between right and wrong no longer existed. The dictators were glad to see a US President who agreed with them that there was no such distinction. The full extent of the collaborative excesses in rendition and other matters will be known only over a period of time. But, evidence from post-Gaddafi Libya clearly proves that despite its repeated denials the Blair Government was a party to illegal rendition.
- e) The Western governments have applied double standards. In the case of Bahrain, they endorsed silently or not, the military crack down led by Saudi Arabia. In the case of Libya the West bombed Gaddafi out of office.
- f) The West was taken in by surprise. In the case of Tunisia, the French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie even offered to send French 'military expertise' to Tunisia to shore up the regime under stress. One of the reasons for her support was that she was close to Ben Ali who had paid for her holidays. She paid for making that offer by getting sacked. But, there are deeper reasons for the failure of the West to figure out what was in the making. The conventional wisdom about the inherent inability of Islam to embrace freedom and human rights as propagated by Fukuyama and others has already

been alluded to. As Condoleeza Rice, former Secretary of State, put it for sixty years US had been chasing stability at the expense of democracy and achieved neither. President Obama made an eloquent plea in support of democracy in Cairo University in 2009. That speech was adduced as one of the reasons for awarding him the Nobel Prize for Peace. As a matter of fact, he did not change the 60-year old policy of seeking stability at any cost. But, it can be said to his credit that as events unfolded in Egypt he started sending the correct signals in support of the Awakening. A Republican President might have not read the writing on the wall as fast as Obama did.

- g) There is also intellectual indolence characteristic of our times that accounts for the failure to anticipate or recognize the Awakening when it commenced to unfold. Since 2002, serious Arab intellectuals and scholars have been drawing our attention to the unconscionable state of affairs in the Arab world through the Arab Human Development Report since 2002. These reports though published by UNDP, are different from the usual ones. They were prepared by Arabs and not by UN officials. The 2002 Report pointed out the importance of according full respect to human rights and freedoms as cornerstone for good governance. For 25 years from 1980 the region witnessed hardly any economic growth. Real per capita income grew by 6.4 % in twenty four years. The youth bulge (under 25) works out to 60%.The median age is 22 years as compared to 25 for the world as a whole. The state is often the main threat to human security. Civil society is suppressed or barely tolerated by the State. Unemployment is running at 14.4% as compared to the global rate of 6.3%. Democracy is conspicuous by its absence and fraudulent elections are held one after the other.

Why did the foreign offices fail to read the Arab Human Development Reports? I asked this question to a senior official in the UK Foreign Office. He had no answer.

We should now look at specific countries. Chronologically, it started in Tunisia. Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, sole breadwinner in a family of eight, was a street vendor in Sidi Bouzid, 300 kms south of the capital. On December 17, 2010, a policewoman confiscated his cart; he tried to bribe her by offering 10 dinar, equal to \$7, that he earns a day. She insulted his deceased father and slapped him in public. He rushed to the provincial headquarters, but none was prepared to see him. He went away only to return and set fire on himself. The attempted suicide and the harsh police action directed against peaceful marchers caused riots might have gone unnoticed but for the social media. YouTube and Facebook showed the protests. Mohamed was transferred to a good hospital near Tunis and Ben Ali visited him on December 28, eleven days after the incident. Mohamed died on January 4, 2011. Ten days later, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia with gold belonging to the people and his family. The gold and the money deposited abroad are still with him.

Ben Ali's departure was not expected to usher in democracy. A state of emergency was declared and a care-taker coalition government that included the discredited President's party (RCD) members. Protests continued, government changed, and a general election was held in October 2011 won by Islamist Ennahda Party. That Party had been banned under Ben Ali.

A question or two need to be asked:

- a) Mohamed Bouazizi was no leader. He did not want to overthrow the government. But his act of self-immolation triggered the protests. That a woman slapped him in public might have added to his sense of humiliation and anger. The security forces used force on peaceful marchers and shot them dead. Suppose the regime had used overwhelming force could it have suppressed the Awakening? The answer is 'may be.'

Did the security forces or the army indicate at any time that they were not going to go on shooting the peaceful marchers? Yes, the Army Chief refused to fire on the

protesters just before Ben Ali fled.

- b) Tunisia is a less violent country than many others. Few people hold guns. The protesters did not resort to violence, except rarely. It was the violent response of the regime that provoked the people to come out and protest in large numbers facilitated by the social media.

What is most remarkable is that a spontaneous and leaderless movement of people toppled a dictatorship that had intimidated people for years . Mohamed Bouazizi's self immolation triggered a reaction from ordinary people who shed fear and hopelessness.

Tunisia's is the most successful Awakening so far. An Awakening should be judged in three ways. Politically, Tunisia has established a pluralistic democracy with a government that came to power through an election free and fair. Socially, Tunisia has disbanded the secret police but the intolerance of dissent characteristic of the fallen regime remains in patches. Individuals have been punished for speaking irreverently of the Prophet. Economically, the Awakening is in deep trouble. The number of Tunisians without jobs has shot up, foreign companies are closing down owing to strike, and tourism has not yet resumed at the normal level. The money and gold looted by Ben Ali remains to be traced. On a scale of ten we might give Tunisian Awakening 7.5.

When Ben Ali fled many commentators including the BBC assessed that Mubarak will not follow. Mubarak watched in dismay as the Egyptians marched to the Tahrir Square waving Tunisian flags. He was determined to do what ever it took to escape Ben Ali's fate. The first major demonstration occurred on January 25,2011, ten days after Ben Ali fled. Mubarak concluded that Ben Ali had not used sufficient force to suppress the protesters. He ordered the use of force. He blocked Twitter and then the Facebook. The Moslem Brotherhood cleverly did not join the protest in the beginning. They feared that Mubarak would exploit their joining to resort to even more violence

and to get international support as he could argue that he alone stood between the obscurantist Brotherhood and Egypt. Mubarak stopped the internet as a Friday demonstration showed the immense size of the opposition to his regime. Washington announced that it might consider the stopping of aid to the Egyptian military. Egypt is the second largest recipient of such aid after Israel. Mubarak dismissed his government but insisted that he would not resign. Obama appeared on television to say that he had advised Mubarak to take “concrete steps” towards reform, the clear implication being that Mubarak should step down. Mubarak was compelled to restore the internet services. On Friday, February 2, “Day of Departure” protests were held practically in the whole of Egypt. Next Friday, February 11, Mubarak's resignation was announced by his Vice President Suleiman. The military under Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi,<sup>76</sup> took over.

Egyptians have traditionally looked up to the army as the protector of Egypt. But, very soon after Mubarak's departure from office, the Egyptian people realized that the army wanted to continue Mubarak's regime without him. The army wanted to hold on to power by pretending to go through motions towards democracy. Election to the parliament was held starting from November, 2011. The results announced in the last week of January, 2011 gave the Freedom and Justice Party, the political front of the Moslem Brotherhood won 47% of the seats and the Salafists, an extreme religious party winning 25%. The secularists did badly.

But, the army has so far not handed over power to a civilian cabinet reporting to the parliament. Presidential election will be held in May with a possible second round in June. Briefly, the Egyptian Awakening is lagging behind the Tunisian politically. One might award 5.5 on a scale 0 to 10.

Libya is the next. The Awakening started in February 2011 in Benghazi. A human rights campaigner was arrested and people protested. The state responded violently. Protests spread and parts of the east came under the control of the protesters. Gaddafi used

airpower to bomb the protesters. In March UN Security Council on Western initiative passed a resolution establishing a no-fly zone over Syria. The NATO hijacked the resolution and started bombing of Gaddafi's military targets and in the process killed many civilians, 55, according to Amnesty International. It should be noted that the Security Council acted only in response to the Arab League's appeal to create a no-fly zone. In August 2011, the rebels organized as National Transition Council took Tripoli and Gaddafi ran away only to be captured and killed later.

Libya is still in a state of mild chaos. The country is awash with weapons. Young men with AK47 control the traffic in the Martyrs' Square. There are strong forces for going back to the federal structure of the 1950s when Tripolitania in the west, Fezzan in the south, and Barqa in the east. The east has a good deal of the oil. One can rate Libyan Awakening at 4.5 or so.

There have been much debate on the motivations and merit of the Western military intervention. Apologists for the intervention have brought up the doctrine of R2P(Right to Protect) that was advanced after the Rwanda genocide. Such doctrines do not have much explanatory value. They fall into the realm of ratiocination. The West because of Libya's oil wealth and its distrust of Gaddafi wanted to intervene militarily in order to hasten his exit from power. At the same time the fact remains that but for NATO's intervention thousands of Libyans would have been killed by Gaddafi's mercenaries from Chad and elsewhere. We have to make a distinction between West's motivations and the consequences of its action.

Next is Yemen. A major demonstration of about 16,000 took place in capital Sana'a on January 27,2011. Initially, the protest was about inflation, unemployment and such issues. Saleh's government responded violently and soon the protesters demanded his ouster. He also organized pro-regime rallies. Saleh agreed to mediation by Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC), but then backtracked. Finally, under a deal negotiated by GCC he left and after an election his Vice President al-Hadi became President. Saleh returned from USA and nobody

knows what his next moves might be. It is remarkable that Yemen was able to conduct a reasonably free and fair election so soon after the dictator left.

Syria is in turmoil. The situation is fluid. The Arab League has suspended Syria's participation in its meetings. The West realizes that no Libya type intervention is possible. China and Russia have so far extended support to the Assad regime. Russia is a big arms supplier , apart from its interest in having access to Syrian ports. It is difficult to say more about Syria as the situation is exceptionally fluid. But, it might be said that one should not be surprised if Assad falls from power during the course of 2012.

Let us turn to the geopolitical implications of the Arab Awakening as it unfolds. Democracy, however messy and untidy it might be ,has dawned in the Arab world confuting the Western pundits who never thought it would happen.

US under Obama has acted with remarkable diplomatic agility. If the Awakening dislodges the regime in Bahrain, US will have to drastically rewrite its policy towards the region, currently predicated upon a strong military presence in the region. But, the regime in Bahrain is unlikely to fall in the near future unless Iran is provoked by an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear sites.

Israel has to rewrite its geopolitical strategy based on Mubarak's support. The Israeli ambassador had to be rescued from an attacking crowd by Egyptian security forces in September 2011. The gas pipe lines from Sinai to Israel have come under attack. Israel should reconsider its policy towards the Palestinians, agree to a Palestinian state with appropriate boundaries and then it will be accepted and recognized by the Arab League. If Israel believes that it can base its survival on denial of their rights to Palestinians and on dividing the Arabs, it will be a big mistake.

The activism of the Arab League is a good development that



needs more study. It is naïve to say that the League played a subordinate role to the West.

For India there should be no hesitation in broadly welcoming and endorsing the Arab Awakening. India might have been slow in reading the correctly the signals, but that should not stand in the way of India's establishing strong and cordial relations with the New Arab world. There is no place for nostalgia in foreign policy. As an established democracy wielding together different ethnicities, religions, castes ,and languages India can lend a helping hand in building a democratic polity. But that helping hand should be given only when requested and that too in a subtle manner taking into account understandable sensitivities.

Keeping in mind the unfolding of the Arab Awakening in general and Syria in particular, CASS might like to consider organizing another seminar before the end of the year.

Ambassador(Retd) K P Fabian is the author of DIPLOMACY:INDIAN STYLE (2012).

## SESSION II

THE NEW MEDIA AS A FACTOR IN THE  
ARAB SPRING : AN EXAMINATION

Chairman : Amit Mukherjee  
Main Speaker : Navdeep SinghSuri

PRESENTATION BY  
SHRI NAVDEEP SINGH SURI

The presentation was made through a number of charts, the gist of which is summerised below :-

He said that Face Book (FB) has become popular amongst the people, specially the youngsters in the age group of 15 to 29, accounting for 75 percent of the users. Elaborating on the social media and its impact in Egypt, he said that the Twitter Revolution organised protests, let people know that they would not be alone sticking their necks out, set agenda, hooligans versus looters with police IDs, transformed the chaos into uprising and brought pressure on Washington to dump Mobarak. He cautioned that Twitters could also pose dangers ; what if revolution is not successful, like the Myanmar crackdown. He further said that governments were getting smarter in tracking. He said that the picture that emerged was too diffused and innovative. The Googletalk used to bypass restrictions on Twitter in Egypt. He posed a question, does social media, democratic by instinct represent a public commons, or the true global commons. He said that listening is as important as speaking and by listening we establish relationship and create stability. So, can we evolve from "Need to Know" to "Need to Share". He said that close to 200 million people use Twitter. This interface with citizens is a force multiplier. Publicity Division is making use of this. The evacuation of Indians from Libya generated a positive response from the media. He informed that

the Publicity Division tries to find answers to Who (audiences), What (messages) and How (tactics), and assists through its outreach, Nation Branding.

## SESSION III

THE ARAB SPRING AND REGIONAL  
VARIATION : LIKELY SCENARIOS

Chairman : Amit Mukherjee  
Main Speaker : F.R. Siddiqui

PAPER PRESENTED BY  
DR. F.R. SIDDIQUI

“All praise be to Allah, today I can see those faces in Parliament about whom in past even an utterance was a legal crime”: Egyptian Prime Minister, Kamal Ganzouri in his address to the National Assembly

Dr. Fazzur Rahman Siddiqui

## Abstract

The Arab Spring is one of the most shocking events occurring across the Arab world and came out to be the biggest moment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far. The turmoil, simply triggered by the self immolation of a Tunisian Youngman on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 has demolished the entire stereotype about Arab and Islam. The democratic upsurge is an expression of aspiration of young people for freedom, prosperity, dignity and individual and national dignity. The turmoil is a symptomatic of deep social, economic and political malaise affecting the region for a long time. This is an outburst against the entrenched totalitarian and despotic political system which has failed to fulfil the aspirations of the masses. This protest of millions around the Arab presents a call for social justice, equality and national sovereignty and dignity and reflects people's flight from culture of authoritarianism.

This Arab tumult has so far forced the Egyptian President to resign, Tunisian President to flee the country, the Libyan regime has been overthrown and Colonel Gaddafi himself has been killed and Yemeni president has conceded power to his deputy.

If one notices the trajectory of these protest movement, he or she will find that this democratic movement is not monolithic character and it varies from region to region given the varying nature of historical, socio-political context of specific country. The country's specific situation is the deterministic factor. Its impacts are overriding and decisive. This movement has adopted different trajectory and, in Syria, for instance, it is the sectarianism that has dominated the course while in Egypt and Tunisia, it is Islamism that reigns the political space. Libya and Yemen are quite exceptional. The tribal conflict in the guise of Arab Spring has emerged

This paper will first analyze the ongoing phenomena called Arab Spring and will deal at length with the varying nature and different landscape of this political dissent in addition to focussing on emergence of variant nature of conflicts and explore the likely emergent scenarios.

## Introduction

A great wave of anger, frustration, defiance, insolence and democratic demand has swept across the Arab world from the Atlantic shore to the Gulf of Aden and from Amman to Khartoum. This is the single biggest uprising in modern Arab history being termed by western media as Arab Spring and what Professor Aijaz Ahmad, a renowned scholar has termed it an “autumn of the patriarchs”. The same feeling has been expressed by Goufran Mansour very magnificently in the Guardian when she wrote that, “it feels good to be Arab these days”. One can determine the extent of fury of the common people by the report in Egyptian media which calls Mubarak the biggest traitor of the history who helped assassinate Sadat and kissed the ass of Israel to please the US.

Some have seen in it the hope of Central and East European revolution of 1989 when many new liberated states adopted the liberal democratic ideals while for others, it is an analogy of fear when people are apprehensive that it will lead to Iranian style autocracy. It was also a great people movement and was the product of similar kinds of socio-economic contexts, which have given birth to the Arab Spring movement. The analogy of wisdom talks about its comparison with Europe of 1848.

The great weapon of this uprising has been the Internet and the electronic media. Much has happened because of the immediacy with which visual images of the latest events can circulate around the world through 24x7 news channels, YouTube, Al Jazeera and even cell phones. Similarly, there is a breathtaking rapidity with which millions can be brought into overlapping networks of communication through e-mail, SMS, Face book, Twitter, and so on.

This was the self-immolation attempt by an unemployed graduate, Mohamed Bouazizi from a small town, Sidi Bouzid in central Tunisia that detonated the Arab revolution in the last month of 2010. The strength of the earthquake that created the Arab revolution stems from the suffering of the Arab nation. Once triggered, it became impossible for Arab dictators to contain the marches of million in different parts of the Arab world. This upsurge forced many regimes to change in the region and before this tide could touch the palace of the monarchs in the gulf, they themselves initiated several political reforms.

This uprising has already laid to rest the “Westocentric” myth that Muslim masses can only be mobilised through religious exhortation, and it has also refuted the claim of American-sponsored dictators that they are the great bulwark against a rising tide of “Islamofascism”. This mass upsurge has successfully debunked many Orientalists' views on the Sociology of the Arab region like; there is inherent incompatibility between Islam and Democracy and Arab Street” is essentially violent and only capable to produce and sustain

despotic and authoritarian political values.

There were other assumptions that have been demolished by this wave across the region like that Arab society is fundamentally patriarchal and therefore structurally unequal and gender biased, Arabs' women are condemned to lead a secluded life and have no individual identity, autonomy and right and Arabs' social structural and cultural values are immune to change and therefore are not receptive of new ideas. This masses anger, similarly, has defeated one of the oldest deductions about Arab that they cannot change but they can be changed only.

This carries good old values of the French Revolution as the marching army is demanding democracy, freedom, equality, justice, dignity and national sovereignty. This is an autonomous and universal in nature and a cry for transformation of political self- power of the Arab people. One of the most prominent feature of this movement is its non-ideological orientation, its homogeneity and non- ethnicity in some countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco while others like Libya, Yemen and Syria are fraught with religious sectarianism and ethnicity. Arab Spring brought a new era of politics in the region and has sown the new seeds of democracy and constitutionalism.

### Genesis of the Arab Spring

The origin of Arab Spring can be traced into the womb of the autocratic character of autocratic regime in post colonial Arab world. One can decipher its genealogy in colonial and post-colonial background and it is an outcome of a prolonged turbulence and turmoil in the region. This upheaval is a response to utter despondence against the dictatorship and it is a passionate desire for independence of oneself and the nation. This is a triumph impelled by shared vision of responsibility and accountability. Ziauddeen Sirdar calls it a post normal world and a tiger-wounded reaction.

All forms of political opposition and mobilisation known to

modern societies – political parties, trades unions, the independent press, and liberal liberties of various sorts – were so thoroughly and successfully suppressed, or at least compromised, by all the dictatorial regimes that any sort of political dissent was unfeasible.

This is a response to political status quo seeking political pluralism and legitimacy to political activities. Arab system and society has become so status quo that one of the French Magazine wrote reacting to the revolt in the Arab world that “Even Arab can have a revolution”. It was wail against securitized nationalism where denial of all freedom was the key political philosophy.

A surveillance-Police state had given rise to a state calling for fundamental change but the dictators had imprisoned, killed or driven into exile those who could plausibly lead a successful and coherent revolution. All Arab states had become a police state where each and every individual act was not only observed but closely monitored. In Egypt only, there are 1.5 million security person employed to watch the common men's activities. There was every abuse of human right by the state in the name of national security and emergency law was in practice for last thirty years in Egypt that was nothing but a licence for the police to arrest, torture anybody.

This rebellion was a refusal of the obedience to the autocratic and foreign-dictated regime. The system had become external and the role of indigenous state had become an implementing agency. They were taking dictation from their foreign masters and, in turn, dictated to the people of their countries. Collusion between the agent of external hegemony and perpetrators of internal tyranny sabotaged the purpose of the entire freedom and liberation from the colonial masters.

The youths were motivated by three rhetorical fetishes of American-style promotion of democracy: Human right, Democracy and Corruption. Democracy was denied in all these countries, human rights were suppressed and corruption had reached gigantic



proportions. These are perfectly legitimate issues as the structural origins and sources of power of these dictators form no part of the consciousness of the majority of what one might call the Twitter revolutionaries. There are three major deficits that explains the story in a comprehensive manner

An Economic deficit: That is a combination of deteriorating living standards and growing inequality. The neo liberal economic policies, especially in Tunisia and Egypt since 1980's produced new social and economic classes. A new bourgeoisie-crony capitalist emerged which appropriated the entire economic opportunities and social space for itself. Gross Development product (GDP) increased but distribution of the newly accumulated national wealth did not take place. The economic policy produced neo- rich classes. This class played pioneering role in producing new networks of client-patron relationship. Unemployment crossed two digits. Basic commodities became scarce and too costly and therefore beyond the reach of the overwhelming majority. In the nutshell, "core" became more and more solid and developed global networks and the periphery became vast and further marginalized and became poorer. For example, only in Egypt, more than 50 % people live below poverty line or earning only \$ 2 a day.

The political deficit: It is about the lack of political freedoms and public accountability. There is complete uniformity in terms of political structure and system in the Arab world. But there are some features which are present everywhere in the region. There is another common feature in the political system. Most of the authoritarian rulers are continuing in the office for long time. A de facto gerontocracy is the order of the day. The entrenched gerontocracy has introduced nepotism and these two have established a client-patron relationship promoting kleptocracy for its benefits. The results have been the disenfranchisement, marginalization and disempowerment of the common people. Such kinds of the political system have been just like "remote" impositions on the masses.

A political deficit has led to dignity deficit causing alienation of

the demographically dominant age groups from the political and economic order and from the mainstream society. Common people are suffering from a deep syndrome of powerlessness, hopelessness and lack of social security. Market driven economic policies made the situation more entrenched and perpetuated it to the next generation. This syndrome derived Tunisian vendor towards self-immolation, which triggered the pent up forces of discontents and frustration.

Most of the Arab rulers had surrendered the national sovereignty to the dictate of foreign powers. Egypt in particular has abandoned its centrality in the regional affairs. The memory of Camp David was still fresh in the mind of the people causing the exit of Egypt from Arab-Israel conflict. Egypt had stopped supporting Arab cause and very often acted indifferently causing a sense of humiliation for the Egyptian masses leading to the revolt. Mr. Hussein Kaykal, a well known political commentator of Egypt has put it very truly that “Arab Spring is the outcome of what we have done to ourselves, what the regime has done to us and what Israel has done to us”.

### Regional Variations:

The Arab Spring is not of monolithic character and the response of the masses in the region has been at variance with each other. In some country, it has been sectarian basis for people's mobilization, (Syria) and in some tribal basis (Libya and Yemen) while in Egypt and Tunisia, the participants have been motivated by Islamic rhetoric. There are intra regional variations that are huge and complex.

Because of this diversity in the scent of the Jasmine movement, another name for the Arab Spring is spreading everywhere but not producing identical result. The scent of Jasmine is getting mixed up with local scents and therefore producing different impacts according to the specific reality of each country. Another point which deserves notice is that the Arab Spring, so far is more success in

republics and its appeal is less and less in the Arab Gulf monarchies.

In Egypt, the real beneficiary have been the Islamist, Freedom & Justice Party, a political wing of Muslim Brotherhood (hence MBH) and Al-Nour party, a political wing of Salafist, a conservative Islamic block. For the first time in modern Egypt, a large number of religious parties have been permitted to participate in the election. Freedom and Justice Party captured around 47% and Al Nour nearly 25% of seats in lower house. With the fall of third republic in Egypt after the January revolution, Islamists forces have been spurred into action in search of the role and gains in the fourth republic. MBH which struggles for almost six decades to get political recognition has come out as the most popular and acceptable voice in the aftermath of Arab Spring. This is the manifestation of political and ideological current running in the Egypt

The absence of Islamic rhetoric throughout the movement was shocking for all those who have harboured an apprehension that any political vacuum will be taken over by Islamist forces. To quote Oliver Roy, an eminent Islamic sociologist, “The uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia show that Islam is now less potent politically, even as its social dominance grows”

Some have already expressed their apprehension over the impressive victory of Islamists in Egyptian and calling Egypt in advance the Islamic republic of Egypt under Qarzavi. One of the political commentators described the development in following words, “The people who have paid high price will not ripe the fruit because of its Islamic character. The response of Islamists to social upheaval is one of the key reasons for their success” and Islamists take over cannot be attributed to its ideological appeal alone but it was also because suppression of other voices in last 60 years

The most startling was the emergence of Salafists in this election who so far condemned political participation and remained non entity in political sphere. Political Islam as an ideology has

swept across the region and it can be seen as a reaction to half century of its suppression by autocratic and so called secular regimes. One member of MBH (Syria) Mr. Bayamon has put it very rightly when he remarked that “For every success there is context and that must be respected”. Arab Spring has created a situation where no longer it is possible to denounce the Islamists. Islamists have got an independent place and new public space for the first time. It has given an opportunity to the Islamists to exploit the political maturity they have accumulated in last five decade of the struggle with the regimes.

Political Islam has emerged as an inevitable force to negotiate its space in the new emerging socio-political order. The change in the region has triggered a new debate on the future role of Islam inviting various interpretations on the mode of its operation and politics of accommodation and adaptation in the newly created political vacuum. Professor of International relation in Paris, Dr Khattar Abu Dayyab says that political Islam will be forced to transform its ideology in a given circumstances”.

This victory for the Islamists has brought a radical transformation into political ideology of Islam itself. There is a new search for Islam in post revolutionary period. It has opened a new chapter of enlightened and moderate Islamic democracy where there seems to be no scope for intra ideological confrontation among different Islamists organizations. This has brought departure from ideological debate to political debate, from confrontation to conformation, from exclusion to inclusion.

It is not the Islamic rhetoric but the question of democracy that has become nearer to their heart. The real concern for believer in political Islam is to highlight the democratic element of Islamic polity and opt for political alliance with even liberal forces. Freedom and Justice Party which include Christian Copts has gone out of its way to assert that it seeks a constitution that respects both Muslims and non-Muslims and committed to pluralistic and democratic Egypt. It is the democratic wave that has compelled the Islamists to abandon its

exclusive and narrow Islamic character of politics and join the mainstream national polity. The legitimacy and authenticity accorded to the Islamists forces have brought modesty in their mode of political engagement.

For instance, the General Guide of MBH, Dr. Mohammad Badi in a recent interview told that MBH would go for consensus candidate for Presidential post with secular orientation given the environment of fear regarding the ascendancy of Islamists in the national politics. The head of Labour Party (Islamic) takes this instance of MBH Guide as an attempt to convince the army that they are not to usurp the power.

A sense of pragmatism has prevailed over the Islamists and they are no more acting regressive in their orientation but acting in more progressive manner. Their political manifesto does not highlight the issue of Palestine but like all other political forces in Egypt talked of employment, social justice and poverty. The formation of FJP places the Islamists at large on equal electoral footing in terms of having to draft a national party platform and specific policies which, no doubt, in longer term will impact its Islamic ideology.

Similarly in Tunisia, the entire mode of Arab Spring has been transformed into a battle of secular and non-secular forces. Bin Ali's regime of Tunisia had oppressed all opposition voices and political opposition was nonexistent. Rachid Ghannouchi, head of Tunisia's recent victorious political party, Ennahda, was one of his biggest victims and suffered exile.

His party formerly known as Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) had a powerful voice in Tunisian politics, though it was illegal under the rule of Ben-Ali. Members of MIT were most of the time thrown in jail on one or the other charges. Under Ben-Ali, MTI tried to appease the government by changing their name to Ennahda in order to become a legal political party abiding by the rules that no political party may have reference to religion. Under immense

pressure from the government and escalating tensions, Ghannouchi left Tunisia in 1990 to continue his leadership abroad, first from Algiers, then London. Ensuing period saw the ideological and political contestation between Islamic group and the party of autocratic regime, Rally for Constitutional Democracy.

The Jasmine revolution changed the fate of Ennahda and they emerged as irresistible forces in the new political land space of the country. In the post Jasmine election of October 23, 2011, Tunisia's first elections in 23 years, Ennahda won majority of the votes and has formed the coalition with liberal and secularists. It was the popularity and part of household imagination that brought Ennahda to forefront of political success in the country while their victory signaled to some that an Islamist takeover would negatively change the outlook of the country.

While Ennahda is aware of the questions surrounding their ability to govern Tunisia, Rashid Ghannouchi has worked tirelessly promoting a positive image of the party. In trying to reassure the people who are apprehensive of Ennahda, Ghannushi said,

“we are serious about our projects in establishing democracy and assuring development...the people who do not trust us, it's normal, because for 22 years they have been subject to propaganda from Ben-Ali which as discredited us, and made people fearful of us”. Ennahda has promised that they will not harm tourism through a ban on alcohol, or force women to wear the veil. Ennahda has claimed that they would respect women's rights, and will remain a progressive moderate party.

Though, since the elections, Ghannushi has continued to articulate a moderate stance, suggesting that they inherit a similar model of Turkey. Ennahda has promised to respect personal rights, and continue to let the wearing of the veil be determined by the woman. In addition to this, Ghannushi has stated that he does not want his party to be referred to as Islamist because it usually suggests

theocracy in Western Eyes. Instead, he would prefer his party be an Islamic party.

To stress his point further, he says, “We should fight those monsters who make the enemy of Islam believe that Islam is an autocratic system and usurp the right of others. While the truth is that it is the source of all legitimacy and sovereignty for the people and even sovereignty of God comes through people”.

The nature of protest in Syria has been different and vague compared to that in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen or Libya. It has taken altogether a different trajectory which is dominantly sectarian in nature and has its own domestic, regional and global dynamics. According to a report of the UN Human Rights Commission, more than 9000 people have been killed so far. This specificity has put the conflict on different board, far away from the spirit and ethos of the Arab Spring.

Syria is prone to Shiite- Sunni conflict. Alawite Shiite (not more than 12% of the population) has been ruling the majority Sunni for over four decades and this minuscule sect has been in the eye storm of the majority Sunni. The Arab Spring came as a blessing for the Sunnis and provided them an opportunity to get rid of the minority regime. Their fight continues to take advantage of democratic wave to remove President Assad.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in February, 2011, Syria has witnessed both the regional and global involvements in the country. The nature of involvement is reflective of sharp Shiite-Sunni divide on domestic and regional level having direct impact on the future of the Arab world in general and Syria in particular.

Protest in Syria triggered with the slogan of freedom and demand for the ouster of President Assad. The Kurdish, the largest ethnic group (2 million) are divided and uncertain about their support to the movement, mainstream Kurdish political parties have trod

carefully trying to solve the equation whether their interest will be served better in status quo or in the exit of President Assad.

The conflict in Syria has received different reaction from neighbouring countries. GCC have recalled their ambassadors from the country. Turkey has hosted several of the meetings of the Syrian National Council, a Syrian opposition group. Not only that, it has also put up a strong economic sanction against Syria and placed thousands of Syrian refugees on Turkish-Syrian border under its full protection. It has also asserted in last meeting of Friends of Syria that Turkey would accept nothing short of removal of Assad

There are reports in some quarters of western Media that Turkey is training Syrian revolutionary forces and French are providing intelligence and logistic support to the civilians. Arab League, the most prominent body of the Arab countries, has suspended Syria from the Arab League and passed a resolution putting economic and political sanction against it. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have called for arming the opposition groups in Syria

Contrary to this, the response of Iran, Iraq and Lebanon has been very different. Iran has promised to extend all patronage to the regime in its fight against the revolutionaries. Further, it has called this protest a 'US-Israel sponsored design' to weaken the regime, the only power fighting the expansionist design of Israel. Iran has signed a free trade pact with Syria with the purpose of rescuing Syrian economy in the aftermath of economic sanctions. Hezbollah, the strongest political face of Shiites in the region, is equally supporting Syria. Its leader Hassan Nasrullah has promised all his assistance to Assad government. Hezbollah's support is so obvious that members of some Sunni organisations have been seen shouting anti- Hezbollah slogans in Beirut.

There is not only regional division; the global community is equally divided on the issue of Syria. Russia and China have vetoed twice UN Security Council resolution condemning the crackdown of



the Syrian regime against the opposition. Russia does not want a Libyan kind of scenario in Syria that would exclude it from global arena and because it could lose its bastion in the Mediterranean Sea. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has been more vocal and has observed that Russia would not alter its position on Syria to please the US and Moscow does not intend to demonstrate that Russia is always ready to say yes to the US.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev justified Moscow's stand, saying that it vetoed UNSC resolution to stop US intervention. It was at the behest of China and Russia that President Assad held a referendum on political reforms last month but opposition called it a 'gimmick' and people in large number boycotted it. The US President Obama has termed the situation in Syria as 'massacre' and called the regime of Assad a 'Mafia' one avowing that US will do everything to stop this enduring violence. Republican Senator John McCain has called for unilateral US air strike against Syria.

US did not approve the proposal from Qatar and Saudi Arabia of arming the opposition fearing that it would further vitiate the situation. US Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Clinton equated it with arming of the al-Qaeda and opposed foreign intervention on the line of Libya. UN Human Rights Commissioner Navanetham Pillay also opposed it, saying that it will cause civil war in the region. Britain and Germany, so far, have opposed any intervention in absence of UN resolution. Instead of envisaging any military intervention, EU Secretary General, Catharine Day has called for stern economic sanction against Syria. NATO does not favour any intervention at the moment but its General Secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen claims that arming the opposition would help in removing the regime of Assad.

There is strong European Union economic sanction against Syria. EU has also called upon Turkey to intervene militarily in Syria on behalf of the Arab League. The US has asked the revolutionary forces not to lay down their arms or surrender.

The case of Yemen is no less pathetic. This is a region that is culturally, tribally, socially and geographically fragmented making the situation very complicated. Conflicts in Yemen are rooted in political and tribal division of the society, bad governance and lack of genuine federalism and power sharing arrangement at the centre and judicious distribution of the national resources. Neo-tribalism, terrorism and the secessionist movements have been further exacerbated as the unintended consequences of the Arab Spring.

Politics of protest in Yemen is almost absent and politics itself has been imposed or become hostage to war between political and tribal factions. Unlike Egypt or Tunisia, in Yemen there are leaders who are imposing their tribal agenda and forcing the masses to join their respective tribal camp. The lack of unity among opposition can be witnessed and this has frustrated all the spirit and objective of the Arab Spring. The culture of nepotism and opportunistic tribal and political alliance has inhibited the emergence of unity against the regime. There is no unity among the members of civil society because each section of the political and social elite have been one time beneficiary of the regime. There is so close a nexus between the tribal leaders and state apparatus that one cannot harm the regime. More than 40 % of national Assembly are constituted by tribal and clan leaders. In Egypt and Tunisia, we have seen how army stood by the protestors but in case of Yemen, one can see both the vertical and horizontal division of the army on tribal and regional basis. Several kingmaker of the past like Muhsin Ahmar turned against the regime and likewise Sadiq Ahmar launched campaign against his old rival. It is marital and family alliance that has not allowed a civil society to prosper which has put the Yemen at the course of civil war.

In Yemen the army did not fight the protestors first but it was tribal chiefs who at the behest of their leaders were fighting and trying to defeat the opposite factions. There were emergence of different tribal groups and blocks fighting among themselves to rescue or oust the regime. The youth demonstrators who sparked the rallies leading to Mr Saleh's departure were also divided over nomination of Mr. Hadi as president who will be president for a two-year transitional phase

There was no global condemnation of the regime as we witnessed in case of Libya and Egypt because Yemen was at the forefront of US war on terror and it was helping US to contain Al-Qaeda in the region. Not only this, United States has stated very categorically that there should be inclusion of Saleh's men in any new national defence and security system. Even government of Saudi acted friendly in resolving the crisis and GCC plan granted full immunity to president contrary to Syria and Libya. By doing so, Saudi has checked the influence of Iran and other external power as witnessed in Libya and Syria.

Libya is altogether different and Arab nations were never sympathetic towards the regime of Libya as they were vis-a-vis Yemen. This can be owed to Colonel Gaddafi's political instance in the region and his flux political behaviour on number of regional issues. Most of the time Libyan leader invoked his African identity at the cost of the Arab and tilted more towards Africa rather than Arab. Because of the lack of support from Arab world, western power were at the forefront in the campaign for the removal of the leader and called for international intervention that ultimately led to Gaddafi removal and finally to his death. It was also the tribal nature of the society in Libya that led to fragmentation and demise of social and political base of the regime.

The case of regime change in Libya is akin to a gory tragedy of all sorts of moral and ethical and the atavistic violence of every kind committed by every party including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) community. This has grave implication for the country, for the region and of course for the international community in the long run. Foreign military intervention culminated in the end of the longest authoritarian regime in the region but it left the society as well as the state more fragile and the most vulnerable. The Libyan society is now horizontally as well as vertically fragmented. Every day people are being killed in name tribal loyalty and some region are demanding cessation form the central federal structure. Intense political battle is continued among different political groups

demanding exclusive political structure of its own choice. Neo-tribalism has taken over the old national identity and loyalty. Primordial identities and tribal and clannish kinship have replaced the civic national identities. Because of this Libyan society is in new throb of conflicts which are unlikely to die down shortly and therefore to allow the nationalism to take root so easily.

Bahrain case is also very interesting. The old sectarian fault lines has been revived and heightened with the onset of the Arab Spring as unintended consequence. The Bahraini crisis has also exposed the proxy battles between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This crisis has also exposed the duality in the Western, especially American approach towards the region vis-à-vis democracy. This has vividly exposed the difference between American geostrategic interests and its ideals. In Saudi Arabia and Morocco, there were some sign of protests but they were suppressed and Saudi particularly it was heading towards Shiite Sunni conflict but contained very soon. Given the different nature and response to the Arab Spring, one can see that it were republics only which have witnessed the uprising and monarchies were able to contain it.

#### Likely Emerging Scenarios:

We have seen above the variant nature of the Arab Spring and we witnessed how the socio-historical and political legacy of specific nation has guided the course of the movement. The whole of global community is keen to see the outcome of this new political process that will decide the future political discourse. A lot of political speculations and anticipations are going around the outcome of this movement in every country. Egypt has seen the rise of the Islamist in the after math of the Arab Spring and dominant speculations is the ascendancy of conservative forces in the corridor of power. The emergence of other conservative voice might lead to conflict within Islmist which may weaken the Islamic wave in Egypt. There is already an intense battle being witnessed over the nomination of Presidential candidate and member in the constituent assembly which would form the new constitution in Egypt. Several members of MBH have resigned in

protest over one or other issue. The army, being the real architect of Egypt for more than six decades, will not easily hand over the power that might further push Egypt towards power struggle and the hope of democracy might be frustrated.

A poor economic situation of Egypt may discredit new incumbent regime and causing political instability and Islamist will have to stride a cautious path between fulfilling the aspiration of the masses and its ideological commitment. Coptic Christians are highly frightened of the Islamic backlash and there are already reports of Muslim-Christian riots in some part of the city of Cairo.

The rise of Islamist Tunisia might cause power struggle with the liberal forces and army would like not to abandon the secular legacy of the country. The import of Turkish model of Islamic polity, as desired by Ennahda leader, will create rift among the Islamist paving way for liberal to assert. The political inexperience of Islamist and coalition politics may not provide economic stability that may discredit the new democratic regime.

In Syria, there seems to be no sign of an early let-up in the brutal treatments of the protestors on part of the regime where thousand have fled their homes and more than nine thousands have been killed so far. The situation might further complicate and turn into a regional conflict between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran. The sectarian division in the region will deepen further and international involvement will increase. There is already lot of war mongering between Saudi Arabia and Iran going on. One of the highly revered Shiite clerics in Iraq, Muqtada-al-Sadr has warned against any foreign intervention and he is reported to have sent his own Mahdi militia to fight along with Assad's army. US involvement along with UN's assertion might force its President to go but the lack of oppositional unity will not facilitate this process so easily. The issue of Syria may engulf the region in complicated Shiite–Sunni embroil

In Libya, the situations are very much in a flux as some parts

of country are still witnessing the battle between the opponents and remnants of Gaddafi's force despite the claim of the NATO force that base of Gaddafi's power structure had been completely dismantled. The newly formed Libyan National Council has been recognised by almost all the countries but they have yet to start the reconstruction process of new political arrangement for Libya. Despite the death of its leader, there are still remnants of old loyalists who may regroup and pose a challenge for any incumbent regime. This is likely to destabilize whole of the North Africa and its reverberation will be felt across the West Asia and North Africa (WANA). The state of Libya will face with existential question. Old tribal and geographical fault lines have surfaced with threatening posture.

Amongst all nations witnessing the Arab Spring, Libya is the single country which has yet to decide its future course of politics and there is already sign of rift among the different opposition groups. There are sharp polarization between National Transitional Council consisting of formers Ministers enjoying the support of NATO and another camp consisting of military men who had helped liberate most of the cities. There is series of allegation and counter allegation amongst these groups and this will hinder the formation of nay popper political formation in the country.

A large section of people does not want to see the remnant of Gaddfi in new emerging political system. A large number of legitimacies are confronting each other: armed struggle and liberation versus the de facto legitimacy of self appointed leader deriving the legitimacy from NATO. Given the nature of NATO involvement, one can predict easily that any political formation taking shape there will have to enjoy the support of NATO. Libya can be ground for foreign powers battle, like France, Britain and Italy who have invested in the war to remove Gaddafi. Each will want to protect its economic and political interest and particularly France who will love to have upper hand politically and economically.

A lot of uncertainties can be predicted in case of Yemen given the fragile nature of politics there. There are several divisions on term

of tribe, region, sect, clan and political class that would resurface in the new political formation. Houthi groups have already boycotted the Presidential election and separatist forces in south have disrupted the election process. We are seeing every day protest on the street demanding the trial of outgoing President who has been given the immunity under an agreement. This dissatisfaction among large number of youth might cause political instability.

There are possibilities that north – south conflict once again may raise its head that has already brewed the nation for decades. New regime will have to stride a cautious path while dealing with the issue of national development and would have and a proper mechanism should be evolved for distribution of national wealth and true democratization of the Yemeni society.

Yemen might experience another wave of foreign intervention what was seen decades ago given the transitional nature of politics. This becomes truer when one sees the level of involvement of GCC countries in general and of Saudi Arabia in particular in resolution of the crisis. When the things are in complete flux and political settlement is still in the process of making, Islamic extremism may also exploit this opportunity to reassemble and can gain the ground which would be another challenge for new regime.

#### Conclusion:

From the above passages, one can comprehend quite well that Arab crescent, an arc of states bordering the Mediterranean and the Red Sea is in state of flux and it is too early to assess the full strategic impact on the region but one thing can be said with certainty that regional politics will never be the same after this' Arab political Tsunami.

The present scenario in the region is an indicator of the divergence among the countries of the Arab world. The present turmoil has its own indigenous impulses which are quite domestic in

character that can be seen through the prism of a common man's cry for freedom, liberty, equality and national sovereignty. The yearning for democracy will be difficult to deny now and the Arabs too could aspire for freedom and justice.

Arabs have sent a stern message to the rulers of the region that transfer of authority from the barracks to the masses can no longer be eschewed. This will lead to a new kind of covenant between the state and people of the respective nation which was so far devoid of the minimum democratic elements. Given the democratic impulse of the common men, people will no longer be bound by the client-patron relationship and instead will claim full share in power through democratic mechanism.

Arab Spring has triggered a process of renegotiation of past, present and future and a new movement for transformation of history has begun. It has opened a new political vista for Islamists forces apart from opening a new prospect for suppressed ideology, scuttled voices and banned action to come out and lay down a fresh blue print for the masses in the region. It has not touched the shore of the Red sea and Mediterranean Sea merely to oust the regime but to transform the entire system itself.

The Arab Spring has regional variations and the uprising in each country is being guided by its own domestic impulse and undercurrent. In Egypt and Tunisia, Islamists after many years of suppression have reached to the corridor of power and for the first time have been put to both legitimacy and accountability and these two are the hallmark of democracy. Political Islam has reached to a stage where one has a feeling that it is not Islam which will shape the politics but it is the politics that will shape the Islamism.

The revolution in Yemen is completely in the grasp of tribal and regional conflict and the primordial identity of region; tribe, clan and sect have resurfaced there putting this nation on different political track. The heterogonous nature of the landscape will not



allow this nation to evolve genuine political formation and lot of conflict may be witnessed in near future. Similar, Libya there seems to be no sign of political stability in near future given the sharp division among different tribal leaders and regional commanders who are trying to fill the political vacuum left by the departure of Gaddafi.

Syria is still burning and there is no hope for an early solution on the line we saw in Libya where NATO intervened and the crisis was resolved very soon. There is apprehension on part of all regional players that any haste may turn the region into Sunni-Shiite conflict. Despite all these regional variation and ideological and sectarian conflict and transitional nature of this uprising, one thing can be comprehended that region will never be the same and all the stereotyping about the region will have to be re-looked. The transitional phase may take a longer period of time but any political formation in the region will be far away from its past and the region will witness an era of negotiation with the future in and not with the past.

## CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

LT GEN AMIT MUKHERJEE, PVSM, AVSM

The Arab democratic awakening has been variously described as 'revolution', 'uprising' and 'awakening'. After the euphoria generated by the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution in October 2010 and the 25 January 2011 Egyptian Revolution, the recent blood letting in Syria, the anarchy in post- Qaddafi Libya and Yemen and the devious manoeuvres by the military in Egypt to cling to power and create a military guided democracy, have disillusioned large sections of the Arab world. Many political analysts have therefore cynically termed this historic event as an Arab Winter!

In reality, revolutions are traumatic and violent affairs which in the immediate, often result in political instability, sectarian violence, breakdown of law and order, accompanied by severe socio-economic distress and therefore take time to fructify. In case of the Arab Spring, both the internal resistance by vested interests of the erstwhile authoritative regimes as well as external political and military intervention by global and regional powers as well as the vested interests of threatened Arab monarchies, have complicated the democratic transformation in Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen. After the overthrow of four of the Arab world's most despotic rulers, the Arab Spring is likely to follow a tortuous evolutionary path which may include phases of violent internal conflict, anarchy, and even civil war, and may therefore take years before the voice of the people is translated into stable and peaceful democracies.

Presently, world attention is focused on the triangular power struggle in Egypt, between the newly emerged Islamic political forces [which won 70% of the seats in the Parliamentary Elections], the secular forces and the military with its self perception as the guarantor of the state. According to some political analysts, the 25 January Egyptian Revolution was really a de facto military coup carried out by

the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces [SCAF], under the facade of supporting a democratic transition, to preserve and protect its monopoly of political and military power and prevent Mubarak's dynastic designs. This has amply manifested in the SCAF's blatant manipulation of the process of democratic transition and assumption of absolute political and military power through the illegitimate mechanism of "Constitutional Declarations", before and during the Presidential Elections. This has included the deliberate delay in framing a new constitution by an elected constituent assembly, selective elimination of presidential candidates by a subverted Supreme Constitutional Court, unilateral dissolution of an elected parliament dominated by Islamic parties and taking over its legislative powers, limiting the powers of future elected presidents and zealously protecting the extra- constitutional powers of the military over the entire political system and its substantial commercial interests.

The latest "Constitutional Declaration" demands that the new constitution be drafted by a fresh 100 member panel to be nominated by SCAF[ in the absence of the dissolved Legislative Assembly !] and fresh general elections held in accordance with the new constitution. The second phase of the Presidential election has therefore degenerated into a run-off between two polarised candidates, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood and Ahmed Shafiq an ex Air Force chief and Hosne Mubarak's short lived last Prime Minister, who is best described as a counter revolutionary candidate, leaving a difficult choice for the voters between an Islamic dispensation, ostensibly with a moderate face and an authoritative ex Mubarak prime minister supported by SCAF and the wealthy elite who prospered during the Mubarak era. The results of the second round Presidential Elections has been delayed, reflecting a power struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood/ Salafists and SCAF , further heightening tensions in the prevailing political crisis. The latest reports indicate a victory for Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohamed Morsi by a slim margin. Though SCAF has promised to hand over power to the newly elected President in July without the presence of the Legislative Assembly, the arrogant display of illicit power by SCAF, has subverted the entire political system and emasculated the powers of the president. This may result in a serious blowback in the

form of a second democratic uprising creating greater political instability and therefore endanger the transition to a stable democratic order. The days ahead will therefore witness a multi dimensional power struggle, between the Islamists and SCAF and the secular forces, which will continue until a popular representative government is formed based on an egalitarian democratic constitution.

The Syrian conflict triggered by the Arab Spring has transformed into a bloody proxy war between a rebel Sunni based Free Syrian Army [FSA] supported by the Sunni Arab Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia along with Turkey and US/NATO, and Bashar Assad's security forces dominated by the minority Allawite Shias, supported by Iran along with Russia and China. Simultaneously, a sectarian Arab Sunni- Shia geopolitical cold war is unfolding between Saudi Arabia, protector of the Sunni Arab order, along with the Sunni Gulf Monarchies, and Iran, the main Shia Persian revolutionary power, closely allied to Allawite Syria, whose mission is to alter the status quo of Sunni Arab domination of the Middle East.

So far the splintered Free Syrian Army [FSA] and its equally divided political organ, Syrian National Council [SNC], have made limited headway in overthrowing Assad's despotic regime which still enjoys the support of bulk of the Syrian Army and the business and ruling elite. The recent Washington conclave of the anti- Assad "Friends of Syria", under pressure from the Gulf monarchies, has reportedly decided to provide heavy weaponry to the FSA coordinated by the CIA, which the Russians have countered by continuing to ship attack helicopters and modern air defence weapon systems to Syria. Considering the numerous non-Sunni ethnic groups in Syria, who feel threatened by a future Sunni take over and the fact that the bulk of the regular Syrian Army and its leadership are loyal Allawites, the infusion of modern weaponry on both sides is bound to further escalate the crisis into a full blown civil war based on sectarian and ethnic fault lines with dangerous consequences.

The only thin silver lining in this grim scenario, is Kofi

Annan's peace making efforts on behalf of UN and the ArabLeague, which showed initial promise with a cease fire but has sadly broken down due to frequent violations of the cease fire by both the Syrian security and the rebel FSA forces, with allegations of civilian massacres and counter massacres on both sides. Annan's latest proposal to create an international contact group to broker peace and Russia's proposal to host an international conference comprising the permanent members of the UN Security Council, Syria and its neighbours, Turkey, Iraq Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Arab League states and the European Union, holds considerable promise to resolve the Syrian crisis through inclusive dialogue and diplomacy. The response from the rebel SNC/FSA forces backed by US/NATO, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies, has been unenthusiastic who are sticking to their single point agenda of forcible regime change. Fortunately, the US Obama administration, in an election year, is extremely reluctant to carry out a Libya style air power based military intervention, to remove Assad, using the modus operandi of either a "No Fly Zone" or "Humanitarian Corridors". This is primarily due to the fractured nature of the SNC/FSA, the dominant presence of Muslim Brotherhood and some Al Qaida elements in the rebel forces and the uncertain outcome of such an escalated intervention. Moreover, despite some desertions, the Syrian Armed forces remain a well equipped, cohesive force which can be defeated only by a major military intervention by substantial ground forces from a coalition of US/NATO, Turkey and the Gulf states, supported by massive precision air power provided by US/NATO. Such an eventuality is considered highly unlikely as it would have a cascading effect in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, unleashing a wider conflict embracing the entire Middle East. Also, any forcible regime change at this juncture, may raise the prospect of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and other extreme Islamist elements such as the Salafists ultimately coming to power in a political void, which may turn out to be a worse strategic outcome, contrary to American and Israeli security interests

In Libya, after Qaddafi's forcible and brutal overthrow, the Libyan Transitional National Council is struggling hard to control the centrifugal sectarian and tribal forces which are threatening to tear

the country apart. Libya was an artificial colonial creation by Italy, cobbling together three erstwhile provinces of the Ottoman Turkish Empire in the Maghreb, ie, Tripolitania in the West, Cyreincia in the East and Fezzan in the South, with different tribal, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Destruction of the Libyan regime along with its infrastructure and centralized administrative system in the eight month civil war, has opened up the “pandora's box” of latent separatism based on tribal ethnicity, primarily due to the past socio-economic neglect of the Eastern and Southern provinces. In the absence of a stable central government, numerous city and region based armed militias, with access to tons of the Qaddafi regime unsecured arms depots/caches, have created an explosive situation resulting in an atmosphere of instability and insecurity. There is also a significant rise of Islamic political groups such as the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and the more extreme Salafists with vociferous demands for shaping the future political dispensation in accordance with the Sharia.

The overall law and order and security situation in Libya remains fragile. The latest examples of the highly insecure situation was the storming of Tripoli's International Airport by a tribal militia, the revenge bombing of the American Consulate in Benghazi by an Islamic militia group in retaliation for the American assassination of a top Al Qaida leader of Libyan origin, Abu Yahya Al - Libi, by a drone strike in North Waziristan in Pakistan, and a large rally of armed Salafists in Benghazi demanding the immediate imposition of Islamic Sharia law, all in the the first week of June! Inevitably, the Libyan Election Commission was forced to postpone the election to the Public National Conference [Libyan name for the Constituent Assembly] from 19June to 07July. This elected Constituent Assembly would be tasked to draw up a new constitution which would be ratified by a national referendum, followed by a general election within six months, to form a democratic government as per the new constitution, an ambitious proposition considering the prevailing adverse security environment.

The major challenges facing Libya are the rebuilding of the

basic institutions of a modern nation state demolished during Qaddafi's 42 years of “Jamahiriya”, unifying approximately 250 tribal identities into a Libyan national identity, facing the growing demand from Islamists for a future Libya based on the Sharia, and forging the three disparate regions into a unified nation. The emergence of tribal and regional forces seeking greater autonomy, the advent of extreme Islamic political groups, the ethnic conflict in the south, and the absence of effective political leadership to stabilize the country with a judicious mix of federal autonomy and a strong centre, are other critical areas which are yet to be addressed.

The other great challenges facing Libya are its strategic sovereignty and its grim socio- economic scenario after the civil war, with unemployment raging at 40%. The overthrow of the Qaddafi regime by US/NATO military intervention and its replacement by the pro-West , National Transitional Council [NTC], has opened up the floodgates to American and European oil multinationals to exploit Libya's abundant energy resources. With the technical assistance of French, Italian and American oil companies, Libya's oil output has reached the pre- revolution output of 1.6 million barrels per day, with a target of 2.4 million barrels per day by 2016. Once the political situation stabilizes, US and NATO are likely to revive their close strategic ties with Libya which was prevalent during the pre-Qaddafi monarchical rule of King Idris in the 1960s and seek both air and naval bases in the strategic southern Mediterranean littoral. The new Libya may also permit the Americans to establish the headquarters of the new Africa Command [AFRICOM] in Libya, to serve US strategic interests in the African continent.

After an initial abortive attempt to save the despotic regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, USA and the European Union [EU], have adopted a flexible strategy based on engagement of the emerging Islamist political parties in Egypt and Tunisia and generally supporting their democratic transition, while simultaneously propping up the highly authoritative Arab monarchies and ignoring their democratic aspirations!. The US is adroitly exploiting Egypt's dependence on the military and economic aid [approximately \$1.5

Billion per year] it has provided since 1979 and its reliance on loans from World Bank/IMF, [necessary to stabilize its battered economy], to ensure that Egypt's new Islamic political dispensation continues to honour the 1978 Camp David Accords and the Egypt - Israel Peace Treaty. The ultimate fate of these highly unpopular treaties, will depend on the degree of strategic autonomy achieved by the emerging Islamic government in Egypt and the outcome of the ongoing power struggle between the Islamists, the secular forces and the military.

In contrast, USA has been muted on the Saudi military intervention in suppressing the democratic upsurge by the Shia majority in Bahrein due to its vital strategic interest of policing the oil rich Persian Gulf from its massive military base in Manama. Similarly, USA has been silent on the raging conflicts in Yemen and has supported the Saudi brokered leadership change through a sham presidential election with one chosen candidate. Yemen therefore remains under authoritarian rule with Saudi and US support, and has a long way to go before it becomes a democracy.

The democratic upsurge in Syria and the resultant civil war has got complicated by its intersection with two flash points in the Middle East. The first is Iran's nuclear ambitions and its demonisation by the West with the objective of Iran's denuclearization and breaking its close strategic links with Syria. The second concerns Israel's security vis- a- vis the growing military capability of the Hezbollah, [a Shia based political- cum military organization in Lebanon] and Syria's role as a conduit for Iran's supply of a large variety of rockets/missiles and other weaponry to Hezbollah. It is perceived by US/NATO that a regime change in Syria would snap this umbilical chord, weakening Iran's regional ambitions to become the preeminent power in the Middle East, and choke off the clandestine military supplies from Iran to the Hezbollah. However, what has not been fully calculated, is the totally uncertain future of the post- Assad regime in Syria, which could transform from its present secular character, into a Sunni Arab Islamic regime dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists , whose political orientation may not be aligned with the strategic interests of Israel or the West!



India has huge strategic stakes in the Middle East and the Arab world due to its dependence on this region for massive energy supplies [70% of its total requirement], trade amounting to over \$ 100 Billion and a large expatriate population of about six million, remitting \$ 35 Billion a year in foreign exchange. India's national interests lie in the creation of a peaceful and stable Middle East which would ensure stable energy flows at affordable cost, so essential for India's economic development.

So far, in the context of the Arab Spring, India has been critical of using military intervention as an instrument of regime change in Libya and Syria on “humanitarian grounds” or employing the dubious “right to protect” doctrine, without exhausting fully diplomatic solutions to resolve the Libyan crisis or the impending civil war in Syria. India must extend full support to Kofi Annan's peace making efforts and use proactive diplomacy to urge both sides of the conflict to establish a cease fire and find an inclusive Syria- based solution through a process of dialogue between the Sunni majority, the ruling Allawites and the numerous minorities, brokered by USA, EU and Russia, Turkey, Iran and the Arab League. India can also assist Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in their difficult march towards democracy, in important areas such as constitution making and building democratic institutions with appropriate checks and balances.

The Arab Spring will certainly have a great impact on all the burning issues which have bedeviled the Middle East in the post Second World War period and generated numerous military conflicts, insurgencies and civil wars. As a rising power with global aspirations, India needs to adopt a more proactive diplomatic posture in taking the initiative in bringing about peace and stability in the Middle East in conjunction with the UN and other like minded countries such as Brazil and South Africa. Using its excellent relations with US, Israel, Iran and the Arab countries, India is uniquely placed as an impartial peace maker, to assist in resolving the intractable Palestine problem, the ongoing Syrian imbroglio and to defuse the crisis arising from Iran's nuclear quest, through constructive dialogue so that the Arab Spring states transform into harmonious democracies and coexist

with a rising Iran.. India must also tactfully nudge the Arab Gulf states to gradually transform into constitutional monarchies in an evolutionary manner, and prevent a later explosive revolution against their continuing authoritarian rule.

The Arab democratic awakening is a historic milestone in the turbulent history of the Middle East, which has just begun. In the days ahead, it will go through many trials and tribulations which will require many more “springs”, before the final goal of creating a vibrant, moderate democratic Arab community of nations fulfilling the aspirations of its people, is achieved.

## SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

After the presentation made by the main speaker five to ten minutes were given for questions, comments and answers. The last session, with ample time, was for general discussion. This session turned out to be very lively. The questions and comments by the audience were searching and probing and comments based on actual personal experience of some of the members in the audience. The replies given by the main speakers supplemented by comments by the Chairman Lt Gen (Retd) Amitav Mukherjee were convincing. A general consensus that emerged has been amply covered in the Closing Remarks of the Chairman.

# THE ARAB SPRING : MEANING, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

24<sup>th</sup> February, 2012

(Venue – New Auditorium, YASHADA,  
Baner Road, Pune)

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1.	Lt Gen (Retd) Amit Mukherjee	-	CASS
2.	Brig (Retd) DA Paranjape	-	CASS
3.	Col (Retd) Arun Joshi	-	CASS
4.	Col (Retd) Navneet Mittal	-	CASS
5.	Prof. Gautam Sen	-	CASS
6.	Col AB Deshpande	-	CASS
7.	Ms. FK Wadia	-	CASS
8.	Ms. Mini Grant	-	CASS
9.	Shri PB Kulkarni	-	CASS
10.	Air Cmde (Retd) A. Mahabaleshwarkar	-	CASS
11.	AVM (Retd) RD Limaya	-	CASS
12.	Air Cmde (Retd) AP Valavade	-	CASS
13.	Air Cmde (Retd) AB Inamdar	-	CASS
14.	Gp Capt (Retd) SR Purandare	-	CASS
15.	Dr. Pramod A. Paranjpe	-	CASS
16.	Maj Gen (Retd) SG Pitre	-	CASS
17.	Brig (Retd) RR Palsokar	-	CASS
18.	Brig (Retd) V. Sapatnekar	-	CASS
19.	Prof. AV Bhagwat	-	CASS
20.	Col (Retd) LM Sathe	-	CASS
21.	Col (Retd) VY Gidh	-	CASS
22.	Lt Gen (Retd) RV Kulkarni	-	CASS
23.	Lt Gen (Retd) Ashok Joshi	-	CASS

24.	Shri MK Mangalmurti	-	CASS
25.	Dr. BsKs Chopra	-	CASS
26.	Ms. Ashwini Pathak	-	CASS
27.	Mr. Praful Talera	-	CASS
28.	Air Marshal (Retd) S. Kulkarni	-	CASS
29.	Gp Capt (Retd) SG Chitnis	-	CASS
30.	Ambassador KP Fabian	-	IFS (Retd)
31.	Shri Navdeep Singh Suri	-	Joint Secy., PDD, MEA, New Delhi
32.	Dr. FR Siddiqui	-	Research Fellow, ICWA, New Delhi
33.	Flt Lt NP Singh	-	CASS/ No.2 Wing, AF
34.	Fg Offr. Sneha	-	CASS/ No.2 Wing, AF
35.	Flt Lt Amit	-	CASS/ No.2 Wing, AF
36.	Fg Offr. Kaushal Kumar Jha	-	CASS/ No.2 Wing, AF
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38.	Mrs. Sulbha A. Rao	-	
39.	Mrs. Anjali Deshpande	-	
40.	Mrs. Lata Chitnis	-	
41.	Nikhil Agrawal	-	
42.	Himanshu Agrawal	-	
43.	Jayati Singh	-	
44.	Satindev Kauu	-	
45.	Anshul Rana	-	
46.	Pankaj Khandelwal	-	
47.	Devansh Aggarwal	-	
48.	Ashwath Komath	-	
49.	Trambkesh Mishra	-	

50. Siddhi Sharma -
51. Rohini Agarwal -
52. Tukti Kumar -
53. M. Wasim Sheikh -
54. Capt Siddharth Upadhya -
55. Maj Sidharth Vyas -
56. Col AK Verma -
57. Rimli Basu -
58. Amit Pant -
59. Gaurav Sharma -
60. Col JA Nadkarni -
61. Lt Col BF Chaudhari -
62. Vaishnavi Sanas -
63. Apeksha Snelar -
64. Anirudha Somvanshi -
65. Shiven Priyadarshi -
66. Akashdeep Singh -
67. Aditya Pratap S. Tomor -
68. Gunjan Chavan -
69. Shivani Goyal -
70. Air Cmde (Retd) SN Bal -
72. Sarita Dalvi -
73. Vipin Bhardwaj -
74. Virendra Kapoor -

CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES  
CASS PUBLICATIONS

Sl. No.	SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS	Date of Seminar
1.	“Defence and Industry”	17 May 93
2.	“Use of Force in Internal Peace Keeping”	04 Dec.93
3.	“The Emergence of China : Political, Economic and Military Implications for India”	22-23 Nov.94
4.	“First SLK Memorial Lecture” by Shri P.Chidambaram, Union Minister for Commerce.	05 Jun. 95
5.	“Human Rights : Law and Order in India”	30 Sep. 95
6.	“The Emerging Security Environment in South East Asia with Special Reference to Myanmar : Political, Economic and Military Implication for India”	02-03 Dec.95
7.	“India 2020 : An Agenda for the Nation” by Maj Gen (Retd) KS Pendse.	Feb. 96
8.	“India : The Nuclear Challenge” by Lt Gen (Retd) EA Vas, Maj Gen (Retd) KS Pendse, Dr. Col (Retd) AA Athale.	Mar. 96
9.	“Challenges to India's National Security And India's Defence Preparedness”	20-21 Apr. 96
10.	“Citizens Rights and Indian Democracy” “Second SLK Memorial Lecture” by Dr. P.C. Alexander, Governor of Maharashtra	20 Jul. 96
11.	“Challenges of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Implications for India”	28 Aug. 96
12.	“Regional Security Environment To The North-West of India With Special Reference To Afghanistan.”	21-22 Mar. 97
13.	“Changing Scenario of The Constitutional Values” “Third SLK Memorial Lecture” by Justice AM Ahmadi, Former Chief Justice of India	02 Aug. 97
14.	“Information Warfare”	24 Sep. 97
15.	“Laws of War”	09 Jan. 98
16.	“Indian Ocean - The Challenges Ahead”	06-07 Mar. 98
17.	“The Changing Pattern of India's Relations with America” “Fourth SLK Memorial Lecture” by Dr.Abid Hussain, Vice Chairman, Rajiv	03 Jul. 98

Sl. No.	SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS	Date of Seminar
	Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies.	
18.	“Pokhran II and its Implications”	01 Sep. 98
19.	“Nuclear India And The World	08 Sep. 98
20.	“The Challenge of Terrorism”	29 Oct. 98
21.	“Foreign Policy Imperatives For Nuclear India”	26-27 Feb. 99
22.	“On Building a Globally Competitive Indian Industry : The Role of Research & Technology”	22 Jul. 99
	“Fifth SLK Memorial Lecture” by Dr. R.A. Mashelkar Director General, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research,	
23.	“Challenges of J&K”	04 Feb. 00
24.	“Indo-Pak Relations : Challenges Ahead”	30-31 Mar. 00
25.	“Insurgency In India - Causes & Perspectives”	28 Dec. 00
26.	“Self Reliant Defence and Indian Industry”	
	“SLK Memorial Lecture – 2000” by Shri K. Subrahmanyam, Converner, NSAB	18 Jul. 00
27.	“Governance In India : Challenges Ahead”	25 Jan. 01
28.	“India and China by 2020 : Political, Economic Sociological and Military Perspectives”	14-15 Mar. 01
29.	“Global Terrorism And India’s Response”	19-20 Mar.02
30.	“Globalization And Its Impact”	
	“SLK Memorial Lecture – 2002” by Dr. C. Rangarajan, Governor, Andhra Pradesh	24 Apr. 02
31.	“Governance In India” “Shri N.K. Firodia Memorial Seminar : 2002”	03 Oct.02
32.	“Globalisation And India”	19 Mar.03
33.	“Elections And Democracy in India”	
	“Shri N.K. Firodia Memorial Seminar : 2004” by Mr. J.M. Lyngdoh, former Chief Election Commissioner, Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy, former Justice of Supreme Court	17 Feb.04
34.	“Comprehensive Security : Need of the Hour”	25-26 Feb.04
35.	“Ombudsman, Lokayuktas, Lokpals ; Concept and Working, with Special Reference to State of Maharashtra”	25 Mar.04



Sl. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS No.	Date of Seminar
36. "Comprehensive Security II : Economic And Internal Security"	03 Mar.05
37. "India And Its Neighbours : A Regional Security Perspective"	04 Jan.06
38. "Probity And Propriety In Public Life" "Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Seminar:2006" by Shri Milind Gadgil, Journalist.	03 Feb.06
39. "Social Unrest in India : Challenges Ahead" "Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Seminar:2007" by Dr.DN Dhanagare, former Vice Chancellor, Shivaji University, Kolhapur; Ambassador PV Joshi, IFS Addl.Secy., MEA and presently with Home Ministry for last two years	13 Mar.07
40. "Emerging World Order And Sino Indian Relations"	21 Mar.07
41. "Aerospace Power in a Changing National Security Environment" "Air Marshal YV Malse Memorial Lecture:2007" by Air Chief Marshal FH Major, PVSM, AVSM, SC, VSM, ADC, Chief of the Air Staff	28 Jul.07
42. "Future Environment, Perceived Threat Preceptions And Imperatives in Response" "Brigadier NB Grant Memorial Lecture:2007" by Lt Gen N. Thamburaj, SM, G.O.C.in.C., HQ, SC	02 Dec.07
43. "Indian Democracy : Its Strengths & Weaknesses" "Professor S.V. Kogekar Memorial Lecture" by Dr. Dileep Padgaonkar,	25 May,08
44. "India's Strategic Environment And Its Implications for Military Modernisation" Air Marshal YV Malse Memorial Lecture by Dr. Bharat Karnad	08 Jul.08
45. "Indo-US Relations : The Changing Perspective"	22 Oct.08
46. "Challenges Before the Fifteenth Lok Sabha" "Professor S.V. Kogekar Memorial Lecture" by Dr. Madhav Godbole, former Home Secretary, Govt. of India	26 May,09

Sl. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS No.	Date of Seminar
47. "Secularism in India : Meaning andPractice" "Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Lecture" by Justice Narendra Chapalgaonkar	14 May,10
48. "Right to Information : Reality and Rhetoric" "Professor S.V. Kogekar Memorial Lecture" by Mr. Wajahat Habibullaj, Chief Information Commissioner, Govt. of India	26 May,10
49. "West Asia : A Factor in India's Security and Foreign Relations"	21 Apr.10
50. "Essentials of an Aerospace Power : India Context" "Air Marshal YV Malse Memorial Lecture" by Air Marshal PK Barbora, PVSM, VM, ADC, Vice Chief of the Air Staff, IAF	09 Jul.10
51. "Naxalism and Maoism and Indian Army"	26 Aug.10
52. "Indo-Pak Relations and The USA"	17 Sep.10
53 "The Kashmir Imbroglia"	29 Oct.10
54. "Value System in the Armed Forces" "Brigadier NB Grant Memorial Lecture" By Lt Gen (Retd) Ashok Joshi, PVSM, AVSM	18 Dec.10
55. "Poverty Alleviation in India : Challenges Ahead" "Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Lecture" By Dr. YSP Thorat, Former Chairman, NABARD & Chief Executive Officer, Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust, New Delhi	13 Jan.11
56. India and East Asia : Opportunities Ahead	23 Mar. 11
57. Prof. S.V. Kogekar Memorial Lecture By Gopalswami "Free & Fair Election : Challanges Ahead"	26 May.11



## CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES

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