Democracy in The Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

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Table of Content

2. Literature Review

Firstly, it is essential to understand how Islam is perceived by Western civilization and vice versa. John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed (2007) conducted a study that showed Muslims' view of the West: "The conflict between Muslims and Western communities is far from inevitable. It is more about policy than principles." (p. xii) Further, they asserted that the study revealed many significant and surprising conclusions, the most interesting of which were that "Muslims around the world do not see the west as monolithic. They criticize or celebrate countries based on their politics, not based on their culture or religion … What Muslims around the world say they most admire about the West is its technology and its democracy" (p. xii). Lastly, "Muslims around the world say that the one thing the West can do to improve relations with their societies is to moderate their views toward Muslims and respect Islam" (p. xiii). The study also showed that regardless of the spread of anti-Western sentiments, most Muslims respect what the West cherishes. On the other hand, the West has two different views in terms of their understanding of Islam and what they consider the objective of Islam to be. The first view was developed by academia and research centers and has remained within the same circle. This is the view articulated by Orientalists, who analyze the sources of Islam and devote their time to exploring the civilization, language, and the Quran. This route understands the real Islam; however, it has been confined to academia. The second view, and the most common one in Europe and the United States, is the one presented in the media. This view visualizes Islam as an evil and assigns to it all the responsibility for any mistake or offensive act that happens today or in the future (Islammemo, 2003). If we subscribe to this view, Islam is considered to be incompatible with democracy, and that is why democracy is always associated with Western civilization.

However, Rashid Khalidi, in his book *Resurrecting Empire* (2004), referred to the West as the reason behind the deficiency in the implementation of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He examined the record of the West in its interventions and involvement in the region and analyzed the outcomes of these interventions. He also examined the latest intervention of the United States in Iraq and referred to it as the new empire that learned nothing from the history of occupation. Khalidi clearly explained that the US has followed the same historical path of the old empires and conflicts, and he highlighted that the current US policy ignores the situation of chaos in Iraq. The situation in Iraq, he asserted, is a consequence of the democratization strategy that the United States formulated for the region; furthermore, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict inflamed by US policy is taking the United States down the same path that the Europeans followed in the past. Consequently, peace, prosperity, and democracy for the MENA region would not see the light of day as long as the United States continues to follow the path of conflict and war. Finally, Khalidi offered some alternatives for US policy makers to help in pursuing peace rather than Empire.

3. Introduction

The Arab uprising, particularly in Egypt, has shown that the Western-style democracy that is spreading across the world is not sufficient for the people of the MENA. Sixty years of Western support for Egypt's authoritarian regime, as well as the support that it has given to other similar regimes has benefited international interests (Porter, 2011, p. 7). The clash between the notion of democracy and its application in the real world has devastated human lives and caused a great deal of sorrow. The international community agrees that democracy is in crisis, and it has acknowledged that there is public dissatisfaction with many components of democracy, including the incapability of some representatives of the government to distribute economic opportunities fairly (IDEA, 2006). Thus, rebels have devised their own type of democracy. As noted by Henry Porter (2011, March 12) in *The Guardian*, "First came liberation from the British; now comes liberation from the west's placeman, and indeed from the limiting western views of what is possible in Arab society" (p. 7). Many arguments have been put forward to explain the inability of the Arab states to adopt democracy.

Statement of the Problem

1. How did the West affect democracy in MENA?

    a. What benefits did the West gain from the region?

    b. How did the West help spread democracy in the region?

2. What are the differences between Western democracy and Islamic democracy?

    a. How does Islam deal with minority ethnic groups?

    b. How does Islam rule the state?

3. Is the Arab Spring an indication that democracy may have a chance in the Middle East and North Africa?

a. Why the revolution?

b. How much of Western democracy and Islamic democracy did the rebels absorb, or how detached are they from them?

4. What will be the result of the revolution—a direct democracy or a representative democracy?

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to deepen the learning of political science with specific emphasis on international relations and, to a certain extent, strategic studies, which are somewhat related to the ongoing revolutions and possibly real democratization. This study is not limited to the students of the abovementioned disciplines, but also extends to those in government. The study is important in that it will enable the researcher to further improve the study and knowledge of the Middle East, from its history and culture to its political dynamics. The researcher is eager for his work to serve a purpose, not just in making a contribution to the academic world, but also to helping provide more insight, which would be of use to policy-makers.

This study is important because one can understand the causes of instability in regions where societies carry out revolutions as the only possible solution for achieving stability. In addition, this study aims to examine the challenges of changing the situation in MENA, as it can be inferred that the people in the region were tired of the status quo and wanted to see real changes that would benefit them rather than their governments and the West.

Democracy in the Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is famous throughout the world for being an unpredictable region. It has been the site of many battles and other clashes. When Western civilization made its way to the region, starting with Napoleon's conquest in the nineteenth century, it was not viewed as introducing liberal or democratic ideas by any means; rather, it was viewed as an occupation that carried with it the occupation of identity, language, and religion. People equated Western ideas and the imposition of Western culture with an occupation that threatened Arabic Islamic culture. At present, the Arab uprising, particularly in Egypt, shows that the Western-style democracy that is spreading across the world is not sufficient for the people of the MENA. Many arguments have been put forward to explain the inability of Arab states to adopt democracy. Some blame the colonial era, others attribute it to natural resources, and others blame Islam.

Methodology

For this particular study, the "divide and conquer" strategy will constitute the backbone, prior to the discussion and analysis of the lack of democracy in MENA. The divide and conquer strategy was used centuries ago by the Romans to wage war and build their empire. In war, the tactic is to weaken the enemy by dividing its forces (Kroll & MacIsaac, 2006). The divide and conquer concept imposes the following condition: "The unitary actor follows an intentional strategy of exploiting problems of coordination or collective action among the multiple actors" (Posner, Spier, & Vermeule, 2009, p. 2). This condition relates to situations where a unitary actor positively benefits from internal hostility within a conflicting group or between two conflicting groups, but does not itself produce that conflict through an intentional strategy (Posner, Spier, &

Vermeule, 2009, p. 2). The mechanisms for using this strategy vary from land division, to

religion and ethnic separation, to the destruction of communication channels.

4. Chapter 1: Democracy

Political systems are the most important pillar in the construction of a country. They comprise the major decision makers in regard to the distribution, production, and use of a country's resources. The call for the development of democratic political systems has always been present in political demands, especially for less-developed countries. In this chapter, I will explore democratic models followed by the different types of political regimes in the dominantly Arab countries of MENA as a background to the study of the recent revolutions and political upheavals in the region, known as the "Arab Spring".

4.1 Models of Democracy

Democracy—rule by the people, the *demos*—has a long tradition dating back in Western history to at least Ancient Greece, where it was first formulated as an ideal. This concept of an "ideal" democracy may be employed as a reference or standard for the realities that have since emerged:

> The meaning of democracy has been distorted; the dominant conception of democracy today has hardly any relation to the classical Greek conception. Furthermore, the current practice of adding several qualifying adjectives to the term 'democracy' has further confused the meaning of it and created the impression that several forms of democracy exist. But, in fact, there is only one form of democracy at the political level, i.e. the direct exercise of sovereignty by the people themselves, a form of societal institution which rejects any form of 'ruling'. Therefore, all other forms of so-called democracy are not but various forms of 'oligarchy' i.e. rule by the few. (Salvato, 2012, p. 57).

This statement explains the reality of politics today, but it also reflects old politics. The discussion here will focus on the basic types of democracy that exist in politics today at the

national (state) level, their similarities and differences, and the extent to which they are related to the classic Greek conception. Four major democratic models may be identified: (a) constitutional republic, (b) constitutional monarchy, (c) parliamentary democracy, and (d) direct democracy.

A constitutional republic involves the creation of political system that is based on individual rights and a delegated authority elected by the people to represent them in the government (Koerner, 2011). In this system, citizens are considered independent, property holding with no false inheritance, and prepared to forfeit their private, egotistic interests to benefit the community as a whole, and thus, egalitarian and righteous people are required to represent the citizens in republics. This sort of political system is found, for example, in France, the United States, and Mexico.

Arguably, a republic is not a democracy. Scholars, such as Bill Koerner (2011) and Nancy Salvato (2012), have attempted to distinguish the concepts of republic and democracy and address why the United States is considered a republic and not a democracy. There are two major differences between a democracy and a republic. Firstly, in an ideal democracy, the government is elected by all of the people, while in a republic, the government is elected by a percentage of voters. Secondly, in an ideal democracy, authority is derived through a meeting of the masses or by any direct expression of the people; in the case of a republic, such as the United States, it is the elected representatives who meet, not the people, and the people only directly express their will through periodic elections (Dahl, 2003). In the US Constitution, Article IV, Section 4 declares that "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican form of Government." The mechanism of selecting representatives and the arrangement for attaining representation established by the constitution clearly show that what is produced is not a democracy in the ideal sense, but a republic. The intention of the framers of the constitution was

not to create a direct democracy, because they believed that a direct democracy would produce "mobocracy" that would lead to tyranny and anarchy, and eventually, to a loss of sovereignty (Salvato, 2012).

The second model of democracy is a constitutional monarchy. Technically, this is "a state ruled by a single absolute heredity ruler," but another crucial point is that it is one "headed by a sovereign who rules according to the constitution... [which] may be 'written' and codified, as indeed it is in the vast majority of the constitutional monarchies of modern world" (Bogdanor, 1997, p. 1). Examples of constitutional monarchies are the United Kingdom and New Zealand, whose constitutions remain unwritten and uncodified. This form of governance differs from that of an absolute monarchy in that the monarchy in the latter is considered as the singular source of political power in the state and is not legally bound by any constitution (Miller, 2010). The power of the king, queen, sultan, etc. in a constitutional monarchy is limited, because the sovereign is not actually permitted to govern, according to the constitution. Thus, in a modern constitutional monarchy, the sovereign is allowed to execute only a very small number of public acts without the authority of his or her ministers (Bogdanor, 1997). A monarchical government is not considered an ideal democracy, since the people do not choose the head of state. Consequently, this leads to a questioning of the legality of the system. Yet, the Council of Europe and the European Union have excluded the condition of choice insofar as monarchies may be the best practical system for a nation (Winkler, 2006).

The third model of democracy is a parliamentary democracy. The notion of parliamentary government differentiates between the mode of the government and the form of the state, and it distinguishes between the old and modern forms of democracy. The modern form combines republicanism and representative government and the old reflects the constitutional monarchy

(Beyme, 2000). Several definitions have been proposed to define parliamentary systems. One of these definitions is "a form of constitutional democracy in which executive authority emerges from, and is responsible to, legislative authority" (Strom, Muller, & Bergman, 2003, p. 10). Another definition of parliamentary democracy is a state where "'parliament is sovereign' under parliamentarism and that this regime type requires 'government to be appointed, supported and, as the case may be, dismissed, by parliamentary cote'" (Strom, Muller, & Bergman, 2003, p. 10). The term parliamentary government usually focuses on the connection between government and parliament. It does not require a universal suffrage or association with citizens. Consequently, a parliamentary government can exist without democracy (Strom, Muller, & Bergman, 2003).

The last model of democracy is direct democracy. This is the ideal democracy introduced at the beginning of this chapter, in which authority is derived directly from the people, who vote on policy initiatives collectively. This type of government does not involve the election of representatives: "Citizens make policy and law decisions in person, without going through representatives and legislatures" (Co-Intelligence Institute). It involves things like mass meetings and collective decision making, which tend to be limited to smaller communities or groups. The modern incarnation of this in state politics can be traced back to the Parisian commune of the 1789 revolution, which was instrumental in the development of the ideal of communism (and communitarianism). In reality, attempts to introduce a more "bottom up" form of direct democracy have tended to be limited by size to smaller "alternative" structures than that of the modern nation-state.

As we see from the differences between these so-called democratic models, the political systems today cannot be counted as "real" democracies. At the end of the twentieth century, however, the world experienced a revolutionary political change that had massive effects on the

terminologies in democratic discourse, with phrases like "people power" and even "Facebook revolution." The conclusion here is that there is no democracy that is equal to the Athenian ideal; thus, eventually, the kind of democracy that the Arab uprisings have sought is either a constitutional republic, a constitutional monarchy, or a parliamentary democracy, none of which is a literal democracy.

4.2 Types of Regimes in the Middle East and North Africa

Many scholars have referred to the governmental systems in MENA either as the only major ruling monarchs left or as authoritarian regimes. While it is true that many of the region's countries are monarchies, this does not apply to all countries in the MENA region. A constitutional monarchy differs, as mentioned, from an absolute monarchy. Furthermore, the fact that some governments are led by a tyrannical ruler (either an individual, family, or the military) does not erase the fact that such countries are republics or parliamentary monarchies; when a country has a tyrant for a ruler, this should be referred to as the practice of authoritarianism, ignoring the country's constitution, or ignoring the ethics, and this label should be not applied to the country itself and its political system.

Monarchs rule most of the Arab league countries, like Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait. Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, and Iraq had kings during the imperial era; however, from 1952 to 1969, these countries shifted from monarchies to republics. In terms of geo-politics, the countries of the Arab league have major control over access to important strategic waterways, like the Persian/Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Strait of Gibraltar, while economically, most are oil producers, and the non-oil-producing countries receive substantial support from the oil producers, considered to be the norm among friends and patrons (Anderson, 1991).

Many changes have occurred in the political systems of the MENA countries since they gained independence. Several countries have experienced uprisings and revolts that changed their systems, while some are still waiting for the results of ongoing struggles, and for others, no such confrontation has arisen. Here, the focus will be on the political systems in MENA and understanding the different types of regimes so as to analyze the reasons behind the contemporary revolutions and unrest, and to attempt to establish whether a democratic system is actually best for these countries, or whether something else might be preferable.

To this end, Table 1 presents an outline of the political systems in Arab MENA countries. Omitted are Palestine (as it is technically not a country) and Israel, Iran, and Sudan (as these are not predominantly Arab countries).

Table 1. Political systems in the Arab Middle East and North Africa

Country	Government type	Independ-ence	Constitution	Branches	Sub-divisions	Political parties	Suffrage
Bahrain	Constitutional hereditary monarchy	August 15, 1971	Approved May 26, 1973. New constitution issued Feb. 14, 2002	Executive—King (Chief of State) Prime Minister (Head of Government) Council of Ministers (Cabinet) Legislative—Bicameral Parliament, Shura (Consultation) Council Judicial—High Civil Appeals Court	12 municipalities	N/A	18

Egypt	Republic	1922	The old one was suspended; the new one is in the process of being drafted	Executive—President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Legislative—People's Assembly	27 governorates	N/A	18
Iraq	Parliamentary democracy	Oct. 3, 1932	New: Oct. 15, 2005	Executive—Presidency Council, Council of Ministers Legislative—Council of Representatives Judicial—Supreme Court	18 governorates	N/A	N/A
KSA	Monarchy	Sep. 23, 1932	The Holy Qur'an, Council of Ministers, Consultative (Shura) Council	Executive—King Legislative—Consultative Council	Administrative Divisions, 13 provinces	None	N/A
Kuwait	Constitutional Hereditary Monarchy	June 19, 1961	Nov. 11, 1962	Executive—Amir, Prime Minister, Council of Ministers Legislative—Unicameral National Assembly Judicial—High Court of Appeal	6 governorates	Political blocs	Adult male, Adult female 21
Lebanon	Republic	Nov. 22, 1943	May 23, 1926	Executive—President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister,	Administrative: 8 governorates	20	21 compulsory for all males; 21 women

				Cabinet Legislative—Unicameral National Assembly Judicial—four Courts of Cassation, Constitutional Council, Supreme Council			with elementary education
Libya	Republic (old) Transnational National Council	Dec. 24, 1951	New: Aug. 2011, Transnational National Council				18 laws passed Feb. 7, 2012
Morocco	Constitutional Monarchy	March 2, 1956	March 1972, newly revised 2011	Executive—King, Prime Minister Legislative—Bicameral Parliament Judicial—Supreme Court	N/A	9	18
Oman	Monarchy		None, Nov. 6, 1996 Royal decree promulgating the Basic Statute	Executive—Sultan Legislative—Bicameral *Majlis Oman* (State Council, elected Consultative Council) Judicial—four Civil Courts	Administrative: 8, 63 districts	None	N/A
Qatar	Constitutional Monarchy	Sep. 3, 1971	Approved by popular vote in 2003, came into force 2005	Executive—Council of Ministers Legislative—Advisory Council (election	Fully centralized government, seven municipalities	None	Over 18 since 1999

				pending until 2013) Judicial— independent			
Syria	Republic	April 17, 1946	March 13, 1973	Executive— President, two Vice Presidents, Prime Minister, Council of Ministers Legislative— Unicameral People's Council Judicial— Supreme Judicial Council, Supreme Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation, Appeals Courts, Economic Security Courts, Supreme State Security Court, Personal Status and local level courts	Adminis trative: 14 province s	10	18
Tunisi a	Republic	March 20, 1956	June 1, 1959/ drafting new since Oct. 2011	Executive— President, Prime Minister, Council of Minister Legislatives— Parliament (suspended) Judicial— District Courts, Courts of Appeal, Highest Court	Adminis trative 23 governo rates	More than 100 since Feb. 2012	18

UAE	Federation	Dec. 2, 1971	Provisional Dec. 2, 1971	Executive—President, Vice President, 7 member Supreme Council of Rulers, Prime Minister Legislative—Federal National Council Judicial—Islamic and secular courts	Admini-strative: self-governing emirates	None	State-nominated electors, appointed by leadership of each emirate
Yemen	Republic	Unification of South and North May 22, 1990	May 1991	Executive—President, Prime Minister Legislative—Bicameral Legislature (Shura Council and Representative)	Administrative: 22 governorates	3 main	18

(Data Source: U.S. Department of State 2012)

With regard to the different governmental regimes in the table, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen are considered constitutional republics. This type of government should be considered a type of democracy; however, there were major Arab revolts against these governments. Moreover, the governments differ from other Arab governments in that they have had political parties involved in many previous political reforms and decisions. Yet, the defects of these systems were embodied in repression, corruption, and economic hardship. These regimes exercised repression and suppression of opposition figures, political activists, and civil liberties (Bellin, 2011).

It would be wrong to assume that there are clear democratic political systems that are already available and waiting to be applied by nations. In reality, all political systems that are introduced, however quickly and using whichever imported models, inevitably involve a measure of evolution and integration into the pre-existing political fabric of the nation. This suggests that the application of direct democracy is impossible because it leads to chaos and violence; it could only be applied in a small nation. However, what the MENA region needs is to determine the type of democracy that works best for the people and for the development of these countries. Another finding from the analysis of democratic models is that ambiguity in defining democracy will extend the struggle. In situations where there is ambiguity, the interpretations of democracy become fluid and expressed according to individual interests.

5. Chapter 2: Western Interests in the Middle East and North Africa

Since the creation of MENA, the West has been present in the region; more specifically, the West was the divider of the land, and the Arabs were forced to accept these divisions. This chapter covers the history of the presence of Western entities in the region. It will also discuss the effect of their presence and the benefits that the West has gained from its presence in MENA. Moreover, it will address the Western promotions of democracy in the region.

The main argument to explain the Arab states' inability to adopt democracy points to the arbitrary colonial division as the root of the problem. Due to colonialism, Arab states face various ethnic issues that have cause instability in the MENA region since the boundaries were drawn. These boundaries also created minority groups and made them feel as though they are the objects of distrust, hatred, or fear (Whiltaker, 2004). The other argument to explain MENA's inability to apply democracy is that the West is not sufficiently involved in its political reform; rather, its interests are strictly oil and other natural resources (Ciric, 2011). These arguments suggest that the instability that has plagued the region results from the divisions that the West created and, more recently, the curse of oil. This chapter will explore the extent to which these arguments are legitimate. Will MENA remain vulnerable to Western intrusion and its harmful effects, or is there hope for a better life?

5.1 The History of the Western Presence in the Middle East and North Africa

Britain and France

Britain has footprints in MENA that originated more than 200 years ago. Britain was the major colonial power that established boundaries all over the world. In fact, Britain is

responsible for most of the current boundaries in Africa and Asia, and the creation of these boundaries was sometimes the consequence of negotiations with other colonial powers. Britain's role was not only to set boundaries; it also participated in the initiation of the scientific paradigm of boundary making. Moreover, prior to this, during the medieval period, Britain's kings and knights launched the Crusade for the Holy Land. However, Britain was absent from the region between 1291 and 1798, when Napoleon Bonaparte led the French expedition to Egypt; Admiral Horatio Nelson pursued the French navy and defeated it at Abu Kir (the Battle of the Nile). The British forces helped the Ottomans defeat the French in 1799. During the Napoleonic Wars, the British seized Aden and eventually settled permanently there in 1839. In the same year, a British consulate opened in Jerusalem, which documented the existence of the British as one of the major actors in MENA (Levey & Podeh, 2008).

The practical involvement of Britain in the region began in the 1860s and lasted until 1960. Britain created the boundaries of several countries that we know today: Iraq, Kuwait, the Gulf States, Jordan, and Palestine. In creating these boundaries, the British also created conflicts within them. Many of these countries resorted to violence to reclaim the lands that they considered to be rightfully theirs. There was also confusion about the division, and the disputes continued among the countries that were formed. The conflict resulted from two perspectives of borders: (a) the notion that they define the limits of ruling the area (the European view) and (b) the idea of ruling the people (the conventional view among Arab tribes) who consider themselves to be under the protection of a certain ruling tribe regardless of the initiated boundaries. The discovery of oil in many of these lands added to the tension (Levey & Podeh, 2008).

The French expedition to the Middle East started in 1798, when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt. The French intervention was aroused by Italian colonial campaigns. However,

the French interpreted their intervention as an offer of assistance to the people in achieving self-determination and modernizing the Orient (Brown, 2006). The First World War, which began in 1914, encouraged the colonizers to occupy more lands. Both Britain and France had interests in the region, which prompted their collaboration. On the other hand, both countries were competing to establish more colonies. The competition did not help the Arabs achieve peace. In the case of the British, they encouraged the Arabs to revolt against the French occupation of the "Fertile Crescent." In effect, leaving the Arabs to fight the French promoted Britain's colonial expansion. The French reaction was quite similar. The French helped the Zionists in their attack against the authority of the British mandate in the land that is known as Palestine today (Barr, 2011). The most important event associated with the presence of the French in the region was the Sykes-Picot Agreement, signed in 1916. The British and the French allied and negotiated a division of the region, specifically Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. These two countries did not have a legitimate right to divide the region; nevertheless, such a colonial strategy represented the predominant political logic at the time.

The Sykes-Picot agreement helped both colonial powers dominate the Arab world and its wealth; Arabs are still suffering from the effects of the agreement today (Barr, 2011).

The Soviet Union and the United States

The geopolitics and economics of the Middle East have always been intriguing to the Soviet Union and the United States. During the Cold War, these two entities competed for control in the Middle East, and both tried hard to decrease the other's influence in the nations of the region. From 1945 to 1985, MENA witnessed a growth in Soviet interests in the region. The eastern part of the Black Sea provided a waterway to the Mediterranean Sea, linking the Soviet Union to Asia, Africa, Southern Europe, and the Middle East (Kreutz, 2007). For the Soviet

Union, the military-strategic factor became increasingly important in the 1960s, when the Soviets needed to expand their naval power along the region's shores, whether for the purpose of confrontation, intervention, or defense. The other reason for the expansion of their fleet was to meet the challenge of the American nuclear ballistic missile submarines. In the 1970s, the Soviets sought locations for aircraft bases to protect their naval force on the shores, and they chose Egypt as the best location, given its strategic geopolitical position for the venture and its relatively stable regime. However, the Soviet Union lost its facilities in Egypt and then sought strategic alternatives in Syria and then Libya. The Soviets' interests increased to maintain strategic objectives, and they successfully gained influence and control over the local security, military, and political forces. Furthermore, the Soviet Union signed so-called friendship treaties to provide a formal framework for stability and relations. It also provided military arms for the "Arab-Israeli conflict" (Golan, 1979). The Cold War gave the region central strategic importance and made it a key battleground for the global superpowers, namely, Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

In 1899, the United States Secretary of State John Hay had proposed an "Open Door Policy" in relations with China, meaning that the multiple imperial powers that had interests in China could participate in trade with the country. Twenty years later, the United States proclaimed the same principle proclaimed to demand the right to access the oil fields of the Middle East. This right was granted to the United States by the dominant powers in the lands in July 1928, by Protocol 31 of the Ostend Conference. This protocol gave the United States a permanent interest in the territories containing oil (Nasser, 2007). The crucial turning point that affected the presence of the United States in the region was the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1947–1948. It took the first initiative to acknowledge the new Jewish state

and continuously asserted Israel's rights to the land. During the Cold War, the United States established new bases or used and revived the old bases in MENA that the British and French had used for different purposes in addition to the containment of the Soviet Union. In the name of containing the Soviet Union, the United States also indirectly supported Britain's continued domination through different projects, such as the Baghdad Pact, the Middle East Command, and the Middle East Defense Organization (Khalidi, 2004).

> With regard to the practices during the Cold War, Khalidi (2004) asserted the following:
> It is rare to see full recognition given to the role played by superpowers in worsening regional tensions in the Middle East. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union often provoked war rather than peace, as well as retarding the spread of democracy and reinforcing the strong authoritarian tendencies that have existed in the region, in some cases since the dawn of recorded history. Sadly, nearly two decades after the end of the Cold War, some of these negative patterns are still continuing, indicating the lingering effects of the Cold War on the region—and the continuation of some Cold War practices there by the United States, the global hegemon and sole remaining superpower, and by a resurgent Russia—even after the dissolution of the USSR. (p. 102)

5.2 Western Gains from the Region

As mentioned previously, the decline of the Ottomans in MENA led to the rise of the European colonial powers in securing a range of territories and controlling access to Asia (Shah, 2011). Politics, strategies, and alliances change over time, but the interests in and domination of MENA have remained constant from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. Currently, energy sources represent the main interest in the region.

Two rivals and partners share the desire to derive the benefits of MENA, namely, the Franco-German and Anglo-American alliances. Many summits seeking to "clear the air" between those powers have taken place, unbeknownst to the global public, which have resulted in an agreement for cooperative management of the spoils of war in NATO's conference in Riga, Latvia, in 2006. The agreement calls for the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and their allies to share the area ranging from the Persian/Arabian Gulf and Afghanistan to Mauritania. The strategy is to restructure MENA to exploit the regional wealth for these Western powers' own gains. "The services agreement between Total S.A. and Chevron to jointly develop Iraqi energy reserve, NATO agreements in the Persian Gulf, and the establishment of a permanent French military base in the U.A.E. are all results of these objectives. Militant globalization and force is at work from Iraq and Lebanon to the Maghreb" (Nazemroaya, 2008). One could argue that these services would aid in the development of the region. On the other hand, it may also be argued that these services are provided to exert superiority, control, and influence over the region. In addition, the West has orchestrated the downfall of Arab leaders who it sees as unfavorable, even if this clashes with the opinion of the people, and it has supported the establishment of corrupt leaders in positions of power for the purpose of creating alliances that work toward the achievement of personal interests. This has created an imbalance between the people and the elite, keeping the people at bay while the elite gain militarization, personal wealth, and power. Most of this has happened in the name of fighting Communism; however, the struggle to control central resources has been the underlying common theme in these cases (Shah, 2011).

Both the Franco-German and Anglo-American alliances shared the oil resources in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. However, it did not stop there. The Washington Consensus

agreed on entering Libya in 2003 through the "Global War on Terror," even though Ghaddafi, then president of Libya, surrendered peacefully to avoid a scenario similar to that in Iraq. With the opening market Libya's status shifted from being a rogue state to an ally or economic partner (Nazemroaya, 2008). That same year, construction began on the Greenstream Pipeline to provide the Europeans with natural gas from Libya by a route passing through the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Sicily. Tracing the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 that called for a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and open markets to foreigner investors, the plan was on track to achieving the declaration's objective of establishing a European dominated free trade zone in the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and North Africa by 2010. The U.S. Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) is equivalent to this. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), an aggressive free trade agreement, was forced on former European colonies under economic threats (Nazemroaya, 2008).

The MENA region has become the most militarized region in the world, and most arms sales take place there. The suppressed people of the region have come to see the West as the core cause of the contemporary problems, and this has led to the rise of acts of terrorism and anti-Western sentiment, especially directed at the United States, as the current superpower.

5.3 The Western Pattern of Democracy and Reform in the Region

We often hear that the West, particularly the United States, is helping MENA to reform its political regimes to establish democratic governments. The United States became involved in two expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the name of removing suppressive regimes and instituting democracy, and war or foreign military presences remain in these countries. This section will address the democratic reforms and policies that the United States and Europe have implemented in MENA to promote democracy.

Efforts to change the situation in MENA and to achieve democracy are still in progress. The European Union and the United States continually declare that the region needs reform and that they will provide the new governments with democratic policies that will help stabilize the region. However, there has been no clear proposal for how they will do so, because the European Union and the United States claim that they do not want to interfere with internal affairs, and that they desire to help the nations decide for themselves.

There have been many studies seeking to discover the root cause of the failure to achieve democracy in the region; their findings suggest that the lack of freedom that led to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism is to blame. The real reason behind the failure to achieve democracy is that both the United States and the European Union have changed their policies concerning democracy in the region on the basis of the status of their interests there (Rutherford, 2008). For example, in 1953, the United States intervened in Iran via American agents who assisted in a coup to overthrow Mohamed Mossadeq, who had been popularly elected, and restore the authority of the Shah, who then ruled Iran from 1941 to 1979. This action was taken to strengthen the control of the port of Abadan and the oil revenues. In the 1980s, the United States showed more support for autocracy by providing military and intelligence assistance to the Iraqis, under the rule of Saddam Hussein, to strengthen Iraq against Iran. George Shultz, who was the Secretary of State at the time, explained that the United States' involvement was simply a reaction against the spread of the Islamic revolution, led by Ayatollah Khomeini (Rutherford, 2008). This indicated that the United States wanted to contain the revolution and help the Shah retain his authority, as he served U.S. interests in the region.

The agenda for reforming MENA was put into force after the 9/11 attacks. The first documented report for democratic change was in July 2002, written by the United States Institute

of Peace. The report found that Arab countries experienced the lowest level of political freedom in the world and stated that the deficits in freedom, women's empowerment, and knowledge hindered the Arab world from accomplishing its true potential and isolated it from the rest of the world. The study defined each deficit. Freedom was defined to include political participation, civil liberties, political rights, and civil society. Women's empowerment denoted Arab women's lack of political and economic participation. Finally, knowledge referred to the Arab world having the lowest level of information and communication technology; the people of MENA are the least likely to use the Internet or to own a personal computer (Yacoubian, 2005). This report declared its purpose as seeking to establish parameters for reform, which, again, shows the lack of parameters to measure the reforms and democracy that the United States sought to implement in MENA.

The European promotion of democracy to MENA in 1989 was aimed at smoothing the way for economic relations and for participation, in general, in stabilizing the region. However, the promotion did not focus on issues related to political reform; it focused only on free trade, counterterrorism, and nuclear proliferation (Yacoubian, 2004). The obvious Western initiatives were the speeches given and conferences held to raise the issues of authoritarian regimes and the need for transformation, yet these did not provide direct and clear objectives for improving the situation in the region. The lack of democratization in MENA has been due to the lack of a definition of democracy and strategy for implementing democracy. The usual reason offered for why the West has held back any initiative is that the MENA nations reject any proposal from the West.

This chapter discussed the presence of Western powers in the MENA region in the past and the present. This leads to the conclusion that the region has never been independent and,

thus, able to adopt democracy. I relate this statement to the imposition of the old constitution that imposed by the British and the French and to the military bases that are spread all over MENA today, either for protection or containment. In addition, democracy will not be achieved as long as there are conflicting interests between powers and the state nation, and between governments and their nations. The existence of the relation where the powerful exploit the weak, between the colonizers and colonized will prevent the MENA nations from achieving their primary civil rights.

6. Chapter 3: Islamism, Authority, and Ethnicity

Islam is the religion of 23 percent of the world's population, and MENA is home to many of the world's Muslims. Many political scholars who have studied the region have referred to Islam as the basic obstacle that hinders development and causes violence in the region. However, many others have tried to draw attention away from "political Islam" and focus on the "new Islamism" (that is, the democratization of the Islamist movement). Many who have studied the influence of Islam have raised issues about how the religion negatively affects people's lives, forgetting that, as with many other religions, the followers have the right to choose what they think is best for them.

All the labels that identify Muslims have been given by others to distinguish between Muslims within the same religion, such as fundamentalist, Islamist, and traditionalist. There is no difference between being a Muslim and being a fundamentalist Muslim, because both believe in the same God, "Allah," and both are asked to practice and call people to follow Islam. The difference between them is who can interpret the words from the Holy Book, the Quran, that tell him/her what to do and what not to do. However, in the end, both are Muslims.

The arguments made in the context of democracy blame Islam for hindering Arab countries from matching the economic and political development of other parts of the world. In his article, "Is the Arab World Ready for Democracy?" Calabresi (2011) cited from Timur Kuran's book, *The Long Divergence*, to the effect that countries that are predominantly Muslim have constricted economies owing to marriage and inheritance laws that block the pooling of capital. Another argument about the inability of Arabs to apply democracy was that the religious minorities living alongside the majority Muslim populations mean that there are no coherent

rules to ensure the protection of these minorities under Sharia (Islamic Law), and this leads to civil wars (Mazel, 2011).

This chapter will focus on the Islamic view of democracy and how different it is from that of the West. It will also cover the law of Islam concerning religious minorities and how Islam deals with different kinds of authorities. It also will discuss the characteristics that an elected ruler should have, and how Islam manages a country's economy.

6.1 The Islamic View of Democracy

Westerners have been wondering how Muslims can believe that Sharia Law is the best solution for salvation from repression, injustice, and authoritarianism. Western commentators have often cited events such as the Taliban preventing girls from attending school in Afghanistan as evidence that Islam is repressive and that it is better for Muslims to have a secular state that guarantees freedom for people of all faiths.

The question to ask is "How does Islam view democracy?" To answer this question, we should first explain the beliefs of Islam. The word "Islam" is not an English translation from the Quran, because the Arabic dictionary has different words to explain the concept of *Aslamah*, which is the verb related to the noun Islam. *Aslamah* has five meanings: surrender, submission, obedience, sincerity, and peace. Although this concept requires the inclusion of all five words, we should focus on sincerity. If someone is forced into something, there is no sincerity; thus, without sincerity, the meaning of Islam would be lost (Estes, 2010). The second most important part is obedience in following what God orders us to do. To quote the Quran, Surat Alkahef, verse 26, "Allah is most knowing of how long they remained. He has [knowledge of] the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth. How Seeing is He and how Hearing! They have not besides Him any protector, and He shares not His legislation with anyone." This last part is the

most important because it explains that for Muslims, God's orders, not what any individual wants, are the only rules, and God's orders are in the Holy Book. Islam rejects giving Parliament the absolute right to deny or approve whatever it likes. However, it does exhort nations to choose their rulers and hold them accountable and keep them in control, as this right is known and visible in the text of the Quran and the Sunnah (i.e., the Prophet Muhammad's life explained for the Quran). Surat Al Nesa'a, verse 59, states the following: "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result." God twice repeated the order to obey Him and the Messenger because it is an absolute order. While He did not say obey the authority, He encouraged it. He added that in the case of a disagreement, people should prosecute according to God's judgment as cited in the Quran or to what his messenger explained to the people in that regard (Al Bahre, 2009). In the latter case, the people could refer their case to Shura, the principle of consultation or the consultative council. This is a decision-making process that some Islamic scholars consider compulsory and others merely call desirable. The compulsory view is bolstered by the Quranic verse, "…and consult with them on the matter" (3:159), while those who consider Shura desirable quote the verse, "those who conduct their affairs by counsel [are praised]" (43:38). Remember, the first verse directly addresses a particular decision of the Prophet and speaks to him directly, while the second verse is more of a general principle. Perhaps this is the reason why traditional Islamic scholars have never considered consultation as a necessary and legitimate element of decision making (Khan, 2012). My reading at this point is that Shura is obligatory, and I consider the third solution for the best of the people if there is no clear text in the Quran or the Sunnah.

Here, we go back to the confusion that the West has about the attitude that Muslims have regarding the claims of the "Islamist." If westerners understand the surrender that the word "Islam" means, and understand that Muslims are practicing their faith the way they understand, there would be no questions about it. On the other hand, the lack of understanding of what is considered right, and the division between Islamic scholars over Shura and how it should be applied for the people's benefit, is the cause of oppressive regimes that steal what belongs to the people and covet greater power and wealth.

6.2 Islam and Ethnicity

In the Prophetic era, Islam interpreted ethnicity according to the religion that the people practiced and not according to whether they were Arabs or foreigners or had a particular skin color. The difference, according to the Hadith (Prophetic tradition and quotations), is "There is No difference between an Arab and a foreigner except in piety and good deeds" (AlAlbani, p. 361). The principle is to be Muslim; however, it also ensured the rights of non-Muslims who were living under the authority of Muslims.

Yet, at the same time, Islam imposes duties on non-Muslims. Their rights to protection from external aggression and internal oppression are formalized under Islamic law. Their status is equal to that of Muslims with regard to protection from aggression, and this status is continuous. Their internal protection is exemplified in protecting them from anything that will make them suffer, or from any kind of humiliation, and to resolve and investigate their complaints. Their money, blood, and honor are equal to those of Muslims. These parameters are proven and explicated in Al Feq'h (Jurisprudence) and Sunnah. Their rights also include social welfare for any kind of disability (i.e., financial, health) or poverty; the freedom to work; involvement in government for those known for their efficiency, trustworthiness, and sincerity

toward the country; and lastly, the freedoms of belief and religion. As an example of their involvement in governmental affairs, Caliph Mu'aweyah Bin Abi Sufyan gave custody of his economic administration to St. John, who was known as "Yuhana Al Demishqi" in Arabic (Hussein, 2006).

As mentioned, non-Muslims who lived under an Islamic system in the Prophetic era had duties as well as rights. They had three duties: the first was paying a special tax for not joining the Muslim military; the second was the commitment to Islamic Sharia law in civil transactions; and the third and last was respect for Islam and Muslims as being equal to their own religion. There is a lot of evidence in the history of Islam that shows Muslims and Christians blending into the Islamic communities with freedom to practice their own beliefs and religions (Hussein, 2006). Many would argue that Muslims did not have these problems with Christians, but that they were ethnocentric especially with Jews.

Moreover, hatred of the West as embodied in the 9/11 attacks and other attacks in the name of Islam have been attributed to what it means to be a Muslim. Here, we could point out that the first real conflict in Islamic-Judaic and Islamic-Western relations was when the West supported the Zionist methodology in establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, as documented by the Balfour Agreement in 1948. This represented a catastrophe to Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. Evidence of the amicable past of Islam and Judaism was during the Andalusian era, when Muslims and Jews lived together. Muslims never violated the rights of Jews because the relation with Ahel Al-Ketab (people with sacred books) was a relation based on the freedoms of belief and religion (Hussein, 2006).

At present, most countries are aiming to form a secular authority to protect the same rights that were known in the old Andalusian era. The Islamic faith has been connected to

violence, terror, and ethnocentrism. Yet, the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks have been condemned in Islam as inhumane and immoral. The conjoining of terrorism and Islam and generalizations that Islam promotes terrorism reflect the ignorance about Islam and the prejudice toward Muslims. There have been many terrorist attacks caused by non-Muslims, but Muslims have not claimed that Christianity or Judaism promotes terrorism. The reason is that, to be a Muslim, you must believe in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism equally. All of these religions came from God. As a result, calling any of these attacks religious is to disbelieve the basics of Islam. However, there have been many references to a government or regime as terrorist and as being against Islam. Furthermore, the terrorist label does not belong to Western governments alone, but has also been used by Arabic Muslim governments who claim to practice Sharia law and ignore the rights of their nations. This is the reason why I cover Islamic law and authority in the next section.

6.3 The Law of Islam and Authority

The concept of the state is ambiguous for Muslims. It has different meanings because the word changes with the *harakat* (the diacritics) on the letters. The state is called *dawlah* (دَولة), which represents the people, the land, and the authority. However, *dolah* (دُولة) means the authority of money. Therefore, the Islamic concept of the state differs from the Westphalian concept of the nation-state that emerged after many religious wars in Europe. The state in the treaty of Westphalia embraced the concept of sovereignty and regarded other European nations as equals. This concept globalized and has become enshrined in constitutions and political systems. Meanwhile, in Islam, the first state was the state of Medina. The people who lived there were immigrants and supporters of the Islamic message and the Prophet. The authority was delegated to the Prophet, who had both the religious advocacy and temporal power to manage

Muslim affairs. Political affairs were considered in order to reach a consensus, except for issues related to revelation, which were not to be discussed (Hussein, 2006). After Medina, the state of the Caliphates emerged and brought about the organization of the military, the foundation of the exchequer house of Muslims, the establishment of basic judicial courts, and the establishment of councils. To this extent, the understanding of the state started to change, until it reached the understanding of authority and rule (Hussein, 2006).

The changes that have occurred from the first state up to the present day show that the state is not sacred. It is arranged by humans who are wrong or right. Thus, the king or president is a human being whose rule could be wrong or right. The only certainty in Islamic authority was during the Prophetic era, which is held as sacred. Everything else concerning the state and authority is Ejtihad (personal explanation by religious people). The difference between the Islamic and Western understandings of the state is that the state of Islam should be ruled according to Islamic Sharia. Sharia is the fundamental basis of public interest, in contrast to the Western ideal of the state achieving freedom of the individual according to the law. They may appear to be the same, but the differences in the understanding of freedom, justice, equality, and human rights lead to disagreement between the concepts of the state, regardless of how much humanity the state shows. Islam does not make a distinction between religion and state, but it develops a certain framework for the establishment of the state and the exercise of power (Hussein, 2006). The problem that is facing Islam today is its ability to resolve issues in the midst of the changing times and places that are also changing the problem, even if we find a clear and obvious verse that was specific to a situation in the past. The Quran and the Ejtihad of Islamic scholars stressed this importance because times are changing, and the Fatwa should be helpful for the changes that life brings.

7. Chapter 4: How Democracy is Changing the Approach of the Arab Revolution

Late in 2010, a wave of protests and revolutions spread across the Arab countries in MENA under the slogan of "The people want to overthrow the regime." These words did not define a specific nation in the Arab world, but all the countries with a republican government type experienced these revolutions. The causes of these protests were similar as well: the spread of corruption, the economic stagnation, and poor living conditions, added to the political restrictions that led to the outbreak of fighting between security forces and demonstrators. These demonstrations succeeded in achieving the purpose of the slogan by overthrowing Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. Yet, these nations are still struggling to reform their governments, and the results are not clear or even predictable.

7.1 The Arab Uprising

Tunisia

The "Jasmine Revolution" was the name of the Tunisian revolt. It started when a desperate, unemployed young man set himself on fire, and this action motivated the people in his rural hometown to protest against the repression they were experiencing on a daily basis. Since 1987, the overthrown government had practiced repression in economic, political, educational, and other forms. The extreme repression was practiced on the Islamist opposition group Al-Nahda movement, or "The Renaissance." Its members were jailed and exiled in the 1990s. As a result, Tunisia considered itself to be the only Muslim country that did not have an active Islamist opposition group. The major reasons for the protest were unemployment, the high costs of living, and mainly political grievances, which exceeded the economic ones. These reasons

provoked the anger of the Tunisian people and the loss of their civil and political rights heightened the rejection of any alternative except for changing the country's whole political system (Noor, 2011).

Egypt

Many might believe that the Tunisian revolt encouraged the Egyptians to do the same. However, Egypt had its own story that sought the same target as Tunisia had worked toward achieving. It started with the death of Khalid Saeed, a 28-year-old man who was killed for no reason by two policemen. His friends wanted justice, but the corrupt government turned a deaf ear to the people's complaints. The young man's family and friends, and college students protested twice before the big revolution that overthrew the Mubarak regime (Amro, 2010). The protestors' main demands were the removal of the Mubarak regime, with trials for the corrupt figures, constitutional amendments, a representative transnational government and the dissolution of parliament, and state security (Aswat Masriya, 2012).

Libya

The Libyan revolution was the most interesting one. It was motivated by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and after Muammar Gaddafi threatened Israel, when he encouraged the Palestinians to revolt and suggested sending fleets of boats to the Israeli shores until their conflict with Israel was resolved (Watson, 2011). There are two interesting parts in Libya's case: the first was the international community's intervention in the revolution in Libya, when it had decided not to get involved in the internal affairs of Tunisia and Egypt. The second interesting part was the reversal in the attitudes of the Libyans toward Gaddafi due to his suppression of his nation. The international involvement (NATO) was meant to protect the Libyan people from the harm caused by Gaddafi's supporters, but this intervention also caused them harm and killed

many civilians in residential areas. Moreover, NATO did not conduct any investigations or contact the survivors from its strikes. According to an Amnesty International report, the strikes on private homes showed no evidence of having been launched for military purposes, and they led to many civilian casualties (Posner, 2012). The Libyan protestors' only demand was democratization.

Yemen

The last revolutionary republican state and the only revolution in Yemen followed the steps of the above. The people of Yemen wanted to achieve what Tunisia and Egypt had achieved. They called for the overthrow of the government and anyone affiliated with the Abdullah Saleh regime. It started with a small group of college students after the Friday prayer. The security forces followed them and attacked them. This was when the protest started, and it continued to grow with the establishment of opposition parties that took a more aggressive stance against the regime and the defections of major tribal leaders. Change became the semi-official name for the protester camp (Rosen, 2011). The reasons behind the Yemeni revolution, as an international report showed, were the inefficiency of the government and its corrupt employees, high unemployment and inequality, in addition to the abuses of human rights (International report, 2011).

One can think of the revolutions as being the same. They might sound similar, and the countries might have experienced the same suffering, but these revolutions were truly not the same. Libya is not Egypt and Tunisia is not Yemen. They shared the slogans and goals of freedom, dignity, and social justice, but they differed in nature and structure as well as in identities, social divisions, and the relationship between man and the homeland.

7.2 Analysis of the Revolution in Egypt as a Case Study

The strategy of divide and conquer has affected the whole MENA region since the beginning of creation. It was also essential from the start of the Egyptian revolution. The focus in this section will be on how the media, religion and ethnicity, and personal interests affected the revolution and how the divide and rule method applied to it.

Social media via the Internet played a major role in creating the first spark in the social movement that influenced the revolution. It created cyberactivism, which is still unclear and its effects and dimensions are still vague. Moreover, these cyber-social movements found a place in news channels, such as Al Jazeera (assigned time in its daily full news broadcast for Facebook news, especially news related to the revolution). This channel also covered the revolution extensively and encouraged more people to revolt. This extensive coverage helped in the fulfillment of the goal of the revolution to displace the government of Mubarak, who had ruled Egypt for thirty years as a dictator. However, Al Jazeera played this role for a purpose. It is owned by the Qatari government and is considered a valuable political and diplomatic tool that suits Qatar's foreign policy. "The Doha embassy claimed Sheikh Hamad (HBJ) told the US senator John Kerry that he had proposed a bargain with the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, which involved stopping broadcasts in Egypt in exchange for a change in Cairo's position on Israel-Palestinian negotiations" (Booth, 2010). This states clearly the strategy of divide and conquer that the channel applied to exploit the revolution for its own benefit and the benefit of its allies, the United States and Israel. In 2009, the channel started to reframe the Obama administration, positively changing the projected image of United States along with the growth of the new Qatar-US relationship (Booth, 2010). Qatar, in this revolution, as a state, tried to gain the blessing of the United States with two major moves: bargaining with Mubarak, who

considered the United States as a favored ally, for Israel's benefit, as the United States' strongest

ally in the region, and offering to export gas to Israel after the Egyptians cancelled the gas treaty

between Egypt and Israel, which Qatar had been trying to do for a long time.

Democracy was the main reason behind the revolution; however, this goal was twisted by

the media and foreign interference in how the government should be and in the violence against

Christian Egyptians, ignoring the fact that they had launched the revolution together. For

example, the *Los Angeles Times* (2011, May 9) mentioned that "Former President Hosni

Mubarak's regime relied on dividing Egyptians. Authorities carefully presided over a volatile

status quo between Muslims and Copts, all the while pretending religious strife didn't exist…

Nonetheless, Copts felt secure under Mubarak, who tightened his grip over Islamists -- the

relatively moderate Muslim Brotherhood as well as the more extreme Salafis and jihadists."

Most of the foreign newspapers and media promoted the idea that Muslims had started the

conflict because they were the majority, and that Muslims, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafis

always use violence to get what they want. Yet, the investigations did not reveal who had started

the conflict between the Muslims and Christians. The propaganda that has been used since the

British occupation of the region and, until now, about Muslims posing a threat to those who

practice other religions, paved the way for the West to express its fear of the Islamists taking

control of the government. Greenwald (2012), in his article "End of the pro-democracy

pretense," quoted Jon Alterman, the director of the Middle East program at the Center for

Strategic and International Studies: "Many in Israel and America, and even some in Egypt, fear

that the elections will produce an Islamist-led government that will tear up the Egyptian-Israeli

peace treaty, turn hostile to the United States, ... American interests, however, call for a different

outcome, one that finds a balance — however uneasy — between the military authorities and

Egypt's new politicians." The article also explained that the United States did not really care about achieving democracy in Egypt, even if the electoral results chose a new Islamist government, because they prefer suppressive regimes that serve their interests. Moreover, he expressed that Alterman was trying to be vague about an obvious reality that he expressed, that is, that the interest of the United States that should decide the type of government for Egypt to adopt and the right of the United States to command how other nations are ruled is one of the essential, obvious principles of American foreign policy (Greenwald, 2012).

The fear that controlled the West came after the parliamentary elections that were held between November 2011 and January 2012 and resulted in a win for the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party with 40 percent of the seats (The New York Times, 2012). Not long after the third period of the presidential election, the revolution shifted from the division that occurred among the nation of Egypt's religious and ethnic groups to the division within the political parties. Most of the Islamist or religiously influenced political parties were disqualified from the presidency based on a constitutional condition that all persons running for president should not be of another nationality or have a family member who is not an Egyptian citizen. The disqualified people were accused of having a family member carrying US citizenship. Moreover, the members of the Muslim Brotherhood gathered in Tahrir square, the heart of the Egyptian revolution, to condemn the false disqualification of their presidential candidate (Al Jazeera, 2012). The Military Council tried to control the outrage of the people, which created another division within the Egyptian community that encouraged the exploitation of the situation from others who were benefiting from the current situation.

Now, the nation is calling for the displacement of the military that represents the old regime and autocracy. However, the military everywhere represents the notion of the state. The

loss or displacement of the military in the current unstable situation, where the Egyptians are trying to install democracy, which does not have clear features, would threaten the country. Moreover, chaos and insecurity will be inherent in the country.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The divide and conquer strategy, or the power to divide another entity into small pieces to dominate and control these small pieces to serve one's personal interests, is clearly visible in the MENA region and particularly Egypt, both internally and externally. This research found that there is an unclear or vague definition of democracy that does not correspond with the original definition used in Rome, and this has resulted in the MENA region's inability to adopt democracy. Furthermore, the lack of democracy promotion on the part of Realpolitik, despite the claim for change and democratization, has occupied most of the rhetoric. In addition, the West's exploitation of the Arab revolutions against the Ottoman Empire to keep the Jews away from the European land led to the division of the land and the creation of the Jewish state on land inhabited by the Palestinians started the conflict between the Arab countries and Israel, although the Europeans shared the spoils of war and the Arab land between them. Furthermore, the West's support for authoritarian regimes that helped it achieve its own interests, and the reinforcement of the idea of the exploitation of the political positions and the people, created the division between the elites and the rest of the nations. Finally, the global media has played a negative role in spreading an unfavorable image of Islam and dividing Islam into groups and parties since the West established a presence in the region. This continues to date and has created a division between the Western and Eastern cultures and within the cultures themselves to serve politics while ignoring human rights.

Some recommendations to help achieve democracy and improve the situation in the region are as follows. Firstly, there must be a clear concept of modern democracy and clear measurements to help easily identify the problem within the political systems. Secondly, the media need encouragement to work as both a complementary and supportive tool regarding the concept of modernity and state-building. Thirdly, the Western media must objectively convey the true image of Islam and MENA and their true viewpoints about the West. Lastly, political religions must be distinguished from religious politics, where the former works for the good of the nation and the latter works against it.

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