# From Revolution to Reform: Analysing the outcomes of the Arab Spring

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## Abstract
The Arab Spring uprisings, which began in late 2010, reshaped the political and geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This research article examines the profound effects of the uprisings on regional geopolitics, international relations, and the balance of power in the region. It explores the shifting alliances between MENA states, the role of foreign intervention in countries like Libya and Syria, and the deepening sectarian divides, particularly between Sunni and Shia-majority states. The article highlights the changing dynamics of power in the post-Arab Spring period, focusing on the influence of regional powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, as well as the strategic interests of global actors, including the U.S. and Russia. The study further assesses the impact of foreign interventions, both military and diplomatic, and their implications for long-term regional stability. Through a detailed analysis, this article contributes to understand how the Arab Spring has led to a reconfiguration of political, economic, and security relations in the MENA region, with lasting consequences for both regional and global geopolitics.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, regional geopolitics, Middle East and North Africa, foreign intervention, alliances, sectarianism, balance of power, Syria, Libya, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, international relations, MENA region.

## I. Introduction

The Arab Spring, a series of anti-government protests and uprisings that swept through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) starting in late 2010, marked a pivotal moment in the history of the region. Initially sparked by grievances over political repression, economic inequality, and widespread corruption, the uprisings led to the toppling of long-standing autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. While these uprisings were seen by many as a cry for democracy and political reform, their outcomes have been far more complex and have varied significantly across different countries. Some nations, like Tunisia, experienced a relatively peaceful transition to democracy, while others, such as Syria and Libya, descended into brutal civil wars, exacerbated by foreign interventions and regional proxy conflicts.

The Arab Spring's immediate political consequences, including the destabilization of governments and the erosion of the established political order, were closely followed by broader shifts in the region's geopolitical landscape. The uprisings disrupted long-standing regional alliances, altered the balance of power, and led to a realignment of political, military, and economic relations both within the MENA region and between regional actors and external powers. In particular, the Arab Spring reshaped the way in which regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) interacted with each other, often in competition for influence, while major global powers, became more directly involved in the region's conflicts.

The Arab Spring also deepened existing sectarian tensions in the regionbetween Sunni and Shia-majority states, with major conflicts like the Syrian civil war and the war in Yemen taking on sectarian and ideological dimensions. The involvement of foreign powers, including the United States, Russia, and Iran, further complicated the regional dynamics, turning these domestic uprisings into global flashpoints. While some countries experienced significant foreign intervention, other nations were left to confront the turmoil with limited external assistance or intervention.

This article *'From Revolution to Reform: Analysing the outcomes of the Arab Spring'* seeks to explore the geopolitical consequences of the Arab Spring uprisings and the long-term impact on the region's political, economic, and security landscape. By analysing the shifting regional alliances, the role of foreign interventions, and the broader balance of power, the paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the Arab Spring has

influenced the trajectory of political change in the MENA region. It examines the ways in which the uprisings have shaped the relationships between regional powers, the role of international actors, and the impact on both intra-regional and global security.

In addition to providing insights into the post-uprising geopolitical transformations, this research paper also considers the broader implications of the Arab Spring for international relations. It assesses the ways in which global powershave adapted their foreign policies in response to the changing political landscape in MENA. By tracing the shifts in alliances, foreign intervention strategies, and regional power dynamics, thepresent paper contributes to a broader understanding of the Arab Spring as a transformative event in both the political history of the Middle East and the broader global political order.

## II.    Literature Review

The Arab Spring uprisings have been widely studied in political science, international relations, and Middle Eastern studies, with scholars focusing on a range of themes, including the causes, outcomes, and geopolitical implications of these movements. Early analyses of the Arab Spring emphasised its roots in economic hardship, authoritarian governance, and the role of social media in mobilizing youth (Amin, 2013; Tufekci, 2017). These studies highlighted how regional inequalities, corruption, and limited political freedoms ignited public uprisings across MENA countries. In terms of political transitions, some scholars, like Lynch (2016), argued that while Tunisia's transition to democracy was relatively successful, other countries like Syria and Libya descended into violence, exacerbating regional instability. The role of foreign interventions, particularly in Libya and Syria, has been the subject of extensive debate, with Berti (2014) noting that NATO's intervention in Libya destabilized the country, while Makdisi (2016) emphasised how the Syrian conflict became a proxy battleground for regional powers, leading to deeper sectarian divisions. Also, the Arab Spring's impact on regional alliances and the balance of power has been explored by Hinnebusch (2015) and Gerlach (2017), who documented how countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, and the UAE sought to exert influence by supporting opposing factions. This body of literature underscores the profound and varied outcomes of the uprisings, with some scholars suggesting that the revolts created opportunities for democratization, while others contend that they accelerated authoritarian tendencies (Falk, 2012; Chaziza, 2020). Overall, the literature reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of the Arab Spring's impact, with ongoing debates about its legacy and the future of political reform in the MENA region.

## III.    Methodology

*'From Revolution to Reform: Analysing the outcomes of the Arab Spring'*adopts a qualitative approach to examine the geopolitical consequences of the Arab Spring uprisings, focusing on regional alliances, foreign interventions, and the shifting balance of power in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The paper employs a comparative case study methodology, analysing key countries affected by the uprisings, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, to explore the variations in political transitions and the role of foreign powers. Primary data sources include academic articles, government reports, and policy briefs, alongside secondary sources such as news reports and analyses from international organisations, which provide a comprehensive view of the events and their aftermath. The paper also draws upon expert interviews with scholars and policy analysts specialising in MENA geopolitics to incorporate a range of perspectives. The research uses content analysis of relevant media coverage and diplomatic communications to understand how different regional and global actors responded to the uprisings and shaped the subsequent geopolitical landscape. By synthesising these various data sources, the methodology aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the Arab Spring's impact on regional and international relations.

## IV.    Objective

The primary objective of this research article is to critically analyze the outcomes of the Arab Spring uprisings with a specific focus on their geopolitical implications for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The study seeks to examine how these uprisings reshaped internal political structures, influenced regional alliances, and altered the broader balance of power through foreign interventions and shifting strategic interests. By exploring the varied trajectories of countries affected by the uprisingsthe research aims to identify patterns of democratic reform, authoritarian resurgence, and conflict escalation. Additionally, it seeks to assess the role played by both regional powers and global actors in shaping the post-uprising order. Through a comparative and

interdisciplinary approach, the article aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Arab Spring's long-term impact on regional stability, governance, and international relations, offering valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and international stakeholders engaged in the MENA region.

**Importance**

This research article provides critical insights into the long-term geopolitical consequences of the Arab Spring uprisings, offering a comprehensive analysis of how these events reshaped the political, economic, and security landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). By examining the outcomes of the uprisings, the role of foreign interventions, and the shifting dynamics of regional power, the study contributes to the understanding of both the successes and failures of the Arab Spring in promoting democratic reforms. It also highlights the significant role of external actors in influencing the course of post-uprising transitions, shedding light on the complex interactions between regional and global powers. The findings of this research are valuable for policymakers, scholars, and international organisations seeking to navigate the intricate political realities of the MENA region and develop informed strategies for promoting stability, peace, and democratic governance. By exploring the impact of the Arab Spring on regional geopolitics, this research fills a critical gap in the literature, offering a nuanced perspective on the enduring legacy of the uprisings and their implications for the future of the region and its international relations.

**Background: Causes of the Arab Spring Uprisings**

The Arab Spring uprisings, which began in December 2010, were primarily driven by a combination of long-standing socio-economic grievances, political repression, and the rising influence of digital media. While these causes were common across the region, the specific factors varied from country to country, shaped by local contexts, political histories, and economic conditions. A central cause of the Arab Spring was widespread dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions. In many countries, high levels of poverty, unemployment, and rising food prices served as catalysts for protests. In Tunisia, the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor protesting police harassment and economic hardship, symbolised the frustration of youth and marginalized groups facing unemployment rates as high as 30% among young people.[1] Similarly, in Egypt, soaring food prices and high unemployment ratestriggered mass protests demanding economic reforms.[2] The economic disparity was intensified by rooted corruption among the ruling elites, with regimes often seen as enriching themselves at the expense of the populace.[3]However, the intensity and manifestations of these grievances differed. While unemployment was a universal issue, countries like Libya and Syria had more extreme internal disparities in wealth, where economic inequalities were more pronounced between urban elites and rural populations.[4] In Tunisia and Egypt, the economic protests quickly morphed into political uprisings, but in countries like Yemen, where tribal affiliations and regional disparities were more significant, socio-economic issues were often overshadowed by deeper historical grievances related to governance and autonomy.[5]

Another crucial factor behind the Arab Spring was the pervasive political suppression that characterised most of the Arab world. For decades, authoritarian leaders maintained power through mechanisms of surveillance, state violence, and suppression of dissent. In countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, authoritarian regimes had been in power for decades—Ben Ali in Tunisia for 23 years, Mubarak in Egypt for 30 years, and Bashar al-Assad in Syria for over 11 years at the time of the uprisings.[6]These prolonged autocracies led to widespread frustration with the lack of political freedom, freedom of speech, and democratic processes.The oppression in these countries varied in its intensity and form. In Tunisia and Egypt, citizens had some space to organise and protest, though limited, which allowed for mass mobilisations against the regimes.[7] In contrast, the political landscape in countries like Syria and Libya had been even more repressive, with heavy security apparatuses that maintained a more tightly controlled society. The lack of democratic channels for change in these countries led to the belief that only mass uprisings could remove these autocratic regimes.

The rapid spread of social media played a transformative role in the Arab Spring uprisings, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube providing a means for organising protests, disseminating information, and sharing the plight of protesters with the outside world. Social media amplified political discontent and played a central role in mobilising youth, in Tunisia and Egypt, where protests were coordinated largely through online platforms.[8]In Egypt, the *#Jan25* movement on Twitter helped catalyse the mass mobilisations that eventually led to the resignation of President

Hosni Mubarak.[9]The extent to which digital platforms influenced uprisingsvaried across the region. While Tunisia and Egypt experienced widespread online mobilisation, countries like Syria and Libya had less effective internet penetration in rural areas, and governments like Assad's in Syria were able to shut down or control social media to a greater extent.[10] The varying levels of access to the internet and the state's control over digital spaces significantly influenced the ways in which uprisings unfolded.

External actors also played a role during the Arab Spring uprisings. In some countries, international actors and foreign interventions helped shape the outcomes of uprisings. In Libya, the United Nations authorised NATO intervention to protect civilians from Muammar Gaddafi's forces, which led to the eventual overthrow of the regime.[11] In contrast, in Syria, external actors such as Iran and Russia supported the Assad regime, while the United States and its allies supported opposition groups, which escalated the conflict into a civil war.[12]Such external interventions significantly influenced the political paths and outcomes of uprisings in Libya and Syria, whereas countries like Tunisia and Egypt, which had less external interference, saw more immediate transitions toward new political systems.

## Democratic Reforms or Deepened Authoritarianism

The political shifts that followed the Arab Spring uprisings were a mixed bag of progress, setbacks, and reversals, with some countries experiencing significant democratic reforms, while others saw a return to authoritarianism. The outcomes varied widely across the region due to the specific political, social, and economic contexts of each country. This section explores the extent to which these transitions led to democratic reforms or deepened authoritarianism in key Arab Spring countries.

Tunisia stands out as the most successful case of political change in the wake of the Arab Spring. After the ousting of President Zine-El-Abidine-Ben-Ali in January 2011, Tunisia embarked on a relatively peaceful and inclusive path toward democratic reforms. A new constitution was adopted in 2014, widely hailed for its commitment to human rights, gender equality, and political pluralism.[13] The country held free and fair elections in 2011, which resulted in the peaceful transfer of power. Tunisia's transitionwas marked by significant steps toward democracy, including the establishment of political dialogue mechanisms and the formation of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, a group of political leaders, labour unions, employers, and human rights activists, that played a crucial role in mediating between diverse political forces.[14]While Tunisia's progress toward democracy is significant, the country faced substantial challenges. Economic hardship, high unemployment, and continued security threats from terrorist groups have created a volatile political environment, leading to political instability and disillusionment with the democratic process.[15]

Egypt's transition following the Arab Spring offers a stark contrast to Tunisia's. After the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, the country initially moved toward democratic reforms with the election of Mohamed Morsi in 2012, the first democratically elected president in Egypt's history.[16]However, Morsi's presidency was short-lived. In 2013, Morsi was ousted by the military after mass protests against his rule. The subsequent return of military-backed rule under General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi marked a clear shift back to authoritarianism.[17]Since Sisi's ascension to the presidency in 2014, Egypt has seen the consolidation of power by the military and the suppression of political opposition, comprisingIslamist groups, secular activists, and civil society organisations. Despite the rhetoric of democracy, the country has witnessed a severe crackdown on dissent, with thousands of activists and political opponents imprisoned.[18]Thus, Egypt's transition has not led to sustained democratic reforms but rather a deepening of authoritarianism under a military regime that controls key state institutions and limits political freedoms.[19]

Libya presents another example of how political transitions can devolve into chaos and authoritarian resurgence. Following the ousting and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the country descended into a civil war among various factions vying for power. The initial hope for democracy was quickly overshadowed by the rise of armed militias and a lack of strong central governance.[20]The power vacuum created by Gaddafi's fall allowed rival factions, tribes, and Islamist groups to take control of different parts of the country, resulting in political breakup and continued conflict.[21]Libya's political instability has hindered any meaningful democratic reforms, and the country has largely remained under the control of various warlords and militias.[22] In 2014, a new round of fighting broke out between the internationally recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) and the rival Libyan National Army (LNA), led by General Khalifa Haftar. Although there have been some international efforts to

mediate peace, Libya's political future remains uncertain, with authoritarian elements emerging in the form of military leaders and factional rule. Thus, Libya's political transition has failed to lead to democracy and instead has deep-rooted authoritarianism in patchy pockets of power.

Syria's political transition represents the most tragic failure of the Arab Spring. What began as peaceful protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime in March 2011 quickly escalated into a brutal civil war. The Assad regime, with substantial military and political support from Russia and Iran, has managed to regain control over much of the country, but at the cost of immense human suffering, displacement, and destruction.[23] The Syrian government's violent suppression of opposition movements and its refusal to implement political reforms only rooted authoritarian rule. The war has also led to the rise of various militant groups, including ISIS, which further fragmented the country and complicated efforts at democratic transition.

Yemen's political transition, like Syria's, has transferred into chaos and civil war. In 2011, widespread protests forced President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down after 33 years in power. However, the subsequent transition to his successor, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, was marred by political instability, economic decline, and the resurgence of old rivalries.[24]In 2014, Houthi rebels, a Shiite militant group, took control of the capital, Sanaa, and later forced Hadi to flee the country. This led to a brutal conflict between the Houthi rebels, supported by Iran, and the internationally recognised government of Hadi, backed by a Saudi-led coalition.[25]Yemen's transition has not only failed to lead to democratic reforms but has instead led to a destructive civil war, with millions of lives lost and widespread humanitarian suffering. Like Libya and Syria, Yemen's political instability has strengthened authoritarian forces and deepened the country's fragmentation.

## Social Media and Youth Movements

The role of social media and youth movements in the Arab Spring uprisings was pivotal in both initiating and sustaining the protests across the Middle East and North Africa. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were instrumental in organising, mobilising, and amplifying the voices of discontented citizens. These tools allowed people to bypass state-controlled media, disseminate information rapidly, and create networks of solidarity that spanned national borders. The influence of social media was especially notable in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, where digital platforms played a crucial role in the coordination and scale of protests.[26]

In Tunisia, social media was a critical tool in organising protests that led to the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 sparked an online outpouring of sympathy and outrage, which rapidly turned into calls for action. Activists and citizens used Facebook pages and Twitter hashtags to organise protests, share videos of police brutality, and expose the corruption of the regime.[27] The same pattern was observed in Egypt, where the January 25 protests were initially coordinated on Facebook through the "*We Are All Khaled Said*" page, which aimed to rally against police brutality and government repression.[28] The ability of social media to help activists rapidly organise events and mobilise the masses was crucial in overcoming the logistical challenges posed by state repression.The youth played a central role in Tunisia and Egypt, with young people using social media to express their frustrations with economic hardship, political suppression, and the lack of democratic freedoms. In Egypt, the 2011 revolution was largely driven by young activists who were highly active on social media platforms, especially in urban centres like Cairo.[29]These movements were largely leaderless, decentralised, and connected globally, making them more difficult for autocratic regimes to suppress effectively. Social media acted as both a tool for empowerment and a means of subverting state control over public discourse.

Social media's impact went beyond organising; it also amplified the protests by giving them a global platform. Videos and photos uploaded to YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook allowed the international community to witness the brutality of government crackdowns in real-time. For instance, the now-iconic image of the "*Egyptian girl in Tahrir Square*" became a symbol of defiance and courage.[30] Similarly, in Syria, social media became the primary means for activists to document the regime's violence and human rights abuses, despite heavy restrictions on traditional media. The viral nature of images and videos shared online served not only to expose the regimes' brutality but also to rally international solidarity, putting additional pressure on regimes to respond.[31]Moreover, social media created a new space for political discussion and engagement, particularly among youth who were excluded from traditional political processes. In Tunisia and Egypt, online platforms allowed young activists to create alternative political narratives that challenged the state-controlled

media's portrayal of events.[32] This was important because it allowed for the rapid spread of ideas and the creation of a counter-narrative that resonated across the region, especially among the youth who felt disconnected from traditional political structures.

While social media played a key role in sparking the Arab Spring uprisings, its long-term impact on political engagement in the region has been more complicated. In the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, social media remained a powerful tool for organising protests and pushing for political reform. However, the post-revolutionary political landscape quickly reverted to old patterns of political control, and social media became a space for both opposition groups and regimes to battle for influence. In Egypt, the military regime quickly adapted to the digital age by employing social media as a tool for propaganda and disinformation, while also using surveillance to monitor and crack down on online dissent. The government's ability to co-opt social media platforms for state purposes led to a decrease in their effectiveness as tools for democratic mobilization.In addition, the initial optimism surrounding social media as a tool for democratic change has been tempered by the realisation that online mobilisation does not necessarily translate into lasting political change. The rise of populist and authoritarian leaders in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and even Turkey has shown that social media can be as much a tool for consolidating power as it is for challenging it. In many countries, the initial promises of democratic reform gave way to political disillusionment, as the new regimes or political systems failed to address the root causes of the uprisings, such as high unemployment, economic inequality, and corruption.

Despite this, social media has had a lasting impact on the political culture of the region. It has introduced new forms of political engagement, who now use digital platforms to engage in political debates, share opinions, and mobilise for social causes. The 2019 Sudanese revolutionsaw youth-led movements using Facebook and WhatsApp to organise protests against the long-standing autocratic regime of Omar al-Bashir.[33] While social media may no longer be as dominant a tool as it was during the Arab Spring, it has however contributed to a shift in how political engagement is structured in the region.One of the unintended consequences of social media's role in the Arab Spring uprisings has been the rise of state surveillance, censorship, and the spread of misinformation. Governments in the region, recognising the power of social media to

challenge their authority, have increasingly turned to digital surveillance and online repression to monitor dissent. In Egypt, the regime has implemented strict laws to monitor online activity, and activists are often targeted by the state for their social media presence. Similarly, in countries like Bahrain, the government has used social media to track and arrest protesters and has even employed 'cyber-mercenaries' to attack opposition voices online.The spread of misinformation and disinformation has also become a significant issue in the post-Arab Spring era. While social media remains an important tool for political mobilisation, it has also become a platform for the spread of false information, conspiracy theories, and divisive narratives that can further destabilise already fragile political environments. This has complicated efforts to use social media for positive political change, as citizens must now navigate an increasingly complex digital landscape of misinformation and state manipulation.[34]

## Economic Impact of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring uprisings not only reshaped the political landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) but also had profound economic consequences for the affected countries. The protests that erupted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria were driven, by widespread economic grievances such as high unemployment, poverty, and inequality. However, the aftermath of the revolutions in these countries worsened many of these issues, resulting in economic instability, deteriorating poverty levels, and a sharp rise in unemployment.

Tunisia, widely considered the most successful example of post-Arab Spring political transition, has faced significant economic challenges since the fall of Ben Ali's regime in 2011. The revolution triggered an immediate economic slowdown, as political instability and uncertainty led to decreased investor confidence, a drop in tourism, and disrupted industrial output. The country's GDP growth contracted sharply in 2011, falling from 3.6% in 2010 to just 1.1% in 2011 (World Bank, 2012). Unemployment in Tunisia rose, especially among youth, reaching 18.9% by 2012, compared to 13.6% in 2010 (World Bank, 2013). High youth unemployment, coupled with regional disparities between urban and rural areas, has aggravated social unrest, making it difficult for the new democratic government to address the economic grievances that sparked the revolution.[35]While Tunisia has made strides toward democratisation and political stability, the economic challenges remain persistent.

Growth has been slow, with GDP growth averaging just 1.5% annually from 2011 to 2019, far below the levels needed to absorb the growing workforce (IMF, 2020). Moreover, food price inflation has become a major issue, further pushing many Tunisians into poverty. Despite political progress, the country's economic recovery has been slow, with the youth unemployment rate still high at around 30% as of 2020.[36]

In Egypt, the Arab Spring ushered in a period of political instability that severely affected the country's economy. The removal of Mubarak in 2011, followed by the short-lived tenure of Mohamed Morsi and the eventual military coup in 2013, destabilised the Egyptian economy, which heavily relied on foreign investment, tourism, and remittances. In the years following the revolution, Egypt's GDP growth fell from 5.1% in 2010 to 1.8% in 2011, and the country faced rising inflation rates, which increased to 11.5% by 2012 (World Bank, 2013). The devaluation of the Egyptian pound in 2016 further impaired economic instability, leading to higher costs of living and reduced purchasing power.[37]Unemployment in Egypt skyrocketed during and after the Arab Spring. The unemployment rate, which had been around 9% before the revolution, increased to 13.6% in 2011 and remained stubbornly high in the subsequent years (World Bank, 2014). Youth unemploymentsoared, reaching approximately 35% by 2013. The political uncertainty created by the successive changes in leadership contributed to a lack of long-term economic planning, with foreign investors remaining cautious about committing to Egypt's market. This economic stagnation led to an increase in poverty, with an estimated 27.8% of Egyptians living below the national poverty line in 2015 (World Bank, 2016).Under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt pursued economic reforms aimed at stabilising the economy, such as cutting subsidies and devaluing the currency. While these measures have had some success in stabilizing Egypt's fiscal situation, the economic benefits have not been broadly feltby the poor and middle class. Inequality has widened, and unemployment remains high, with significant portions of the population still unable to secure formal employment or adequate income.[38]

Libya's economy was severely impacted by the civil war that followed the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The conflict disrupted oil production, which accounted for over 95% of Libya's export earnings and more than 50% of its GDP before the revolution. The collapse of oil output, along with the fragmentation of the state and the rise of militia groups, led to economic instability and a reduction of Libya's economy. Libya's GDP fell by an estimated 62% in 2014, and inflation rates spiked.[39]The breakdown of security and governance led to a dramatic rise in unemployment and poverty. Unemployment, which had been around 19% in 2010, risen after the conflict began, with reports suggesting that up to 30% of the workforce was unemployed by 2015. Moreover, poverty rates increased as the civil war devastated infrastructure and social services, while the influx of refugees and displaced persons damaged the country's resources. As the war continued, Libya's economy became increasingly dependent on foreign aid and humanitarian assistance, undermining the prospects for long-term recovery.

Yemen, which had been struggling with poverty and economic inequality even before the Arab Spring, saw its situation worsen significantly after the uprisings. Following the departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012, Yemen's political transition failed to bring about stability. Instead, the country plunged into civil war in 2014, which has lasted for years and led to severe economic consequences. The conflict devastated the country's infrastructure, including critical oil pipelines and ports, leading to a dramatic decline in oil production. Yemen's GDP contracted by 35% between 2014 and 2015, and inflation skyrocketed (World Bank, 2016).Unemployment in Yemen had already been high before the war, hovering around 35% in 2010. The conflict, however, exacerbated this issue, with estimates suggesting that unemployment reached over 50% by 2016 (World Bank, 2016). The country also saw a drastic rise in poverty, with over 80% of the population living below the poverty line by 2017 (UNDP, 2017). The collapse of Yemen's economy has been accompanied by a humanitarian crisis, with millions of Yemenis facing food insecurity and a lack of basic services due to the war.

The economic impact of the Arab Spring on Syria has been nothing short of catastrophic. The civil war, which began in 2011, has led to widespread destruction, especially in major cities like Aleppo and Damascus. Syria's GDP has contracted by more than 60% since the beginning of the war, with key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and oil production suffering extreme losses. The war has also led to a sharp decline in foreign direct investment, as the conflict created an environment of profound instability.Unemployment in Syria rosedramatically as the conflict progressed, with estimates suggesting that more than half of the working-age population was unemployed by 2015.

The destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of millions of people, and the continued military operations have contributed to the sharp rise in poverty. In 2017, it was estimated that around 80% of the Syrian population was living in poverty (UNDP, 2017). In addition, inflation rates have spiralled, and the Syrian pound has lost more than 90% of its value since 2011, further eroding the purchasing power of Syrians.[40]

**Influence on Regional Geopolitics and International Relations**

The Arab Spring uprisings, which began in late 2010, have had profound and lasting effects on the geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). While these uprisings were primarily driven by domestic grievances, their outcomes reshaped regional alliances, foreign interventions, and the balance of power across the region. The upheavals destabilised established political orders, led to the emergence of new power structures, and prompted shifting alliances both within the MENA region and between regional powers and external actors.

One of the most significant geopolitical consequences of the Arab Spring was the shifting of regional alliances, as the uprisings dismantled old power structures and prompted the reconfiguration of relationships between states. In many cases, countries that were once aligned under authoritarian regimes found themselves at odds in the post-Arab Spring landscape. InTunisia, the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011 weakened the influence of traditional Arab autocracies and created openings for new political ideologies. In Egypt, the overthrow of Mubarak led to a temporary rise of Islamist influence under the Muslim Brotherhood, during the presidency of Mohamed Morsi (2012-2013), which caused friction with more conservative regional powers like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who viewed the Brotherhood as a threat to the existing order.[41]On the contrary, the uprisings allowed other countries to increase their regional influence by supporting opposition movements and Islamist factions across the region, including in Libya and Syria.[42]

The shifting alliances also had implications for countries such as Syria and Bahrain. In Syria, the Assad regime, which remained relatively stable due to its strong relationship with Iran and Russia, became an epicentre of regional proxy wars. The Iranian regimeused the Syrian conflict toboost its influence in the Levant and counter the rising influence of Sunni-majority countries like Saudi

Arabia, which had backed opposition groups. This proxy conflict further intensified the sectarian divide in the region, which had broader implications for the balance of power.[43] Meanwhile, in Bahrain, the protests were violently suppressed with the support of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces, primarily from Saudi Arabia, marking a clear distinction in how regional powers responded to popular uprisings depending on their strategic interests.[44]

The Arab Spring also led to significant foreign intervention in the region, as both regional and global powers sought to influence the outcome of uprisings in various countries. One of the most prominent instances of foreign intervention was in Libya, where the NATO-led intervention, sanctioned by the United Nations, played a key role in the overthrow of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. The intervention, which began in March 2011, was framed as a humanitarian intervention to protect civilians from Gaddafi's forces. However, critics argue that it also reflected broader geopolitical competition, with Western powers, particularly France and the UK, seeking to ensure influence in the post-Gaddafi era and safeguard their economic interests, especially in the context of Libya's oil wealth.[45] The collapse of Gaddafi's regime left Libya in a state of turmoil, leading to a power vacuum that was quickly filled by competing militias and local factions, many of which received foreign backing, complicating the country's stability.[46]

In Syria, foreign intervention took on a different character. As the Syrian civil war unfolded, regional and international powers engaged in direct and indirect interventions, contributing to the escalation and prolongation of the conflict. Iran, which had long been an ally of the Assad regime, increased its support to Damascus, providing military aid and deploying its own forces, while Russia, provided crucial military backing, including airstrikes, to support the Syrian government. Meanwhile, the United States and its European allies, along with regional powers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, backed various opposition groups, though with conflicting agendas. This foreign intervention escalated the conflict, turning Syria into a proxy battleground for regional and global powers, with lasting implications for regional stability and the future of the Syrian state. The Russian intervention in Syriasolidified Moscow's role as a key power broker in the region, shifting the balance of power and challenging Western influence in the Middle East.[47]

In addition to military intervention, foreign powers also exerted influence through diplomatic and economic channels. The Arab Spring opened up opportunities for countries like Turkey to expand their influence in the region, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, where it provided political and financial support to Islamist movements.[48] At the same time, the United States and the European Union found themselves grappling with the consequences of the uprisings, often struggling to balance their support for democratisation with their long-standing relationships with autocratic regimes in the region. The U.S.faced dilemmas over whether to support the overthrow of longstanding allies, such as Mubarak in Egypt, while simultaneously trying to maintain stability in the region.[49]

The Arab Spring uprisings led to a shift in the regional balance of powerbetween the Sunni and Shia-majority states, with Iran and Saudi Arabia at the forefront of this divide. The uprisings deepened existing sectarian tensionsand intensified the Sunni-Shia rivalry. In Syria, the Assad regime's Alawite-Shia identity faced off against Sunni-majority opposition groups, backed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. This division turned the Syrian conflict into a regional proxy war, with Iran aiming to expand its sphere of influence in the Levant and counter the influence of Saudi Arabia and its allies. Similarly, the Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia, supported anti-regime forces in Yemen, contributing to the ongoing conflict there, while Iran has been accused of supporting the Houthi rebels, entrenching the regional sectarian divide.[50]

In contrast, some countries, like Qatar and the UAE, emerged as regional power players by leveraging their financial resources and diplomatic influence to shape events in the post-Arab Spring period. Qatarsupported opposition movements across the region, while the UAE, with its strong military and economic assets, positioned itself as a counterweight to political Islam and Islamic movements. This led to a growing rift between the UAE and Qatar, mainly after the fall of Morsi in Egypt and the rise of more conservative Islamist factions in the region.[51] These tensions reflect the broader contest for regional hegemony, with each Gulf state vying for influence over the future trajectory of political movements in the MENA region.

## V.    Results

The analysis reveals that the outcomes of the Arab Spring uprisings have led to a complex and varied geopolitical landscape across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In countries like Tunisia and Egypt, the uprisings resulted in short-term political transitions, with Tunisia experiencing a relatively successful move toward democratic reform, marked by free elections and the establishment of a new constitution. However, Egypt's transition was more turbulent, with the initial rise of the Muslim Brotherhood followed by a military coup in 2013, leading to a return to authoritarian rule. In Libya, the NATO-led intervention contributed to the fall of Gaddafi, but it also created a power vacuum that plunged the country into prolonged civil conflict, with foreign powers, including Russia and Turkey, becoming involved in a proxy war. Syria witnessed the most devastating consequences, with the civil war escalating into a multi-sided conflict, heavily influenced by foreign intervention from Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, destabilising the region. Yemendescended into a brutal civil war, with Saudi Arabia and Iran backing opposing factions. The results also indicate a significant realignment in regional power dynamics, with countries like Iran and Qatar seeking to expand their influence, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worked to consolidate their authority through military interventions and support for more conservative political movements. The findings suggest that while the Arab Spring offered opportunities for political reform, it also deepened sectarian divides and led to an intensification of regional rivalries, significantly altering the balance of power in the MENA region.

## VI.    Discussion

The results of this study highlight the profound and multifaceted impact of the Arab Spring on the political and geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). While the uprisings initially promised a wave of democratisation and political reform, the outcomes have been far more complex, with varying results across different countries. Tunisia stands out as a relative success story, transitioning to a functioning democracy despite significant challenges, suggesting that democratic change is possible even in the MENA context when there is a commitment to peaceful dialogue and institutional reform. On the other hand, Egypt's experience underscores the fragility of political transitions, where short-lived democratic experiments were overturned by military intervention, pointing to the resilience of authoritarian structures in the region. The case of Libya proves the dangers of external military intervention, as NATO's involvement led to the

collapse of the state, creating a power vacuum that exacerbated internal divisions and invited further foreign interference. Syria and Yemen, with their prolonged civil wars and complex foreign interventions, show how the Arab Spring inadvertently fuelled sectarianism and proxy conflicts, with regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey playing pivotal roles in shaping the trajectory of these conflicts. Besides, the research demonstrates the lasting influence of foreign powers, with the U.S., Russia, and European countries actively engaging in the region's conflicts, often in pursuit of strategic interests that have only deepened divisions and instability. The Arab Spring's legacyreveals that while it opened the door for potential reform, it also established geopolitical rivalries, created opportunities for authoritarian resurgence, and significantly altered the regional balance of power. This duality underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the Arab Spring's impact, as it continues to shape the MENA region's political trajectory and international relations.

## VII.     Conclusion

The Arab Spring uprisingshave had far-reaching and complex consequences for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. While initially seen as a potential catalyst for democratisation and political reform, the outcomes of the uprisings have been highly varied, with some countries witnessing brief moments of political transition, while others descended into violent conflict and protracted instability. Tunisia's relatively successful shift toward democracy stands in total contrast to the disastrous outcomes in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, where foreign interventions, sectarian tensions, and power vacuums deepened regional instability. The Arab Spring has also had a significant impact on the geopolitical landscape of MENA, with shifting alliances, rivalries, and the increased involvement of regional powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, all of whom sought to reshape the balance of power in the post-uprising environment. External actors like the United States, Russia, and European powers, have also played a crucial role, often worsened the conflicts or pursued strategic interests that undermined efforts for lasting peace.

Finally, the Arab Spring's legacy is a mixed one, characterised by both opportunities for reform and the entrenchment of authoritarianism, sectarianism, and regional fragmentation. The uprisings revealed the deep-rooted challenges of governance, state-building, and democratisation in the MENA region, highlighting the difficulties of achieving meaningful political change in environments marked by entrenched power structures, economic disparities, and external pressures. The Arab Spring has thus redefined regional geopolitics and international relations, with its impacts continuing to reverberate across the MENA region and influencing global political dynamics. This article underscores the need for continued engagement with the region, with an emphasis on supporting sustainable peace processes, democratic transitions, and conflict resolution efforts that address both the local and international dimensions of the Arab Spring's aftermath.

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