The Middle East Conflict and the Rise of Arab Spring: An Analysis from the Understanding of Protracted Conflict

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Abstract

Protracted conflict is some set of goals which is long-lasting, intractable, severe, violent and acute conflict. Middle East is the wide region of conflict where the main parts are related with protracted conflict such as Israel-Palestine, Iraq-Iran conflict, specially the authoritarian regime is the main culprits in the Middle East.

In this paper I have discussed about the conflict with the conceptually analysis of protracted conflict from theoretical approaches and then I have explore about the main reasons and causes of conflict in Middle East from the theoretical basis and practical conception by using secondary method.

At the end of this paper has delightedly investigate about the present situation of Arab countries after the Arab spring and critically discuss what should be important for Middle East at this democratic transition.

Preamble

“Injustice anywhere is an affront to justice everywhere”

- Martin Luther King Jr.¹

Conflicts are a fact of life, inevitable and often creative. Conflict happen when people pursue goals which clash and disagreements. All human relations, social relations, economic relations and relations of power are experience growth, change and conflict.² For the unequal social status, unequal wealth and access to resources and unequal power lead to

arise of conflict imbalances in the World. On this the method of conflict, protracted conflict which is a intractable, complex, severe, commonly enduring and violent conflict for human existence in the World. From the various approaches of protracted conflict in the World are ongoing and crash the World peaceful balances as like of them protracted conflict are Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, CHT in Bangladesh and Middle East conflict etc. In this paper it will be clarified about protracted conflict existence in the Middle East crisis and Arab spring. Middle East is a one of the conflict ridden region in the world. The region has many experiences regarding to long-term internal and international conflict. The fifty-five year-old Israel-Palestinian conflict is one of the most enduring conflicts anywhere, but over the past twenty-five years, the region has also hosted two of the wars with the most international participants (Iraq in 1991 and 2003) as well as the bloodiest interstate war (Iran-Iraq, 1980-1988). Since 1950-2003, twenty –seven out of twenty-nine armed conflicts with more than twenty-five battle related causalities were domestic and internationalized civil war.

In the end of 2010, a historic change has been taken place in Arab world with widespread demonstration and toppling authoritarian rulers which is known as ‘Arab Spring’, ‘Arab Revolution ‘or ‘Arab Uprising’. The Arab Spring” has created a new atmosphere for politics in the region. Monarchies that have gone unchallenged for hundreds of years and dictators that have ruled with iron fists without fear of criticism now find themselves within a very different environment. People from all backgrounds demanded democracy, social justice, freedom, dignity, equality, freedom from corruption, freedom of information, and freedom in their lives. The Arab spring is not a sudden upheaval; there are many factors behind the Arab spring. The conflict in the Middle East is one kind of protracted conflict and the rise of Arab spring. In this paper it will be discussed about the so many conflicts in Middle East and rise of Arab spring from the analytical corner of protracted conflict.

Methodology of the Study

The methodology is the functional action strategy to carry out the study in the light of the theoretical framework and guiding research question it is followed by a set of pre-specified procedures. This study is followed following strategy.

Main Method

There are three possibilities for any study. It can have all qualitative date, it can have all quantitative date, or it can combine–both types in any proportions. My study is basically based on a mixed method. It is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods but mostly prone to the qualitative approach.

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5 Ibid-4
6 Democracy in Arab World and renewal: UNESCO in support of transition to democracy. A round table held by UNESCO on 21 June 2011.
Secondary Data

Secondary data is used for the reanalysis of previously collected and analyzed data. There are clear advantages to working with an existing body of data, including cost, time and working with an existing body of data, including cost, time and working with making difficult populations accessible. In order to collect secondary materials I will use many journals, library and relevant websites.

Variables of the Study:

<table>
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Definition of Conflict: From the Types and Level of Conflict

- A struggle or clash between opposing forces; battle, a state of opposition between ideas, interests, etc; disagreement or controversy, a clash, as between two appointments made for the same time.

- Conflict is a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) which is mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands.

- Conflict is a state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs, a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.

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10 [http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conflict](http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conflict)
From the above discussion of conflict it can be said that conflict is a situation in which two or more parties’ disputes or violence for any kind of interests. There are many kind of conflicting situations occurred in the World for the different issues and factors as like-

Figure 01: Types of Conflict

These conflict are occurred from the different level as like of these are the level of conflict are given below-

Figure 02: Level of Conflict
Conceptual Framework on Protracted Conflict

Protracted conflict is identity-driven rifts are the result of an underlying fear of extinction that often grows within vulnerable ethnic groups who live with the memories or fear of persecution and massacre. From the different concept on protracted conflict has defined by the scholar’s by the name of protracted social conflict such as like-

- Protracted social conflict is refers to conflict situations characterized by the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs, fair access to political institutions and economic participation”.

- Protracted social conflict termed it denotes hostile interactions between communal groups that are based in deep-seated racial, ethnic, religious and cultural hatreds and that persist over long periods of time with sporadic out breaks of violence.

- Protracted social conflict is the divisions and perceived threats often result in the domination of the state machinery by a single group to basic human needs for the majority of the population.

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13 Oliver Ramsbotham, Contemporary Conflict Resolution, Review of International Studies, Vol- 31, 2008, P- 84
Approaches of Protracted Conflict:

From the different theoretical approaches of protracted conflict can be defined which is explain in the below-

❖ Theory of Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar:

Azar has developed the protracted social conflict with precisely in the World. He sustained sequences of studies from the early 1970s at the University of Maryland. Azar systematically
developed and redefined his understanding of the dynamics that generated violent and persistent conflict of this kind.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Realist/ National Interest Theory:
  
  Conflicts between societies occur because each, as a nation-state, often pursues incompatible national interests.

  \item Cognitive/ Behavioral Theory:
  
  Conflict is consequences of poor communication, misperception, miscalculation, socialization and other unconscious processes.
\end{itemize}

\section*{Middle East Conflict and the Rise of Arab Spring}

After the long lasting of violent conflict in the Middle East has created the revolutionary mind in the Arabian people and at the end of 2010, a historic change has been taken place in Arab world with widespread demonstration. Monarchies that have gone unchallenged for hundreds of years and dictators that have ruled with iron fists without fear of criticism now find themselves within a very different environment The demonstration has been started from Tunisia while a Street vendor ‘Mohammed Bouazizi’ set himself on fire. The uprisings of the Arab populations spread from Tunisia to Egypt, then sparked a movement in the entire region calling for freedom and release from the authoritarian yoke and Another page has thus been added to the history of democracy, dedicated to the peoples’ aspirations to take control of their collective destiny.\textsuperscript{15} After series of demonstration, protests, strike and losing many people’s lives, overthrowing the military and authoritarian stronghold, the revolution turn to democratic system and institutional change in state apparatus.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15} Democracy in Arab World and renewal :UNESCO in support of transition to democracy. A round table held by UNESCO on 21 June 2011 .
\end{flushright}
Historical Analysis of Arab Spring

Revolution in the Arab world did not come from nowhere. During the decades before the Arab Spring began, the Arab world suffered numerous revolts for human rights. These riots were driven by government corruption, totalitarianism, high unemployment rates, economic decline, high starvation rates, human rights violations, and lack of transparency in many Arabic countries.

Rising quality of life and education rates only increased the unrest, due to the rising hopes of the citizens and the slow rate of change. In some countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria, protests were especially frequent leading up to the period now known as the Arab Spring. One of the events that sparked the escalation of these protests was the leaking of secret American diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks.

The two hundred and fifty thousand confidential documents released, transmissions between the U.S. and its diplomatic missions throughout the world, revealed widespread government corruption and other factors that led to the revolts. The second major catalyst for the Arab Spring was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi.

Theoretical Background of Middle East Conflict and Arab Spring

Despite diverse commonalities between Arab states’ authoritative patterns, it would be difficult to develop one comprehensive theory in explaining current changes.

*Theories of Revolution: the Third Generation:*

The work of Goldstone (1980) in *Theories of Revolution: the Third Generation*. Goldston classifies scholarly work on revolution into three generations. The third generation paid attention to those variables: the goals and structure of the state. Different structures, goals,
and programs applied by the state affect revolutionary outcomes. The contradiction between state’s goals and society would result in a revolution. This can be applied to the Arab countries where incompatibility between regime’s interest and people exist.

❖ **Civil War Theory:**

Accounts of civil war have frequently referred to ethnic and religious hatred and to economic, political and social discrimination. Some researchers suggested that greed (opportunity) serves as a better explanation for civil conflict. Gurr(1970)and Ellingsen(2000), we see the outbreak of civil armed conflict as a combination of frustration (repression, suffering), opportunity (enough freedom to recognize; access to finances, weapons, and soldiers), and common identity (cohesion facilitates mobilization). Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2002, and 2004) present two partially competing perspectives on civil war: a high level of grievance and opportunity for forming a rebel organization. While economic inequality, political rights, ethnic polarization, and religious factionalism were significant, natural resources dependence as a significant factor in Collier and Hoeffler study.

❖ **The Domino Theory:**

The domino theory was a theory during the 1950s to 1980s, promoted at times by the government of the United States that speculated that if one state in a region came under the influence of communism then the surrounding countries would follow in a Domino effect. A key geographic element of the Domino Theory is contiguity: a ‘spillover’ effect that crosses borders and infects neighbors. The current demonstration in Arab area called the Arab Spring originated in Tunisia than chronologically spread out in Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and other Arab countries.

❖ **Human Needs Theory:**

Human needs theory assumes that deep rooted conflict caused by basic human needs, physical, psychological and social security theory, identity, recognition, participation and autonomy are often cited in this theory. This theory is also related with Middle East conflict and the responsible for the rise of Arab Spring.

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26 Harm de Blij, 2011, CHANGING GEOGRAPHIES: THE DOMINO “THEORY” AND THE ARAB “SPRING”
27 Ibid, 3- P- 8
Identity Theory:

It assumes that conflict is caused by feeling of threatened identity, often rooted in unresolved past loss which related with identity theory.\textsuperscript{28} This theory also applied in the Middle East conflict to the protracted conflict.

Exploring the Causes

Middle East lags behind in economic, social, and political development.\textsuperscript{29} The Arab spring was caused by economic and political dissatisfaction over the rule of governments. Economic problems, social problems, political problems, juridical problems, and diplomatic problems all contributed to a furious sense of grievance across the Arab world that finally boiled over in the winter and spring of 2011. Numerous factors have led to the protests, including issues such as dictatorship or absolute monarchy, human rights violation and government corruption.\textsuperscript{30} Economic decline, unemployment, extreme poverty, and a number of demographic structural factors such as a large percentage of educated but dissatisfied youth within the population are leading causes of Middle East conflict.\textsuperscript{31}

Government Structures:

Before 2011 the Middle East was a democratic desert. The lack of a strong civil society, a market-driven economy, adequate income and literacy levels, democratic neighbors, and democratic culture explains the region’s failure to democratize.”\textsuperscript{32} The dictators of the Middle East, whether they are called kings, presidents, and prime ministers, some of which disguise their authoritarian regime better than others, follow a similar pattern. By controlling all the power and making sure that the different government departments all report directly to him, the dictator makes himself the only decision maker in the operation of the state, therefore protecting himself from potential harm or opposition.

These autocratic regimes added to the misery of their people by tolerating, and even encouraging, widespread corruption and sketchy legal systems that frightened away legitimate investors. As a result, foreign investment and development were replaced by those looking to exploit the region in cahoots with its semi-criminal elite.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{29} United Nations Development Program, 2002
\item \textsuperscript{30} Cockburn, Alexander (18–20 February 2011). "The Tweet and Revolution"
\end{itemize}
Economic Problems:

Despite the fact that most national economies in the Middle East have grown in the past decade, the vast majority of that wealth has gone to the dictators and their supporters rather than to the people. Over the course of his thirty years in office, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt collected a fortune of between 40 and 70 billion US dollars, and many of his close friends and business partners also became billionaires. Food prices mostly evened out in 2009 and early 2010. However, prices rose again from mid-2010 as quantitative easing was started. During an 8-month period, prices rose nearly 40%. Decreasing wages for average worker alongside rising food prices, widespread unemployment, and the obviously fast-growing wealth of political elite has created an atmosphere of frustration and anger for the common man and create conflict.

Major Events

Tunisian Revolution:

The Tunisian Revolution is commonly considered to have begun on December 18, 2010, when 26-year old Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after a policewoman confiscated his only method of income. After the confiscation, Bouazizi attempted to complain to the provincial headquarters, but was refused an audience and soon lit himself on fire in protest. Bouazizi’s radical act served to unite different groups together in a series of escalating protests. These violent protests led to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s fleeing to Saudi Arabia in January 2011.

Algerian Protests:

As a result of widespread protests in 1988, an attempt at a democratic government, the military seizure of power, and three terms of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, protests were common in Algeria. In early February 2011, President Bouteflika was driven to promise the end of a nineteen-year state of emergency and later vowed to increase democracy in Algeria. However, inspired by the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, protests still continue in the country.

34 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12195025
36 Ibid
37 http://professional.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703327404576194363244985344.htm
38 Ibid.
Egyptian Revolution:

Hosni Mubarak was President of Egypt for thirty years, and ruled in a constant state of emergency. On January 25, 2011, semi-violent protests against Mubarak began. In response to the protests being organized over Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, the Egyptian government shut off internet access throughout the entire country in an attempt to end the protests. Facing major opposition, Mubarak gradually made a series of concessions: he promised not to run again in September, dissolved his government, chose Omar Suleiman as his Vice President, and ceded many powers to Suleiman. Finally, on February 11, 2011, Mubarak stepped down.

Libyan Civil War:

An early protest about delays in housing projects in January 2011 led to about thirty billion dollars being earmarked for a housing investment fund. Soon, however, people became inspired by revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and began to openly revolt, using things like social media to organize protests.

Other Protests:

Protests have occurred in many countries, such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Oman, Mauritania, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Sudan, and Western Sahara.

Timeline of Arab Springs:

- December 17, 2010 — Street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in protest.
- December 28 — Tunisian President Ben Ali warns protesters to stop protesting.
- January 25 — Thousands protest in Egypt.
- February 11 — Egyptian President Mubarak hands over power to the army.
- February 12 — Thousand of protesters defy a ban on demonstrations in Algeria.
- February 16 — Tens of thousands of people protest in a major intersection in Bahrain.

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid
43 http://www.tropicpost.com/middle-east-in-revolt/
44 http://www.haaretz.com/news/international/violent-clashes-wrack-libya-after-scores-said-killed-in-single-day-1.344666
February 27 — Tunisian Prime Minister Ghannouchi announces that he is stepping down and gives power over to Bengaji. Libyan National Transitional Council opposition party formed.

March 3 — Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq resigns to coming protests and chooses Essam Sharaf as his successor.

March 19 — NATO begins operations in Libya.

April 1 — Thousands of Algerian guards protest against government.

June 22 — Constitutional amendment talks in Algeria end. Opposition parties call them a sham.

July 2 — Bahrain Sunni rulers begin to talk to opposition”.46

Democratic Transition

Many analysts can argue that the Arab Spring can be seen as a third wave of democratization, following Latin America in the 1980s and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Autocratic leaders have lost power in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. There is a reform process underway in Morocco, Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain and other gulf states. Even in Saudi Arabia, the decision to allow women some future rights to vote is a direct result of the Arab Spring.

Others have argued that upheaval in the region has led to new threats in the form of the rise of political Islam. It is certainly true that recent elections in the region have benefitted religious parties. In Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Islamic parties have come out on top. They may well do so in Libya, Algeria and Yemen as well. Such as democratic transition in Middle East as like-

Democratic Transition

- Presidential election in Egypt, 23 and 24 May, 2012
- Election in Tunisia on 23 October, 2012
- Presidential election held on 21 February, 2012
- Parliamentary election in Libya on July, 2012

Figure 04: Democratic Transition in the Middle East

46 http://professional.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703842004576162884012981142.html
The outcome and future of “Arab Spring”

Since December 17, 2010, a wave of social reactions has been spread to all countries of North Africa and to the majority of the Middle East’s countries. This social uprising caused a series of political developments inside the Arab world, such as:

- The fall of some regimes (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen).
- The promotion of a series of political reforms (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, etc), and
- The persistence of uprising in other Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, etc).

Criticism

After a bloody revolution in Arab world the counties of the reign are facing some tremendous problems in social political and economic sphere. So every country must consider many factors for any potential unrest. The following factors should be more emphasize:

1) Middle Class status, income distribution, poverty line, perceptions of social equity, Employment and job quality must be promoted

2) Security services, national security courts, and emergency law: The legitimate struggle with terrorism and extremism affects some countries. So security should be developed.

3) Rule of law: there are serious abuses of property, criminal, business, and other civil law. Corruption in the courts and legal system is a key problem. So rule of law should be ensured.

4) Corruption: It was one of the reasons of Arab spring. So government should be aware to abolish corruption.

5) Respect for Human and Fundamental Rights: The state should ensure Human and Fundamental Rights of every citizen.

6) Women rights: Women rights are largely neglected in the Arab reign. So, freedom has to give to women in social, political and economic arena.
Conclusion

Finally it can be said that Middle East conflict is the long-term regarding as protracted conflict in their region from the various kind of bloody war such as Israel-Palestine and Iraq-Iran war. But after Arab spring the People from all backgrounds demanded democracy, social justice, freedom, dignity, equality, freedom from corruption, freedom of information, and freedom in their lives and they are going to this ways to the peaceful civilization from their previous authoritarian rule. The revolution turns to democratic system and institutional change in state apparatus. Middle East is economically developed region in the World but some of their disorder situations fall into them in the hell after the Arab spring it should be denoted the democratic transition in Middle East but this is so much important for positive peaceful state to settle and ensure the human rights by non-violence and personal transformation to link up with international organizations and institutions.

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