

## INTERNAL FACTORS AND GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE ARAB SPRING

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In this article authors comprehensively analyze the internal factors and the geopolitical aspects of the Arab Spring. This phenomenon has seen the removal of numerous political regimes in its way, and it has had great impact on the political situation and democratic governance in the Arab world in particular, and the world in general. We highlight zone of interests, systems of alliance and regional geopolitical flashpoints in general, and the role of the U.S. as "prima player" in the region in particular. The Arab Spring led to regime change and democratic reforms, but, at the same time, its "furious power" has set fire to the civil war, social unrest and prolonged political crises.

**Key terms:** *Arab Spring, revolution, political crisis, conflict factors, geopolitical flashpoints, regional security, U.S. foreign policy.*

**FACTORII INTERNI ȘI ASPECTELE GEOPOLITICE ALE PRIMĂVERII ARABE**

În acest articol sunt analizate temeinic factorii interni și aspectele geopolitice ale Primăverii Arabe. În calea sa, fenomenul în cauză a eliminat numeroase regimuri politice și a avut un impact considerabil asupra situației politice și guvernării democratice în statele lumii arabe, efectele căruia s-au resimțit și pe plan global. Sunt determinate zonele de interese, sistemele de alianță și punctele geopolitice fierbinți pe plan regional, dar și rolul SUA în calitate de „prima player” în regiune. Primăvara Arabă a determinat schimbarea regimurilor politice și demararea reformelor democratice, dar, în același timp, ea și-a manifestat furia într-un mod „agresiv” – prin război civil, tulburări sociale și crize politice de durată.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Primăvara Arabă, revoluție, criză politică, factori de conflict, puncte geopolitice fierbinți, securitate regională, politică externă a SUA.*

The political turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East by the end of 2010 and at the beginning of 2011 was not unexpected, but its scale, dynamics and intensity really surprised, moreover, it startled the international community. The series of protests and demonstrations called the "Arab Spring" have affected in different ways all Arab states, especially, with major changes for Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and minor changes, but with distinctive lines for Morocco and Jordan. The term "Arab Spring" is an allusion to the revolutionary movements of 1848, which is sometimes referred to the "Springtime of Nations" or the "European spring". First it was used by Foreign Policy's Marc Lynch on 6 January 2011 in a post titled "Obama's Arab Spring". Then, the term was adopted by journalists, activists and experts in the political sciences. In mainstream literature, the Arab Spring is umbrella term for: Arab Awakening, Arab revolutions, Arab upheavals, Arab revolts, pro-democracy and sociopolitical uprising. The violent reaction to the Arab Spring was, in particular, the deaths of anti-government protesters in Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, and the huge military actions under the form of civil war in Libya and Syria. The Arab Spring has seen the removal of numerous political regimes in its way, and it has had great impacts on the political situation and democratic governance in the Arab world in particular, and the world in general. The causes varied from country to country but mostly were determined by domestic problems.

It has long been known that the academic specialists on the Arab world have pointed out on the economic problems and an inevitable social explosion in the Arab countries. In the years before the conflict, at least, the socio-economic parameters were not in favor of stabilization and success of a number of Arab countries. We have determined two basic interpretations of this situation. On the one hand is the nature of the state and its inactivity, and on the other hand – the "half step" in matter of socio-economic reforms during the mid-1990s. The detailed analysis of the broader demographic, economic and social trends in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region reveals the critical situation of population since the 1990s. According to the Burke Chair Analytic Survey (2013), the unequal distribution of wealth and the income fluctuation have created instability in the MENA region [4, p.7]. By the 2000 years, the MENA countries registered lowest rates of per capita income and wealth. For instance, in Egypt per capita GDP was \$1,51 and per capita wealth constituted \$3,66 USD [4, p.9]. The data reveals the critical situation in Yemen, Syria, Morocco, Iran, Algeria, Jordan, and Tunisia – less than \$3 per capita GDP, while the oil rich gulf countries registered GDP per capita

rations far higher. By comparing 2000 and 2012, we could see that the Arab countries in the Levant and North Africa not grew at a much greater rate of GDP per capita: Algeria – \$5,40; Egypt – \$3,18; Jordan – \$4,95; Morocco – \$2,92; Syria – \$3,28; Tunisia – \$4,23; Yemen – \$1,49 [4, p.9]. The income spectrum is correlated with key social problems like youth bulge, employment, ability to marry, housing, etc.

The second complicated factor in this respect is demographic pressure which threatens the stability of many Arab countries. This factor is coupled to another one, not so dynamic, but essential – severe shortage of land suitable for cultivation, especially in North Africa countries. The population of the Arab Region approximately tripled between 1970 and 2010, ascending from 128 million to 359 million [10, p.9]. The massive population growth in the conditions when the poverty and the economic decline are particular features of many Arab countries has created the critical situation for their national governments. Commonly, it means the inhibition of the state ability to offer a productive employment, especially for young people. Rapid population growth has created the additional pressure on natural resources (e. g. water, energy) – while 50 percent of the Arab population is rural [17, p.3] and the agriculture is their primary and vital economic activity, and also on public resources, such as education and health.

The region as a whole has one of the highest labor force growth rates in the world, exceeds 3% per year. The number of working-age population (15-64) in total has increased from 51% in 1970 to 62.45% by 2010 and it is expected to grow gradually at 66% in the year 2040 [17, p.39]. Before the global financial crisis, which started unfolding in September 2008, the youth unemployment registered high rates in the Arab countries, namely: Arab region – 22%, North Africa – 24%, and Middle East – 18% [7, p.48]. Rapid population growth, especially among young people, and accompanied by poverty and unemployment, resulting in falling public trust in the political regimes.

According to mainstream literature, the link between the state (regime) weakness and social conflict is composed by two important reasons. The first one is socio-economic. Accordingly, the consequences of the youth bulge and its critical situation is manifested by: (a) major lag in jobs and lack of real careers, marriage and housing; (b) breakdown in education and its irrelevance for socio-economic demands; (c) dissatisfaction with income spectrum of large percentage of educated youths; (d) total corruption, nepotism and favoritism for/of clan's elite. Therefore, the "youth bulge phenomenon" affected many Arab states and produced the unprecedented pressure on their national governments. This demographic phenomenon and theory appears in 2005, according to which, a peak in the number of persons aged 15-24 in the population is associated with a high risk of political violence [18, p.5].

The second reason of the social conflict, and therefore, the appearance of revolutionary situation, could be determined by the political situation in MENA countries. On the one hand is concentration of power in the hands of authoritarian ruler, which is accompanied with violation of constitutional norms regarding the presidential terms and the nature of the transfer of power. At the other end – the neglecting of public opinion, human rights violation, and absence of participatory democracy. Generally, it means the political exclusion and persecution of any political opposition. Therefore, the decades of oppressive and authoritarian political system in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, etc. have generated a simmering dissatisfaction among the population. All these processes, except the political one, are identified as dynamic factors that characterized the conflict situation in the MENA region and date back to the early 1990s.

Against this background of worsening socio-economic and political situation in the Arab countries, in which the major determinants and factors are poverty, demographic pressure, unemployment and issues of democracy and political exclusion, have appeared the global financial crisis in 2008. In fact, the Arab countries entered the crisis with some pre-existing revival of their economies, but this situation did not influence the consequences of crisis, which were following:

- negative effects on labor migration – slow remittances from abroad, especially from the Arab Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) and returning of migrant workers to their countries of origin [7, p.26];
- increasing social tensions – high rates of unemployment and difficulties in entering the labor market for young people and women [7, p. 27].
- declining investment in public services – education, health, protection and care;
- economic stagnation – GDP rates (annual %) has decreased from 2008 until 2009. For instance: Egypt – from 7.2% to 4.6%, Bahrain – from 6.2% to 2.5%, Tunisia – from 4.7% to 3.6%, Libya – from 3.8% to 2.1%, etc. [21]. According to data analysis (see Table nr.1), the second phase of economic decline was registered in 2011.

Table 1

## The GDP growth (annual %) in the MENA countries, 2008-2013

Country Name	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Algeria	2	1,59998	3,600169	2,800018	3,299991	2,8
Bahrain	6,245128	2,539772	4,334407	2,100184	3,588705	5,337539
Egypt, Arab Rep.	7,156284	4,6736	5,147235	1,764572	2,2262	2,10092
Iraq	6,608865	5,80974	5,53789	10,21409	10,292	4,211745
Jordan	7,232408	5,476581	2,33683	2,560809	2,651595	2,828819
Kuwait	2,479844	-7,0761	-2,3706	10,21001	8,307395	No data
Lebanon	9,098077	10,30091	7,996086	2,004586	2,2	0,900212
Libya	3,8	2,1	5,002725	-62,0765	104,4845	-10,879
Morocco	5,587056	4,758347	3,642975	4,985647	2,669166	4,381458
Oman	8,199696	6,112454	4,802852	0,876368	5,763414	No data
Qatar	17,66303	11,95755	16,73156	13,02141	6,039976	6,321519
Saudi Arabia	8,42718	1,829176	7,434453	8,569886	5,81289	3,950025
Tunisia	4,736813	3,608145	3,249399	-0,5083	4,661335	2,521341
United Arab Emirates	3,191839	-5,24293	1,63542	4,885317	4,677925	5,19998
Yemen, Rep.	4,014389	4,134838	3,317465	-15,0884	2,469879	4,155706

Note: \*GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products.

Source: World Bank national accounts data and OECD National Accounts data files. Compiled data from Catalog Source World Development Indicators for 2008-2013.

These consequences are combined with high food prices which have led to food insecurity among the poor people in some Arab countries, particularly for Yemen, Egypt and Algeria and, with distinctive and profound features for Jordan and Sudan. All these countries are sensitive for food price increases. In the first year of global crisis, a wave of small bread riots began in Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Their national governments responded by a series of measures, including raising wages and increasing subsidies in order to mitigate this critical situation. On 6 April 2008 the big protest has started in Egypt, in which has been enrolled tens of thousands of students, textile workers and many unemployed and poor people [3]. This huge protest marked the creation of "April 6 Movement" named after the Al-Mahalla al-Kubra uprising. At this stage, regardless of the reasons behind the social revolts in many Arab countries, the social mobilization of different groups tended to be more organized, and it was conditioned by the synergy of the aforementioned conflict factors. This phase point can be taken as a starting point for assessing the impacts of such demonstrations.

The economic crisis in Arab countries in some ways continued in 2010, and therefore, the amplification of the gap between government and ordinary people. As a matter of fact, many Arab countries did not have a comprehensive response inside their economies for this major challenge. In the next year, the record high food prices were registered by World Bank [19] and UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) [20]. The lower social order in Arab countries was disrupted into mass antigovernment protests by flash trigger – self-immolation of Tunisian fruit vendor, which was happened in December 2010. This event produced a series of unprecedented political demonstrations in Tunisia. Thereafter, the protests led to a wave of violent unrest abroad. By using social media, TV channels and news media as means, protestors mobilized fellow citizens to organize mass protests. All Arab countries remained affected by the winds of change in matter of sociopolitical uprising.

By analyzing data on several important indicators of socio-economic development of many MENA states in the period before the economic crisis, we see that: the socio-economic development and modernization

process by the 2000 and after was significantly lower. Moreover, global economic crisis reveals that the economy of many Arab countries was in "dire straits". The statistical indicators along with other factors confirm certain theses of linkage between state weakness and the creation of the social conflict and the revolutionary situation as well. According to this analysis and the bottom-up approach, we could propose the follow assumption: widespread unrest in 2011 arose from population's perceived failure of system, which was unable to provide full food security and stability.

As a region with extremely high geo-economic and geopolitical importance – greatest hydrocarbons supplier in the world, the MENA region is affected by the policies of regional and extra-regional actors, such as: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the European Union. Another aspect represents the geostrategic significance of MENA's transportation routes, especially Strait of Hormuz and Suez Canal. By holding and controlling both geostrategic points, the external actors have access to energy suppliers and to transportation corridors as well. Therefore, the situation on the world markets and energy security directly depends on the stability of the situation in the Arab world. From a certain geopolitical perspective, we could identify the main problematic areas, or, let us name these points – geopolitical flashpoints, as well as the implications (e.g. geo-economic, geopolitical, and geostrategic interests) of number of external and regional actors.

*Iraq (commonly along with Afghanistan)* represents a rich hydrocarbons supplier by global reserves, as well as a permanent source of sectarian tensions, instability, unrest and violence against civilians and armed forces. In 2009, the basic Iraq's GDP growth came from sales of energy resources, and entered in the top of 10 world suppliers along with Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, etc [22, p.77]. By ethnicity and religion, Iraq has the following structure: Arab – 75-80%, Kurdish and others – 20-25%; Muslim – 97% (Shia 60%-65% and Sunni 32%-37%), and Christian or other – 3% [4, p.63]. The majority of Shia-led government is located in the Southern part of Iraq and it is supported by Iranian clerical state. The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq was completed in 2011. From 2014 onwards, the large part of Northern Iraq being under the administrative and military control of jihadist group of the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant. This terrorist organization is using the large-scale armed activities and the terrorist attacks to obtain vital territory and resources. The series of attack led by the U.S. and its allies on ISIS have failed to destroy definitely this organization and its members. Therefore, Iraq becomes for U.S. a great geo-economic and geostrategic pivot of the global war on terrorism. At the same time, three reasons make Iraq to be important for EU: 1) Democracy – even though the Iraq's society is most complex by ethnicity and religion, the state has the potential to become the biggest pluralistic democracy in the Arab world; 2) Energy resources – make this state to be a potential supplier for Nabucco pipeline; and 3) Regional context or geopolitical environment – positioning in the complex region, Iraq can use its leverage to improve security and stability regionally as well as its influence on Iran [13, p.66].

*Middle East (commonly along with North Africa)* is a very complex region according to various profiles of political regime, ethnicity, religion and language. The Greater Middle East includes a huge territory of Northern Africa, Western Sahara, Levant, Persian Gulf, Arabia, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. The region as a whole economically is focused on petroleum producing. The petroleum industry (e.g. oil, gas, and gas/condensate) is located in two broad costal belts: 1) the line of Gulf of Oman, including Gulf of Tigris and Euphrates valley of Iran and Iraq; 2) other lines along Southern Mediterranean coast from Egypt to Algeria [1, p.24]. On political accounts, the Middle East is very turbulent region with great potential of explosion into intra-state conflict, i.e. ethnical, religion, ideological, and also inter-state conflict, especially on border/territorial issues.

Against this background of general and particular issues of the Greater Middle East, the U.S. has formulated its foreign policy according to its own geo-economic and security interests and also taking into considerations its international engagements. Moreover, the U.S. Middle East Policy Agenda contains multiple policies to address all these challenges. At the same time, Israel is the main ally of the U.S. in the Middle East. Tendency to provide full security for Israel represents the constant policy of the U.S. In the same way, the U.S. maintains its military presence in Persian Gulf, being a unique guarantor of security in this region. For the EU, the proxy arena of relations is the southern Mediterranean region. The main directions in the Euro-Mediterranean relations include: the security cooperation and democracy promotion, the stable partnership on the regional level, migration issues, the industrial and communication activities, etc. [2, p.204].

*Iran and its nuclear issue* is a special point in the International Community Agenda, especially in the matter of collective security and energy resources access. Iran is a large country of South-Western Asia,

which geographically comprises the Middle East – from coastlines on the Arabic Gulf, and the Gulf of Oman to the Caspian Sea. This country along with Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has huge proved reserves of natural gas and oil in the world. Without reserves in the Caspian Sea, was estimated that Iran holds nearly 10% of the world's crude oil reserves and 13% of OPEC reserves [8]. By ethnicity and religion, Iran is predominantly Persian-Muslim (Shia) country. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran promotes exclusivist clerical or Islamic based vision on the domestic policy and also in its foreign affairs.

The Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East is manifested by confrontation between two geopolitical centers: 1) Iran as a Shia hegemonic state in the region and its three Shia allies: Iraq (predominantly southern part), Syria and Lebanon; and 2) Saudi Arabia along with Egypt – as two basic pillars of Sunnism in the Arab world. Some states and regions such as Bahrain, Yemen and southern part of Iraq became a proxy arena for an intense Saudi-Iranian struggle for geopolitical interests and domination. Regarding to Iran's nuclear issue, the U.S. has placed it into the security section agenda with wide involvement of international community. Regionally, this issue has two important aspects: (1) Iran's progress toward weapons capability and (2) Israel's strategic calculus. In this respect, by using diplomatic engagement, economic sanction and political pressure, the U.S. government tends to disrupt progress in the Iranian nuclear program. Israel perceives this nuclear program like an imminent existential threat and projects the preemptive military strike against Iran [9, p.9]. For Saudi Arabia, the emergence of nuclear Iran is perceived like a fear that Tehran's foreign policies will become more interventionist and expansionist, especially towards most vulnerable Saudi's allies like Bahrain and Yemen. Getting restrictive policy toward Iran and its isolation by using sanctions (containment policy) means to supporting the Saudi Arabia leadership and maintaining Israel as a unique nuclear power in the region.

This very complex and dynamic situation in the MENA region has been shattered by revolutionary movements under the flags of democracy, rule of law, social equity, political rights, etc. In either case, the socio-political uprising, known as a dynamic-revolutionary and wide-spread process, has produced the significant geopolitical reconfiguration of interests, powers and security mechanisms in the MENA region. By August 2012, governments have been overthrown in four countries, namely: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has left the country in January 2011 in the conditions of general demonstrations of his fellow citizens. In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak has been resigned in February 2011 as result of the Tahrir Square protest movements. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi had suffered the tragic fate ending: from civil war in Libya to international military intervention led by the U.S., and finally, his killing by rebels on 20 October 2011. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned after massive domestic revolts and his successor Abdal-Rabah Mansour Al-Hadi formally replaced him in February 2012. In some ways, the protests in Syria have repeated the Libyan scenario, but with one distinctive feature – Syrian President remained in power and still alive. The U.S. decision to intervene militarily by translating the Syrian problem into security approached dilemma was stopped by counter initiative of Russian Federation to ensure the distraction of the Syrian chemical weapons. But, the Syrian case still remains unsolved and it constitutes the critical flashpoint for regional stability in the Middle East. Below, we will examine in detail the Syrian comprehensive issue.

At the same time, the Arab Spring was effectively marked by counter measures of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) led by Saudi Arabia. As a regional Arab leader, Saudi Arabia promotes distinctive lines of foreign policy aimed at gaining geo-strategic influence and dominance upon Sunni states by maintaining unchanged their political regimes. For instance, the protests of Shia population in Bahrain were put down with help of the military intervention of Saudi armed forces [14, p.10].

According to the revolutionary transformation process inside the country and taking into consideration the external influences and interests of U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the Arab countries could be divided into three main categories: 1) states which successful displacement of authoritarian regime: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya; 2) restrained states with potential igniting of the rebellion, such as: Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and Iraq; and 3) states which have implemented partial reforms in order to annihilate demonstrations: Jordan and Morocco, and with some distinctive lines – Saudi Arabia. Even though the Arab revolutions displaced such authoritarian rulers and the movement for democracy and rule of law reached its peak, the fundamental transformations in the society did not take place. They cover three traditional phases of crisis analysis, i.e. (a) the pre-crisis phase; (b) the crisis phase, and (c) the post crisis phase, but, without significant transformations inside. Some countries did not able to manage the process of transformation from the democratic transition to the democratic

consolidation. As things turned out, they have fallen into violence and political instability, which generated a political crisis for long time. For instance, the revolution in Egypt has brought to power the Islamist organization Muslim Brotherhood. In 2013, after one military coup d'état was established the interim secular military government and the Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization. The repression campaign against its supporters has culminated into mass trial in April 2014, in which more than 680 people were sentenced to death [12]. According to the Failed States Index scores of Fund for Peace (FFP) for 2011-2014 years, at least five MENA countries are considered chronic unstable taking into consideration their socio-economic and political indicators with designated ranks of "very high warning" to "alert", and even more – "high alert" (see Table nr.2).

Table 2

**Annual ranking (Failed States Index scores) of MENA countries based on their levels on stability and the pressures that they face, 2011-2014**

Level of stability	2011	2012	2013	2014
Very High Alert	No one	No one	No one	No one
*High Alert	Iraq (9) Yemen (13)	Yemen (8) Iraq (9)	Yemen (6) Iraq (11)	Yemen (8) Iraq (13) Syria (15)
*Alert	Iran (35)	Syria (23) Egypt (31)	Syria (21) Egypt (34)	Egypt (31)
*Very High Warning	Lebanon (43) Egypt (45) Syria (49)	Iran (34) Lebanon (45) Libya (50)	Iran (37) Lebanon (46) Libya (54)	Libya (41) Iran (44) Lebanon (46)
High Warning	Algeria (81) Morocco (87) Saudi Arabia (93) Jordan (95) Tunisia (108)	Algeria (77) Morocco (87) Jordan (90) Tunisia (94) Saudi Arabia (100)	Algeria (73) Tunisia (83) Jordan (87) Morocco (93) Saudi Arabia (102)	Algeria (71) Tunisia (78) Jordan (83) Morocco (92) Saudi Arabia (96)
Warning	Libya (111)	Bahrain (125)	Bahrain (124)	Bahrain (120)
Less Stable	Kuwait (128) Bahrain (129) United Arab Emirates (138)	Kuwait (128) Oman (137)	Kuwait (127) Oman (136)	Kuwait (127) Oman (135)
Stable	Qatar (139) Oman (141)	United Arab Emirates (140) Qatar (142)	United Arab Emirates (142) Qatar (143)	Qatar (139) United Arab Emirates (143)

Note: \*The Index is based on The Fund for Peace's proprietary Conflict Assessment Software Tool (CAST) analytical platform.

Source: The Fund for Peace (FFP). Compiled data from Failed States Index (FSI) for 2011-2014.

At the level of international relations and regional security, the Arab spring has opened regionally based issues. Generally, the Arab Spring has had great impacts on the political situation and democratic governance in the Arab countries through anti-government oriented protests. However, among ways chosen by the Arab governments in order to mitigate tensions and social unrest were repressions and armed violence. By using such responses against protesters have been produced genocides, crimes, and tortures. In particular it refers to Libya and Syria. In the new and changing environment, as a result of the events of the Arab Spring, the security question in the Middle East has been replaced into enlarged international agenda. The main focus is on three basic points, namely:

- Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, biological and chemical) in the Middle East. Undermining this regime is an imminent threat for regional security. Especially after Syrian chemical attack against civilians in the Ghouta Area of Damascus on 21 August 2013 [15, p.1].

- Fighting against terrorist organizations in the context of its attempts to exploit the revolutionary situation in some affected countries. It refers specifically to following Arab countries: Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen.
- Stopping uncontrolled arm spreading to militants in the revolutionary countries, which could pose imminent risks to regional security. It related specifically to lose munitions from Libyan stock and the threat of terrorists to obtaining Man-Portable Air Defense System (MANPADS) [5].

Between 2013 and 2014, the U.S. foreign policy towards MENA region remains often-varied and multi-vectoral. On 24 September 2013, President Barak Obama used his speech before the UN General Assembly to specify the U.S. multilateral management approaches to the Arab crises. The main five goals of U.S. foreign policy and military engagement in the MENA region are:

1. "The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure these core interests in the region; 2. We will confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf War; 3. We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends upon the region's energy supply, and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy; 4. We will dismantle terrorist networks that threaten our people. Wherever possible, we will build the capacity of our partners; respect the sovereignty of nations, and work to address the root causes of terror. But when its necessary to defend the United States against terrorist attacks, we will take direct action; 5. And finally, we will not tolerate the development or use of weapons of mass destruction. Just as we consider the use of chemical weapons in Syria to be a threat to our own national security, we reject the development of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region, and undermine the global non-proliferation regime" [11].

The Syrian issue is most complex; moreover the country has become a battleground of rival interests on international scale. It includes: (1) ongoing Arab uprising in the Syrian territory and the governmental brutal military responses; (2) Syrian civil war at large scale; (3) chemical attack against civilians in the Ghouta District of Damascus; and (4) ISIS emergence on Syrian territory since 2014. As a part of Shia Axis-led by Iran, Syrian government acts against any pro-democracy movements, which could remove Shia-based political regime. After Ghouta chemical attack, military intervention led by France, the UK and U.S. was prevented by a bilateral framework agreement reached between Russia and the U.S. in Geneva on 14 September 2013 [6]. According to this agreement, Syria accepted to relinquish its full chemical warfare capacity by June 2014. Moreover, Syrian government adopted the decision to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CMC). This decision saved the authoritarian regime led by Bashar al-Assad, but, at the same time, it has disbalanced Syria at the regional level towards the Israeli performances in detaining the weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, from geopolitical point of view, the U.S. allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia have obtained the geo-strategic advantages through loosening Syria, which is one of Iran's strategical allies. The emergence of ISIS in the Middle East is perceived by the U.S. as an enemy No. 1 that must be destroyed by means of military forces. In this respect, the U.S. government had conducted many airstrikes against ISIS targets in Northern Iraq, destroying armed vehicles, machine gun encampments and military camps. Although the U.S. government enacted a series of measures against ISIS, it did not cooperate with Syrian regime to attack ISIS. Iran along with Syria is designated by the U.S. Secretary of State to have repeatedly provided support for international terrorism and therefore, their isolation in the region is perceived naturally by the U.S. [16].

The explanation for the genesis of the Arab Spring is most commonly drawn from internal factors, thereafter the geopolitical interests, and by cases the foreign implications. The research puzzle is what are the main internal factors and driving forces of the Arab revolutions which led to the social unrest and prolonged political crises in many Arab countries. We have determined the socio-economic and political factors. Thus, the major determinants and factors that triggered off the Arab revolutions in MENA countries were corruption, poverty, human rights violation and political issues. The "contagion" began in the end of 2010 with the fall of Tunisian president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. Then, the revolution has led to the removing of two long-standing dictators, a civil war in one country and serious violence coupled with severe instability in at least three others. The Arab Spring has produced the significant geopolitical reconfiguration of interests, powers and security mechanisms in the MENA region. The U.S. has its own interests in the region which are combined with efforts to be a significant and impactful conflict manager. From this perspective, the political crises in the Arab world (2010-2014) were a great challenge for American global leadership. During the Arab political crises, the U.S. government had faced multiple problems on regional level, including the most sensitive security issues.

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