

The Democracy Mirage in the Wake of the Arab Spring: Legal Perspectives of External Dynamics

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Abstract

The Arab Spring, which was a remarkable series of revolutions that broke out in late 2010 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, was triggered by discontentment with authoritarian regimes, the gap that existed in terms of economic disparity, inequality and lack of social justice. Through this revolution, the inclusive reforms that were promised, brought about hope of a wave of democratic change. Nevertheless, the pre-revolutionary society and the post-revolutionary society are comprised of a complex interplay of different factors, such as external and internal, both have shaped the post-revolutionary landscape. This article focuses on the external links among the main players such as international powers, regional actors, and multinational corporations, and also how their interventions are dynamically perceived across the MENA region. This research paper on international law, human rights principles, and governance theories searches for the real tendencies that might either support democracy and human rights or may have the opposite effect in countries that had their Arab Spring. Transformation processes after the Arab Spring are scrutinized by using comparative case studies and accountability perspectives. This research explains the necessity of respecting legal norms in the context of the shifts that are emerging after the revolutionary events in the Arab world. Fairly, it also provides pragmatic policy suggestions aimed at building long-term democratic governance. Future studies will enquire into follow-up assessments and explore emerging challenges like public rights and gender issues. By a thorough analysis, from externalities to the circumstances of the law, the article highlights the role of political dynamics in guiding the transition towards democratic systems which is resilient to external factors.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Democracy Mirage, External Dynamics, Legal Perspectives, Democratic Governance

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1. Introduction

The Arab Spring is a collective name given to a sequence of pro-democracy movements and revolts that took over several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. (Hursh 2016). The movement was marked by a mob of people discontented with the rule of dictators, corruption, economic challenges, political suppression, and

infringements on human rights. The Arab Spring started in Tunisia in December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor, set himself on fire as a protest against police corruption and mistreatment. The demonstrations followed and the president was finally ousted in January 2011 (Rogan 2012). The remarkable achievements of the Tunisian revolution encouraged the idea of a similar uprising in other Arab countries, such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain (Niakooee 2013). These protests were promoted through the extensive utilization of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which helped activists coordinate actions and attract the crowd. The demands of the Arab Spring protesters varied from country to country, but in general, they were asking for changes in the political sphere emphasizing respect for fundamental human rights, civil liberties, and the end of authoritarian rule (Moaddel and Gelfand 2017). The movement involved people from all spheres of life such as students, intellectuals, trade unions, feminists, and oppressed peoples, and they all believed that there was a need for change and that the power should be in the hands of the people. The Arab Spring sparked off some notable political chaos, where dictators such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen were deposed by the masses (El-Hasan 2019). Some of these leaders even had to resign, while some of the regimes were brought down by violent uprisings or civil wars as they attempted to repress any form of opposition. Although the Arab Spring promised the possibility of democratic transition and reform at first. Its concrete outcomes have been political instability, socio-economic troubles, sectarian conflicts, and the occurrence of extremist groups. Democracy mirages have been noticed in many countries which underwent revolutions, as the establishment of a stable democracy has been very difficult for them (Herd 2011). The Arab Spring and its context are critical in understanding the dynamics of political change, social mobilization, and the role of the outside world in shaping the outcome of events that determined the region's trajectory (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016). Within the scope of this research paper, the "democracy mirage" implies a situation where the expectations and hopes for democratic transformation and governance that had emerged during the initial Arab Spring do not quite translate into actuality as planned. This, however, is different from the reality of the matter, with a general lack of hope regarding the transition into democracy occurring as a result of the internal and external factors that have been impeding it. The term "mirage" denotes an illusion or misleading surface. This implies that the Arab Spring happened with the hope of democratization, however, the real outcome did not match the expectations (Kuhn 2012). Though the regime leaders have been overthrown and demands for a longer political process and human rights are high but still in many countries in the region the rule of law, the fostering of inclusive governance, respect for human rights, and the establishment of genuine democratic progress are still not a reality. The meaning of the democracy mirage is twofold. It points to the structural impediments and difficulties that hinder the development of democracy in the MENA region (Abdulsattar 2015). It also highlights the gap between the lofty expectations of democracy and the ugly realities of political, social, and economic power contention in the post-Arab Spring nations. The realization of the dreams of democracy lies at the heart of policies, research, and activism that aim to steer the political complexities of the region toward a sustainable democratic transformation (Lahoud et al. 2022). This article, which examines the understanding and importance of the democracy mirage, will constitute a theoretical framework from which the effect of external factors and the legal environment as well as alternative pathways for democratic governance after the Arab Spring will be analyzed.

The most significant element in the depiction of the MENA region after the Arab Spring revolution is external factors (Korotayev et al. 2014). International intervention, which is a geopolitical

pursued out of economic consideration, has played a central role in political transitions and stability (Aras and Yorulmazlar 2016). Major global powers and regional actors follow different strategies, from diplomatic engagement via secret negotiations to direct intervention, seeking to influence political order in post-Arab Spring countries (Brynen 2019). The geopolitical competition such as countries like the United States, Russia, and China, and regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, has further intensified the scenario and each of them is fighting to fulfill their strategic objectives in the region (Aras and Yorulmazlar 2017). Economic issues, such as natural resource supply and investment projects, are also the reasons behind the involvement of external actors in the MENA region (Esfahani 2006). Foreign governments and multinational corporations do not look back once they find the economic opportunities available in those countries, sometimes not paying attention to democratic governance and human rights at all. The mighty issue of security, especially the counterterrorism efforts and conflict resolution at the regional level, form a subject that has to be taken into account by external policies and interventions having a considerable impact on the military situation in the post-Arab Spring countries. Media and information warfare have become an effective arm that both domestic and foreign parties can exploit to establish “truths” and persuade the public in the MENA region (Greenberg 2019). Traditional and modern media platforms are being used to tackle different issues and promote certain agendas which end up contributing to the complexity of the post-Arab Spring events. The manifestation of these outside dynamics with the native elements has produced a situation that is fluid and unpredictable for the governance of the region. Notwithstanding the expectations and promises from the Arab Spring, the reality was often quite different, and scholars have coined the term "democracy mirage" to reflect this. This phenomenon requires us to appreciate the complexity of external actors involvement to comprehend the difficulties and opportunities that post-Arab Spring countries face, as they seek to progress their political transitions and achieve permanent democratic reforms (Dinçer and Hecan 2020).

2. Purpose and scope of the research article

The goal of this research paper is to explore the legal issues relating to the developments and processes outside the system, and how this contributes to the phenomenon of the facade of democracy post the Arab Spring. The article aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the legal factors that induced political transitions and brought stability, or democratization in the MENA region after the 2010-2011 revolts.

The scope of the research article encompasses:

1. **Legal Frameworks and Principles:** Instruction and highlighting of international legal norms, treaties, and conventions related to democratic governance, human rights, and sovereignty in the recent post-Arab Spring will be discussed.
2. **External Actors and Interventions:** The examination of the phenomenon of external actors, i.e. foreign governments, international organizations, regional states, and multinational corporations, and how they create political results and influence legal dynamics in countries of Middle East and North Africa.
3. **Implications for Democratic Governance:** Analysis of the impact of global pressures coming from the external interventions, geopolitical struggles, economic interests, and security issues of the post-Arab Spring governments on the transition to democratic governance, rule of law, and human rights.
4. **Case Studies and Comparative Analysis:** Attention and in-depth analysis around particular case studies as well as a comparative approach to legal responses and consequences arising from external aspects that have an impact on different nations and regions. These include

factors such as sharing disciplines and finding commonalities, patterns, and lessons learned for future studies and policymaking.

5. **Policy Recommendations and Future Directions:** The policy formulation recommendations and suggestions on eradicating the democracy mirage and the promising sustainable democratic changes in the MENA region will be given. As well as the article will discuss the possible direction of further research and the ways it can be used in studying the legal aspects of the post-Arab Spring situation.

3. Examination of relevant legal theories and frameworks for analyzing external dynamics

A related legal theory and a framework to further analyze external dynamics are investigated by analyzing the established legal principles, theoretical perspectives, and conceptual frameworks within international law, human rights law, and governance studies, respectively (Slaughter, Tulumello, and Wood 1998). The following study intends to propose a structured methodology that helps to assess the legal consequences of external factors on the political transformations and democratic government development after the Arab Spring. Here's a detailed exploration of the components involved in examining relevant legal theories and frameworks:

1. **International Law:** International law operates as the main legal system that manages relationships between states and as a principal instrument of rules and regulation of state actors acting internationally (Kumm 2004). During the examination of the external dynamics of the Arab Spring, scholars examine the relevant principles such as those of sovereignty, non-intervention, and the prohibition of the use of force. They analyze the legal parameters and legal limitations on external interventions in the internal affairs of the post-Arab Spring countries in relationship with principles included in the UN Charter and customary international law (Panara and Wilson 2013).

2. **Human Rights Law:** Human rights law represents the normative foundation for the protection as well as promotion of individuals and communities fundamental rights and freedoms. Researchers will look at international human rights, instruments, treaties, and conventions, to determine the legal standards for human rights protection during political change and democratic governance. They try to understand the legal obligations of states and external actors to adhere to human rights principles such as civil liberties, political freedoms, freedom of expression, and the right to participate in public affairs (Mutua 2017).

3. **Governance Theories:** Governance theories give us the basis for theorizing on how social and state relationships work, institutional arrangements, and power relations within governance systems. Scholars try to understand the mechanics of democratization, building statehood for new entities, and the justice system in transitional settings in their work with the post-Arab Spring contexts. They analyze the performance of state institutions, non-governmental organizations, and outside actors in providing a basis for governance outcomes and the processes of democratic change (Katsamunskaja 2016).

4. **Accountability Mechanisms:** Accountability mechanisms cover the aspects of the law, legal structures, and institutional mechanisms for strengthening transparency, accountability, and the rule of law in governance processes. Scholars explore the actual functioning of accountability mechanisms, like domestic courts, justice and reconciliation commissions, and international tribunals, in dealing with human rights violations, corruption, and misuse of power in the post-Arab Spring era. They weigh up the chances of legal means of holding governments and non-state actors accountable for their crimes and of generating reconciliation and justice during post-conflict periods (Baker and Scheye 2007).

Thus, the great figure of the theory and the framework of laws becomes an essential part of the scientific research and they clarify legal consequences as a result of the external factors and the democratic system as well as human rights protection. It enables the process of critical assessment and analysis, the creation and promotion of policies that deal with the mechanisms of law and democracy reforms in these countries.

3.1. Discussion

The examination of the legality issues of external factors of the democracy mirage during the 2011 Arab Spring demonstrates the intricacy of the governance transitions of the MENA countries (Abdulsattar 2015). The Arab Spring, known as a wave of protests and demands for political reorganization, sparked the people's optimism for democratic change in many countries in the MENA region (A. Ahmed and Capoccia 2014). Nevertheless, the gap between the ideals of democracy and the realities of the political, social, and economic realm in the Arab Spring states is evident, with scholars and observers describing it as a "democracy mirage" (Carbonnier 2013). The latter is a phenomenon that reflects the gap between the ideas of democracy and the harsh realities of political, social, and economic dynamics in the post-Arab Spring countries. As the totalitarian leaders have been dethroned and demands for more political liberalization in the society are made, the countries still face several challenges such as political instability, violence, repression, and a lack of real democratic development (Alfadhel 2016). This discussion implies that external politics is a factor that cannot be ignored in the transitional processes in the region, more so because of the impact it has on the processes success. A scrutiny of legal theories and models relevant to the issue of the influence of external factors on political transitions and governance in the MENA region is the key point to the understanding of this issue. International law acts as the main legal system, which dictates the procedures of states dealing with themselves and provides grounds for military interventions. The principles of sovereignty, non-interference, and restricted use of force are interrelated and provide the foundation for determining the validity of external acts in the Arab Spring countries (Obse 2014). Human rights law provides the normative basis for the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms, thus allowing the evaluation of all external interventions that affect the rights of the people and their freedom. Governance theories focus on state-society relations as well as the institutional frameworks. From this perspective, state institutions, non-governmental organizations, and external players are studied, to fully understand the impact on governance results. For transparency to be promoted as well as accountability and the rule of law to be enhanced in the societies within the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The accountability mechanisms, such as domestic courts and international tribunals must play a major role. The examination of the operation of these mechanisms be it for issues of human rights abuses, corruption, and abuses of power, plays a vital role in addressing the injustices in transitional contexts (Nassar 2015).

4. Overview of major external actors involved in the Arab Spring and their interests

The Arab Spring, i.e. the set of pro-democracy demonstrations occurring in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in late 2010, was something that caught several types of external actors, each with its interests and motives, by surprise. The intricate interaction among various actors is one of the most important factors that helped to determine the character and future of the Arab Spring and the events afterward. Revealing the interests and objectives of the other external actors will help understand the difficulties of the era of the Arab Spring and its impact at the regional and international levels (Schumacher 2011).

The rising global powers, among them the United States, Russia, and China, have been on a quest to find their place in and shape the new political structure of the MENA region as they pursue their

strategic interests(Hazbun 2018). The United States as the most influential actor in the world wanted to play the role of idealistic democracy promoter but also at the same time defend its strategic interests in the region. The United States assigned much importance to security and stability, which allowed the US to accomplish their policies (tightened security) without any obstacles (Atlas 2012).

The second influential international player was Russia. It acted as a stabilizing factor in the region by supporting governments that were more in line with its interests, especially in the Syrian case. The fact that Russia backed Assad's government shows that it was in the interest of the latter and also the West to keep stability in the area by avoiding the occurrence of foreign intervention. Moreover, Russia looked to the Arab Spring as a potential risk to its security and wanted to prevent its conditions from being provided to the Arab nations (Charap 2013).

The expansion of China's economic presence led to increased attention in the MENA region, particularly in terms of trade, providing an avenue not only for natural resource access but also for investment opportunities. Moreover, stability was the utmost priority of China, as it strived to counteract the domestic turmoil and avoid any conflict with its neighbors. China's stand on the matter of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries was supported by the country, while it, at the same time, worked on expanding influence through its economic ties and diplomatic connections (Chang 2014).

Both regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and other actors decisively affected the outcomes and the course of the Arab Spring events. Saudi Arabia, as the key player in the region, perceived that the Arab Spring was likely to constitute a threat to its stability and therefore it strove to defuse the pro-democracy movements, which were mostly inspired by the Shiite-led protests in Bahrain. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia backed the autocratic rule of dictatorial regimes within the area to prevent the decay of its hegemony and to stop the spread of democratic thoughts (Kéchichian 2022).

In contrast to Iran, which saw in the Arab Spring an opening to the Arab World and thus used the situation to advance its interests and strengthen its position in the region (Kéchichian 2022). The other most important aspect of Iran's role in the Middle East is that it supported movements struggling for the establishment of Sunni-dominated regimes, especially in Syria and Yemen. Those were parts of Iran's grand plan to play a big role in the region. Sectarian dispute on the background of Iran's involvement in Shiite groups and alliances was intensified during the Arab Spring (Dehshiri and Shahmoradi 2020).

As a regional power with certain regional ambitions, Turkey saw the complexity of Arab Spring by trying to balance the democratic movements support and also the maintenance of relations with the autocratic regimes. At the start, Turkey also praised the Arab Spring as being a good development and expressed its backing for democratic transformations in the region. On the other hand, its relations with the neighboring countries, particularly Syria, eroded as the conflict started to intensify and this brought about quite a few issues that Turkey had to confront when tackling its foreign policy goals (Kireççi 2012).

An important function of international organizations, such as the United Nations, EU, etc., was mediation of conflicts, provision of humanitarian aid, and democratization support as the Arab Spring unfolded (LUUKKAINEN 2012). Through its various agencies and diplomatic interactions, the UN has been addressing the aspects of conflicts and humanitarian crises in the region by providing platforms for dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation. However, the UN encountered serious situations in intervening in deep-rooted conflicts and reached fruitful results in the cases of Syria, and Yemen (Vuji 2023).

The European Union (EU) with its unique democratic values, human rights, and neighborhood policy expressed support for democratic transitions and reforms in the region of the Middle East and North Africa. The EU tolerated financial and technical support to the countries that were economically and politically transforming and it was aimed at assuring stability, freedom, and respect for human rights. Nevertheless, the EU had difficulties promoting democracy and establishing a unified political system due to political realities and the complexity of regional life. In addition to that, different global corporations also had a prominent part to play in both the Arab Spring and the subsequent aftermath (Grinin and Korotayev 2012). The role of these corporations was mainly concerned with their business interests and investing in the area. MNCs of the world were not left behind as they took advantage of opportunities that existed in the post-Arab Spring countries such as infrastructural projects, energy investments, and market expansion. However, the business climate in the area could be marred by political instability, security issues, and regulatory challenges, which could lead to certain multinational companies' operations and revenues taking a plunge (Ianchovichina 2018).

Non-state actors, including extremist groups as well as NGOs, together formed a new factor that resulted in the disturbance in the Arab Spring. Extremists abused the fuzziness and unpredictability that arose in the wake of the Arab Spring to make progress and foist their ideas such as the establishment of the Islamic states and the downfall of secular governments. Entities such as al-Qaeda and later ISIS benefited greatly from the weakened governments and the decay of state institutions that the authoritarian regimes tended to leave behind (Poulis 2015).

However, the role of the NGOs was significant, they carried out the tasks of documentation of human rights abuses, and provision of humanitarian aid, and emphasized the importance of democratic reforms and accountability. Addressing human rights violations became a key task for NGOs, especially for civil and political liberties in Post-Arab Spring countries. This was a turning point for democracy and governance in the region, however, the challenges of transitioning societies towards liberalism remain (Hamd 2016).

5. Examination of international law principles and norms relevant to external interventions and their impact on democratic transitions

International law principles and norms pertinent to foreign interventions and their impact on the democratization process have to be looked deeply because they reflect the law frameworks and boundaries of what the states are entitled to do internationally. The governance of international law sets forth certain rules and control mechanisms for the conduct of states as well as the interaction between states comprising the area of interventions in the domestic matters of other states (Slaughter 1995). In the context of the Arab Spring and its aftermath, several international law principles and norms are particularly relevant:

1. **Sovereignty:** Sovereignty lies at the basis of international law, with the principle of the independence and self-governance of states being essential. It says that the states are the only sovereign entities that have the right to rule according to their chores. The sovereignty principle is the foundational barrier against foreign efforts that are designed to erode internal structures and change the governance system. Nevertheless, the principle of sovereignty has a limit as it is not absolute and its sovereignty is bound by international law, especially if there are cases of gross human rights violation or international peace and security (Cohen 2004).

2. **Non-Intervention:** The nonintervention rule entails that states cannot intervene in the internal affairs of other states. The principle of sovereign equality includes the acknowledgment of the states' independence as well as the idea of self-determination for a country. States must not utilize force or coercion to affect the internal political, economic, and social processes of another

state. Non-intervention is stipulated in the UN Charter and the general rules of international law and is considered one of the basic elements of the existing international legal framework (Conforti 1992).

3. **Use of Force:** The use of force is substantially limited, which is reflected in the norm of the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of any state stated in the UN Charter. Force utilization is allowed solely in self-defense or when UN Security Council resolutions under Chapter VII of the Charter authorize it. The principle of noninterference and the prohibition of employing force are the major tools for maintaining peace between states and preventing armed conflicts (Fink 1995).

4. **Human Rights:** The international human rights law sets out as a norm a universal standard for human rights as well as the freedom of actions that should be protected and promoted. The States ought to embrace their legal responsibilities of protecting an individual's human rights where the state's influence exists whether by respecting, protecting, or fulfilling the said rights. The norms of human rights, which include the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association, contribute to the basic foundations and processes of democratic governance as well as political transitions. Human rights should guide external interventions and take care not to violate the human rights of the people and the community (Donnelly and Whelan 2020).

5. **Responsibility to Protect (R2P):** The principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) underscores our collective duty along with the international community to prevent and intervene in situations involving mass atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. R2P states that a state has the burden of protecting the population from the commission of these heinous crimes and that the international community has the responsibility of helping states realize this responsibility. R2P helps in enacting legal groundwork to ease humanitarian intervention to safeguard and ensure that no state jeopardizes the lives of its populace by failing to protect them (El-Kebbi 2019).

The issue of external interventions by the international, and regional powers in the case of the Arab Spring where they used diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, military operations, and support to the opposition group posed crucial legal and ethical questions such as the adherence to the international legal principles and norms. On the one side, it is credible that some of the interventions were fair and justifiable in humanitarian terms and per democratic aims. On the other hand, these were criticized as violations of sovereignty, peace, and force. The consequences of external interventions on democratic transitions in the post-Arab Spring countries differed in different countries. Some missions made the political situation better, including institutional reforms and democratic consolidation; however, others just worsened the situation by creating or increasing conflicts, undermining the governance structures, and even leading to human rights violations. By scrutinizing international law principles and norms, the rule of law is created for evaluating external interventions' legitimacy and legality and, hence, for their implications on democratic transitions, sovereignty, and human rights protection in the MENA region and beyond (Rajah, Halliday, and Shaffer 2015).

6. Case studies of specific countries or regions affected by external dynamics, highlighting legal challenges and implications

Case examples from individual countries or regions that faced this problem help us understand the complexity, measures, and consequences of external engagement for democracy and governance. Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region were under the impact of foreign factors starting from the time of MENA and up to the current moment. These cases demonstrate the layers of intricacies in international law, sovereignty, and human rights that

become more apparent in political upheavals and the transition process. Here are a few notable case studies:

1. **Syria:** 2011 witnessed the outbreak of the Syrian civil war which has manifested with a myriad of intricate inner dynamics as well as multiple multi-national interventions. The conflict started as a popular rise against the dictatorial regime of President Bashar Al Assad that transformed ultimately into a protracted civil war where many groups such as jihadist organizations and external actors were involved. Regional powers' intervention in other countries' affairs, namely Iran and Russia, has helped the Assad regime to continue and worsen the conflict by increasing the humanitarian crisis. The legitimacy and acceptability of external interventions in Syria have been an important issue of discussion for scholars, pointing toward questions regarding sovereignty, the right to use force, and the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (Abdulsattar 2015).
2. **Libya:** The NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011 to protect the people from atrocities committed by the Colonel Muammar Gaddafi government, led to the regime change and the crashing down of the state institutions. Although the intervention initially received international recognition and was initiated on humanitarian grounds, the latter was characterized by a great schism, violence, and tensions further down the road. Foreign actors involved such as jihadist groups, regional powers, and other nonstate actors exploiting the power vacuum in Libya, the situation worsened, and efforts aimed at supporting democracy were completely undermined. The intervention's implementation gave birth to legal and ethical queries that arose from the issues of force, regime change, and protection of human rights in the framework of R2P (Estelle 2017).
3. **Egypt:** Egypt's case of democratic transition after the removal of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 is a turbulent one that demarks the clash of political parties, the military takeover, and the external effect. The military's intervention in 2013 was welcomed and criticized, and the Arab and Western world had different opinions as they usually do. Whilst some individuals believe it is inevitable to prevent the government led by Islamists, some others think that it is a coup against a democratically voted government. On the one hand, the use of military force is often seen as a violation of constitutional laws. On the other hand, it is not always clear where the interference of the law stops and what consequences it has, as it is often controversial (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015).
4. **Yemen:** In 2015 the Yemeni conflict transformed from a local to a regional problem, with one side being Saudi Arabia and the other being Iran. It has turned into a proxy war in which civilians are at the forefront of the humanitarian crisis. The involvement of external interveners like Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners masterminding the return to power of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and countering Iranian influence has further viciousized the humanitarian crisis with huge mindless human rights violations. The legality of the military campaign of the coalition forces including an airstrike which is targeting civilian infrastructure and population centers, by human rights organizations is questioned and the international observers. The conflict has led to legal and moral debates concerning the observation of the rules of international humanitarian law, the safety of the citizens, and external actors' responsibility for war crimes and human rights violations (Karakir 2018).

Hence, these case studies illustrate the complexity of the interplay between internal and external influences, and how it determines the political transitions and governance structures in the MENA region. The legal issues and implications of the external interventions are a manifestation of the fact that one must stick to the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and human rights protection when it comes to the establishment of peace, stability, and democracy. This knowledge

forms a fundamental basis for the future shaping of society after the conflict, including responsibility, justice, and the rule of law.

7. Assessment of the impact of external factors on the prospects for democratic governance in post-Arab Spring countries

Prospects for democratic governance in the post-Arab Spring countries are not only a matter for intra-state actions; but one that involves a more complex and dynamic study of interplay between domestic and external factors (Stel 2014). Internationally, external factors particularly get intervened by global and regional powers, geopolitical rivalries, economic motives, and the role of international organizations which have tremendously influenced the direction of democratic transitions in the MENA regions following the Arab Spring uprisings. It is hard to say with certainty whether external factors affect democratic governance positively or negatively, but there is a clear two-sided dimension to this. On one side, external aid to democratic movements and civil society initiatives can be a pivotal element in establishment of the inclusive political systems the rights of mankind, and the strengthening of democratic institutions (Boose 2012). Inter-national pressure and diplomatic relations can also be crucial in having states make changes to implement the rule of law. Nonetheless, beyond such actions designed by hostile countries to support authoritarian regimes, promote certain geopolitical interests, and extract economic benefits, fundamental democratic hopes can be suppressed and the political instability is prolonged. Global or regional powers, including the United States, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, are engaging in geopolitical rivalries, which are the main factors of conflicts and divisions within, or between, nations. Economic background that implies natural resources and investment possibilities, trade relations, and likewise, often takes preference over democratic principles and therefore leads to a hard choice between stability and prosperity. For instance, the role of the international institutions (UN-United Nations and EU-European Union) in supporting democratic transformations and tracking human rights violations are indeed decisive, but may also be limited by political considerations and contradictory interests of the member states (Kędzia et al. 2014). However, we should be well-prepared for a detailed study of political, economic, and social aspects of democratic governance, taking into account the complex diplomatic relationships between the local democratic aspirations and foreign policy of other nations that might affect the future of democracy in the MENA region.

8. Analysis of legal mechanisms and institutions for promoting democracy and human rights in the face of external pressures

The examination of legal mechanisms and institutions that allow democratic values and human rights to triumph in the face of external pressures is crucial to understanding how legal systems can unfold an adequate answer to the challenges posed by external impediments and protect democratic principles. The Arab Spring resulted in revolutionary countries faced with the challenge of instituting legal systems abiding by democratic values and safeguarding human rights while in the meantime, different external pressures might be playing out. The toolbox of these legal mechanisms includes constitutionally provided rules, electoral laws, judicial independence, and human rights institutions. Constitutional protections provide a vital function of creating and consolidating democratic governance by establishing the powers of government bodies, preserving fundamental rights, and setting the mechanisms of responsibility (Franck 1992). A strong constitution, which has a well-defined separation of power and balance of power system, could maintain stability and prevent interference from the outside by providing a framework for working for the government openly and effectively. Yet, the equally vital securing of freedom of expression, assembly, and association through constitutional guarantees is also crucial for

safeguarding civil rights and participation in the democratic processes. Electoral laws and the process of holding elections are imperative to making sure that an election is free and fair, which is a crucial component of democracy. Laws guiding the electoral process must uphold values of transparency, inclusivity, and fairness so that no outside power can disturb it, and people who get elected get their legitimacy from the process (Tekin and Temel 2019). Independent Electoral Management Bodies, impartial judiciary oversight, and dispute resolution mechanisms which are professionally sound play a crucial role in defending electoral integrity and detaching from the influence of external actors, through manipulation or coercion. Judicial independence constitutes one of the most important prerequisites for the establishment of the rule of law and forms an essential feature protecting the system of democratic governance from undue external pressures. Through a judicial branch, constitutions can be protected from rights violations, public officials can be held to account, and laws can be upheld in defiance of external intrusion. Scrutiny mechanisms, like judicial review systems, can allow courts to review government actions, like laws and policies that undermine democracy or human rights. The resilience of democratic governance to external pressures also depends on robust court systems with the power to effectively apply law and order rules. Human rights institutions that comprise national human rights commissions, ombudspersons, and international human rights treaties, perform a valuable and significant role in safeguarding and maintaining human rights even in the presence of external influences (Reif 2000). These mechanisms constitute the main means for victims of human rights violations to seek legal remedies, which, in addition, help to monitor the government's adherence to international human rights standards and voice their support for human rights law reforms. Ensuring access to justice, execution of remedies, and guaranteeing accountability mechanisms are important principles of human rights protection in the countries after the Arab Spring. The legal mechanisms and institutional analysis that are intended for creating equilibrium with democracy and human rights emphasize the role of power legal frameworks as stabilizers in the restoration of democratic ideals when facing external forces. By strengthening constitutional safeguards, conducting fair elections, preserving the independence of the judiciary, and protecting fundamental human rights, the post-Arab Spring countries can prevent the rise of foreign dominance and will be more powerful when it comes to the governance of their countries following the rule of law and human dignity (Rasovic-Noruzi 2023).

9. In-depth examination of selected case studies illustrating the interplay between external dynamics and democratic transitions in the Arab Spring aftermath

An in-depth analysis of a selected number of case studies with an emphasis on the intersections between the external actors and the way democratic transitions played out in the aftermath of the Arab Spring is of utmost importance since it brings to the fore the complexity of governance and change in the MENA region. Several case studies highlight the multifaceted nature of external influences and their impact on the prospects for democratic governance:

1. **Tunisia:** The Tunisian case is very positive and illustrative of the democratic transition that followed the Arab Spring. Having struggled with external pressures and economic difficulties, Tunisia still has managed the change in a way that is based on consensus-building, political offer, and respect for democratic norms. Western democracies and international institutions such as the World Bank have played a critical role in this process, financing the development of the country's democratic structures and stimulating the transition to pluralistic rule. Nonetheless, the Tunisian government is confronted with internal and external obstacles, such as security threats, economic differences, and regional instability, which have seen it vulnerable to its democracy consolidation (Becheikh 2021).

2. **Egypt:** Egypt's post-revolution journey has been unconventional with political instability, military resurgence, and external interventions. The military coup of 2013 against the democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, showed to what extent domestic and external forces were working to safeguard the way things have always been and hinder the rise of Islamist movements. The regime is not only supported internally; it also garners external recognition by way of the Gulf Monarchies and the Western Powers' diplomatic backing and security assistance that contributes to the authoritarian government rule and the elimination of dissent. Even though the restructuring of Egypt's politics was optimistically assessed as being successful, this period underlined the difficulties of dealing with potentially conflicting interests and ideas under external influences (A. A. Ahmed 2017).

3. **Libya:** Libya went through the transformation from dictatorship to democracy after the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the internal conflicts, and foreign interventions have delayed the completion of the process. The NATO-led intervention designed to stop government-led acts of violence against civilians not only caused a power vacuum but promoted factional fighting. The impact of external powers supporting contending militias and political factions, also with regional rivalries and proxy war, have resulted in prolonged instability in Libya and overwhelmingly democratic governance. Apart from diplomatic efforts and called-up political dialogue international community has not been successful in ending the unrest and conflicts in Libya, where the authority of the government is shared between two different sides, with private military groups under their control (Tahir 2016).

4. **Syria:** The Syrian war (2011), which is one of the outcomes of the Arab Spring, is one of the most turbulent circumstances that the region is experiencing now. The complicated question of domestic discontent, dictatorial repression, and external participation has resulted in a persistent civil war whose humanitarian disasters and regional proxy war hammer the area further. The extra-regional involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf states has been backing different sides of the conflict, fueling sectarian tensions and unknicking the intrinsic problem of political settlement. The international initiatives to end the conflict by diplomatic talks and peace initiatives have been thwarted by geo-political activity and divergent interests among the powers. The Syrian case again brings to the fore the difficulties in settling complex conflicts of the presence of foreign intervention and the fact that the issues underlying conflicts need to be tackled at their core and not merely through negotiations (Kargin 2018).

These cases shed light on the range of different histories and results of democratic transitions following the break-out of the Arab Spring, emphasizing the delicate internal actions and the external contribution. Although the outsourcing of the democratic reform process and asset construction can be resolved, it is however possible for external support to magnify conflict, consolidate authoritarianism, and hinder democratic aspirations. Being able to grasp the subtleties of the outside world as well as its impact on democratic transitions is a vital aspect for policymakers, researchers, and activists on the path of dealing with the complications of political changes and creating democratic political systems of good governance in the MENA region.

10. Policy recommendations for addressing the democracy mirage and mitigating the negative impact of external factors on democratic governance

The string of policy recommendations adopted for combating the newly created democracy illusions and preventing the destabilization of the governing systems due to the negative effects of the external factors on Arab countries after the Arab Spring should be a multifaceted process that includes domestic reforms, regional cooperation, and international support. Here are key recommendations:

1. **Strengthening Democratic Institutions:** One of the major objectives of the post-Arab Spring states should be the implementation of institutional reforms that will systematize democracy and ensure the impartiality of the judicial system, fair elections, and parliamentary oversight. To secure freedom from external interferences and influence, the improvement in the quality of the institutions such as their independence, transparency, and accountability can be a huge step towards the emergence of democratic governance (Glasius 2015).
2. **Promoting Civil Society and Media Freedom:** States must protect the rights of civil society and the independent media, civil society organizations, and human rights defenders to criticize the government for democratic changes. The protection of civic space, nurturing pluralism, and securing freedom of expression are of specific significance in the fight against authoritarianism and for democratic governance as they are the steps towards the protection of civic space, nurturing pluralism, and securing freedom of expression (Joseph 2012).
3. **Fostering Inclusive Political Dialogue:** Political actors including government representatives, political parties, and civil society organizations should engage in inclusive dialogue, consensus-building, and peace negotiations to address grievances, solve conflicts, and help democratic development. The culture of political inclusion and representation is critical in ensuring the growth of trust, credibility, and social harmony in the societies that arose from the end of the Arab Spring (Cohen 2004).
4. **Combatting Corruption and Impunity:** Fighting corruption rooted in impunity and abuse of power should be the central concern of policymakers because they make people lose their trust and disregard democratic regulations. Shoring up anti-corruption arrangements, increasing transparency in public purchases and financial transactions as well and holding answerable those who have been committing abuses is vital for the rule of law and for regaining confidence in democratic institutions (Noueihed and Warren 2012).
5. **Regional Cooperation and Conflict Resolution:** The actors of the region such as neighboring countries, regional organizations, and international alliances are supposed to put in the utmost effort to build cooperation and dialogue just to help solve regional conflicts, stabilize the region, and also enhance democratic transition in the region of post-Arab spring. As many as possible regional initiatives towards peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development might decrease the negative consequences of external interventions and ensure peace and prosperity in the region (Berger et al. 2012).
6. **International Support and Assistance:** Partners, such as bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, and democratic governments, should provide sustainable assistance and support to the post-Arab Spring countries that are struggling to consolidate democratic governance, promote respect for human rights, and hence achieve sustainable development. International assistance must be by the national priorities, should respect the sovereign and owner rights, and place the capability and institutional change on the top of the list (Peters 2012).
7. **Promoting Economic Development and Social Justice:** Confronting socioeconomic differences, ensuring a fair economic development that benefits all, and achieving social justice is the cornerstone of the resilient and inclusive democracies that are emerging in post-Arab Spring countries. The government should try to allocate resources for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and job creation first to deal with the social discontent from its causes effectively and ensure equitable development (Ardic 2012).
8. **Respecting Human Rights and Rule of Law:** Promoting the respect of human rights, which don't violate the rule of law, and giving equal access to justice for all citizens make up the pillars of democratic governance. Governments must uphold international human rights norms,

guard the rights of vulnerable and minority groups, and establish redress systems for the victims of human rights abuse (Fisher and Stewart 2014).

Adopting these policy suggestions, post-Arab Spring nations will be better positioned to solve a democracy illusion, limiting the negative impact of external factors on democratic governance, and building an efficient and inclusive democracy, which will respond to the desires and demands of all the citizens. A solid democracy, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights are the key issues that will provide a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the democratic process in some countries of the MENA region and beyond.

11. **Suggestions for future research directions and areas for further exploration in the field of legal perspectives on post-Arab Spring dynamics.**

The post-Arab Spring studies related to the legal perspective offer space for exploration in future research directions to acquire further insight, track the new trends, and provide inputs to the policy and practice. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Long-term Impact Assessment:** Organize long-term studies that will judge the impact of legal reforms and institutional changes made in an attempt to ensure the transformation that followed the Arab Spring. Analyze the role of legal approaches in reinforcing democratic government, safeguarding human rights, and attributing accountability over time (Fisher and Stewart 2014).
2. **Comparative Legal Analysis:** Expand the comparative legal analysis across the Arab Spring countries and identify common challenges, best practices, and innovative ways of responding to them while focusing on democratization processes and external pressures. Designing the course will compel students to compare constitutional frameworks, electoral laws, judicial systems, and human rights protections to elicit noticeable global trends and patterns in legal dynamics (Fisher and Stewart 2014).
3. **Intersection of Law and Politics:** Discuss the synergy between law and politics in the post-Arab Spring cases by shedding light on the function of legal frameworks as the key determinants of the play of political processes, the resolution of conflicts, and the balancing of power hierarchies. Study the effect of legal changes on political stability, regime legitimacy, and citizens' participation in democrat (Hadzhidimova 2016).
4. **Transitional Justice and Rule of Law:** Explore the place of transitional justice instruments, including truth commissions, criminal justice, and reparations programs, in accommodating past human rights abuses and contributing to reconciliation in societies after the Arab Spring revolution. Review the link between transitional justice mechanisms and the rule of law, accountability, and democratic strengthening (Sriram et al. 2017).
5. **Digital Rights and Cyber Law:** Address distinctive legal issues arising in digital rights, internet protests, and cyber security in ex-Arab Spring countries. Consider the legal regimes related to internet governance, freedom of speech, privacy, and government monitoring, and the prospects they guarantee for democratic governance and human rights protection.
6. **Gender and Legal Reform:** Explore the gender aspects of legal reform and democratic governance in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Review the role of legal systems on women's rights, equality, and political participation, and debate strategies on how to integrate gender dimensions in institutional practices and amendments (El-Husseini 2016).
7. **Judicial Independence and Accountability:** Consider the components on which judicial powers stand in the countries that have passed through the Arab Spring, such as judicial appointments, tenure, and sanctions. Find out what international legal principles, professional

associations, and civil organizations can do to show that the judiciary is clean and the rule of law is well protected (Chertoff and Green 2012).

8. **Legal Empowerment and Access to Justice:** Develop policies of legal empowerment and justice for all in the post-Arab Spring countries, especially for the poor or the oppressed groups. Research on the efficacy measures of legal aid programs, alternative dispute resolution processes, and community justice systems in increasing legal literacy, civic participation as well as social equality (Byczkowski 2023).

9. **Regional Dynamics and Legal Pluralism:** Study regional institutions and legal pluralism within the region of MENA, featuring coexistence between national legal systems, traditional law, and beliefs. Conduct the study of the consequences of legal pluralism for democratic administration, human rights protection, and peacekeeping during cultural and religious diversity (Byczkowski 2023).

10. **Ethical Considerations and Legal Ethics:** Reflect upon ethics and legal ethics that are relevant to the roles that lawyers and legal scholars take in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in the respective countries. Looking at professional standards, codes of conduct, and ethical choices concerning political and social environments that figures in the legal profession such as practicing lawyers, judges, and policymakers have to deal with (Fisher and Stewart 2014).

This research can be expanded further to include other lines of inquiry and focus on many other aspects of the law that affect the post-Arab Spring developments in MENA. Through such research, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers will have the opportunity to give a wider angle and more practical advice on democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law in the MENA region and beyond.

12. Conclusion:

With the Arab Spring and the subsequent pursuit of political reform in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, has been facing tremendous challenges such as the “democracy mirage”. Amid optimism and high hopes for political reform, democratic principles in the post-Arab Spring period have been harshly challenged by political instability, economic hardships, and the overwhelming continuance of authoritarian rule. The intense participation of various global actors, from great powers to the regional and multinational organizations, has inevitably shaped the fate of political transitions, which regularly increase the level of existing ethnic tensions and with no doubt, hindering the overall progress towards democracy. Legal perspectives are very cardinal in the complexities of external factors, thereby indicating the need for adherence to the principles of international law, implementation of human rights framework, and application of the theory of governance in responding to the challenges linked with democratic governance. The policy recommendations in this article emphasizes on building a system inclusive of the governance structures, a system which supports equality and a mechanisms of accountability to eradicate the myth of democracy mirage. Future research should also add long-term performance assessment to the agenda and take into account topics like digital rights and gender perspectives for the sustainable development of the MENA region. Through holistic approaches mentioned in this article and joint actions from all around the world, the meaning Arab Spring will get this new breath, and consequently, the future will be expressed in the languages of respect for human rights, governance, and democratic legitimacy.

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