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POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE ARAB SPRING

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Abstract: Even though the name is Arab Spring, neither the protests nor the effects of them seem to remain confined just to the Arab world. The reason for that is simple; increasing globalization. Due to our present world of globalization and the opportunities that it presents, the wave of protests have easily crossed the borders and spread from North African deserts to the Arabian Peninsula and even to Israel within a very short span of time. Inspiration led demands have ranged from reformative acts to government overthrows, leaving the region within turmoil of large scale.

The significance of the Arab Spring lies in the natural-resource-rich geopolitical importance of the region. Thus, like the protests themselves, their effects have made and are yet making a tremendous impact. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the potential effects of the Arab Spring and endeavors to give an insight into the politics of the region.

Keywords: The Arab Spring, International Politics, Globalization.

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ARAB SPRING

As an important turning point for the Arab World, the protest waves that have started in Tunisia in December 2010, have created almost a domino effect and the protest waves have expanded to a significant territory in a short time. The protest waves have started by one man setting himself on fire and by the following uprising of young Tunisians in Tunisia in December 2010. While this was followed by the uprising in Algeria, overthrow of Ben Ali government as a result of the uprising in Tunisia in January 2011, has encouraged the other countries in the region and the opposing groups in those countries. Following these development, the protest waves have spread to Jordan, Sudan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait and Morocco and then followed by the protests in Syria and Israel.

The most notable ones that have come into prominence among these uprising movements are those that have ended up with overthrow of the existing governments and with the absolute change in the existing regulations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In Tunisia President Ben Ali fled the country, while in Egypt head of state Hosni Mubarak resigned from his post and ended his 30 year-long reign, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown and was slain as a result of emergent civil war in the country. Moreover, King Abdullah II of Jordan, following the inception of the protests, dissolved first the existing government and then the subsequent one, for falling short of making the necessary regulations in Jordan. At the same time President of Sudan and Prime-Minister of Iraq were able to suppress the uprising movements by declaring that they will not run for the next term. As of November 2011, the uprising movements have been continuing partly in Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, thus enabling substantial uncertainties to rise over the future of these countries.

Whatever requests of the rebels are, whether reformative regulations on the existing circumstances or government overthrows, those requests reveal a territory where environment of economic and political turmoil and elusiveness in a great scale prevail as a result. Moreover, even if sometimes the reforms that have been made could actually achieve its goal, it may only indicate a controlled liberalization movement in other times. Such a situation shows that the countries in the region are resistant to protect their oppressive regimes (Yom, 2005). But the situation faced in the Arab Spring movements has been that such a resistance cannot have much chance against the dynamics of region.

Such a spread of the protest waves has become possible thanks to contemporary globalization and the opportunities that it provided. Owing to globalization, nowadays

transnational boundaries are almost removed; more importantly, technological developments brought by globalization have played a role in spreading of such protest waves. In the countries that have experienced protest waves, the internet, especially social networks, which the opponents have been using against the oppressive regimes to be able to make themselves to be heard by the entire world, to be able to become organized and to be able to state their requests, lay emphasis on the importance of the effective utilization of technology on the spread of the protest waves. The success of the technology in taking the pulse of the local communities and leading them during the Arab Spring has brought along the attempts of censoring of such technological devices in mentioned countries. But, spread of the protest waves could not be prevented despite all kinds of attempts. As a result of such an effective spread, the boundaries of the effects of these uprising movements have already exceeded the Arab World.

It is a known fact that the need for democracy of the people living in those countries lie in the common grounds of the uprising movements. But of course the essence here is the hunger for a better life. Democracy here is an instrument through which to satisfy this hunger. More democracy will bring along more freedom of expression and more freedom of speech and therefore more institutional quality. It is stated by several researchers (ie., Alfaro, Chanda, Kalemli-Ozcan and Sayek, 2004; Alfaro, Chanda, Kalemli-Ozcan and Sayek, 2006) that increasing institutional quality is an important indicator to attract foreign investors. Accordingly, increasing institutional quality in investment recipient countries may lead to more investments by foreign investors to those countries (Alfaro and others, 2004). Increasing foreign investments are seen as the engine of the economic growth (Borensztein, Gregorio and Lee, 1998). Ultimately, the economic growth that may occur will be able to return as a better life in the sense of economics to those people live in those countries. But of course a better life that has been provided by democracy is not just limited to be measured by economical indicators.

The importance of the effects of the Arab Spring increases due to the natural-resource-rich geopolitical structure of the region. These effects not only affect the Arab World but also affect numerous countries that are closely interested in the region and that have historical, commercial or political ties or that consider this region as the home of new opportunities.

Thus in this paper, potential effects of the Arab Spring were handled for both the countries in the region and also for the countries that have or may have a close relationship with the countries in the region. Moreover, in this paper it was attempted to provide a perspective that aimed at the stated unstable upheaval environment in the region may lead to

what sort of new developments and how it affects the Arab World and those countries that are in close interaction with the Arab World. While the effects of the Arab Spring were being analyzed, political and economical effects were not separated from each other due to the fact that political and economical effects are in mutual interaction. In this direction, while potential effects of the Arab Spring were handled politically, economically and socially both for the region and for the globe, political and economical expectations over the new global conjunctural structure that may occur were presented in the following part. The importance of the Arab Spring was emphasized and context of the new conjunctural structure that may occur in the region was presented and the paper was concluded in the last part.

AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

The Arab Spring seems to be a movement that has visible effects as well as the ones that have not yet become apparent. While administrative, social and economical reforms that have been taken shape in several countries and even government changes in some occasions constitute the visible effects of the Arab Spring, political, economical and social future of the region is still remains unclear. After the Arab Spring, both the relationships of the countries in the region and countries that have concerns about the region in between themselves and their mutual relationships will probably be reshaped, as a result of the Arab Spring, as well as the new co-operations and new close relationships, also new conflict environments will probably be emerged.

People demanding the change from their leaders by imposition and even sometimes carrying out their demands by their own conducted the Arab Spring to start in the form of local uprisings and then to become more regional than local. But the extent of these movements that seem to be local uprisings at first sight does not remain local nor regional, it has reached to a capacity that can make an effect in global scale. One of the questions that is needed to be asked is that whether or not a movement that achieved such effects has actually had foreign connections. Some researchers (ie., Laipson, 2011) indicate that these movements have been a series of actions for each society according to their capacity of change within their own historical and social dynamics, reflecting their own people's will and carrying out by their own without any foreign interference and that foreigners have been titled only as observers. Is it really possible that a revolution movement in such enormous magnitude can be carried out by only a few passionate activists? Or whole these uprising movements carry the meaning of

reshaping the region? The answers to those questions lie in the analyzing the effects of the Arab Spring thoroughly.

As a result of the Arab Spring movements, a pressure has been set over Israeli and Palestine governments to reach the long expected peace. The Arab Spring may appear as an opportunity to establish a ground for a possible peace. The protests in Israel could push Palestinians to unite and could strengthen their hand for peace, and as a natural result, the first steps of attempts of being recognized by United Nations (UN) as statehood have been taken by Palestinians.

On the other hand, for Israel it is like an equation with multiple unknown variables. There is an ambiguous environment in the region for Israel that arises the need for reshaping the relationships with almost all of the Arab World over again. As a result of the Arab Spring, on one side, if the new conjunctural structure that will emerge be more democratic and liberal then it will probably have a positive reflection effect on the Arab-Israeli relations, however on the other side, if more fundamental radical Islamist structure will emerge then the relations will become as a more complicate conflict for both countries. Israel is approaching to the Arab Spring movements in a fairly cautious manner and is refraining from anti-Semitic radical Islamist groups to seize power in this ambiguous environment. Particularly a possible seizure of power in Egypt by anti-Semitic the Muslim Brotherhood organization would intensify Israel's fears (Byman, 2011). Moreover, how would Jewish population living in Muslim countries to be affected by the Arab Spring is another issue of concern. There is no doubt that Jewish population in countries especially like Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey and Morocco will be affected by the Arab Spring. Ongoing democratization processes if sustain, might return as more freedom to Jewish people in the region, however an austere fundamentalist regime that would be nourished by terror in this upheaval environment might make the situation much worse.

Additionally, pressures on Syria as Shia Iran's greatest supporter in the region, continue to mount. On one side the United States and the West, on the other side Turkey are sending more intimidating warning messages each and every day to Esad controlled Syria for encountered civil deaths in the country. Notably without Turkish support in the region Syria would become more fragile to foreign pressures (Paul and Seyrek, 2011). Increasing death toll for civil opponents in the country is a clear indication that Syrian government - on one hand is the greatest ally for Iran in the region, on the other hand has been offering her land to terror

for many years not just against for Turkey but also against for other countries too² - cannot hold on for a long time against such a pressure. But, Russia and China while becoming a party for the matter think that a possible intervention against Syria would deteriorate the balance of the region and expressed their reaction harshly to such possible situation.

Realization of such a situation, without a doubt will diminish the efficiency of Iran in the region. Moreover, it can be anticipated that Iran would lose power and get weakened as a result of both the efficiency loss of Syria in the region and the troubles about domestic integrity that Iran has been experiencing lately³. Thus, it is safe to say that as a result of the Arab Spring, isolation of Shia Iran in the region and loss of her efficiency and therefore loss of her power can be anticipated.

However in the period after the Arab Spring, the most important subject that needs attention is that who will seize power in the countries that have had government changes. The important question at this point is which model shall be adopted in ruling the country. Shall as a democratic Islamic country the Turkish model to be supported? - That is, for some⁴, the America's Islamic model (Tol and Vatanka, 2011) - Or shall the Saudi Arabian model that adopts the fundamentalist Sunni rule to be supported? It can be expected that countries looking up to West can see Turkey in the foreground as a model and can adopt the democratic secular Islamic country model of which Turkey has been the pioneer. Particularly the United States and the countries of European Union (EU) consider the Turkish model as a model that is open to easily reconcile with the democratic values of West and therefore can support this model (Nafaa, 2011). However, countries that wish to live in a Middle-East that has Sunni grounded Islamic structure can adopt the Saudi Arabian model instead.

In the reshaped region after the Arab Spring Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia stand out as the countries that are attempting to influence the region the most. Additionally, isolated Shia Iran's efficiency in the region is also diminishing. Particularly, Iran's greatest ally in the region Syria and her troubles are constraining Iran's hand. Moreover existence of a powerful Shia Iran in the region is unwanted. Thus, there is no any other third choice. There is only either the Turkish model or the Saudi Arabian model. Several Arabian countries in the Gulf region are leaning towards a Sunni Saudi Arabian model that is supported by the United

² Syrian government harbors not just anti-Turkey PKK terror organization but also Hezbollah and Hamas organizations that are effective in the region as well and provides logistic support in her lands for these organizations' activities.*ref

³ Disputes between Iran's religious leader Khamenei and President Ahmedinejad have reached the point where they can disrupt the domestic integrity (Tol and Vatanka, 2011).

⁴ After the Arab Spring, Iran accuses rival Turkey of attempting to spread the American Islamic model with the aim of gaining influence in the region (Tol and Vatanka, 2011).

States against the threat of Shia Iran. Such a model that is to be formed against Iran will be necessarily compatible with the interests of the United States⁵. However it is also possible to encounter with the increasing terrorist attacks as a result of radical Islamist approach in the Saudi Arabian model. Also, even though Saudi Arabia has tended towards some democratic developments as a result of the Arab Spring, the truth of the matter that these developments are a democracy game that is for show only, does not change⁶. Besides that, because of Shia uprisings that have occurred and have been still continuing in Bahrain and Yemen, Saudi Arabia has been feeling uneasy about the upheaval in her neighbors. Further, as a result of the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia has lost its most important ally Mubarak and therefore lost a remarkable support. When all these developments are taken into account, it can be indicated that gravity of the Saudi Arabian model has weakened and that such a weakened Saudi Arabia will probably have an environment that can welcome terror and turmoil.

In this direction, when the subject matter is held for the United States and the West, it has been emerged that in the radical Islamist Saudi Arabian model, while the factor of stability alone precedes democracy (Howard, 2011), it embodies some risks as terror, however in the Turkish model, a democracy based stability factor dominates all the other outcomes. Additionally, while the United States and the West desire democracy in the region, on the other hand they concern about the foreign policies that would possibly be followed by the radical Islamist groups that could come into power as a direct result of democracy (Hamid, 2011). Turkey stands out with opportunities like her economic power made possible by the achieved high economic growth performance, historical, cultural social and commercial ties with the countries in region and the desire for playing an efficient role in the politics of the region (Stuart, 2011). And the key bridge role of Turkey that she can play between the countries in the region and the Western countries carries also a significant importance (Paul and Seyrek, 2011). It also attracts attention that another important determinant in the future of the region is secularism (Susser, 2011). Therefore, the Turkish model is the most rational solution for the choice to be made. What makes the Turkish model attractive is that Turkey could have reconciled democracy and Islam and converted this into the success of economic development (Paul and Seyrek, 2011). Besides, the truth of that all the countries who want to

⁵It is a clear indication of this situation that in the Shia uprisings in Bahrain since 14th of February, 2011 against the Sunni royalty that has been in rule, most of the states - except Iran - supported the present government, not the rebels on the contrary of the general atmosphere of the Arab Spring.

⁶In Saudi Arabia where even the driving of women is prohibited, giving women the right to vote and being the country in the arbitrary governance of the royal family form the essentials to question the sincerity of the democratic development of Saudi Arabia.

be active and effective in the region will also come across with the ghost of the Ottoman Empire⁷ and in accordance with the back leading strategy of the United States president Obama, embracing the leadership of a Muslim state in the region (Stuart, 2011) along with the increasing popularity of Turkey in the region as a result of its determination about the opposition to Israel in diplomatic terms (Taşpınar, 2011), raise the importance of choosing the Turkish model for the reconstitution of the region.

Furthermore, democratic secular Islamic country model messages of Prime Minister Erdoğan that he gave in the beginning of the Arab Spring, his visiting to the countries whose governments have been overthrown and his tough attitude towards Syria and his collaboration with the Syrian opponents (Stuart, 2011), show that Turkey has been seeking for serious penetration in the region. Turkey has come to a position that she can provide important benefits from the movements in the region. As a matter of course this situation will also disrupt the regional collaboration of Turkey with Iran. As a result of the Arab Spring and its opportunities, Turkey has given the clear message of that she will face to the West, not to the East - to Iran - as it was once feared (Tol and Vatanka, 2011). At this point, by providing the United States' support that has not lean towards the collaboration with Iran in anyway, a new era has begun for Turkey in which she can increase her efficiency in the region. In this way, it can be said that Turkey can adapt herself to the changing climate and she has not fall behind it.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, countries in the region are not the only ones who seek for penetration in the region. France who has behaved like NATO advance guard alone in the civil war in Libya, China and Russia who want to be an effective power in the region, and the United States who wants to increase her penetration in the region have also expectations to increase their power in the region.

When the economical dimension of the subject matter is taken into consideration, cost of the Arab Spring for the countries in the region is considered to be almost over 50 billion dollars; but yet it is not certain because of the situation has not yet been clarified (Geopolicity, 2011). In financial terms, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen pay the highest price (Geopolicity, 2011). As a result of the turmoil environment caused by the Arab Spring, a decrease in the general production has been encountered for the countries in region and this

⁷The term of the ghost of the Ottoman Empire has been put forward by Fromkin in The New York Times (2003). Accordingly, in the Middle East and in the Balkans - the territories that were reigned by the Ottoman Empire - the established systems have a tie with the Ottoman Empire and he emphasized the necessity of that to be able to penetrate these territories that have been exposed to foreign interference in present time, just an integrating Islamic identity like as in the Ottoman Empire should come into prominence (Fromkin, 2003).

decrease has reflected on the GDP of the countries in the region, financial balance has been disrupted as a result of the increasing public expenditure and decreasing public revenue and additional expenses that have been brought by the havoc emerged in the conflicts in the countries in the region (Biles, 2011). In addition to these, most of the investors have drawn back their investments because of the fact that there hasn't been a suitable environment for investment and this situation has created an extra burden for countries in question.

Most of the researchers (e.g., Biles, 2011), especially when they were analyzing the consequences of the Arab Spring in short term, have stated that oil producing countries that have not exposed to protests or that have somehow not faced with serious losses as a result of the protests will turn out to be the most profitable countries in economical terms (Biles, 2011). In this direction, it will be true to say that Egypt, Tunis and Libya have been the primary countries that were suffered mostly not only political but also economically due to the Arab Spring movements (Geopolicity, 2011). In the countries in question, while changing of the current ruling system has brought a serious financial burden, it is obvious that deduction in oil production and the capital fled from the country will also bring an additional load to these countries.

Most of the countries in the region could offset the economical burden of the Arab Spring with the increasing oil prices. Throughout the region, increased state spending as a result of the Arab Spring, have reflected in oil prices. However; to what extent the increasing oil prices can be met by the global economy is still not known (Monthly Oil Report, 2011). In this direction, the stability that will be provided in the region can place the government expenses of the countries in the region to a more balanced axis, and so the oil prices can be pulled down to a more reasonable level. Thus, while the importance of the oil attracts attention for one more time both for the economy of the region and for the global economy, also the importance of the provided stability of the environment increases.

The expected development in medium and long term is that the countries that can fulfill their democratic transformation in a short time and provide a certain economical and political stability, can derive gains in economical terms at a particular level. When natural resource-rich structure of the region combines with the investment assurance that has been brought by the improved democratic environment and institutional quality, this situation will especially whet the foreign investors' appetite. The countries in question can be a center of attraction with the new democratic environment and stability that they have provided and economic growth can speed up in these countries due to increasing domestic and foreign investments.

Besides, the countries in question hold the possibility to be a new safe market for the investor countries. When some conditions have been provided such as political and economical stability and institutional quality, the countries that have made investments in these countries may have the opportunity to gain significant financial profits.

CONCLUSION

With the extensive changing movement that the Arab Spring initiated, it has enabled both difficulties and new opportunities to emerge at the same time for the countries in the region. Moreover, emerging of the new democratic ways that mention the societies' political demands, will weaken the radical Islamist movements (Pillar, 2011).

A brand new political and economical structure is needed in the process of reconstruction of the region. At this point, Turkey is in a model country position that can take on a leading task in the shaping of the new structure (Barkey, 2011).

In terms of economical focus, while the countries in the region have been having domestic costs, they have reflected these costs generally to the oil prices. Moreover, in the general sense oil-rich countries - except the countries in which domestic disorder has being experienced - are the countries that have made the most profit from the Arab Spring⁸. Global economy has been subject to some costs such as high oil prices that have been brought primarily by the elusiveness in the region and has been faced with a non-suitable environment to invest in the region in the short term. However, this situation does not have to remain like this. The political and economical stability environment that is to be emerged, will bring along democratical change and institutional quality, and this situation will enable the region to become a convenient market - may be even more than the past - again for the foreign investors. Additionally, although the Arab Spring has been thought to have an effect that decreases international trading volume initially, it will help the international trading volume to enhance in the long term as a result of the new opportunities that it has revealed. This situation has been reflecting the attraction of the region in economical terms.

It should be expected that the powerful monopolies that have been settled in the region resist against the new reformation movements to preserve their previously made profits and benefits (Walton, 2011). But the countries that desire to have productive results from the

⁸ For instance; the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have all experienced increases in their public revenues (Geopolicy, 2011).

transition period can only go through that phase with a consistent reformation movement that has been dealt patiently and insistently.

To be able to complete the political change processes experienced, it is compulsory that these movements also have economical support. After all, democratization process experienced will bring along the economical returns if the right policies are pursued. Economical reforms that are to be carried out will complete the political change experienced in the region (Watson, 2011). Because; what happened in the Arab Spring is not just a series of protest movements, but also it is a total reformation movement that has been embarked for the entire region. Accomplishing of this reformation movement in the long term can be achieved only through carrying out the economic and social transition in a body.

For this reason, as well as the models that are to be determined for the development of the region, regional development programmes can also be useful. At this point, it should be expected that Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) lead such a development movement. It is also a fact that the support from outside of the region will play a role in the settlement of the stability and democracy in the region. At this direction, establishing of the democracy that the people of the region in question have been starving for, in such a manner that contributing to the stability of the region, by following the right models and ensuring sustainability of the reformation movements carried out in the long term are consisting the true path to follow not just for the region but also for our globalizing world.

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