

# **Between Reform and Reaction**

## **The Syrian and Moroccan Responses to the Arab Spring**

**Jack Kalpakian**

School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Al Akhawayn University  
Ifrane, Morocco

## **Between Reform and Reaction: The Syrian and Moroccan responses to the Arab Spring**

**Jack Kalpakian**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper argues that the Arab Spring is caused by a diverse set of causes that include government repression, the development of overseas communities and economic hardship. In addition, the paper identifies the changes in information technologies as a permissive cause of the Arab Spring. The paper explores normative issues related to revolution as well as the broader issues of order and justice in international affairs. It uses a comparative case study methodology and offers some policy prescriptions for Syria and Morocco.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, Syria, Morocco, Case Studies, Order, Justice, Revolution, Political Reform.

### **Introduction**

In terms of political science and international studies, the concept of order and its cost was the object of contention between the English school and its more liberal opponents. A major premise of the English school is that without order, even the possibility of justice does not exist (Bull, 1971). Critics, on the other hand, see that “order” is often used a justification for the denial of justice (Ray, 1999). This paper argues that the English school is broadly correct in its approach to order, but that while order is foundational to the possibility of “justice” or “progress,” maintaining it depends on the steps that follow its (re-)establishment. In many ways, the Arab Spring provides us with an excellent opportunity to study the interplay of order and justice. On the one hand, there are revolutionary social movements striving to alter the relationship between the Arab state and its citizens and on the other hand there are governments representing structure and organization and reflecting the value of order. In the words of James Woolsey, there are some decent governments in the Arab world, but none has reached democracy (Woolsey, 2002). Woolsey’s division of Arab governments suggests that they react to the Arab Spring in vastly divergent ways. These divergent reactions can serve as the basis of the re-establishment of order, the seeding of chaos, or anything in between. The use of force was present in all countries at various levels and so were calls for dialogue and compromise, but the emphasis on one aspect or another of the government’s response was crucial.

Some states chose to war against the revolutionaries, these included Bahrain, Khadafy’s Libya and Assad’s Syria, others chose to compromise to an extent including Algeria, Jordan and Morocco. Under neither policy were results even, as with the issue of use of force, outcomes are best understood in relative terms. Of course, relativity also implies comparison with peer states.

It would be patently unfair to compare the Arab states with the countries of the European Union or even ASEAN, because their history makes them very different from other aspirant democracies to the point where comparison could not teach us much. The members of the Arab League are peer states with similar histories, demographics, culture and concerns, so they would be a good basis for comparative case studies vis-à-vis each other. Using a structured case study methodology, this study examines the approaches used by two Arab League governments to the complex of social and revolutionary movements collectively known as the Arab Spring. The first section addresses the normative questions associated with the question of the Arab Spring, the second section samples the current literature on the Arab Spring, the third section offers the framework of analysis used by this study, the fourth section addresses Syria and Morocco in comparison, and the fifth section offers policy prescriptions for Arab governments like Morocco's and for their partners in Europe and North America. There are no policy prescriptions for the Syrian government, because the course it embarked on leaves us no room for any suggestions, but there are some suggestions for a future Syrian regime informed by a meeting the author held with Syrian workers in Lebanon during the summer of 2012. The final section returns us to the question of order versus justice.

### **Normative Considerations**

One colleague once told the author that he regarded revolution as a pleasant or cleansing event. In contrast, the author's view is that revolution is at best a necessary evil, despite its emancipator potential. It contains no intrinsic value in and of itself, and it almost never results in a true break with the past. The Bolshevik, French and Chinese revolutions established governments were even more oppressive than the ones they replaced. Revolution is associated with massacres and even genocide against vast sectors of the population. From the earliest "modern" revolution and onwards, revolutions have the record of resulting in an immense number of deaths during the Vendee genocide (Levene, 2005: 116), the reign of terror, the Red terror, and the Great Leap Forward/Cultural Revolution. If a population is pushed to revolution, then the responsibility lies either with the government and/or revolutionary counter-elites, as was the case with revolutionary France. Wars of independence are often termed "revolutions," but that is a misnomer at best. The United States, Mexican, Cypriot, Serbian and Greek wars of independence were not revolutions, because they simply sought to rid the countries in question of foreign rule. If revolution can be avoided through peaceful reform, then normatively peaceful change is the better choice. This view is in line with non-violence and the use of civil disobedience and Gandhi's approaches. This perspective is certainly unpopular with people with Marxist and radical liberal positions, but the historical record is there for all to see, whether Marxist, Radical Liberal or even Nationalist, revolution often comes at the expense of innocent people, particularly unpopular minorities, vulnerable farmers and traditional civil society organizations like churches, Sufi brotherhoods and fraternal orders. The violence of revolution also begets the violence of counter-revolution, traditionalist resistance and causes a near-permanent division of the population of the country. In that respect the Tunisian and Egyptian episodes of the Arab Spring have been exceptional thus far, but one only needs to look at Libya to see the risks associated with revolution. Revolution's effects take decades and generations to work themselves out: it has been argued that France did not stabilize until the Fifth Republic (Barzun, 2000: 425). Relatively non-violent or not, all revolutions argue that they are for the sake

of establishing justice, but they rarely if ever achieve this. But to be clear, the responsibility for them lies as much with the sitting government as it does with the counter-elites leading them; failing to meet the population's demands or at least attempting to do so makes a sitting government co-liable for a revolution with the counter-elites leading it. There are also clear instances where governments leave their populations no other choice except to attempt a radical and complete break with the past despite the costs, and this can be argued to have been the case in the European Spring of Nations (1848), Iran (1978), Libya (2010-2011) and Mexico (1910).

### **Sampling the Literature**

The literature on revolution is very vast, and no summary can be attempted of it here. The literature on the Arab Spring on the other hand is narrower, but is both recent and of varying quality. Given the increasing diffusion of publishing technology and venues for dissemination of academic knowledge, this paper will attempt to sample the literature rather than conduct a comprehensive review suitable for a book. Its content can be divided into several schools of thought concerning the causes and effects of the Arab Spring. Scholarship on the Arab Spring reflects the normative commitments of the scholars involved, whether acknowledged or not. Unfortunately, the emphasis in the English language literature has been on the implications of the Arab Spring. For example, there is an emerging narrative about the "Islamist Winter" that is supposed to be a direct result of the Arab Spring (Wittes, 2012; Totten, 2012). There is also an alternative literature that celebrates the Arab Spring as an anti-neoliberal movement (Veltmeyer, 2011).

This unusual interpretation of the events is not necessarily based on direct knowledge of the political economy of the Arab states, which are the furthest possible economies from capitalism whether the state is Western-aligned or not. Veltmeyer appears to interpret events from a Marxist prism without being open to the possibility that capitalism's absence is one of the causes of the Arab Spring. There are four alternative genres of literature on the Arab Spring. The first literature outlines causes, and these tend to be ascribed to economic and technological change. Second, there is a literature that outlines the role of external actors like the United States and Qatar in promoting revolution, and while there is something to this, the United States and virtually every other state was caught by surprise with the Arab Spring. Third, there is a literature that focuses on particular countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, and due to the clear grounding of that literature in the particular countries, it tends to be better backed by evidence and field involvement.

This literature explains why the revolution took place in Egypt and the other Arab countries, and to that extent it is very strong. It nevertheless lacks a comparative perspective and cannot be used for making more general inferences. By using a comparative study, this paper attempts to move beyond the focus on single countries and attempts to focus on states other than Egypt and Tunisia which have been discussed by much of the literature already. In addition, it tells us nothing about the need to avoid revolution and its attendant risks. Finally, there is a literature that inserts the scholar's normative preferences for what is taking place on the ground. This literature sees the Arab Spring as a Liberal, Islamist, anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal, or a Marxist movement often depending on the scholar's own commitments and

attitudes towards the Arab Spring, whether such as assessments are warranted by the evidence or not. This last school of thought is exemplified by Veltmeyer's arguments. Another variant of the same approach is to insert an anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian narrative into the Arab Spring (Abou El-Fadl, 2012: 6). While the Palestinian issue may have mattered to some of the revolutionaries, it is clear that the Arab Spring is affecting all Arab governments whether or not they were sympathetic to peace with Israel or not. The two most deeply anti-Israeli governments in the Arab world were Syria's Ba'athist government and the former regime in Libya, and both have been confronted by revolutionary movements that rejected their discourse of "resistance" outright. Consequently, the focus will be on the explanatory and the foreign-relations narratives.

### ***Explanatory Approaches***

Three causes are often listed in the current literature on the Arab Spring: economic failure, the rise of the internet and the level of repression by the governments. The literature on economics is well argued and is backed by plenty of evidence. The Arab states experiencing revolution are very economically vulnerable and extensive state sectors that suffocate private initiative and risk taking. Two former Arab Ministers outline the case of the failure of Arab economies in creating opportunities for the teeming millions of youth, the failure to contain and cut back on defense expenditures, and the lack of economic integration in a paper published by the Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economics (Malik and Awadallah, 2011). Thus poverty, unemployment and the closure of the economy are identified as the root cause of the Arab Spring. While Marxian in a sense, this approach does not identify the economies of the Arab states as necessarily capitalist and does not see in the Arab Spring a "class war." Some the literature actually precedes the Arab Spring, particularly in the case of some of the studies about Yemen or Egypt. The second approach focuses on bringing in the internet into the study of revolution.

The scholars arguing for the importance of social media do not actually say that the cause of revolution lies in Facebook or Twitter, but they argue that the new internet social media made it possible for the revolutionaries to mobilize public opinion and spread their dissident ideas and messages. The existence of social media is then seen as a permissive but incomplete cause of the relative success of the revolutionaries (Keif, 2011: 25). This idea has not been well received at the 2012 meeting of the International Studies Association in San Diego, and the author was hectorred by a leading luminary in International affairs for even trying to discuss the issue. The point here is that the technology made reduced the cost of organizing dissident movements to such an extent that attempting revolution became attractive. The internet-based reasoning does not negate other causes.

A pluralistic approach to cause is used by Amin Saikal who identifies several factors, including repression, economic failure, demographic pressure, and the distance between Arab governments and their populations as a cause of the Arab world's revolution (Saikal, 2011: 538). Repression appears in many of the explanatory narratives surrounding the Arab Spring, and it is very appealing as an explanation. The human rights records of Arab states tend to be poor and there is certainly a close relationship between the revolutionary ferment in the Arab world and the levels of repression that the region has experienced. Yet the focus on repression raises as many questions as it answers. For example, why did the Arab Spring not arrive in the 1970s when levels of repression were similar to those just before the Arab Spring? A similar approach

is used by Samir El Hamadi who uses a framework of analysis that includes the failure of democracy, the crisis of illegitimacy, corruption, the internet and the rise of satellite television channels as decisive factors. Unlike many other scholars, El Hamadi strongly warns against any claims of Arab particularism or exceptionalism, and argues that the region is not exempt from the normal and ordinary flow of politics common to the world as a whole (El Hamadi, 2012: 75-96). In general, the thrust of this section of literature is to explain the reasons why the Arab Spring happened. It is a disciplined and very reasonable literature that is loyal to the knowledge building purposes of academe. Its sole shortcoming is that it does not provide governments and social movements a way out of the maze of revolution, its risks and its logic. As argued earlier, it is important to think of revolution in a holistic manner that acknowledges both its emancipator character and its potential for catastrophic violations of human rights.

### ***The “Foreign Role” Literature***

This literature tends to veer towards advocacy and favors or disfavors a foreign role based interpretation of the events related to the Arab Spring. One vocal voice in this genre of writing is Asad Abu Khalil who sees an imperialist policy in the support the United States, Saudi Arabia and Qatar gave or give revolutionary forces in Syria and Libya (Abu Khalil, 2012). A related but totally opposed argument is raised by those who note United States democracy promotion efforts in the Arab world from the point of view of organizing civil society.

The argument being made under this approach is that the United States helped train journalists and civil society activists in the use of social media and the internet, and thereby created the possibility of an Arab Spring against the governments of the region (Nixon, 2011). While the tone and tenor of these two sets of arguments is far apart, they are united in terms of placing importance on the activities of external actors. While this study concedes that outside influences do play a role in fomenting demands for change, it disputes the importance placed by the analysts following this approach on the actions of foreign states. These have often marginal influence on domestic policies that motivate governments or the political plans of social movements opposed to regimes.

The external role that is offered in this study is the role played by Arab people living abroad. There are millions of citizens of Arab states living in Europe, North America and elsewhere and they use telephony, the internet, plain mail as well as personal visits to communicate with their relatives. Their role in communicating alternative methods and means of government has been discounted by the literature. Training civil society activists was, in the view of the author, an attempt to reform the Middle Eastern states rather than an encouragement of revolution, so while these programs may have helped cause the Arab Spring, they were not intended to bring about revolution. At any rate, evidence from Egypt strongly suggests that many Egyptian civil society groups active in the revolution did not benefit from the funding made available by the various United States democracy promotion projects (Snider and Faris, 2012).

## **Analysis of the Literature**

As of the time of writing, the Arab Spring is still a very recent event. Scholarship as well as principled journalism will need time to formulate studies, histories and stories that explain what has been taking place and its implications. To that extent, this work is intended to apply some models and arguments that have not been considered, including the role overseas communities, factors like WikiLeaks and the role played by repression as part of an overall picture of the causes of the Arab Spring. In addition, it offers policy recommendations to both governments and social movements in opposition to reduce the possibility of violent revolution and to insure that political demands and grievances are addressed with the least disorder. Finally, this work attempts to take a middling position between the English School and its critics concerning the contrast between Justice and Order as values. The aim here is to provide a narrative that includes descriptive, normative and prescriptive elements.

### ***The Framework of Comparison***

The framework of analysis offered by this study is similar to the ones used by Saikal and El Hamadi to study the case of the Arab Spring. It differs only in the sense that it includes a few more variables such as the internet, the response of governments and the overseas communities. This model was first proposed in 2011 and was offered at the ISA 2012 conference in San Diego. The variables constituting the model are largely qualitative in nature, although there are good statistics on the failure of Arab economies as well as some quantitative information of the number of migrants from Syria and Morocco.

### ***Repression and Government Dysfunction***

One of the most important causes of the revolution was the level with which the population was repressed. The level of repression was also co-related with the level of violence in the revolution itself. As Syria shows, the most repressive regimes are increasingly being met with armed uprisings. Broadly put, this variable is linked with the denial of civil liberties, police brutality, and the prohibition of legitimate opposing voices. In the application of this variable to the two case studies an attempt is made to account for the period of time before the eruption of the Arab Spring.

### ***Economic Hardships and Demographics***

The states of the MENA region suffer from deep structural economic flaws. The economies are illiberal, and there is little room for private initiative and independent businesses. The ability to reward clients and deprive opponents of livelihoods has been a regular part of the policy menu since independence. Economic classes are subservient to the state and it alone decides their scope of action; and this also includes any and all multi-national firms operating in the country. Add a relatively high birth rate and a poor educational system to the mix and you have the perfect conditions for mass unemployment, poverty and grinding despair. To measure economic hardship, variables like poverty rate and unemployment will be used in comparison.

### ***Social Media and Satellite Television***

Before the arrival of the new forms of the internet, the government's opponents often could be atomized and isolated from each other, to use Arendt's words. The advent of blogging, social media networks and more advanced versions of chat and email effectively brought a tool that allows people to connect with like-minded individuals and to express themselves in relative anonymity. The proliferation of cyber cafes also helped maintain that anonymity to some extent. The mobility provided by some technologies like internet enabled satellite telephony also meant that the state could not effectively cut off the internet. The new technologies meshed well with older systems like satellite television news, which often broadcast YouTube videos taken by protestors using their cell phone cameras and sent to friends overseas.

### ***Communities Abroad***

With millions of people with MENA origins living in liberal democracies, it is inevitable that they will visit their relatives back in the old countries, welcome them on visits to the new countries, and answer their questions about such things as rule of law, economic opportunities, and personal freedoms. Far from being the agent of the feared "Islamization" of Europe, the migrants have probably become a strong influence for the democratization of the Arab world. While they may not necessarily want to adopt European cultural mores, they interact with Western governments that are by enlarge driven by due process and which largely respect a social contract between themselves and their populations, in sharp contrast to many MENA governments. The inevitable question raises itself, "if Westerners can have good governments, why can't we back home?" Remittance statistics and population figures abroad will be used as a measure of the links between people overseas and the relatives in Syria and Morocco.

### ***The Uprisings and the Governments' Responses***

As the discussion in the normative section stated, the government holds the primary responsibility in insuring that the civilian population is not harmed and that political processes and change happen peacefully. Facing protests brings this responsibility into sharp focus, because the government's response could either transform the protest into a positive event or raise the level of risk associated with revolution by injecting catastrophic violence into the interaction. All states use force to disperse protestors if need be, including liberal social democracies in Scandinavia, but the use of force is the exception rather than the rule when protests are peaceful.

### ***Syria and Morocco in Comparison***

#### ***Repression and Government Dysfunction***

Morocco underwent significant repression during the years of lead. The years of lead spanned the late sixties until the early nineties. The years that followed the country's independence from France were also marked with political violence pitting the two independence movements against each other. The years of lead included disappearances, imprisonment of political dissidents without trial, torture and exile. Mehdi Ben Barka, a dissident Socialist leader,



was first exiled to France and then disappeared under mysterious circumstances in 1965. After attempting a failed coup during the 1970s, General Muhammed Oufkir (then Minister of Defense and a former Minister of the Interior) is said to have committed suicide. The number of those who disappeared and were not accounted for is up to 600, and some mass graves have been discovered (Reuters, 2005). The years of lead ended with the creation of an Equity and Reconciliation Commission to investigate human rights abuses in the period of time leading to 1999. Over a five year period, the ERC investigated the human rights abuses in the period of time between 1956 and 1999 and investigated 16861 claims of denial of human rights during that period. It found that 9770 claims had validity, with compensation due in the vast majority of the cases (Equity and Reconciliation Commission, 2005).

Despite some setbacks, the country's overall human rights situation is certainly better than it was under the years of lead. On the issue of corruption, however, there is a need for improvement. One WikiLeaks cable showed that persons with access to power were using their connections to determine economic outcomes in their own favor, and this apparently was noted by a former United States diplomat connected with the Moroccan government (The Guardian, 2010). Corruption often reaches the lowest or street level bureaucracies as well, with minor officials asking for coffee money. This problem saps the legitimacy of the state and creates distance between the government and the population. There was an anti-corruption campaign in 1996 which played itself out in part as a theater of conflict between the private sector organized as the Confederation General de Enterprise de Maroc. This conflict legitimated the role of the private sector as a partner of consultation for the state (Sater, 2007: 112-121). Morocco has an active branch of Transparency International and there are educational campaigns against corruption, indicating that the problem is acknowledged to exist. Corruption remains a problem in Morocco as with many other countries (Flah, 2012).

Most people concerned with the future of Morocco would acknowledge the need to further improve respect for human rights and reduce corruption. In Syria, the need is even more pressing. The Syrian government functioned under a state of emergency between 1963 and 2011. In 1982, Hafez El Assad's troops massacred about 20,000 people in Hama after the city revolted under an Islamist insurgency (Masoud, 1999: 132). In 2005, Human Rights Watch estimated that the Syrian regime has 4000 political prisoners incarcerated along with 17000 Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners arrested for political reasons in Lebanon during the 1990s. Kurdish indigenous inhabitants of Syria were denied citizenship until April 2011, and politically motivated arrests of opposition activists of a Liberal or Islamist stripe were common. The country also failed to do least for the promotion of gender equality (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 486-490). The lack of news concerning the disappeared Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners is very disturbing and suggests that they may have been killed (Ghadry, 2005). Syria's human rights record cannot be described in positive terms, even before the current civil war. Corruption in Syria is severe; with the Assad family and its associates in near complete control of the Syrian economy:

For example, in 2001, when Bashar's maternal cousin, Rami Makhluf, won a monopoly over telecommunications, prominent businessman and parliamentarian Riad Seif insisted on investigating the licensing and published a report documenting the corruption involved in the deal, despite the government's warning him off. Seif's bold declaration

resulted in his arrest and imprisonment. Upon his release in 2006, he reiterated his claim and described how two telephone companies, Syriatel and Ariba, had colluded with the government to create a monopoly, enabling them to charge exorbitant prices—higher than in the United States—and make enormous profit while paying little tax. All the while, the government continued to refuse to enforce regulations while Syriatel and Ariba unilaterally voided consumers' contracts by refusing to supply agreed-upon minutes or provide promised discounts. These two companies won a contractual concession to provide service for a maximum 1.7 million persons, but they have already doubled this number and may even double that, which went against the terms of their contract and further secured their status as twin monopolies. By 2005, corruption had reverted to the levels of pre-Bashar days, albeit with a smaller circle of participants as Bashar had purged many of the old guard. The Assad family and assorted cronies appeared to have siphoned off as much as 85 percent of Syrian oil revenues that year, according to Syrian officials' private estimates (Borshchevskaya, 2010: 45).

In short, the main differences between the two countries approach to the twin challenges of human rights and corruption lay in one word: acknowledgement. Syria never accepted that it had a problem with human rights, and labeled any foreign critic an unwelcome interventionist and labeled any and all domestic critics of its human rights and corruption policies a traitor. Furthermore, the scale of human rights violations exceeds anything imagined in the Arab world save for the abuses that were common in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. It does not follow to call all Arab governments equivalent and somehow worthy of immediate and radical overthrow, and this un-nuanced discourse not only risks bringing chaos to situations where reform is appropriate but it also subtly raises expectations to unrealistic levels, because the comparisons made are often not to peer states. The problem of repression and governmental dysfunction is not the sole cause of the Arab Spring and the revolution that followed, but the emphasis on it is well placed. It is probably the leading cause of the Arab Spring. The approach of governments to this issue also provides us with a predictor on the effectiveness of their response.

### ***Economic Hardships and Demographics***

The Moroccan economy has been improving over the last decade, but that improvement masks some deep problems with competitiveness which were compounded by the dramatic increase in oil and food prices (Achy, 2012). The level of unemployment in Morocco increases with the level of education. It also is harsher in urban areas and affects youth at higher levels. According to the African Development Bank, the uneven availability of employment opportunities is related to the relative weakness of the educational system. In specific terms, one in eight university graduates is unemployed which is difficult for a country where the number of illiterate people exceeds forty percent of the population.

The national average unemployment rate is below 10%, but with geographic, intergenerational and gender disparities. Despite the crisis, the unemployment rate declined from 9.8% to 9.1% between 2007 and 2011, but remains high among the 15-24 year olds (18.3% in 2009) and university graduates (26.8%). Urban areas are particularly hard-hit with 31.8% of 15-24 year olds, 20.2% of 25-34 year olds and 20.3% of women without employment. In urban areas, unemployment fell from 15.5% in 2007 to 13.8% in

2009, while in rural areas where underemployment is dominant (13.2% compared to 10% in urban areas), it stands at nearly 4%. However, the impact of the 2009 crisis on employment was mitigated by the implementation of measures recommended by the CVS focusing on three components: (i) a social component on safeguarding jobs; (ii) a financial component on supporting businesses; and (iii) a commercial component on supporting exports. Otherwise, the job losses due to the crisis would have been higher, as shown by the difference in jobs safeguarded between the support programme beneficiary (4% of jobs lost) and non-beneficiary (10%) enterprises (African Development Bank, 2012: 8)

Morocco has a young population and while the birth rate is declining, it remains above replacement level meaning that there will continue to be pressure to provide for additional jobs for young people. The key may lie in de-linking economics from political power, meaning to allow and support small and micro business through the active encouragement and legalization of the informal sector. Similar patterns of unemployment and demographics have an even harsher grip on Syria. The unemployment rate had been officially declared to be about 12 percent before the Arab Spring, but the definitions used were designed to keep the numbers low, counting people with a 2-day a week job as employed.

Furthermore, the numbers were lowered through the employment of Syrian labor in Lebanon by the hundreds of thousands. About 72 percent of the unemployed were between the ages of 15 and 24. Unlike the case of Morocco, unemployment hit the uneducated hard, with over 80 percent of the unemployed lacking in secondary or tertiary education (Almosabeh, 2008). Publicly available statistics suggest that about 35 percent of Syria's population is under the age of 14 compared with about 28 percent for Morocco and about 20 percent for the United States (CIA World Factbook, 2012).

In short, Syria faces disaster when its poor economic performance and widespread corruption are taken into account. One of the methods that the Syrian state used in attempt to control its population was to limit their access to information. Lebanese citizens with Syrian relatives told the author that they cannot discuss world affairs with their Syrian cousins, because the latter simply have had no access to information about what takes place on the international level, despite being well educated professionals practicing fields like accountancy, dentistry and pharmacy. The Syrian state's ability to construct a narrative that it forces others to obey was undermined by the dramatic transformation of information technologies and their sudden and near total democratization. By democratization, the author means that their costs have collapsed and even the poorest communities may now have cyber cafes stocked with used desktops and rudimentary connections to the internet.

### ***Social Media and Satellite Television***

The current form of the internet's potential was well understood by all Arab governments. As early as 2004, the Council of Ministers of Interior of the League of Arab States passed a resolution to "protect religious values and morals from its effects," in some Arab states chat lines as well as whole websites were closed (El Hamadi, 2012: 94). But this was already beside the point, because Arab citizens were increasingly exposed to diverse perspectives by an

earlier technology that was more difficult to restrict – satellite television news from Al Jazeera and other channels (El Hamadi, 2012: 91-93). Furthermore, as the web evolved, it became harder and harder to actually restrict its use barring “disconnecting” the country from the whole internet. The two states under study here had very divergent policies towards the internet. With some exceptions, Morocco has had relatively open access to the internet. In contrast, Syria was actually designated an “enemy of the internet” by *Reporters Without Borders* in 2011 (*Reporters Without Borders*, 2011).

The Moroccan oppositionist youth movement took advantage of the relative freedom of internet use to create YouTube videos and Facebook pages calling for democratic change. They also used the technology to help themselves organize opposition to the government. Readers are invited to visit the February 20<sup>th</sup> facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/20FevrierMaroc> to sample the ongoing debates that still rage on its pages. Many of the videos are still up and an example can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0f6FSB7gxQ>. The message is that these young people want a more democratic and even-handed society that allows them a chance to speak their minds and provides them with the economic opportunities needed to build a decent life. Of course, they differ in terms of how to proceed, with some favoring a constitutional monarchy, others favoring a more radical change, and still others favoring a number of forms of Islamism. Syria in contrast had to first have a group of people who could use proxies to go around the electronic barriers that the government had put in their way, but eventually thousands of groups appears on the internet in Syria demanding social and political change. These groups began connecting with exiled Syrian politicians as well as dissidents determined to alter the regime in Syria. The latter were already online and using the internet extensively to criticize the regime. Examples of such dissidents include Radwan Ziadeh whose English language webpage can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/radwan.ziadeh?fref=ts>. While it is clear that the presence or absence of the internet is not a root cause of the Arab Spring, it did make the task of organizing and mobilizing protests, the articulation of grievances and the criticism of governments much easier. It is therefore a permissive cause or in El Hamadi’s words, a “weapon.”

### ***Communities Abroad***

There are about 2 to 3 million Moroccans abroad with the vast majority living and working in Western Europe. The community sends more than three billion dollars Euros home in remittances every year and increases tourism revenues through the money it spends during visits home. It is a crucial contributor to the Moroccan economy (De Haas, 2005). There has been a lot written about the economic and social impact of the North African communities in Europe on both the continent and on their homelands. Discussions with Moroccans, who live abroad, including many of my former students, indicate that they believe that foreign countries have ideas and models that can help improve circumstances in Morocco itself.

The same held in a more structured interview held with Syrian workers in Lebanon this summer, which is discussed in detail below. The group of Syrian workers interviewed appreciated the rule of law found in the Gulf Cooperation Council states when it came to economic matters. Many had relatives who lived or worked in Europe and also appreciated the ideas of rule of law, democracy and freedom, broadly speaking. The number of Syrians abroad

including permanent migrants is perhaps equal to the number of people living in the country. The Syrian diaspora was disproportionately Christian historically, which may have limited its influence in Sunni-majority Syria; nevertheless, there is inevitable cross-communal dialogue and exchange of information. In addition, there are increasing numbers of Syrian Muslims working and living abroad, including those who work in Lebanon (about one million). While Lebanon is not a Liberal Democracy, it is also notably and exceptionally freer than Syria. Some of the factory workers interviewed expressed appreciation for the attempt of the Lebanese political system to include all communities, but at the same time, they were painfully aware of its limitations. The potential of overseas communities to transfer information, perspectives and new ideas back home is often under-appreciated, and this aspect of the Arab Spring must be studied further.

### ***The Uprisings and the Governments' Responses***

The course of events in each country undergoing the process of the Arab Spring was in no small measure determined by the government's response. The protests in Morocco began in early February 2011 and became a national movement when protestors marched in 53 Moroccan cities and towns. The crowds were of significant size, and included diverse groups of Islamists, Liberals, Leftists, and Constitutionals. For several months, there were organized protests all over the country (Moroccans for Change, 2011). The crowds attracted people from all walks of life, including a businessman who could well be the single wealthiest citizen, on one occasion. The intensity of the protests dropped significantly, but they have not yet ended. The primary reason for the decline of the protests was the very rapid institution of reforms. In no small measure the political inexperience of the protest movement helped its opponents. First, the King's speech on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 promised wide reforms. Second, and a new anti-corruption law was adopted early April 2011, and a process that brought forth a new constitution was initiated. The February 20<sup>th</sup> movement rejected both dialogue and participation in the constitutional referendum, and its actions served to marginalize it severely. It also lost some of its allies in the Islamist and Leftist movements as a result. The referendum saw the participation of about 70 percent of the electorate, suggesting that the movement attracted the support of a third of the people of Morocco. The transition in Morocco is not yet complete, and it has not been entirely peaceful. There were about 11 deaths and many more injuries during the protests, so the events were not entirely bloodless.

In Syria, the bloodshed began almost immediately, and it is fair to assess fault at the feet of the regime. The current death toll in what has become a full civil war with at least three armed factions now stands in excess of 35 thousand. The number of internally displaced people and refugees abroad is approaching two million or about one in ten people in Syria. The use of violence led to the escalation of the revolutionaries' demands and fed confessional fissures in Syria, and the conflict quickly became embroiled in religious discourse. Instead of protest after Friday prayers, the news from Syria is today dominated by news of battles in the major cities pitting the regime against the Free Syrian Army, with Syria's minority groups being increasingly caught between the combatants.

## **Policy Recommendations**

I will offer recommendations for Syria and Morocco individually.

### ***For Syria***

The interviews with Syrian workers in Lebanon during summer 2011 strongly suggested that the demands of the opposition grew with the government's decision to use increasingly violent measures against the revolutionaries and the communities perceived to support them. The workers, both those supporting the opposition and the government, had many ideas in common.

The government's supporters openly admitted that it is a gross violator of human rights, but they cautioned that many factions within the armed opposition are trying to use the war as a cover for demographic engineering of Syria into a state that reflects the opposition's ideational preferences. There were Sunni workers supporting the government because some of the revolutionaries used Salafi discourses and narratives. In terms of their vision for the future, all the workers wanted a free country governed by rule of law with protections for all communities.

The government's opponents were clear that they do not envision a Syria that lacks room for diversity. One worker praised the economic policies of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, while at the same time rejecting their autocracy. Another worker described his arrest at the hands of the secret police and his experiences with torture. He was asked to confess to crimes that he did not commit, because he marched in one of the Friday protests.

There was widespread agreement that Syria should make peace with Israel only after the Palestinian question is solved and both pro- and anti- government workers insisted that a peace deal include the Golan Heights. They were well informed about democratic mechanisms used in the West and partially used in Lebanon, and some had relatives abroad. They were literate and three had high school education.

One complaint that was raised by both sides was the control of access to further education by the state and the tracking into poverty and marginalization they felt. None demanded an Islamist state. Nine male workers, aged 17-55, were interviewed in a group setting with about four supporting the opposition, three supporting the government and two expressing mixed views.

The methodology used was participatory with the workers initially asked how they envision Syria's future and consequently they brought their concerns about the situation to the table. The author deliberately asked the workers not provide identities, so that they could speak freely and safely. They were recruited from a housing unit serving Syrian industrial labor in Lebanon, and the three hour encounter was conducted in Arabic. The majority of the workers were Sunni, but there were three Christians and one non-Sunni Muslim--who was also a vocal critic of the government. The sole question offered the author concerned his views of Turkey given his ethnic background and what policies I thought Armenia should pursue with it; that particular question came in the wake of the discussion on Palestine. A neighbor known to the

author helped recruit the workers and they were informed about the purpose of the meeting and gave verbal consent for the use of their opinions in this piece.

A future Syrian government must move rapidly to address the fears that have driven large numbers of Syrians into unwilling neutrality and in some cases tacit support for the government. In the words of one pro-revolutionary worker: “they [the government] tell Christians and others that a change of the regime means that things will get even worse for them.” This means that it needs to shear off those who believe that the Syrian uprising must be used to settle confessional accounts on the basis of inter-communal inequality and the suppression of minority identities. Second, a future Syrian government must emancipate the economy by allowing Syrian people to take risks and open businesses, whether or not they support the government. Third, Syria needs to begin a wide ranging internal social dialogue over issues that pertain to education and rule of law. The workers were partially shocked and partially amused that an academic would want to hear their views.

A new government in Syria needs to have very clear commitments to participatory approaches to governance as well as some very strict protections for human rights in the police and the judiciary. These protections can perhaps be achieved through a system of elected local ombudsmen empowered to review the actions of law enforcement officials. Finally, a future Syrian government needs to investigate the possibility of creating a mixed Syrian and international human rights crimes tribunal to investigate both the regime’s pre-war violations in Syria and Lebanon and war crimes on both sides during the ongoing civil war.

### ***For Morocco***

In the Moroccan case, the main danger is for the government to believe that the reforms are something that can be implemented once and then left frozen in place. The reforms need to be seen as part of an ongoing process that leads to embedded democratization in Morocco along the lines seen in countries like Chile and Turkey. This means that protests and demonstrations should be viewed as a way of discerning the shortcomings of the government’s performance and as a natural part of the political process. Protests can help a government understand what is not working and move to implement reforms that can address the question, and to that extent, they are positive.

That having been said there are three actions that the Moroccan state can take to keep reform on the agenda and to signal that it takes criticism seriously and constructively. First, the death penalty, which has been implicitly abolished under the new constitution under a right to life amendment, should be formally removed from all statute books. The death penalty has not been implemented since the mid-1980s and it is essentially abolished, but formal abolition would be a first in the Arab world. Second, an amnesty program should extend a blanket pardon on all protestors who acknowledge fault for acts of disturbance through the protests and apologize for them. Such a pardon should be based on non-retributive transitional justice principles. Third, the National Council on Human Rights should conduct an investigation of human rights violations during the protests, and all the organs of the state should implement its findings. Fourth, the new constitution’s inclusion of all of Morocco’s languages should be transformed into public policy with all due haste.

At present, a gap exists between bureaucrats who are often Francophone and Arabic speaking and vast segments of the population who do use neither Arabic nor French. A state that does not speak the languages of the population cannot listen to them. For a long time, ideological considerations have prevented the implementation of linguistic inclusion, and these have been clearly rejected by the new constitution. Implementing this aspect of the constitution would greatly reduce cynicism towards politics.

Finally, the electoral system needs to be revisited. The region of Ifrane has about 90 thousand voters, of whom about 35 thousand voted, and of these only about 13 thousand decided the outcome for the two winning candidates under the currently mixed system that combines multi-member districts with two national lists reserved for women and youth for the lower house of parliament. Given the multiparty nature of the Moroccan political system, the elections seem futile for the vast majority of the voters.

Given the diversity of political opinion in Morocco, the question of a different mix of parliamentary seats should be examined. A system that assigns half the seats to proportional representation and the other half to single member majority districts system would allow people to feel that their votes matter and are relevant. Consequently, such a reform would help increase the legitimacy of parliament, thereby enable it to claim more powers while at the same time allowing the upper chamber and beyond it, the monarchy, to check against abuse of parliamentary power during transition. In Morocco's case, there is a gradualist path that can lead to a more democratic country, it should embark on it.

### **Conclusion: Order, Justice and Revolution**

The Arab Spring has allowed us to see that many of the predictions of political science as a discipline are broadly correct. Nevertheless, political science lacks two important aspects of inquiry. First, it lacks the precision of the natural sciences and of engineering. It cannot predict events exactly, and cannot provide numerical details. Second, without the injection of political philosophy, it lacks a normative compass. Consequently, questions related to fairness, justice and ethics have to be addressed explicitly within a value framework. In the Arab World, many governments as well as outside powers preferred stability and order over disruption and justice. These values were believed to come in pairs. Peace too was seen as dependent on order, and order itself was seen as being dependent on a measure of injustice, thus the local saying "an unjust ruler is better than an ongoing civil war."

While there is some merit in viewing a demand for absolute justice as unproductive, especially when the demand is brandished by counter elites interested in their own power, it deserves a second look. If order needs to be established at the expense of some injustice at some stage, once the social context turns orderly and predictable, governments need to use order as a basis for redressing some the injustices that established it and well as a basis for entrenching further enfranchisement and emancipation of their populations. Should they fail to do so, their pursuit of order lays the ground for repression and that in turn leads to revolution.



Rather than being in dichotomous opposition, order and justice are to a large extent co-dependent. This was understood by Hedley Bull in his lecture *Order and Justice in the International System*, but his language continues to privilege order, to the extent that the only apparent exception he makes for wars of national liberation. Of course, Bull's focus was on order and justice as understood in international relations between states, but in today's world the internal and external have merged.

The Syrian case cannot be isolated from Turkish and Lebanese politics and the national and international have blurred into each other. Morocco was greatly influenced by social media and satellite coverage of the Arab Spring elsewhere and its own movement influenced its foreign affairs. Consequently, the questions raised by Bull are now relevant for internal politics as well. The two case studies teach us that it is simply not possible to maintain order under conditions of injustice. In the larger normative debate, the evidence here supports Ray's position concerning Bull's arguments. The case studies also teach us that reform is a much more effective means for maintaining order than reaction.

#### **About the Author:**

**Jack Kalpakian**, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences in Al Akhawayn University Ifrane, Morocco. He received his B.S. degree in Political Science from Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in International Studies from Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA. He can be contacted at: [j.kalpakian@aui.ma](mailto:j.kalpakian@aui.ma) or [jackkalpakian@yahoo.com](mailto:jackkalpakian@yahoo.com)

#### **References**

- Achy, Lahcen. 2012. Morocco's Stalling Economy. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. May 29. Accessed October 20, 2012 at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/29/morocco-s-stalling-economy/b0dv>
- Abou-El-Fadl, Reem. 2012. The Road to Jerusalem through Tahrir Square: Anti-Zionism and Palestine in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 41(2): 6-26.
- Abu Khalil, Asad. 2012. Forgotten Bahrain. *Al Akhbar English*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/6710>
- African Development Bank. Morocco Country Strategy Paper 2012-2016. *African Development Bank*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at: <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/MOROCCO%20-%20CSP%202012-2016.pdf>
- Almosabeh, Imadeddin. 2008. The Effective Factories in Unemployment in the Syrian Arab Republic: An Empirical Study by Using Cointegration Method. *The Arab Planning Institute*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at: [http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/41871/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_41871.pdf](http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/41871/1/MPRA_paper_41871.pdf)

Barzun, Jacques. 2000. *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present*. New York: Harpers Perennial.

Borshchevskaya, Anna. 2010. Sponsored Corruption and Neglected Reform in Syria. *Middle East Quarterly*, 17(3): 41-50. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
<http://www.meforum.org/meq/pdfs/2760.pdf>

Bull, Hedley. 1971 (2008). "Hedley in His Own Words: Three Essays." Pp. 23-126 in Coral Bell and Meredith Thatcher, Eds., *Remembering Hedley*, Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
<http://epress.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ch0819.pdf>

Central Intelligence Agency. 2012. World Factbook. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

De Haas, Hein. 2005. Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa's Migration Passage to Europe. Migration Policy Institute website. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=339>

El Hamadi Samir. 2005. *The Spring of Rage: A Preliminary Comparison*. Casablanca: New Najah Press. (Arabic).

Equity and Reconciliation Commission 2005. The Summary of the Contents of the Final Report. *Equity and Reconciliation Commission*. (Arabic). Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
[http://www.ier.ma/article.php3?id\\_article=1439](http://www.ier.ma/article.php3?id_article=1439)

Flah, Loubna. 2012. Corruption Continues to Plague Morocco- Transparency International. *Morocco World News*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:  
<http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2012/10/61325/corruption-continues-to-plague-morocco-transparency-international/>

Ghadry, Farid N. 2005. Syrian Reform: What Lies Beneath. *Middle East Quarterly*, 12(1): 61-70, citing SHRC 2003 Annual Report, *SHRC*, 9.

Human Rights Watch. 2005. World Report 2005. *Human Rights Watch*. New York.

Keif, Echo. 2011. *We Are All Khaled Said: Revolution and the Role of Social Media*. Fairfax: George Mason University. Accessed October 12, 2012 at:  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20120602072152/http://www.pubchoicesoc.org/papers\\_2012/Keif.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20120602072152/http://www.pubchoicesoc.org/papers_2012/Keif.pdf)

Levene, Mark. 2005. *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State. Vol. 2: the Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide*. London, UK: I. B. Tauris.

Malik, Adeel and Bassem Awadallah. 2011. The Economics of the Arab Spring. *CSAE Working*

Paper, WPS/2011 23. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:

<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/csae-wps-2011-23.pdf>

Masoud, Tarek E. 1999. The Arabs and Islam: The Troubled Search for Legitimacy. *Daedalus*, 128(2): 127-145.

Moroccans for Change. 2011. What Next Morocco? *Moroccans For Change*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:

<http://moroccansforchange.com/2011/03/26/feb20-timeline-what-next-morocco/>

Nixon, Ron. 2011. U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings. *The New York Times*, April 14. Accessed April 3, 2013 at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

Ray, Aswimi K. 1999. The Concept of Justice in International Relations. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34: 1368-1374.

Reporters without Borders. 2011. Internet Enemies: Syria. Reporters without Borders. Accessed October 20, 2012 at: <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-syria,39779.html>

Reuters. 2005. Morocco finds graves of 50 killed in 70's. *The New York Times*, October 9. Accessed April 3, 2013 at:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B01E4DA1F30F93AA35753C1A9639C8B63>

Saikal, Amin. 2011. Authoritarianism, Revolution and Democracy: Egypt and beyond. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 65(5): 530-544

Sater, James. 2007. *Civil Society and Political Change in Morocco*. New York: Routledge.

Snider, Erin A. and David M. Faris. (2011) The Arab Spring: U.S. Democracy Promotion in Egypt. *Middle East Policy*. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:

<http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/arab-spring-us-democracy-promotion-egypt>

*The Guardian*. 2010. US Embassy Cables: Moroccan Businessman Reveals Royal Corruption, Claims US Cable, *The Guardian*, December 5. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/239525>

Totten, Michael J. 2012. Arab Spring or Islamist Spring. *World Affairs*, January/February.

Accessed April 3, 2013 at: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/arab-spring-or-islamist-winter>

Veltmeyer, Henry. 2011. Unrest and Change: Dispatches from the Frontline of a Class War in Egypt. *Globalizations*, 8(5): 609-616. Accessed October 20, 2012 at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14747731.2011.625823>

Wittes, Tamara C. 2012. Learning to Live with the Islamist Winter. *Foreign Policy*, July 19.

Accessed April 3, 2013 at:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/19/learning\\_to\\_live\\_with\\_the\\_islamist\\_winter](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/19/learning_to_live_with_the_islamist_winter)

Woolsey, James. 2002. *CNN.Com Transcripts: Lou Dobbs Moneyline*. Accessed October

20, 2012 at: <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0206/10/mlld.00.html>