

ARAB UPRISING

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS

Aijaz Ashraf Wani*

Abstract:

Famous English historian Arnold Toynbee while analyzing the causes of the rise and fall of civilizations in his twelve-volume book “*A Study of History* (1934-1961)” said “Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder”, thereby putting the blame for the downfall more on internal factors rather than external forces. When a civilization responds to challenges, it grows. It declines when its leaders stop responding creatively, and sink owing to nationalism, militarism, and the tyranny of a despotic minority. This is happening in the Middle East, however, at the same time the external powers with nefarious designs play a great part, creating conditions where their interests are best served. The present crisis of the Arab World is therefore the result of the mixture of internal problems and the external manipulations. The present paper seeks to know what happened recently in many countries of the region; how the regimes have responded and how the external forces are playing their game for their own interests.

Keywords: Middle East, Mis-governance, dictatorship, uprising, corruption, Emergency Laws, non-violent resistance, Qaddafi, Hosni Mubarak, Basher al Assad, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Bahrain, Iran, US, Wikileaks, New Middle East policy.

Introduction:

Some of the primary characteristics of ‘Failed States’, writes Noam Chomsky, are (a) their inability or unwillingness to protect their citizens from violence and perhaps even destruction, (b) their tendency to regard themselves as beyond the reach of domestic or international law, and (c) if they have democratic forms, they suffer from a serious “democratic deficit” that deprives their formal democratic institutions of real substance.¹ Over the decades most of the Arab states have only witnessed authoritarianism, denial of democracy and mis-governance. The present crisis in the Arab world is largely an outcome of these reasons, thereby turning them into ‘Failed States’ and now into battle fields. However, it will be naïve to think that the present crisis is solely outcome of internal factors without any external influence. Historically Great Powers have done everything to control this area either directly or through installing their favoured person on the throne. Such forces are again playing their part actively in the current crisis in order to safeguard their vested interests.

* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India.

¹ *Failed States-the abuse of power and the assault on democracy*, Allen & Unwin, Australia, 2007 edition, pp. 1-2.

Internal Dimension:

When Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old Tunisian set himself on fire on December 17, 2010², little did outside world knew that it will set virtually the whole of the Middle East into frenzy. For people outside the Middle East someone committing suicide is condemnable but not one that can outrage the vast majority. In the Arab world suicide is unheard of. What may seem banal event of a Tunisian immolating himself is grave matter for Arabs. First that he was slapped by a woman and second committing suicide is unpardonable sin in Arab. “The reality,” wrote Michele Penner Angrist, “was much grimmer: dissidents were tortured and everyday Tunisians struggled to earn livelihoods, while the families of the president and those connected to him enriched themselves and flaunted their wealth ... and Ben Ali regime was contemptuous of its citizens, treating them as too unsophisticated to entrust with freedoms- and betting that they would be too meek to call the regime to account for its excesses”.³

Today young generations of Arabs, who, according to Regge Omar of Qatar’s news channel Al Jazeera: “have grown up in a period where an independent, brave and global Arab media has developed, and are able to see and empathies with each other’s lives. Young Arabs see the repression, corruption, dashed aspirations and youth culture that is emerging from Iraq to Morocco – and what’s more they are able to communicate about it”.⁴ Add to it the hundreds of thousands of natives studying and working outside their homes: learning about different type of socio-political environment which they aspire to have in their native places. These nonresident Arabs feel that they can make changes in their homelands. Representing various countries of the Arab world these young Muslims are uniting Arabs in one group as they are socially, linguistically and culturally one community. Most of these young Arabs in the age group of 15-35 communicate through ‘social’ networking sites and upload or watch videos. A study has revealed that 80% of the world’s uprisings between 1970 and 1999 started in states where 60% of the population was under 30 years.⁵ Arab uprising reaffirms it.⁶

² This was in protest of the confiscation of his wares and the harassment and humiliation that was allegedly implicated on him by a municipal officer and her aides.

³ “Morning in Tunisia”, *Foreign Affairs*, Jan 16, 2011.

⁴ “They all watch Arab Pop Idol. They all follow their own hip-hop artists rapping about poverty and corruption ... and yes, they’re all on Facebook”; Regge Omar, “The west clings on to the old Arab order at its peril”, *Guardian*, February 8, 2011.

⁵ Elizabeth Leaky, Robert Engelman, Carolyn Gibb Vogel, Sarah Haddock & Tod Preston, “The Shape of Things to Come – Why Age Structures Matter to a Safer, More Equitable World”, *Population Action International*, Washington DC, 2007, p. 24.

⁶ The Arab Human Development Report of 2009—a United Nations project staffed by Arab researchers, said that Arabs are overwhelmingly young, the median age 22,

Hosni Mubarak and Egyptian Politics:

Historically Egypt has been leader of Arab resistance against colonialism and the champion of the Palestinian cause. President Ghamal Abdul Nassar vehemently followed the policy of Pan-Arabism but didn't succeed. Following the assassination of President Sadat in October, 1981, by a Jihadi cell in the military led by Lt. Khalid Islambouli, Hosni Mubarak became the President and the Chairman of the National Democratic Party (NDP) on 14th Oct 1981. He was the longest serving President lasting for 29 years. Mubarak continued his predecessor's policy of periodic rigged elections to get re-elected by majority votes for successive terms in 1987, 1993, 1999 in referendums. The referendum in itself is of questionable validity. No one could run against the President due to a restriction in the Egyptian constitution in which the People's Assembly played the main role in electing the President. It was only in May 2005 that a national referendum approved a constitutional amendment that changed the presidential election to a multicandidate popular vote.

Like many other Arab countries that have remained under dictators for a long time now, Egypt was also put under Emergency Law in 1967⁷ which continued to remain in force, except for an 18-month break in 1980s. Under the law, police has been given extensive powers to make extra-judicial imprisonment of individuals⁸, certain constitutional rights suspended, censorship legalized, political activities prohibited, etc. The very basic elements of a democracy: right to vote, right to contest elections, rule of law, etc, have remained absent in Egypt.

Political corruption in the Mubarak administration increased dramatically, due to the increased control of the cabinet over the institutional system. In 2005 'Freedom House', an NGO reported that the Egyptian government expanded bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and other controls that feed corruption.⁹ This significant problem, under Mubarak, was not tackled effectively and accordingly Egypt continued to earn bad name on this account.¹⁰ Following the recent

compared with a global average of 28. They have become overwhelmingly urbanized: 38% of them lived in urban areas in 1970; it was now close to 60%; Ajami, "Demise of the Dictators", *The Newsweek*, Feb 2, 2011.

⁷ Emergency Law No. 162/1952: Official Gazette of 28 September 1958, No. 28, Bis.

⁸ As per non official records some 17,000 people were detained under the law, and estimates of political prisoners ran 25,000 to 35,000 (between 1967 & 2010) because under the "state of emergency", the government acquired the right to imprison individuals for any period of time without any trial, and for virtually no reason, William Fisher, "U.N. Slams Abuse of Emergency Law", Inter Press Service News Agency, March 11, 2010; <http://ipsnews.net>.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House.

¹⁰ In 2010, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index Report assessed Egypt with a CPI score of 3.1, based on perceptions of the degree of corruption from business people and country analysts, with 10 being very clean and 0 being highly

non-violent uprising in the country there were many media reports regarding the illegal wealth accumulated by Mubarak since the time he was an air force officer amounting between US \$ 40 and 70 billion on kickbacks, military contracts, etc.¹¹

Besides muzzling and choking the voice of the Egyptians the high level corruption played significant role against Mubarak and his regime for the eruption of mass protests in Cairo and other Egyptian cities on 25 January 2011, leading finally to Mubarak's resignation.

Libya under Col. Qaddafi:

On September 1, 1969, a small group of military officers staged a coup d'état against King Idris of Libya and launched what is known as the Libyan Revolution. The Libyan army's Free Unionist Officers' Movement, led by the then 27 year old Lieutenant Muammar Qaddafi, took over power. On 16th January 1970 Qaddafi became the primer of Libya and immediately thereafter evacuated American and British bases from Libya. Inspired by Nassar's ideas of Pan Arabism, Qaddafi also attempted to seek the unification of Arab world. However, all his attempts to achieve the "Union of Arab Republics" with Egypt and Syria, or with Egypt and Tunisia, failed. Without an official title, he is sometimes described as the "Brother and Leader", and other times as the "Leader of the Revolution".¹²

Qaddafi controls virtually all the main political and economic institutions of the country. In 1973, he delivered his famous "Five-Point Address"¹³ announcing: Suspension of all existing laws and implementation of *Shar'ia*; Purging the country of the "politically sick"; Creation of a "people's militia" to "protect the revolution"; Administrative Revolution and Cultural Revolution. Following this, in 1977, the Libyan Arab Republic was renamed as *Jamahiriyah* (state of the masses) when Qaddafi assumed the title of "Leader and Guide of the Revolution" and forming "people's committees"¹⁴ to monitor the functioning of the government. It was then, in 1979 that he resigned from

corrupt. Egypt ranked 98th out of the 178 countries included in the report; www.transparency.org. Also see, datastore@guardian.co.uk

¹¹ Susanna Kim, "Egypt's Mubarak likely to retain vast wealth", *ABC News*, Feb 2, 2011; <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/egypt-mubarak-family-accumulated-wealth-days-ilitary/story?id=12821073>; *The Washington Post* (February, 13, 2011) reported that the illegal assets of Mubarak were up to \$70 billion (£430bn); *The Guardian* (13 April, 2011) said that the fortunes of Mubarak and his family might be worth up to \$70 billion accumulated due to corruption, kickbacks and legitimate business activities.

¹² For details see, John L. Wright, *Libya: A Modern History*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1982. Also see, George Tremlett, *Gadafi: The Desert Mystic*, Carroll and Graf, New York, 1993.

¹³ *Libya: A Modern History*, pp. 179-80

¹⁴ *Gadafi: The Desert Mystic*.

the position of General Secretary of the General People's Congress of Libya in 1979, but retained power as de-facto dictator.

For the past 42 years Qaddafi has issued countless orders and passed hundreds of laws restricting the activities of the citizens, including laws directly related to public freedom and the exercise of political, cultural and economic activities. Most of the laws reflect the regime's interest in protecting itself and closing the doors to dissent or competition.¹⁵ The laws were used against Libyans to deprive them of their legitimate fundamental rights. The repeal of the 1951 constitution which established and embodied the state's constitutional legitimacy was Qaddafi's first step to tighten his grip on the state, followed by all sorts of restrictions on the citizens to curb their democratic rights. Qaddafi's word became law and his "Green Book" the political Bible for Libya.¹⁶

The draconian laws have curbed political liberties of the people to make them suffer. For example, the "Law for the Protection of the Revolution," makes it a criminal offense to proselytize against the state, to arouse class hatred, to spread falsehood, or to participate in strikes and demonstrations.¹⁷ There have been instances when political opponents were booked under this law on flimsy grounds. The Abou-Salim prison massacre on 29 June 1996 that killed about 1,200 political prisoners is one of the worst crimes against humanity.¹⁸ Qaddafi used light and heavy weapons against unarmed detainees whose only crime was strike due to

¹⁵ Interestingly these laws were not issued by the Legislative, but by the Executive Authority represented by the Revolutionary Leadership Council.

¹⁶ *The Green Book*, Public Establishment for Publishing, Advertising, and Distribution, Tripoli, Libya; The Green Book consists of three parts: "The Solution to Democratic Problems," published in 1975; "The Solution to the Economic Problem," in 1977; and "Offering Solutions to Complex Social Problems," in 1981. Enacting the Green Book eviscerated every aspect of society. Qaddafi used the second part to justify the confiscation of private businesses, nationalize private property, and cap the income of Libyan families. Libyan society, once tolerant, grew less so. The third part undercut the position of women, which it labeled the "feebler sex," and berated black Africans, whom it labeled a lazy race liable to multiply without limit.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Simons Leslie, *Libya: The Struggle for Survival*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996, p. 192-3; Article 1 of the 'Revolution Protection Law' issued on 11th December 1969 states that anyone bearing arms against the 1st September republican regime or joining an armed gang for the same purpose shall be executed. Law 45 of 1972 prohibits strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations. Law 71 of 1972 treats political parties as criminal. An article of this law considers the exercise of political party activities as treason. Articles 3 and 4 prescribe a penalty of death or no less than 10 years' imprisonment for anyone who calls for establishing any prohibited gathering, organization or formation of any political group. Dissent is illegal under Law 75 of 1973; Lillian Harris Craig, *Libya: Qadhafi's Revolution and the Modern State*, West View Press, Boulder, 1986; Also see, *Gadaffi: The Desert Mystic*.

¹⁸ The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, *The Long-Aged Dictatorship 40 Years of Qaddafi Rule in Libya*, <http://www.anhri.net/libya/lw/pr040700.shtml>

poor health conditions, inhumane treatment, torture, humiliation and their continued detention without trial. One of the obligatory instructions is an order that says: “We execute even innocent people with the aim of terrorizing real culprits who may not be known at the moment. The locations of those who wish to defy the revolution shall be attacked and destroyed inside Libya, even if in a mosque. If the location is external we have to move to its location and attack and execute the perpetrators”.¹⁹ According to the US State Department, 10 to 20% of Libyans work in surveillance institutions,²⁰ a proportion of informants on par with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq or Kim Jong II’s North Korea. Perhaps the most dangerous tool of judicial oppression is the “Law of Collective Punishment”, passed in 1997, which allows the state to sanction entire families, towns, or districts for the so-called wrongdoing of individuals.²¹

The rampant corruption and accumulation of wealth by Qaddafi and his close associates is another feature of his regime. His nationalization of private property has allowed him to exert complete control over the economy and also keep foreign investors in check. Fulfillment of the needs of all Libyan citizens depends upon their absolute obedience.²² There are varying estimates on Qaddafi’s wealth. Some estimate it to be as much as £60 billion – which has been squirreled away in safe havens across the globe. The main vehicle for the Qaddafi’s wealth is the \$70 billion Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), a “sovereign wealth fund” set up in 2006 to spend the country’s oil money.²³

Syria and the Assads:

In an interview recently Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that he was unlikely to face a popular uprising similar to the ones in Tunisia and Egypt because change inside Syria was shaped by “the people’s feeling and dignity, [it is] about the people participating in the decisions of their country”. The President remarked that while Syria faced circumstances more difficult than those in most Arab countries, the country remained stable “because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people”.²⁴ However, the policies of Hafiz al Asad, who ruled the country

¹⁹ The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, *The Long-Aged Dictatorship 40 Years of Qaddafi Rule in Libya*, <http://www.anhri.net/libya/lw/pr040700.shtml>

²⁰ “Libya,” *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2004*, Washington, D.C (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State), Feb. 28, 2005

²¹ Mohamed Eljahmi, “Libya and the U.S.: Qadhafi Unrepentant”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter, 2006, pp. 11-20.

²² *Green Book*, p. 54. Also cited in Mohamed Eljahmi, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2006.

²³ Admin, “Exposed: Gaddafi Inc.” *Telegraph*, Feb 27, 2011.

²⁴ *Wall Street Journal*, Jan 31, 2011.

for three decades, and Bashar had provided enough reasons for the people of Syria to explode and demand a change.

In 1970 Hafiz al Assad became the first Shiite 'Alawi' President ruling over majority Sunnis. He placed members of his family, clan, tribe and sect, personally loyal to him, at important positions of power in the military, security, party and state institutions. He invested heavily in the military, giving privileges to the security forces and creating for them a vested interest in the survival of his regime. To protect himself from potential army coups, he created independent "Defense Companies" as a party militia, and an independent Presidential Guard. He never allowed any opposition to his power. In Feb 1982 Assad responded with unprecedented force to Muslim Brotherhood's opposition to him resulting in the killing of five to ten thousand people.²⁵ After announcing a state of emergency in 1963, his Baath Party regime quickly declared martial law.²⁶

Bashar assumed power in 2000 and has continued with his father's policies conciliating moderate Sunnis by promoting loyal Sunni Ba'athists to important positions.²⁷ Bashar maintained his supremacy by methodically undermining all potential alternative centers of power and legitimacy. Opposition parties and NGOs are banned, and an emergency law introduced in 1963 allows police to arrest and detain anyone they suspect of "opposing the goals of the revolution". All forms of dissent are quickly and violently crushed, and the *mukhabarat* (secret police) is everywhere.

However, the nature and magnitude of present uprising clearly reveals that government does not care much about the wishes and beliefs of the people who are not allowed to shape their political sphere. The recent anti-government protest is almost unheard of in Syria where the brutal response of the government has resulted in the death of many people.

External Dimension:

²⁵ Robin Wright, *Dreams and Shadows: the Future of the Middle East*, Penguin Press, 2008, p.243-4.

²⁶ The government shuttered all newspapers and magazines, abrogating Press Law 35/1946, which had been in effect since Syria's independence in 1946. The martial decree also banned the licensing of any newspaper or magazine, confiscated all printing equipment, and seized the movable and immovable assets of printing house owners; Moh'd Anjarini, "Oppressive Laws in Syria: Laws of Emergency issued upon the Legislative Act No. 15 on 22.12.1962 by the Council of Ministers in Syria," *Justice Online Journal*, October 2001.

²⁷ Like prime minister, foreign minister and defence minister, Bashar even married a Sunni girl – Asma Fawaz al-Akhras.

Middle East has a tremendous geo-strategic and economic importance and hence was one of the hot beds of cold war confrontation. The area is an important communication land bridge to three continents, and the gateway to the undeveloped but great continent of Africa. Endowed with oil, the Middle East is one of the economic life-line for the West.²⁸

The US started to look towards the Middle East after the World War II for two main reasons—oil and the containment of Soviet Union. Oil was originally a commercial interest, but with the onset of the cold war it also took its place in a general political-military strategy.²⁹ Accordingly, US provided economic and military aid to many countries in the Middle East under “Truman Doctrine”³⁰ to stop the influence of Soviet Union. And, henceafter, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1953-54 under *Pactomania*³¹ drove deep into the heart of Middle East to seek military pacts like NATO, CNTO, etc. Where it could not CIA dislodged governments like that of Mohamed Mosaddeq in Iran in August 1953 to be replaced by US-friend Shah. It helped the governments in the region that looked “moderates” and opposed those “radicals” that took sides with the USSR. It was an open policy.³² US has ever since continued to oppose and suppress the regimes that tend to oppose it or pose threat to its interests in the region like Hamas in Palestine and Qaddafi in Libya, including for the sake of Israel which has been its greatest ally in the region.

On the other hand, Russian policy of expansion to the South dates back to Tsarist era and it continued under the Soviets. Stalin, without success, tried hard to put pressure on its southern neighbours and increase its influence in Iran to obtain concessions from Turkey. The new Soviet offensive in the mid-1950s was far more intelligently conceived

²⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Strategy of the Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1957, pp. 655-56.

²⁹ John C. Campbell, “The Soviet and the United States in the Middle East”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Sage, Vol. 401, 1972, p.127.

³⁰ The Truman Doctrine was a policy set forth by US President Harry S Truman on March 12, 1947 stating that the US would support Greece and Turkey with economic and military aid to prevent their falling into the Soviet sphere. It was later extended to other countries also.

³¹ Pactomania is a term used to describe a period of treaty making by the United States during the Cold War. During the Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the United States, mainly through the efforts of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, formed alliances with some 42 separate nations along with treaty relations with nearly 100 countries, which scholars described as “pactomania”.

³² *The New York Times* (Aug. 6, 1954) described it an “object lesson” for the “underdeveloped countries with rich resources”, an “object lesson in the cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatic nationalism” and tries to take control of their own resources thus becoming “radical”; Cited in Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New*, Pluto Press, London, (new edition, Viva Books Ltd., New Delhi, 2007), p.112.

and executed.³³ Khrushchev's strategy was primarily based on manipulation of local forces rather than a campaign to intimidate local governments or to make gains through negotiations with contesting powers. Kremlin exploited the new dynamic Arab Nationalism and its distrust of the West. Soviets supported Arab regimes that were more or less dedicating their efforts to revolutionary changes, and became the major supplier of arms to them who obviously were opposed to the West. Taking advantage of Arab-Israel conflict they endorsed Arab position gaining thereby favour throughout the Arab world. However, after the collapse of Soviet Union the US influence has increased in the Middle East and has exercised its power to shape future in the area in a way its interests are secured.

US continue to ensure its control over the major energy resources of the Arabian Peninsula. It is not, therefore, surprising that US supports "moderate nationalists", such as the ruling elite in Saudi Arabia.³⁴ On the other hand it opposes "radical nationalists" who stand in the way of US objectives. Libya is a case in point. Initially there was a feeling in the West that Qaddafi like King Idris will follow a pro-West policy. However, armed with ample petrodollars, he descended into an increasingly self-contained and self-reverential world, a closed system fed and reinforced by the sycophancy that always surrounds dictators and that accepts no opposition. In the early 1970s, by nationalizing the country's oil companies, the Colonel increased the suspicion of the West but boosted popularity and legitimacy of his rule at home. While US appears to have supported Qaddafi's efforts to raise oil prices in the early 1970s "in order to strengthen the position of 'moderates', such as Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Libya has increasingly been an obstacle to US objectives and was designated as prime target from the earliest days of the Reagan Administration under the pretext of a "war against international terrorism".³⁵ Qaddafi came to be called as "mad dog" of the Arab world and US even carried out air-strikes on his compounds on April 15, 1986 as a backlash of Lockheed bombing episode.

To strengthen its position further, US, in the year 2006, was hotly pursuing a policy of redrawing the maps of the Middle East including parts of South Asia. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was the first to coin the term "New Middle East" in June 2006 in Tel Aviv.³⁶ The

³³ John C. Campbell, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 401, 1972. Also see, Freedman O. Roberts, "Patterns of Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Sage, Vol. 482, 1985, pp.40-64.

³⁴ *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New*, p.117.

³⁵ *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New*, see chapter 3, *Libya in US Demonology*.

³⁶ Mehdi Dorius Nazemroaya, "Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a New Middle East", Nov. 18, 2006, www.globalresearch.ac. The map of "New Middle East" was drawn by retired Lt. Col. Ralph Peters in his book, *Never Quit the Fight*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, released in July 10, 2006. This redrawn

motive was to give death blow to insurgencies that were carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as creating an arc of instability, chaos and violence from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq to the Persian Gulf, Iran and Afghanistan with the expectation that Lebanon would be pressure point for realigning the forces of ‘constructive chaos’ to help the West and Tel Aviv to redraw the Middle East map. However, with the entry of Al Qaeda in Iraq, US had to shun the idea and pursue the policy of exterminating the militant forces first.

Revolution is allowed because one of the strongest institutions helps it, i.e. Army. Tunisian Presidential “orders were to make the protests end, with live rounds if needed The armed forces didn’t listen. Troops moved into the streets and reportedly even deployed helicopters to stop paramilitary snipers who were shooting demonstrators from rooftops”.³⁷ Egypt’s Army mostly allowed protestors to have their day although it receives ‘an incredible \$1.3 billion military aid annually. All this comes under US doctrine of ‘necessary pain’ which is used to destabilise any state. And those familiar with US ‘New Middle East policy’ would easily realise the designs behind it.³⁸

In the present crisis, US and other countries are again making every effort to secure their interests in the region. This is not the first time that that US has supported a so-called revolution for strategic interests. It organized the so-called “orange” and other “colour revolutions” some years ago in Central Asia. These “revolutions” were also ostensibly for the realisation of “democracy”, but a necessary component of such “democracy” was the pursuit of neo-liberal policies, which were designed to hand over control of Central Asian gas to US multinational bodies. What is striking about the current Arab uprising is that similar efforts on the part of the big powers have failed till now because the actors of the uprising are aware of their machinations. Egypt and Tunisia were “fortunate” not to have oil, so the imperialist concern about their uprisings is confined only to the potential implications of such uprisings for Israel. But in the case of oil-rich Libya, it has resorted at direct intervention. It is why the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, sent agents to make contact with the Libyan resistance, ostensibly to inquire about the requirements of humanitarian aid, but in reality to attempt imperialist penetration into the Libyan resistance as a

Middle East map was also published, under the title of *Blood Borders: How a better Middle East would look*, in the US military’s *Armed Forces Journal*, June, 2006 issue, with commentary from Ralph Peters (Mehdi Dorius Nazemroaya, *Global Research*, November 18, 2006).

³⁷ Ellen Knickmeyer, “Just Whose Side Are Arab Armies On, Anyway?” *Foreign Policy*, Jan 28, 2011.

³⁸ Ellen Knickmeyer, *Foreign Policy*, Jan 28, 2011.

means of achieving future control over Libyan oil.³⁹ In its statement of April 4, 2011, Solidarity National Committee (A Socialist, Feminist, anti Racist Organization) said, “France, Great Britain, the United States, and other European powers claim to intervene out of concern for human rights and democracy, but these claims are contradicted in practice. These nations support other dictatorial regimes in the Arab world and around the globe, even during the course of events in Libya doing nothing to stop the use of Saudi troops against protesters in Bahrain. They intervene in Libya due to their own economic interests and concerns for geopolitical control. Qaddafi was already a willing client of empire, and Euro-American powers have intervened in the civil conflict to broker deals with disgruntled and ambitious members of the Libyan elite who are backing the uprising. Power abhors a vacuum. The principal goal of the imperial powers, France, Britain, and the US, whether individually or acting in concert as the UN or NATO is to dominate and shape the unfolding Arab revolution. As new governments form in the region and new political actors emerge in the course of the revolutions and uprisings, these powers will not stand idly by and let events take their course. The intervention is a show of force to an entire region but Libya was not chosen arbitrarily.”⁴⁰

According to a report “Even as the United States poured billions of dollars into foreign military programmes and anti-terrorism campaigns, a small core of American government-financed organizations were promoting democracy in authoritarian Arab states”.⁴¹ These attempts on the part of US agencies were a constant source of tension between the ruling elite and the US government. In Bahrain, officials were worried that the political training being imparted by these groups “disproportionately benefited the opposition”. In Yemen, where the US has been spending millions on anti-terrorism programmes, officials complained that American efforts to promote democracy amounted to “interference in internal Yemeni affairs”. Hosni Mubarak was “deeply

³⁹ Prabhat Patnaik, “Struggle for Democracy- At the first stage of a protracted process”, *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, March 23, 2011.

⁴⁰ *Libya: Revolution, Intervention and Crisis*, April 4, 2011. www.solidarity-us.org

⁴¹ “A number of the groups and individuals directly involved in the revolts and reforms sweeping the region, including the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and grass-roots activists like Entsar Qadhi, a youth leader in Yemen, received training and financing from groups like the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House, a nonprofit human rights organization based in Washington, according to interviews in recent weeks and American diplomatic cables obtained by Wikileaks. ... Some Egyptian youth leaders attended a 2008 technology meeting in New York, where they were taught to use social networking and mobile technologies to promote democracy. Among those sponsoring the meeting were Facebook, Google, MTV, Columbia Law School and the State Department”; Ron Nixon, “US Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprising”, *The New York Times*, April 14, 2011.

skeptical of the US role in democracy promotion,” said a diplomatic cable from the United States Embassy in Cairo dated Oct. 9, 2007.⁴² Even in Bahrain the outside players like Iran and Saudi Arabia with their own respective interests are playing an important role in the present crisis. Ironically certain Arab countries are building mercenary forces with the help of western agencies to deal with such crises. One such battalion of 800 members trained by Erik Prince, the billionaire founder of *Blackwater Worldwide*, on the behest of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi at the cost of US \$ 529.167 million is intended to conduct secretly special operation missions inside and outside UAE including defending oil pipelines and skyscrapers from attacks and put down internal revolts like pro-democracy demonstrations.⁴³

Conclusion:

What we are witnessing in Libya and other Arab countries is actually the culmination of decades of mis-governance together with the traditional interference of the external powers to secure their vested interests. Apparently it seems to be a fight of the common people for the establishment of democratic rights in their respective countries that have been denied to them but in view of the role being played by external powers the people of these countries need to be careful about the methods they use for securing their rights. The Egyptians have clearly shown the power of peaceful resistance as it does not provide much excuse to the rulers to perpetuate state terrorism. One area where Mubarak failed and Qaddafi succeeded is pushing people for violence. It gave Qaddafi a reason to use all his brutal methods to suppress the revolution. There are two major reasons for the success for non-violent campaign.⁴⁴ Firstly, a commitment to nonviolent methods enhances its

⁴² Ron Nixon, *The New York Times*, April 14, 2011. According to the US embassy cable leaked to Wikileaks in April this year the US had channeled funds to Syrian pro-democracy groups. The cable claimed that, since 2006, \$6m (£3.6m) had been channeled to groups including the Movement for Justice and Development, a moderate Islamist party based in London, and *Barada TV*, Guardian.co.uk, April 18, 2011. *The Washington Post* also reported that (based on a US State Department cable unveiled by WikiLeaks) US government secretly funded Syrian opposition groups and an anti-government television broadcast—the London-based satellite channel *Barada TV*, *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2011.

⁴³ Mark Mazzetti and Emily B. Hager, “Secret Desert Force Set up by Blackwater’s Founder”, *The New York Times*, May 14, 2011.

⁴⁴ A recent study conducted by Maria J. Stephan and Eric Chenoweth explored the strategic effectiveness of violent and nonviolent campaigns in conflicts between non-state and state actors using aggregate data on major nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006. The study shows the successful use of non-violent strategy in Serbia (2000), Madagascar (2002), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004-05), Lebanon (2005), Nepal (2006), to bring about the positive changes. The findings show that 53% of major non-violent campaigns have achieved success compared to 26% of violent campaigns, Stephan J. Maria and Chenoweth Eric,

domestic and international legitimacy and encourages more broad-based participation in the resistance, which translates into increased pressure being brought to bear on the target. Recognition of the challenge group's grievances can translate into greater internal and external support for them and alienation of the target regime, undermining the regime's main sources of political, economic, and even military power.

Secondly, whereas governments easily justify violent counterattacks against armed insurgents, state violence against nonviolent movements is more likely to backfire. Potentially sympathetic publics perceive violent militants as having maximalist or extremist goals beyond accommodation, but they perceive nonviolent resistance groups as less extreme, thereby enhancing their appeal and facilitating the extraction of concessions through bargaining. Or in other words, as Eric Chenoweth wrote, the non-violent resistance succeeds "for one thing, people don't have to give up their jobs, leave their families or agree to kill anyone to participate in a nonviolent campaign. That means such movements tend to draw a wider range of participants, which gives them more access to members of the regime, including security forces and economic elites, who often sympathize with or are even relatives of protesters".⁴⁵ The question remains whether the Arab world can resist the external intervention but win over their democratic rights by their own efforts even if it takes a bit more time and sacrifices. Consequences of external intervention for democratization are disastrous as has been witnessed in Iraq.⁴⁶ And finally it is very important for these countries to guard against slipping into anarchy or civil war once the revolutions are successful. It is also very important that the transfer of power is smooth and according to the wishes of people. After a successful resistance in Egypt that ended the regime of Mubarak the people are again on the streets only because the transition was partial. As Atul Aneja writes, "The magnificent Egyptian uprising, after a brief introspective but impatient pause, has flared up again. On February 11, it brought down dictator Hosni Mubarak and drove him into peripheral existence in Sharm-el-Sheikh, the resort city on the Red Sea. Yet, even when the euphoria generated by the exit of the oligarch was in full flow, many among Egypt's seasoned protesters observed, 'We have brought down the dictator, not the dictatorship'.⁴⁷ He further writes, "By April 9, less

"Why Civil Resistance Works-The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict", *International Security*, Vol.33, No. 1, 2008, pp. 7-44.

⁴⁵ *The New York Times*, March 10, 2011.

⁴⁶ The disastrous results of US involvement in other countries for restoring the so called 'stability' and 'democracy' is best captured by Condoleezza Rice in a speech delivered at the American University in Cairo in June 2005 saying "we have been trying to achieve stability at the cost of democracy in the Middle East but we ended up achieving neither stability nor democracy", Abbasi M. Arshid, "The Arab Spring of Discontent", *Weekly Pulse Magazine*, Islamabad, April 1, 2011.

⁴⁷ Atul Aneja, "Egypt Enters Second Phase of Uprising", *The Hindu*, April 28, 2011.

Arab Uprising

than two months after Mr. Mubarak's unceremonious exit, the uprising gathered its second wind. With clarity and focus, it declared war on the remnants of the regime, which had remained largely unmoved from institutions and had, for three servile decades, served Mr. Mubarak unquestioningly. More significantly, the protesters' perception of the military top brass, who had taken over the state after Mr. Mubarak's ungainly departure, changed dramatically. It began to dawn on them that the military was not people's friend. It was as much part of the old oligarchy, which was yet to make way for people's power".