

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Humanities



Bachelor Thesis

**Political Economy and Social Movement
2011 uprisings in Syria**

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Abdulrahman Kodsi

Economics Policy and Administration
Business Administration

Thesis title

Political Economy and Social Movements: 2011 uprisings in Syria

Objectives of thesis

This thesis will consider the connections between social movements and political economy using the example of the 2011 uprisings in Syria. Alongside traditional political actors like states and parties, social movements are increasingly considered as important drivers of both political and economic change. A political economy approach to social movements raises various significant questions, including what material interests drive people to participate in such movements, what resources are available to movements, what economic models and ideas are implicit and explicit in their goals and demands, and the longer term consequences of such movements for economic policy.

The uprisings in Syria in 2011 were seen as part of the so-called Arab Spring, a series of uprisings against authoritarian regimes. The thesis will focus on these events, considering the motivations of participants, their explicit and implicit economic goals, and how the events are remembered today.

Methodology:

Methodology

Develop a literature review on the question of social movements and political economy. Case study research into the 2011 uprisings in Syria, based on documentary analysis and interviews, focusing on motivations and causes of the uprisings.

The proposed extent of the thesis

40-50 pages

Keywords

Social Movement, Political Economy, Economic Sabotage, Arab Spring, Corruption, Authoritarianism, Grievances, ICT.

Recommended information sources

- AMENTA, Edwin, et al. The Political Consequences of Social Movements. Annual Review of Sociology. 2010. 36:287–307
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Expected date of thesis defence

2019/20 SS – FEM

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Electronic approval: 9. 3. 2020

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "Political Economy and Social Movement 2011 uprisings in Syria" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break copyrights of any their person.

In Prague on 23.03.2020

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Ph.D., MA Daniel Rosenhaft Swain, I am profoundly grateful for the patient guidance, advice, valuable recommendations and support as his student during my work on this thesis.

Political Economy and Social Movement 2011 uprisings in Syria

Abstract

This thesis identifies different types of collective behaviour and specifically studies social movements. It investigates how a social movement starts, what are the different theories explaining how it begins, why individuals join it, and how we can categorize social movements according to their goals. Moreover, the better understanding of a social movement requires investigating its participants' contrasting material interests and investigating whether they have a real chance or leverage to achieve their goals. The theory also studies the way the participants of a social movement react to violence, and the way authorities control and use of the country's resources to weaken a movement. To put the Syrian uprising in perspective, this thesis investigates the political situation in the Arab states before the Arab spring and what could be the political and economic reasons behind the prevalent authoritarianism in the region. A key issue that helped with the development of social movements in the Arab world, and influenced people's participation was ICTs [Information Communication Technologies] which is discussed hereafter.

The aim is to study the Syrian 2011 uprisings and hence it is the case study of the thesis.

Keywords: Social Movement, Political Economy, Economic Sabotage, Arab Spring, Corruption, Authoritarianism, Grievances, ICT.

Politická ekonomie a sociální hnutí: 2011 hnutí v Sýrii

Abstrakt

Tato práce identifikuje různé typy kolektivního chování a konkrétně studuje sociální hnutí. Zkoumá, jak začíná sociální hnutí, jaké jsou různé teorie vysvětlující, jak sociální hnutí začíná, proč se k němu jednotlivci připojují a jak můžeme kategorizovat sociální hnutí podle jejich cílů. Lepší pochopení sociálního hnutí navíc vyžaduje prozkoumat protichůdné zájmy jeho účastníků a zjistit, zda mají skutečnou šanci nebo vliv na dosažení svých cílů. Teorie studuje také způsob, jakým účastníci sociálního hnutí reagují na násilí, a způsob, jakým autority řídí a využívají zdroje země k oslabení hnutí. Z pohledu Sýrského povstání tato práce zkoumá politickou situaci v arabských státech před Arabským Jarem a jaké by mohly být politické a ekonomické důvody převládajícího autoritářství v regionu. Klíčovou otázkou, která pomohla s rozvojem sociálních hnutí v arabském světě a ovlivnila účast lidí, byly ICT [Information Communication Technologies], která je popsána dále.

Cílem je studovat povstání ze Sýrie v roce 2011, a proto jde o případovou studii této práce

Klíčová slova: Sociální hnutí, politická ekonomie, ekonomické sabotáž, arabské jaro, korupce, autoritářství, křivdy, ICT.

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1 Introduction

The 21st century, especially the 2nd decade of it, has been a very eventful decade full of revolutions accompanied by their various aims. These revolutions have been helped by new technologies that have impacted societies, around the world, in different ways, as well as education which is more prevalent nowadays. In a globalised world, where people can visit or at least see how others are living in other countries, grievances were on the rise which was exaggerated when people became more aware of the developments and the increased standards of living that occurred in some countries in the West after their transformation from authoritarianism to democracy, making these countries an example that some populations in the 21st century attempted to follow.

Technology has also complicated our world even more and, in one of the more complicated regions of the world the Middle East, the impact of these changes has probably been felt the most compared to other regions. Many revolutions and uprisings have taken place in that region, until it was needed to coin a collective term for these protests that took place, which is the Arab Spring. Authoritarian states in the region had provided for their citizens throughout the decades of their rule and gained public support by doing so, the public, on the other hand, had grown used to being dependent on the government for most of their needs. However, with the turn of the century, many countries in the Middle East started to slowly shift, at least slightly, to a more liberal model of economy, which decreased government support and raised unemployment rates.

The Arab Spring, which was a result of the aforementioned reforms, was probably dubbed as thus for the hopes people had for democracy and freedom in one of the more authoritarian regions in our world. However, not all of these instances of revolutions and uprisings managed to achieve their goals or resolve themselves peacefully. In a generally more conflictual region, some of these instances ended up creating unexpected violence that decimated some countries and even spilled over to other parts of the region and affected large portions of the world in general. The Syrian uprising, which is an example of this, started with demands for democracy and later on the end of authoritarianism in the country to later turn into a full-blown civil war. Studying the beginnings of the Syrian uprisings, and such movements in general, can point us out to better understand our turbulent world, the developments within it and why such revolutions start in the first place.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to investigate, some aspects of the Syrian uprising in relation to theories that deals with the social economic and political aspects of collective behavior and social movements. Aspects such as finding the motives of people and why they joined the uprising. Syria was an authoritarian state for long time, so an important question is knowing what triggered the revolt in 2011 and not before, why did people choose to protest in the first place, why did they change their initial demands, how did they think of the violent actions in the social movement and how do they look at the movement now after 9 years of civil war.

2.2 Methodology

Develop a literature review on the question of social movements, political economy and Arab spring in order to better understand the political and economic situation in the Arab world. The practical part will be focused on a case study of the 2011 Syrian uprisings based on documentary analysis and interviews.

The interviews focused on participants and witnesses of the Syrian 2011 uprising. The interviews were semi-structured to give space for the participants to express their thoughts on the issues discussed freely. However, in the thesis only the more important and relevant parts of the interviews were quoted as the rest was irrelevant e.g. talking about the civil war which is not the focus of this thesis.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Collective Behaviour and Social Movements

To start off with, and to be able to study the Syrian uprising, I intend to start from a broader and more encompassing start point that contains general analysis and discussion of an event such as the Syrian uprisings and similar events. To study such events thus we need to study collective behaviour – as these events are in themselves collective events with a certain behaviour – and studying collective behaviour helps us understand the influences people exert on each other that drives them to act collectively.

William Little has defined collective behaviour as when an unorganized group of people have the same behaviour or are inspired by other individuals' behaviours, but that behaviour is unorganized by any third-party.¹ For instance, when a group of people are commuting to work, or when a group of people adopt a similar fashion e.g. hairstyle. There are different types of collective behaviours; *the crowd*, *the mass*, *the public*, and *social movement*.

- *The crowd*: constitutes a large group of people come together provided, they share the same aim, whether *short* or *long* term.
- *The mass*: constitutes a large group of scattered people, who are not inter-connected and who have no personal knowledge of each other, have similar interests and goals. While at the same time are unable to act together to achieve their goals as they do not know each other e.g. those who are interested in the same TV show.
- *The public*: constitutes a group of people who have the same idea regarding an issue, but are not organized in any relevant way.

And finally, whenever an organized group of people come together having the same goals and interests, focusing on a specific social or political issue and attempting either to achieve social change or to resist it, provided, that these actions are not regulated by institutions, are considered a *social movement*.

¹ Little, 2014, pp. 647–648

3.1.1 Emergence of new social movements:

In recent years, an increasing number of modern social movements have taken place for many reasons. The improvement of education, the widening of literary reach, and the existing communication technologies, e.g. the internet and mobile phones, have enabled young people to get more information and knowledge about economic and political issues. By using these communication technologies, people have been influenced and motivated to participate in movements, in the expansion of democracy and that of the freedom of speech which made it easier for social movements to emerge.²

In the beginning, researchers agreed that social movements emerge when there are deep social changes, such as the processes of urbanization and industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries, which provided the possibility for a large number of individuals to interact together and provided a platform for individuals who share the same goals and ideas to find each other and organize. Some scholars had argued that social movements are not anything abnormal, instead they look at it as a different type of politics; politics that are dubbed “*politics by other means*” Social movements are

“simply ‘politics by other means,’ often the only means open to relatively powerless challenging groups”(McAdam 1988).³

3.1.2 Types of Social Movements:

Anthony Giddens in his book *The Nation-State and Violence* introduced four areas where modern social movements are focused on:⁴

- Democratic movements focus on political and human right issues.
- Labor movements that work for the control of the workplace.
- Ecological movements that are concerned with the environment.
- Peace movements that work towards peace.

This categorization seems to be a more broad and general kind of categorization of social movements, without taking into account the movements’ specific goals and aims. For example, a democratic movement that aims at political reforms is arguably different from a

² Heywood, 2013, pp. 260–261

³ Edgar F. Borgatta & Rhonda J. V. Montgomery, 2000, p. 2718

⁴ Giddens, 1985, p. 311

movement with political aims, which may demand, not only reforms, but total and more radical change.

However, Giddens's typology is not the one, others have as well taken different stance on the types of social movements. One of the other views is by Simone I. Flynn, who according to his essay *Types of Social Movements*, in his book *Theories of Social Movements*, Anthropologist David Aberle, in his book *The Peyote Religion among the Navaho*, has identified four types of social movements; *alternative, redemptive, reformative* and *transformative* social movements.⁵ These types are based on two classifications; what is the movement trying to change or more thoroughly, is the movement seeking change on an individual level, e.g. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which is a group that supports recovering alcoholics in their path to sobriety. Or whether the movement is seeking change on a societal level; seeking economic, political or/ and technological change. Furthermore, the second classification is related to what extent a social movement is trying to change. It could be partial change, such as labor movements where they seek change in a specific area or total change, as for civil rights movements which work for universal equal rights.

- *Alternative social movements*: alternative social movements work to achieve limited change on the individual level. They focus on small groups of individuals and a specific issue, and try to change the individuals' behaviours regarding this issue.
- *Redemptive social movements*: redemptive movements also focus on small groups of individuals, but they seek a total change of the individuals' behaviour.
- *Reformative social movements*: reformative movements seek a limited societal change, in other words they introduce positive changes to the social structure by addressing the issue of injustice and inequalities, people who participate in such a movement do not want to change the system, they just want to be equally included in the system.
- *Transformative social movements*: transformative or revolutionary movements seeks a total societal change, such a movements could involve violence actions to achieve their goals.

However, some critics argue that Aberle's typology of social movements is based on hypothetical conception of these movements; a conception which is out of touch with social

⁵ Editors of Salem Press, 2014, pp. 64–65

movements in the real world where social movements are much more complex as they have several aims and goals, and their categorisation involves characteristics from all or some of the four aforementioned types.

3.1.3 Theories of Social Movements:

We already established that a social movement is a group of individuals gathering to create some social or political change, or to resist such a change. There are also different theories that try to explain how social movements emerge and what are the motives or influences behind the movements' members participation. I will discuss here four of these theories; *Mass Society*, *Relative Deprivation*, *Resource Mobilization* and *Value-added*.

Mass Society Theory: defines *mass society* as a society that constitutes a mutually shared culture and identity. This mutual culture, in many instances, is rather seen as “low-brow” culture. The concept of social movements within this theory draws attention to the individuals who feel socially isolated and not included within the society that they live in as individuals who are more prone to the influence of extremist movements. Mass society theory emerged in the 19th and early 20th century as a result of societal change caused by the processes of urbanization and industrialization. Furthermore, this theory sees that these isolated groups can be manipulated and controlled, by manipulating their emotions to mobilize them. A way to do that is through the media which in itself is seen by the theory of mass society as a sponsor of modernity. However, Chicago School sociologists *Turner* and *Killian* have questioned the applicability of the main claim of the mass society theory where many researchers have found that socially isolated individuals are less likely to get involved in movements, and individuals who are more socially involved are more likely to get involved in a movement.⁶

Relative Deprivation Theory: suggests that individuals living in uncomfortable conditions, not living equally and inclusively in the societies they live in, or that they are not enjoying their legal rights as others do in their society are more likely to create social movements, take action to improve their conditions, or/and try to achieve social satisfaction. The theory argues that individuals with feelings of deprivation – feelings that, in themselves, arise from their feelings of deserving better – such individuals are those who negatively

⁶ Steven M. Buechler, 2013

compare themselves to others who have access to more goods and resources, and who enjoy better conditions of living and legal rights than the deprived individuals, e.g. labor movements and civil rights movements. Instances of civil rights movements can include women's rights movement which attempted – and in many cases succeeded – in narrowing the gap between the rights men usually enjoyed in society and the rights of women. Women essentially felt deprived of the rights that men enjoyed and with comparison to men, women saw that they had fewer political rights – the right to vote , for instance – or men's higher income – income inequality – which triggered feelings of deprivation among women and prompted them to initiate social movements to support their demands. Relative deprivation is, in my opinion, a trigger of social movements, because in general people tend to compare themselves to others and almost always seek to advance their social, economic and political situation and rights; and there would always be something better to compare oneself to. Furthermore, as scholars have discussed how relative deprivation creates social movements, but more importantly, they also posed the question of why some deprived people create social movements and others don't.⁷

Resource Mobilization Theory: the resource mobilization theory studies the successfulness of a social movement by looking at its structure. The theory suggests that the most important factor for a movement to succeed is how it is able to gain resources. Resources are divided into materialistic resources such as capital, organizations, labor, and means of communication, and on the other hand non-materialistic resources such as relationships, legitimacy, public attention, solidarity, and commitment. From the theory's point of view, individuals join social movements voluntarily and are motivated by grievances that they feel, and that there will always be some individuals within society who feel unsatisfied and who feel that they deserve better. Those individuals want to achieve some change, but grievances alone are not enough to mobilize them, especially that membership in a movement is a rational decision. Therefore, movements need good organizational skills, acquiring the aforementioned resources, political opportunities and to use these effectively to achieve their goals. However, when a social movement does not have sufficient resources or is powerless then it needs to seek external support and funding in order to achieve their goals.⁸

⁷ Editors of Salem Press, 2014, pp. 58–61

⁸ Editors of Salem Press, 2014, pp. 64–65

Value-Added Theory: value-added theory identifies the possibility of a social movement to whether take place or not. The theory suggests that there are specific combinations of conditions that should occur in a specific pattern in order to lead to a collective behaviour. Value-added concept comes from economics, where it is described as the combined value-added at distinct stages of production. Products are not produced in one stage, but rather over a chain of production – from raw materials till the final product; these different stages of production each adds value to the final valuation of the final product and the final product's value is determined by the various additional values we add in each different stage over the production chain, hence it is called value-added. Similarly, for social movements, they are brought about as a final product of the sum values – effects – of social issues, meaning that a social movement does not come about until the sum value of its issues reaches a certain threshold. In this theory, the components of a movement's issues are described as follows. Firstly, *structured conduciveness* condition, which states that people are aware of a problem and believe in some opportunities that encourage them towards some collective behaviour. The second condition is *structural strains*, which states that people feel deprived and where there is inequality in society. The third condition is the *growth and spread of a belief*, where a solution to an issue spreads among people. The fourth condition is *precipitating factors* which are specific events that occur which have the possibility to turn into a social movement. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action* that is when an affected group gather to take action towards a specific issue that they have in common. And the final condition is *social control* in which agents take an action in order to stop a collective behaviour. If the agents succeed in dispersing such a behaviour quickly then the proto social movement loses its chance to become a fully-fledged social movement.⁹

3.1.4 Violence and Social Movements:

Anyone who observed or participated in a social movement has probably often noticed a relation between social movements' actions and violence. There are many forms of violent actions and it is not necessary for all of them to occur for a movement to be considered violent. Researchers argued that, for example, if some people use toxic language – such as aggressive speech or aggressive behaviour – it would be considered a violent action and it is

⁹ Editors of Salem Press, 2014, pp. 77–78

not justified even if it did not cause physical harm and was limited to only mental, psychological or emotional harm. Others do not consider damaging property or ruining it as violence as long as this damage does not cause physical harm to people. However, others have argued that violence against repressive regimes is to a certain extent justified as it is considered self-defence, and through which people express their grievance. Such violent action depends on the political system; the more the political system is closed and unresponsive to the social movement the more violence occurs as Opp and Roehl (1990) stated in their analysis of the *anti-nuclear movement*. Alongside Della Porta (1995) who in her investigation of German and Italian violent social movements, all three discovered that when a movement faces more violence and repression from the state it become more violent and radicalized and that increases the chance of violent interaction with the police. The resource mobilization theory emphasized the importance of resources, such as money and manpower. For a movement to be successful, scholars have argued that violence in a movement is considered an alternative way for such movements with limited resources to draw the attention of the media and the state about the movement's issues.¹⁰

“Economic sabotage is far more effective [a tool] against corporate enterprises to cost them money, and the most effective way to do that is to physically damage their property...yeah. It's the only thing that they recognise and take notice of... That's my strategy” ('Andrew' 2001)¹¹

Andrew argued that when a movement does not have enough resources it will not be able to achieve any of its goals or draw attention to them. Therefore, a movement needs to use the resources available to it; on one hand causing physical damage to property has no cost for the movement, and on the other hand it affects their opponent negatively as it cost them money. Others saw that there is nothing wrong in taking such violent actions, as long as activists make sure that such actions do not risk others' lives, whether humans or animals, It can be considered non-violent action, for example, when damaging someone's car engine which is Andrew justifies, because a car would simple just stop running, while damaging the brake cables, for him, is not justified as it puts the life of others at risk. Therefore, when a

¹⁰ Editors of Salem Press, 2014, pp. 39–43

¹¹ Plows et al., 2004, p. 208

movement take such actions it makes it more difficult for their opponents to continue exercising their powers the same way as before. However, it can always be argued that even if such actions did not put other's lives at risk these actions cannot be justified, for it has ripple effects that may not be visible at first, for instance people's jobs would be lost if their workplace endured a violent action which affects them negatively.¹²

3.2 Political economy and social movement

Political economy has a very important impact on the studies taken in the field of social movements and revolutions. It has shifted these studies from psychological and socio-psychological treatment of activists to sympathetic analyses where it points out the importance of resources, organization, and political opportunities for movements success.

According to Stanley and Goodwin, there are seven ideas that could help us in understanding Social Movements.¹³

- The first idea of political economy demands that to understand a Social movement we have to take into consideration the participants' material interests which come from their structural position in the economic and political institutions. For example, employers are interested in lower labor costs, because high labor costs have a negative impact on the profitability of their companies. On the other hand, staff need to increase their wages and improve their working conditions. This example illustrates, the diversity and contradiction between different material interests depending on the individual's structural position. Interests, however, are not exactly the same as what people conceive of themselves nor are they similar to their actions, yet these interests have some effects on people's actions and thoughts about the world around them; the scope of an ideology of a specific group can be reduced to fit with their material interest. Furthermore, people with shared interests could come together and act collectively against people with contrasting interests e.g. working-class's struggle against employers. On the other hand, groups with different interests could act collectively as well, for example when women from different classes in the USA, elite and working-class women, participated in the women's movements side by side even though that their goals were different.

¹² Plows et al., 2004, pp. 208–209

¹³ Stanley & Goodwin, 2013

- Secondly, many analysts consider that the most important thing in shaping a movement's stability and success is access to material resources. Political economy is concerned about understanding the market key mechanisms of resource distribution in capitalist societies, where successful property and the owners of the means of production have much greater wealth and power resources compared to their workers. This agrees with the material part of the 'resource mobilization theory' which also emphasizes the importance of material wealth as a necessary factor for a movement to succeed. The market mechanism also focuses on the satisfaction of the working class, where some working-class workers have greater salary than other working-class workers e.g. a doctor and a guard both of them employed at the same hospital, but the doctor has a much greater salary than the guard, that's why the guard is more likely to get involved in a movement relative to the doctor. This dissatisfaction however, does not have to arise from objective uncomfortable circumstances, in my opinion; compared with 'relative deprivation theory' a worker's conditions do not have to be bad to be incentivized to join a movement, but only a worker's ability to compare his/her self to someone with better situation can be enough of a trigger. By understanding the market mechanism in distributing resources among different classes and class segments, we can understand the diversity of different movements emergence, trajectories, success or failure.
- The third idea is how to analyse the power of a movement, where political economy determines the difference between power that comes from the movement's size and power that comes from the structural position of the movement's individuals in economic and political processes. For example, organized truck drivers have great structural power as they have the capacity to be able to obstruct traffic and commerce, therefore, they seriously interrupt economic and social life. A similar situation is when widespread disobedience in the army arises it would be impossible to make war efforts. While unemployed workers are highly motivated and often well organized, yet they have small structural power as they have no role in the production process, therefore they are not able to press their demands on the elites. Therefore, we can understand why some movements of the same size can be more or less successful, while others are not, in accomplishing their goals. However, this comes in contradiction, at least to a certain extent, with 'economic sabotage' theory, which

states that a movement can use violence to affect the economy and attract attention to the demands of the movement, regardless of the movement's power and resources.

- The fourth point in political economy is that one of the influences over a social movement are the influences that come from the competition between firms. Where in competitive environment encourages individual firms to develop and to approve new strategies to compete with their opposition, such as the introduction of new technologies which cause change in the social life of the workers as such new technologies could replace the need of man-power or de-skills them. Another strategy that is adopted by firms in a competitive environment is shifting their production away from expensive labor to cheaper labor. Both of these strategies have an impact on the organization and the efforts of the workers' struggles. However, competition could also create conflicts between economic elites as they have contradictory interests depending on the firms' types that they own. For example, export companies are interested in weak domestic currency as it makes their business more profitable, on the other hand import companies are interested in strong domestic currency. This contradiction between firms generate conflict among economic elites. This conflict occurs when different business associations make a partnership with different political parties and support them financially with hopes that they will get some advantages in the future. Furthermore, this conflict among economic elites could creates political mobilization as movements try to make an ally with a group of elites against the others.
- In the fifth point, economists have investigated the movements with aggregate behaviour that result from the competitive strategies between companies in the economy. These results are clear when taking in mind the economic crises in the recent decades which is a result of the competitive and uncoordinated friction between companies in industrial societies. Crises, however, did not come alone with no 'booms' in the economy; booms have brought about some positive feelings of growth and optimism and incentivized risk-taking and political mobilization. Crises themselves have also incentivized action by reshuffling jobs and changing communities and have also put pressure on governments and challenged them. In these crises, people who were affected sometimes got organized alongside common goals, while for others, crises create tension between competing groups for limited

resources; blue-collar workers movements against immigration, for instance. In response, some governments lean on military spending, or even igniting wars as a solution for such crises, as wars increase public spending and opens up new markets abroad.

- Sixthly, Political economy expresses how states challenge reform movements and tend to remain in favour of the capitalist class interests. This bias comes from two features of capitalist democracies. The states are highly dependent on tax revenues that come from private investment, therefore the states are unwilling to apply changes that somehow could cause a slowdown in private investment, even if there is a powerful movement seeking such changes and even if the government supports this movement and their demands. However, if the government decided to apply some types of change, such changes could cause a slowdown in private investment and therefore could affect the unemployment rate negatively, decreasing tax revenue and struggling to finance social programs. All of this may lead to an increase in the unpopularity of the government. These issues do not conclude that reformative movements cannot create some changes, but that the government should take into consideration the employers demands as well and apply changes that could cause positive impact and cause economic growth.
- The seventh point of political economy explains the emergence of new collective identities some of which can act collectively and seek some change. A note has to be given here, of how similar this to ‘mass society’ theory, which contributes the emergence of social movements to industrialization and urbanization, both of which gave ground to build a collective, in the first place, on which different identities can be formed later on. Political economy, also, suggests that the reason behind these new identities is the increase of large-scale factories where industrial workers with common values and interests come together for the first time giving the opportunity for the working-class’s identity to rise. Also, the development of capitalism has some impact on collective identities that have small relation with the economy. For example, LGBT movement has been influenced by the industrial revolution, urbanization and the wars that occurred after them, where men and women moved out from their villages to urbanized areas seeking better jobs and living conditions. These

changes gave men and women the opportunity to socialise with each other and with those who have the same sexual orientation.

All in all, political economy points out to some key factors that we should understand about social movements, it explains elites segmentation, economic crises, and political opportunities for movements to seek some change. Political economy also explains how people interact with each other at work and in civil society and it explains why some new collective identities, emotions, and ideas are fascinating for a specific class of movement members at a specific time period.

3.2.1 Economic concept of political unrest:

In the previous part, I discussed ideas on political economy and social movements from Stanley and Goodwin. In the following sections, I will discuss arguments on political unrest, how it can affect the economy and how peaceful protests could turn into a revolution in reference to authorities' mismanagement. These ideas were mentioned in Abdelbaki's research, which is aimed at understanding the existing theories of political unrest, in the context of the Arab Spring.

Abdelbaki argues that naturally as humans we tend to live together in harmony, we are willing to work and be productive when we feel that we and our families are safe, and our property and rights are protected. However, when individuals live in a place where they do not feel safe nor protected and when they feel that they are treated unfairly and that the members of society are not treated equally, their willingness to work, achieve their goals and improve themselves declines.¹⁴ For that reason stable governments tend to increase their spending when it comes to providing security for their people inside and outside the country, but when the dissatisfaction increases in a population and protests against the government turn into riots, the government may transfer large part of their resources, that is used in providing goods and services to the public, in order to purchase and produce military equipment (e.g. weapons, planes, strategies to stop the uprising) Such expenditure is not used for the benefit of the people, but in order to dissolve insurgencies, therefore economically, we can define a revolution as a government exploiting the country's resources, not for the benefit of the people, but for repressing the demonstrations instead. By doing so, the government

¹⁴ Abdelbaki, 2013, p. 189

causes lower standard of living to come about, increases unemployment and inflation rates, which was the case in the Arab spring.

3.2.2 Tracks of Political unrest:

It has been argued that the onset of an uprising comes from the humiliating conditions within a country where individuals have a feeling that they are less respected than they should be, and are dissatisfied with the quality of life and the economic conditions prompting these individuals to have feelings that they should take action to change their situation to a better one; a better situation which they see suits them the best. All of that, is a result of impoverished economic and social conditions of their country, and the actions they might take could be either legal or unlawful. The first action they might take is expressing their feelings of dissatisfaction through demonstrations, however if taking action through demonstrations is not permitted, or if it is permitted but is met with planned or even unplanned occurrences, with violence from the authorities for instance, researchers have suggested that this may lead protesters to take totally different types of actions to just demonstrating, which could involve harmful actions, such as bombing and kidnaping acts. Furthermore, violence can transform peaceful demonstrations to more complicated movements where the government faces increased demands by the demonstrators.¹⁵ If the second type of actions is carried out then the country will be in an unstable state and may face a shortage in resources and increased lack of safety, which will make the demonstrators demanded change less possible to achieve and their loss will be even higher than their gains if there were any gains at all. Therefore, we can conclude that a peaceful demonstration can turn into a revolution if the authorities ignored or delayed response to the requested change or if the government responded violently trying to dissolve the demonstrations.

Generally though, a revolution has a negative effect on the national economy of a country, but at the same time there will always be individuals who benefit from the state of lawlessness and lack of security and these individuals will encourage rioting instead of trying to achieve stability, in order for them so they can gain more benefit.

¹⁵ Abdelbaki, 2013, p. 188

3.2.3 Causes of uprisings from economical point of view:

Scholars tried to identify the factors behind the beginning of the uprisings and they mentioned two main factors which are *motivation* and *feasibility*. They also added a third factor which is *identity* as it plays an important role in the formation of rebellions, as rebels usually act together as one group only when they feel that they share the same goals and identity.¹⁶ The motivation factor is divided into two parts; the first one is negative motive which is grievance against the status quo; the second one is positive motive, greed for instance, as it is ambition for financial benefit. In literature, both of these motives together are called “justice-seeking”. While grievances cause ‘*Justice-seeking*’ rebellions to emerge with their main goal in achieving justice, the conditions that encourage *Justice-seeking* rebellions to emerge are identified by the interaction between justice supply and demand. Demand for justice is specified by three elements; the first one is the relatively high number of educated but yet unemployed young people, or when social fractionalization is high. The second and third elements are political oppression and economic dissatisfaction; when economic growth is low, inflation rate is high and when there are economic and social inequalities in the population. Justice supply, on the other hand, is based on how much the rebellions would lose when participating in collective action in their sought of delivering more justice.

The feasibility factor sees that a rebellion action as an unusual thing in society and in order to thrive, a set of events or situations should be met. In literature, this factor is called ‘*looting-seeking*’. A civilian conflict is sparked when participants’ ambitions to achieve personal gains coincides with the existence of *loot-able* resources, which establishes the motive for ‘looting-seeking’ rebellions to emerge. There are two factors which can affect the feasibility of rebellions, the first factor is the positive effects which are the number and the opportunity cost of the possible rebels, while the second factor is the regime’s military forces which have a negative effect on the possibility of rebellions to emerge.

Motivation and feasibility are two of the most important factors in determining the onset of an uprising, as rebels need incentives, in order to keep seeking change, and resources, in order to finance their actions during the uprising. However, the economic theory of political unrest suggests that the motivation is not as important as feasibility factor – ability to finance the unrest. The theory argues that grievances and thirst for power are the

¹⁶ Abdelbaki, 2013, pp. 188–190

same between societies, but what makes a difference in figuring out the risk of an uprising is the feasibility of predation, as P. Collier States:

“it is not really matter whether rebels are motivated by greed, by a lust for power, or by grievance, as long as what causes conflict is the feasibility of predation”.

3.3 The Arab Spring

From the year 2011, the world has seen a number of demonstrations that broke out through the middle east region and in the Arab world. These events are well known as the ‘Arab spring’ which started in Tunisia after Mohamed Bouazizi – a street vendor – set himself on fire demonstrating against the autocratic regime after he had been humiliated by a police officer just for trying to make his living in dignity, which was followed by demonstrations that spread out through the Arab world. Protesters showed dissatisfaction with the authoritarian regimes that have or had been in power for a long period of time where these regimes have failed, as well, to achieve economic equality and they showed no respect for human dignity. Many countries in the region kept emergency laws active for a long period of time which deprived citizens of basic freedoms and gave the regimes the power to prosecute anyone who stood up against the regime. Protesters, in these demonstrations, demanded authorities of economic, political and social justice and that individuals in society should be treated fairly, enjoy equal opportunities, and that there should be no discrimination and respect for human rights. These events revealed that these powerful authoritarian regimes can no longer depend on force and old social contracts to stay in power. After these events some regimes in the area like Saudi Arabia and Algeria responded to the protests by increasing their social spending and introducing some types of reforms.¹⁷

However, most of the demonstrations were faced with repression and violence by the forces of the regime, and accordingly the demonstrations turned into violent protests where protesters responded with violence toward government forces. The main slogan for these events was ‘al-sha’b yuridu isqat al-nizam’ (“the people want to bring down the regime”)¹⁸. Some have argued that people took to the streets as a first option for the absence of publicly elected representatives, through whom people can demand change, and even when such

¹⁷ ROBBINS & JAMAL, 2016, pp. 127–129

¹⁸ Salam, 2015, p. 122

representatives were there, they were of no significant power, which also explains the slogan that people used, that they wanted to bring down the whole system.¹⁹

“Spring” as a term is used most of the time with event of joy and renewal. The history of ‘Spring’ as a term is associated with political events like ‘revolutions’ which goes back to the period of 1848, where reform events spread out through Europe promoted liberalization and nationalism a period that is known as the ‘Springtime of Nations’. Others see its origin from a later on period, in 1968 a period of liberalization which started in Czechoslovakia and was called ‘Prague Spring’ in which people protested against the communist regime advocating for decentralization and democratization. Furthermore, many have argued that using the term ‘Arab Spring’ is not accurate as only one uprising in the Middle East happened during springtime which is the Syrian uprising. Others have also argued that using the term ‘spring’ compromises the effort and the strive for political, economic, and social rights in the Middle East which was not confined to one season i.e. spring.²⁰

3.3.1 Political life in the Arab world:

In the Arab Human Development Report, which was made by researchers from the United Nations Development Programme who studied the political, economic, and social situation in the Arab world reported that Arab countries – which are defined as the countries with Arabic as the official language and are members of the Arab League constituting 22 countries in total – ²¹ fall far behind any other regions in participatory governance. That’s because the democratization wave that dominated the western world and Asia in the 1980 and 1990 did not reach the Arab world in that period which in turn weakened the human and political development in the Arab world. The report also included some political features that were in common among the Arab world.²²

Some of which:

- None of the surveyed Arab States ranked above the international average when it comes to political rights, freedoms and independence of the media with the exception of Jordan.

¹⁹ Gelvin, 2015, p. 25

²⁰ Gelvin, 2015, pp. 37–38

²¹ BBC News, 2017

²² Gelvin, 2015, pp. 4–5

- The survey about quality of public services and bureaucracy and the self-rule of civil services concluded that Only 40% of the surveyed Arab states were higher than the international mean.
- And 60% of the Arab states were above the international mean in corruption.
- In states that were not monarchies, the presidents frequently changed the presidential term limits that were specified by the constitution of the country. The Syrian constitution, for instance, was changed by the parliament in order to provide a legal way for the son of the former president to take over the presidency.
- Most of the Arab governments gained their ‘legitimacy’ by ‘blackmailing’ the public, as they staged themselves to the public as the only thing stands between the public and Islamism.
- The majority of Arab states limit or prohibit the establishment of political parties.
- Many of the Arab countries have active state of emergency for long period of time. In Syria it had been active since 1963. In Egypt since 1981. In Algeria since 1992. Under the state of emergency the government has the right to arrest anyone with or without a reason for an undeclared period of time and the public cannot defend themselves as the government has the right to keep them in jail without trial.²³

Torturing prisoners is also a well-known feature of the Arab countries. Overall regarding political participation none of the Arab states political systems fell under a full democratic system nor under an imperfect democratic system. From the three highest ranked Arab states (Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon) only Lebanon falls under “hybrid democracies”, in Lebanon elections are significantly unreliable, corruption is everywhere, and weak civil society. The rest of the Arab countries were under the “authoritarian regimes” category.²⁴

3.3.2 Reasons behind authoritarianism in the Arab world:

Historians and political scientists have analyzed and tried to guess the cultural and social reasons behind authoritarianism in the Arab world. Some of them thought of Islam as the reason as they saw that Islam does not go well with democratic values and human rights.²⁵ However, nowadays that explanation is not valid for the vast majority of social scientists,

²³ Abdelbaki, 2013, p. 194

²⁴ Gelvin, 2015, pp. 4–7

²⁵ Gelvin, 2015, pp. 7–9

arguing that there is no reason that makes Islam less compatible with democracy and human rights than any other religion such as Christianity or Judaism. Furthermore, not all Muslims practice their religion the same way or even take Islamic principles in practice at all. Giving an example of Indonesia and Turkey, they are both Muslim majority countries and they have democratic political systems, and the state is not run just as a family business, as is the case in many Arab countries.

Political scientists agreed on two elements which suggested what could partially explain the authoritarianism in the Arab world. The first one is the state's control over resources where Arab states derive large proportion of their income from renting their resources – oil for instance, as many of them are oil rich countries – to a favourite client and not from taxation which makes them highly dependent on rent. Such states are called by economists as 'rentier states', which explains how regimes with reserves of natural resources which can be rent generating can base their authority on their role as the distributing faculty of the state instead of popular approval. By the government taking control over resources it ensures that the economy is controlled by the state and it gives the state the ability to have a link with their population through a relationship which is based on favouritism as well as on being able to buy off its opposition, which explains why after the uprising in some Arab countries, some other Arab states started offering their population social benefits, increasing salaries, and subsidies on basic commodities.

The second element is the American foreign policy, which believed that in order to keep the region from communism the region would need immediate economic development and the only way to achieve it is through strong authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, it was the only way for United States to keep the balance of power in the region and secure the West's access to oil by controlling sea shipping lanes on the routes that link the Western world with Asia. This American policy is nothing new to the region, for such policy had been observed by the area's former strong influencer, the British Empire. An example of the continuation of such interference policies in the Middle East is the 'Pentagon Talk' in which the Americans "*essentially endorsed British aims*" (Louis William Roger, 1984, p. 110) in the region, and to take the 'historic part' of the British Empire in the region, especially against communism. Therefore, it appears to be that the American policy in the region today is just a continuation of the British policy of exploitation and meddling with the areas interior

affairs.²⁶ Gelvin, therefore, suggested that only a strong authoritarian regime like the one in Egypt, for instance, could agree to sign peace agreement with Israel regardless of the public opposition.²⁷

3.3.3 Factors triggered the Arab uprising

While the state had taken control of the means of production in order to achieve economic development, it had also guaranteed employment for its population and provided health care, education, subsidies for basic goods including oil, and other social benefits, in other words, the welfare of the population was considered one of the state's responsibilities. However, when Arab states became under pressure from international financial institutions like the world bank and the IMF to liberalize their economies, they had to eliminate subsidies, which left the population alone to face their daily struggles. States had to privatize publicly owned companies and to initiate many other economic reforms, such as increasing taxation on consumption for individuals and granting investors exemption from taxes. Some of these economic policies were practiced in a different way from what it was supposed to be like. Privatization, for instance, which was supposed to result in capitalism, lead in reality to *crony capitalism* instead. For example, in Egypt a friend of the son of the president's owned 60% of the steel industry, and similarly in Syria the president's cousin owned 55% of mobile communications industry.²⁸

The regimes made sure to set up a system in which economic resources are controlled by the regime's affiliates and their cronies, in other words, only who had strong ties to the regime were able to acquire an ownership of the property sold by the government, and most of this property was sold for the ruling elite and thus were able to accumulate wealth through corruption. Therefore, corruption boosted the public anger against the authorities alongside the great income inequality were the public experienced continued poverty. The downside effects of the adopted policies by the authoritarian regimes for liberalization include the demand for respect after a long period of discrimination, – such as that some leaders in the Middle East belonged to minority groups who took control over the country without the

²⁶ Louis William Roger, 1984, p. 110

²⁷ Gelvin, 2015, p. 9

²⁸ Gelvin, 2015, pp. 13–19

respect of the majority's will –²⁹ favouritism, poverty, and violence that the government forces exercised. The regime ignored the basic human rights, like political participation and freedom of speech, and more specifically the usage of violence in order to silence political opposition, all of that was shown in the slogan used “Bread, Freedom, and Dignity” in many of the demonstration across the Arab countries, as Gerges said:

“a unifying thread runs through all of [the revolts]: a call for dignity, empowerment, political citizenship, social justice, and taking back the state from presidents-for-life, as well as their families and crony capitalists who hijacked it”

Furthermore, when the neo-liberal economic reforms did not work out in the Arab world – liberalization did not transform the political system into democratic system as authoritarian regimes usually introduced reforms that only benefited their own political interests which enabled them to establish their desired political image instead of democratizing the whole system – lead to a high level of inflation, followed by an increase in the food prices as the government kept their interference in the market at minimum levels due to the adoption of neo-liberal policies which requires the government to cease their control over prices³⁰ and unemployment and income inequality rates were at high levels as well. On one hand, the youth with a high level of education had high expectations in getting employed in the public sector, but the government did not meet their expectations as they were not able to increase the number of jobs created to suite the population growth rate in the region, which disappointed the youth who found out that being granted a job in the public sector is very difficult leaving many of the young unemployed with higher levels in the urban areas. On the other hand, the allocation of the few jobs offered to the population was done through favouritism. For example, in Egypt the result of the survey conducted by the Egyptian Information and Decision Support Centre indicated that 70% of the jobs were given based on favouritism. Also, another research dissatisfaction with the quality of public services showed that people in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia and Egypt are the least happy in the world which explains why economic policies played an important role in the onset of the Arab uprising.³¹

²⁹ QadirMushtaq & Afzal, 2017, p. 6

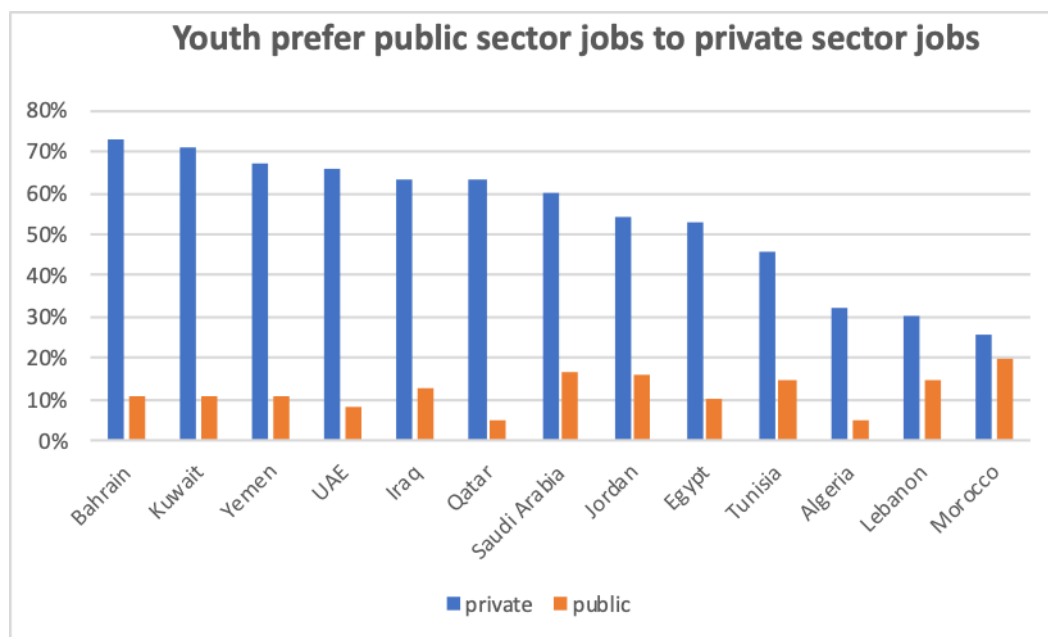
³⁰ QadirMushtaq & Afzal, 2017, p. 2

³¹ Nurullah Ardiç, 2019, pp. 3–9

That's not to mention Huntington's belief, that due to the increased numbers of educated young people in society, urbanization, and with the available technology that made access to information easier in the developing countries, created incentives to change the existing political system to a democratic system.³²

According to the world bank in 2014 the unemployment rate among youth aged (15-24) was 22% in males and 39% in females. 40% unemployment rate was estimated in Tunisia, while the rate of unemployed females in Egypt was at 65%, and 50% in Jordan and Yemen, and it was even higher among the most educated. As most of the youth prefer to get employed in the public rather than the private sector, because the public sector offers higher salaries, job security and better benefits, which was indicated in the result of Gallup survey in 2011 which looked at the difference of preference between public and the private sector.³³

Figure 1 Youth prefer public sector jobs to private sector jobs



Source: The World Bank

Overall the economic reforms led to some economic growth, but they also brought about greater income inequalities. The failure of the regimes in promoting economic equality was a key factor leading to the popular discontent manifested by protesters taking to the streets.³⁴

³² Abushouk, 2016, p. 60

³³ LILI MOTTAGHI, 2014

³⁴ Gelvin, 2015, pp. 13–19

As authoritarian Arab regimes are well-known as oppressive and violent regimes, where political power is put in the hand of the few instead of being shared by the many, these regimes thus will use all available resources to them, including being physical violence, to stay in power. Their justification for the violent actions done by the government's forces comes from the declared state of emergency, however the original intention of the law was to fight terrorism.³⁵

3.3.4 The role of ICT in the Arab Spring:

It has been argued that with the existence of new information and communication technologies made it easier for the massive demonstrations, that took to the streets in the Arab world, to mobilize.³⁶ Most of these demonstrations were organized by young people through the effective use of the internet and more specifically the available 'social media' platforms e.g. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. While some viewers of the events were not sure about the effects of social media, analysis showed that stories of successful demonstrations were very effective and influential of other individuals from different countries to mobilize and protest against their respective regimes and many social media pages on different platforms were created in order for protesters to communicate and influence each other. After the protesters in Tunisia, followed by those in Egypt, were very successful and succeeded in overthrowing their leaders, these protests showed other Arab countries that overthrowing dictators is not an unachievable thing anymore.

Using the new information and communication technologies helped protesters not only in mobilizing and influencing others to take action, but also helped them in another way by being able to share their stories across the world and gain support, showing the unlawful actions that were being done by the regimes, and the regimes' oppression while also seeking to weaken the regimes' legitimacy. Therefore, most of undemocratic regimes tended to shut down the internet to cut the communication lines among protestors.

Another important role played by social media is that the events covered through it, were not manipulated and showed the regimes' practices which drew attention to the issue of human rights violations that occurred in the Arab countries.

³⁵ Kamal Eldin Osman Salih, 2013, pp. 187–189

³⁶ Nurullah Ardiç, 2019, pp. 12–14

4 Practical Part

In the previous chapter of this thesis, I discussed different arguments concerning social movements, the various interests and incentives for individuals to participate in a social movement, and the relation between a social movement and the economy, as well as some arguments about social movements' doings and actions and analyzed those actions from an economic point of view e.g. how we can define such a movement according to economics. I also discussed arguments about the economic and the political factors related to the start of the Arab spring and the factors that could have possibly led the people in the Arab world to take to the streets and protest against their governments.

The practical part of this thesis is a case study about the 2011 Syrian uprising, and the aim of it is to investigate the main reasons people had when they took part in the Syrian uprising, their perception toward violence which occurs in a social movement and how they look at the uprising after 9 years of a civil war that ravaged the country. I would also like to state that the investigation will be focusing on the early Syrian uprisings only, which occurred in March 2011.

4.1 2011 Syrian uprisings

According to the Digital Journal report titled '*A Recap of the Syrian Crisis to Date*' by Paul Iddon, On January 28th 2011 in the city of Al-Hasakah in Syria, a man called Hasan Ali Akleh set himself on a fire imitating and reminding people of what Mohamed Bouazizi did in Tunisia and why.³⁷

According to France24 news report titled 'Facebook used to rally Syrians to 'revolution'' A Syrian activist published, on 3rd of February, an invitation to the people to demonstrate two days later on the 5th of February for what the activist called "a day of anger", to demand an end to the corruption and emergency law which had been active since 1963. None protested on that day, however, due to the increased number of security forces across the country.³⁸

³⁷ PAUL IDDON, 2012

³⁸ News Wires, 2011

The same report of the Digital Journal ‘a recap of the Syrian crisis to date’ by Paul Iddon stated, that on February 17th a group of people in the Al-Hamidiyah market in Damascus the capital city demonstrated after a shop keeper had been humiliated and beaten up by a policeman. The protesters chanted “the Syrian people will not be humiliated”, and after that, a government official promised that the incident will be investigated.³⁹

According to a CBS news report titled ‘How schoolboys began the Syrian revolution’, on the 6th of March 2011 a revolutionary slogan that was used in Cairo and Tunis “As-Shaab / Yoreed / Eskaat el nizam!”: “The people / want / to topple the regime!” was painted on a wall in the Syrian city of Daraa by schoolboys. An action that was inspired by the same slogan, probably seen on TV and used by protesters in Cairo and Tunisia. After the slogan was painted, the security forces took 15 boys aged between 10 and 15 into custody.⁴⁰

According to the CNN news in their report titled ‘Daraa: The spark that lit the Syrian flame’ by Joe Sterling, the families of the detained boys went to the authorities asking them to release their sons, however according to the report the authorities insulted the families. On the 16th of March a protest led by a female in Damascus demanded the release of the people who have been taken into custody unfairly, however the police men started beating the protesters. Mohja Kahf said "the Police dragged protesters by the hair and beat them,".⁴¹

On the 18th of March a protest in Daraa gathered from al-Omari Mosque demanded political reforms, and the release of the children detained, as reported by the Human Rights Watch. Security forces used teargas and water cannons against the protestors and then opened live fire killing 4 of the demonstrators, which marked as the first killing incident. After this incident the authorities promised to initiate an investigation, however, they did not take responsibility putting the blame on ‘terrorist groups’⁴², saying that the security forces had been fired on first.⁴³

According to Euro news, on the 20th of March demonstrators in Daraa went to the Baath party headquarters, the main court and the two mobile phone operators’ buildings and set all of them on fire demanding freedom and an end to the emergency law. The Baath party has been the ruling party in Syria since 1963. In this period, all opposition was banned and

³⁹ PAUL IDDON, 2012

⁴⁰ GLOBAL POST, 2011

⁴¹ Joe Sterling, 2012

⁴² HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2011

⁴³ Liam Stack & Katherine Zoepf, 2011

now is headed by the president Bashar al-Assad. One of the mobile phone operators is owned by the president's cousin; That's why the protestors burned these buildings. However, and in order to calm down the demonstrators in Daraa the authorities promised that they will release the 15 detained children.⁴⁴

According to Human Rights Watch, when the detained children were released – after being seriously tortured – the public's anger increased and the demonstrations in Daraa grew in size and people in other cities started to gather at the same time as well.⁴⁵

As stated in CNN news report, someone said that the government used live fire only in Daraa, and the more the demonstrators in Daraa grew the stronger the crackdown they faced from the security forces and the more civilian casualties were reported.⁴⁶

According to CBS news, on the 24th of March, president Bashar al-Assad increased salaries by 1500 S.P (32.60\$ at the time) for all state employees. On the day after, the demonstrators took to the streets in Daraa shouting “We do not want your bread, we want dignity.” They brought down a statue of the former president Hafez al-Assad – the father of the current president Bashar al-Assad – and in return, the security forces responded with live fire.⁴⁷

According to Euronews, on the 29th of March president Bashar al-Assad accepted the resignation of the council of ministers and appointed the former Agriculture minister to form a new government.^{48 49}

According to CNN, on the 30th of March, president Bashar al-Assad addressed the nation for the first time after the unrest started. He acknowledged the unrest and that the authorities did not meet their demands yet – lifting the emergency laws and political reforms – but he did not announce any changes or a timetable for reforms. He also described the demonstrators in Daraa as ‘conspirators’. After the speech the demands for reforms changed into demands for the president's regime to step down.⁵⁰

On the 21st of April, president Bashar al-Assad signed legislation which ended the 48 years of emergency law and which regulated the right for protest – in a peaceful way – as a

⁴⁴ Euronews, 2011a

⁴⁵ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2011

⁴⁶ Euronews, 2011d

⁴⁷ Joe Sterling, 2012

⁴⁸ Euronews, 2011b

⁴⁹ Euronews, 2011c

⁵⁰ Joe Sterling, 2012

basic human right. The protests, however, kept on spreading across the country and faced more crackdown from the government. On the 26th of February 2012, a new constitution was approved by 90% of the voters in which multi-party political system was introduced in the country. – ending the rule of the Baath party.⁵¹, which was set to be as the ruling party in the Syrian constitution 1973-2012, according to the Article 84:

“Upon the proposal of the Arab Socialist Baath Party regional command, the Assembly issues the order for election of the President”⁵²

Table 1 Syrian constitution (The president of the Republic)

Old Syrian constitution 1973-2012 ⁵³	New Syrian constitution 2012 ⁵⁴
<p><u>Article 85:</u> “The President of the Republic is elected for 7 years according to the Christian calendar, beginning at the date of the expiration of the term of the incumbent President.”</p>	<p><u>Article 88:</u> “The President of the Republic is elected for 7 years as of the end of the term of the existing President. The President can be elected for only one more successive term.”</p>

Source 1: Carnegie Middle East Center

Source 2: Syrian Arab News Agency

According to Aljazeera news, on the 28th of April, two Syrian army units clashed with each other. A resident told Aljazeera: “The Fifth Division has opened fire on the Fourth division and I've heard reports that the major general leading the Fifth Division has been killed and that four sergeants have taken charge”.⁵⁵

And later on, according to BBC news, in August 2011, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) had been formed in turkey by former military personnel and deserters. After that formation, some armed groups started to appear across the country holding the emblem of the (FSA).

Since then, the civic uprising has turned into a civil war with no end till this day.⁵⁶

⁵¹ CNN, 2019

⁵² Carnage Middle East Center, 2012

⁵³ Carnage Middle East Center, 2012

⁵⁴ SANA, 2012

⁵⁵ ALJAZEERA, 2011

⁵⁶ BBC NEWS, 2013

4.2 Interview

To relate the events that occurred in Syria with the general theories of social movements, as well as to gain more knowledge of the real situation on the ground, I intend to ask some participants and witnesses [the respondents are 7 Syrians 5 males and 2 females between 25-35 years old. all of the respondents are or were university students with only two of them not graduating, as they left the country before they finished their studies. Most of the interviewed participated or intended to participate either in early protests that occurred in Damascus (Day of rage and Great Friday) or at Aleppo University on May 12th] of the early Syrian revolution about their stance on some questions that aim to investigate people's motives and goals in the early days of the revolution and to try and find the spark that triggered the revolution at this specific time and not another. Questions such as how people started to know about the uprising, what are the key issues that made people participate and how they look at the violent actions in such a movement and how they perceive the movement in general. (list of the questions in the appendix)

4.2.1 Output

In the question of the interview, I asked people of how they knew about the uprising in the first place? Granted that the state monitored the media, and that foreign media was not allowed to cover hotspots in Syria, a policy which was enforced by the government, besides that almost everybody, in Syria, feared talking about politics, then how did people know about the uprising? This seemed like a good question to start with, as firstly, it would shed the light on the sources people acquired their information from. Secondly, especially in the age of social media, it would show the weak points of the conventional state and government in their rule and control of their people. 4 of the 7 respondents claimed that they knew about it from Facebook, either through videos on Facebook showing people demonstrating in Syria, or on some Facebook pages that called people to demonstrate. 3 out of 7 said that they knew about the protests either from TV or Friends. Respondent 7 stated:

“I followed some of the Facebook pages that called for the demonstrations even before February 2011, and when one of the pages called for a demonstration in front of the parliament on February the 5th I went there with hopes of taking part of the expected protest, but that specific protest did not take place and later heard about the protests that managed to take place on the same Facebook pages a month later.”

The second question is of two parts both of which are directed towards finding the trigger behind the protests in Syria. The first part investigates the role of ICTs in motivating and informing individuals to join protests. The second one is directed towards finding the degree to which the Arab spring is connected to incentivizing people in Syria to protest. Most respondents expressed that the domestic political situation and liberties were lacking in the country and they stated that a lot of people that they knew were not content with state of constant fear of the authorities in the country. Many of them stated that the situation, in Syria before the protests started, was tense and none was satisfied with such situation, but all were afraid and needed a spark, as the respondents stated. Therefore, when people saw the events in Tunisia and Egypt, people got motivated and lost their fear, the respondents continued. Respondent 5 stated:

“All that the people need is a spark, and especially that the Emergency law in Syria had been active since 1963, no one was able to speak out and everybody was afraid and silent. However, when protests started in other Arab countries it really motivated Syrians to take action and social media was a very effective way of showing what was happening in other countries”

Based on the aforementioned, and as the loss of fear is not a reason on its own to push people to participate in a movement, I asked the respondents of their reasons why they or people participated in the uprising. The answers from the respondents varied significantly, but almost all mentioned corruption and cronyism as reasons that pushed people to protest. Others stated personal reasons, such as the taking into custody of some family member or close friends. One of the respondents mentioned that people were discontent with the rule of a minority over the majority, and another pointed out to what he saw as opportunistic individuals who encouraged protests in order to create chaos and benefit from such chaos. Respondent 2 stated:

“Because the fear we endured for ages was broken now. There was no such thing as ‘the wall have ears’ anymore, and we saw that people started to point at the wrong things without fear like cronyism, repression, basically we did not want to live and die with fear anymore.”

Aimed towards investigating why people thought of corruption and cronyism as a main factor in incentivizing people’s participation in protests, I asked the respondents of their opinion on the extent to which they thought that living conditions played in motivating people. Almost

all of the respondents pointed out to corruption and cronyism as problems, as they described that the situation in Syria inhibited anyone who wanted to get a job in the public sector – or even just a promotion – from doing so, if they were unable to pay a bribe, or if they did not have connections with people in authority. This reflected negatively on people’s lives as only those close to the regime, and those with enough money to bribe were able to climb the social ladder; one of the respondents even called getting a job in the public sector as a ‘dream’, because such job carried with it a lot of benefits, and thus was only given to people with connections. This left a lot of young people unemployed. Respondent 5 stated:

“the economic situation was not too bad, everyone who wanted a job was able to find one and would have been able to afford the costs of living with the government subsidies. Getting employed in the private sector was easy, but the public sector was the dream for Syrians, where employees were offered benefits. However, getting employed in the public sector required knowing someone [cronyism] or paying someone to get the job; it was never about personal qualifications”

and those who did not, were left to fend for themselves, which the respondents described as unfair and took as a reason to rebel against the government for that the government is supposed to provide people with a decent living, they exclaimed.

The respondents’ responses on corruption were mostly, if not entirely, linked to jobs and getting employed. Therefore, I proceeded to ask the respondents of their opinion of whether they saw democracy or getting a job more important to protest for. Almost all of the respondents agreed that getting employment is more important than democracy, or at least equal to it. Those who said that employment is more important stated that, as Syrians have lived under authoritarian regimes for long and have gotten used to it, it is thus more important to have a well-paid job and decent living. [perhaps this is based on their experience with corruption in the country which would allow them to bribe their way through to their aims if they had a well-paid job]. Respondent 6 stated:

“Democracy is a lie, you cannot find a full democratic country, so, in my opinion, it does not matter if we have Democracy or not as long as the government is improving the country, creating jobs and improving living conditions of their people which is more important than democracy”

Those who thought of democracy as more important, they thought so as they saw that with democracy they would be able to fight for their rights, improve their standards of living, and

that if they had good standards of living but were not allowed to express their feelings and opinions they stated that they would become like robots following orders with no feelings.

After knowing about some of the issues that triggered the protests, I asked the respondents of their and what they thought were the demands of the people. Many of the respondents linked their demands back to fighting corruption in the country. Others called for more political freedoms and many also called for the abolishment of the emergency law, while some also demanded the end of the heavy-handed military rule in the country.

Respondent 3 stated:

“Demanding economic and political reforms. Ending emergency law and corruption”

After knowing about the demands of the respondents, I proceeded to ask the respondents of how they were resolved to achieve their demands, which aimed at opening the discussion to the following questions related to legislation and why people did not take it as a way for change, why people changed their demands, and what is their perception of the violence in the protests. Some of the respondents stated that at the beginning, they thought that by protesting for one or two months, similar to what happened in Egypt, the government would step down and fulfil their demands. However, all agreed to protests as the way they wanted to take to achieve their goals. Respondent 1 stated:

“Peaceful protest, holding slogans and calling for reforms”

As all respondents agreed that they wanted to achieve their goals by protests which was not legal in Syria, I proceeded to ask them of why they didn't try to achieve their goals through legal processes and through legislation. All in return expressed mistrust with the legislative branch and they saw that the parliament and parliamentarians alike were puppets in the hands of the regime, and all exclaimed that if no one trusts the authorities then how would they cooperate with them in a legal way, especially that the constitution was not worked with and where the country was under emergency law for decades. One of the respondents referred to the change of the constitution within the matter of days to accommodate for the current president's age at the time when the father of this president died, as an example of why people did not trust the authorities. Respondent 7 stated:

“The legislative branch was just theatricals and in reality, only the ruling elite held any powers and did not abide by laws”

Based on the case study, in the beginning of the uprising in the first few months people in Syria only called for reforms, to later start calling for the change of the whole regime and the

stepping down of the president. The president announced some reforms, but that still that did not calm down the protests, who kept on demanding the stepping down of the president and the change of the regime. Therefore, I continued to ask the respondents of why they left their demands of reforms behind and demanded full change of the system. Many attributed the change in the demands for the violence exercised against protestors by the government as the reason for change. Some also expressed that people have had enough with the regime and that it could not be fixed. One mentioned the interest of some individuals to benefit from chaos as one of the reason why they changed their demands in order to keep the state of chaos. Respondent 6 stated:

“First of all, we did not see any of the promised change and all that we saw was force. Secondly, the president could not bring about any change, only those who had changed the constitution could, and they wanted him in power. He is just the face of the government, therefore the people wanted to bring the whole system down”

As reported in the case study, there was violence exercised from both sides, therefore, I intended to shed a light on this by asking people of their stance on the violent actions of both sides. All renounced violence, with most of them not justifying it as means to an end. One of the respondents showed vexation with protestors who called for peaceful demonstration, but yet ended up setting government and private buildings on fire, and called such actions rioting. Those who justified violence took it as means to express discontent with the government and draw attention to their issues, or as a reaction to the violence exercise on them by the security forces. Respondent 2 stated:

“I do not agree with violence, however it can be justified if it does not target people. It is a way for people to draw attention to the things that they are angry with by destroying it, and it was also a reaction to the violence that people were met with. There is nothing such as peaceful protests under a repressive regime”

As a conclusion to the inquiries in the interview, and with the knowledge of the years of civil war that has ravaged the country in the recent years, I proceeded to ask the respondents of their opinion on the 2011 uprising as they see it from our today perspective. Half saw it as a brave movement where young people overcame their fears and started pointing to the wrong things in the country, however, they pointed out the foreign interests in the country which changed the shape of the movement, in their opinion. The other half disagreed and saw it as a bad movement and a wrong thing to do as it carried with it more negativity such as

destroying the economy and country alike. In foreseeing the future, some saw the uprising as a turning point after which the government would understand that the public has limits and will not be silent forever, so it would become less oppressive.

Respondent 3 stated:

“It was a brave revolution, but a naïve one as well. People did not practice politics for too long, they have forgotten how to do so”

4.2.2 Results and discussion

From the people interviewed, I found that most of them knew about the uprising through Facebook pages that called for protests, while others knew about it from their friends who participated in the protests., which sheds a light on the role social media outlets played in the early revolution.

People, as the respondents stated, were not allowed to say their political opinion and that they had to accept what the authorities do without objection. People, however, did not appreciate this situation, but as they were living in fear, they did not protest as of the existence of the emergency law allowed the police to arrest whoever they see a threat without checks, the respondents stated. The turning point, all of the respondents agreed, was when people saw how the protestors in Tunisia and Egypt were able to change their regimes, which helped Syrians overcome their fear of the regime’s authorities.

One of the interviewed people said that not only those who lived in poor condition participated in the protests, but middle-class people as well. The unlawful arrests of relatives, provoked one of the respondents to join the protests, even though she did not intend to do so beforehand. [this sheds the light on the use of force by the regime, that escalated the situation and pushed more people to protest] The respondents think that the most important issues that made people participate are the widespread corruption and cronyism, which they all agree on. These two issues are seen as the reason why many young people were unemployed, and consequently the unemployed were easily attracted to participate in any action. This connection between corruption and unemployment seems to be like a vicious cycle, where corruption produced more unemployed and the unemployed numbers, who in themselves were easier to attract to revolt, accumulated like gas that filled a room and needed a spark to ignite. This connection is comparable to the ideas in the value-added theory. In the theory the first condition identifies the problem people were facing which can be seen here as the

corruption our respondents identified. The feelings of deprivation resulting from poor conditions of living caused by corruption and unemployment were the second condition of the theory, and when people saw what happened in neighboring countries seems to be the third condition of the theory where people's belief in a solution to a problem seemed to be crystalizing leading to the fourth condition which is ignition of the tension which can be attributed to the events that happened to the children in Daraa.

One of the participants described getting employment in the public sector, which offers many benefits, as a dream as the workers were not selected based on their qualifications, but on their connections and ability to bribe i.e. corruption. Therefore, it seems that what most of the people wanted to change was to put an end to the widespread corruption, as well as an end to the emergency law which gave the authorities unchecked powers. Seeking change in the respondent's opinions was only by taking the streets, as most of the respondents believed that the country's legislations were made by the ruling elite and that even the parliament did not have power at all, which is mirrored in section 3.3.3. Some of the respondents' aims were, from the beginning, to change the regime because, in their opinion, the regime and the country's system were unfixable. Moreover, most of the respondents wanted reforms only, however, when people saw that the president did not meet their demands and that all what they were met with was security forces and violence, they seized to want to fix the system, and turned to call for the change of the whole system, which affirms the aforementioned point in the (section 3.2.2) on tracks of political unrest where it is argued that the authorities delayed or violent response can be attributed to people's change of initial demands. Three of the respondents preferred having a job and good living conditions over democracy as, in their opinion, democracy is not too important as long as the government is able to develop the country and provide people with some political rights. Two of the respondents thought that democracy and having a job were on the same level of importance, while the other 2 respondents left believed that with democracy, they can achieve their rights and goals. It can be argued then, that the structural position of an individual, as in Stanley's and Goodwin's conception (section 3.2), decides an individual's economic and political motivation. Similarly, it can be argued that those with good structural position had less of an economic interest in the revolution and more of political interest calling for democracy and political rights. Those, on the other hand, with lower structural position had

their economic motives as the driving motives and called for jobs and were more lenient to it from their leniency to democracy.

When it comes to the violence during the uprising, no one supported the violence and most of the respondents thought that it was wrong and could not be justified. Two of the respondents saw that if violence was just a reaction to the repressive regime then it could be justified as it is a way to express the want to change the system. Overall, and for most of the respondents, the events of 2011 in Syria seemed to be a wrong thing to happen as it did not bring about any change and all what it brought was destruction. Only one respondent thought that the revolution will have some positive impact in the future as the regime will not be as repressive as it was before.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Syrian uprising appears to have many layers and reasons in the background that paved to it, the motives of the participants in it and the goals it called for. The Syrian uprising is a complicated occurrence and is not so for the wrong reasons. Syria – and most of the Arab states around it – was under authoritarianism for long and in such systems the state had complete control over the economy, and at the same time was a provider to the people of support which they grew accustomed to. Later on, when the government in Syria started liberalizing the economy it had to limit their support to the people, felt that they were left alone as a consequence, which created grievances that accumulated and created a tense atmosphere of repressed anger. These grievances and their influence can be compared to the workings of relative deprivation (section 3.1.3), where uncomfortable living conditions and feelings of deserving better can be influential in a movement's incubation. In Syria it seems that the relative deprivation feelings of the government pulling its support of the people was in itself a motivation for people to rebel, as the absence of government support seemed to be a motive and not necessarily people actually being in a bad situation; people's grievance partially was the removal of government support, a thing that people got used to. Furthermore, corruption and cronyism, which were wide-spread, robbed people of many of their rights, and gave way the rule of the powerful – those with connections – and to bribery – the rule of money – which left the poor masses to fend for themselves. Such corruption infiltrated jobs in the public sector, as well, and led many even those with education to become unemployed which caused more tension to rise. After witnessing the revolutions that

took place in neighboring countries, Syrians' fear of the authorities started to weaken and in this heated atmosphere, and especially when the children in Daraa were detained and tortured, Syrians took to the streets, firstly protesting the incident of the children as they saw that the state was supposed to protect the rights of the people, rather than torture them, alongside demanding the abolishment of the emergency law and calling for reforms. This makes the earliest period of the uprising, according to the typology of social movement (section 3.1.2), a reformative type of social movement as the goals at this time were addressing problems such as corruption and inequalities, and protestors in this period seem to be only calling to be equally included in the system. The government, however, with its delayed response and response with violence, pushed the protests to turn from peaceful protests into violent ones and raised the demands of the people from simple reforms to a change of the whole system, as people saw that the government was not protecting their rights as it should do, but rather protecting the rights of the ruling elite. Therefore, it can be argued that the government carries, at least, a part of the blame for turning the movement into a transformative kind of social movement where the demands of the protestors switched from reforms to total societal change and led the way to incorporate violence in achieving the protestors' goals, as the transformative type of social movements predicts (section 3.1.2). However, and regardless of what happened in Syria and whether the uprising was useful or not to the country, yet still the 2011 Syrian uprising can be arguably taken as a changing point of the history of the country as it showed the regime that people will not be silent forever.

All in all, there seems to be a couple of lessons to be had from the study of the Syrian uprising. Firstly, and in further analysis of the early situation, and as the government did not use violence in response to protests in Damascus or Aleppo, for instance, and only used violence in Daraa which is a rural and less educated area in general, it seems to be that the use of violence by the government was, to a certain extent, necessary in such areas where people did not have the capacities needed to protest and exercise democracy peacefully. Secondly, violence in protests is not a way to show dissatisfaction with the authorities or to apply pressure on them, especially in authoritarian regimes or worse in regimes ruled by the military, as in such regimes the response of authorities would be even more violent against the protestors and give chance to the transformation of a simple movement into a more complicated conflict.

On the other hand, however, the government's use of violence cannot be justified at any rate, as it was probably a reason to drag the county into the current civil war, that's by transforming the initial reformative movement into a full blown transformative movement that called for the down with the whole system.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Interview questions:

- 1. How did you know about the uprising?**
- 2. What triggered the protests now and not before? And do you think it is related to the Arab spring?**
- 3. Why did you decide to participate?!**
- 4. To what extent do you think living conditions and income inequality motivated people?**
- 5. What is more important to you, democratic rights or to get employed?**
- 6. What were the demands?**
- 7. How were the goals intended to be achieved?!**
- 8. Why did the people you seek their goals through protests and not legislations?**
- 9. Why there were Change in demands from reforms to topple the regime?**
- 10. What is your stance on violence from both sides?**
- 11. How do you describe 2011 uprising?**

7.2 Interview output:

1. How did you know about the uprising?	
Respondent 1	<i>"I knew about it from the news on TV and also from my sister's friend who distributed flyers calling people to demonstrate"</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"I knew about it through Facebook, specifically when I saw a video of students protesting in both of Damascus and Aleppo Universities"</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"I knew about it from the news on TV and later on from my schoolmates. They were very happy about it as they never expected that people will have the courage to speak out"</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"I saw on Facebook that students were going on demonstrations at Aleppo University where I also studied, as well as from my cousin who participated in a protest and from a friend of mine who was one of those who organized the same university protest"</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"First I knew about it from my friends who were talking about the people of Daraa and how they were demonstrating after their children were taken and tortured just for that they wrote slogans against the regime"</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"I knew about it from Facebook, as I use it mostly to follow the news, and at that time all [related] pages on Facebook were focusing on the uprisings in the Middle East, and whatever was posted on Facebook at the time spread really fast"</i>
Respondent 7	<i>"I followed some of the Facebook pages that called for the demonstrations even before February 2011, and when one of the pages called for a demonstration in front of the parliament on February the 5th I went there with hopes of taking part of the expected protest, but that specific protest did not take place and later heard about the protests that managed to take place on the same Facebook pages a month later."</i>

2. What triggered the protests now and not before? And do you think it is related to the Arab spring?	
Respondent 1	<i>"people were not allowed to say their political opinion and they had to accept what is given to them by the authorities. Everybody in Syria had in mind that 'the walls can hear' [referring to the regime's secret police] and when we saw it, we were encouraged by the brave actions of the Tunisian people to not be afraid anymore. However, with the rise of the internet we were better able to see what is going on around us and hear the stories of other people who had similar issues to ours with the regime, and many saw in the protests a path for change."</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"After seeing people in other countries in the region like Tunisia and Egypt and how they were able to overthrow their authoritarian regimes which were in power for years with the help of social media platforms and which encouraged people to go to streets and not be afraid anymore, we thought why cannot we ?!"</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"After the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, everybody thought that in a period of 2-3 months of demonstrations we should be able to change the regime similar to what happened in other countries."</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"The impact of social media was huge on people as it polarized them because it was used for propaganda from both sides [government vs protestors]. I do not think that there was a connection with the Arab Spring as I think that everything that happened in Syria was"</i>

	<i>planned for from the past, during the period of troubles with the Muslims brother in the 80's"</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"All that the people need is a spark, and especially that the Emergency law in Syria had been active since 1963, no one was able to speak out and everybody was afraid and silent. However, when protests started in other Arab countries it really motivated Syrians to take action and social media was a very effective way of showing what was happening in other countries"</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"When people in Syria saw what happened in other countries with similar authoritarian systems and how the people were able to change the regime, that motivated the Syrian people to do the same and try to change their regime. Besides, that there were people who had interests in chaos to steal and loot [material interest]"</i>
Respondent 7	<i>"There was a general feeling of discontent with the regime, especially in the more educated circles. However, there was not a feasible way to organize against the regime before social media. With the introduction of social media, the educated organized and demanded change and assembled the masses' through their access to social media platforms and by shedding the light on the revolutions in the neighboring countries"</i>

3. Why did you decide to participate?!

Respondent 1	<i>"I was encouraged by my friends who went to demonstrate in support to what was going on in Daraa. They demanded the government's release of the children arrested and they were not afraid of security forces which encouraged me to join them after my sister got arrested for the same reasons"</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"Because the fear we endured for ages was broken now. There was no such thing as 'the wall have ears' anymore, and we saw that people started to point at the wrong things without fear like cronyism, repression, basically we did not want to live and die with fear anymore."</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"There are many reasons, but mainly corruption. The government however was not the only one responsible about corruption, but also the people who bribed and taught their children how to do it and encouraged them"</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"Because there were a lot of people who suffered under this regime and because many people were tortured in prisons just for saying their political opinion. Also because of corruption"</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"For many reasons, for the corruption, bribery, cronyism, and the minority's rule over the majority. The majority felt as the saving account of the minority, so when there were uprisings in other Arab countries, all of which have similar political systems, the Syrian people wanted change that as well"</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"for some it was just that they wanted to do the same as what their friends were doing and others had aimed for change. We needed a fair law and to have some degree of freedom, others just wanted to either bring about destruction and chaos or to take advantage of lawlessness and to steal"</i>
Respondent 7	<i>"I had never liked nor supported the regime. As a person with political interest and ambition, I realized since I was young that I had no chance of pursuing such path in my own country. Besides, that I was highly critical of the corruption, mismanagement and brute force the government exercised on people daily lives and matters."</i>

4. To what extent do you think living conditions and income inequality motivated people?	
Respondent 1	<i>"it was not only poor people who went against the regime. Most of the middle class people were against the uprising and supported the president, however most of this poor as well worked for the government and their job became to participate in the protests to later report and arrest the protestors"</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"All of this is related to cronyism and corruption, most people who were unemployed were so for not being able to pay a bribe that they were asked for in order be accepted in a work position, or they did not know anyone who was in a high position to recommend them. In other words, only those who had connections or were able to pay for a job would get it"</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"It had a great effect, as the only channel open for people to advance their situation, for example getting employed, was only through connections with influential figures in the regime, or through bribery"</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"The uprising was planned way in the past by those who had political interests and exploited the poor and offered them financial incentives to participate and assured them that after toppling the regime they will not be suffering from poverty anymore"</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"the economic situation was not too bad, everyone who wanted a job was able to find one and would have been able to afford the costs of living with the government subsidies. Getting employed in the private sector was easy, but the public sector was the dream for Syrians, where employees were offered benefits. However, getting employed in the public secotor required knowing someone [cronyism] or paying someone to get the job; it was never about personal qualifications"</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"Living conditions had a real impact on people, as most people were in poor living conditions. They were not getting paid enough, a lot of young people were unemployed and when people do not have a job to fill their time with, their minds will start to wander and take to the streets, if given the chance."</i>
Respondent 7	<i>"It did not play a role in motivating the more educated, but for rallying the poor and the masses, living conditions and poverty were key motivators."</i>

5. What is more important to you, democratic rights or to get employed?	
Respondent 1	<i>"Democracy, because I like my voice to be heard, and because if I did not have a job and did not care about seeing poor people struggling to find a job and food because of corruption, then I would just be like a robot with no feelings"</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"For sure democracy, because we can, through democracy, achieve our rights and improve step by step. If we do not have democracy then we will stay where we are forever"</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"Both are equally important. Living in democratic country without having a job has no meaning and having a job while living with fear is not living at all"</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"Both are equally important, there is no benefit in having democracy but not affording food. However, with no democracy, the state would not invest in its people unless the ruling authorities benefit from such investment as well"</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"in Syria we have been living under an undemocratic regime for a long time and we got used to it ,therefore in my opinion, the most important is having a well-paid job. The government should take control of the economy and not liberalize it because in such system only those who have ties to the regime or are from the same ethnic group are allowed to invest. Therefore, they do not actually liberalize, but instead they just got a country's resources written under their names"</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"Democracy is a lie, you cannot find a full democratic country, so, in my opinion, it does not matter if we have Democracy or not as long as the government is improving the country,</i>

	<i>creating jobs and improving living conditions of their people which is more important than democracy”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“The problem is not about democracy, but about the exploitative character of the Syrian regime. I, personally, do not believe that democracy is the solution for Syria, but having a strong ‘authoritarian’ regime with good planning and intentions would guarantee good standards of living, besides basic political rights on a local scale.”</i>

6. What were the demands?	
Respondent 1	<i>“We called for freedom of expression, and the end of corruption and cronyism.” Those who do not have money to bribe or they have no connection with the elite their writs will be lost for example: when our neighbor was going to work a car hit him and he got injured, and he was not able to bring the driver to justice because he was the son of an important person in the government”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“Freedom of speech, removing emergency law and instating political reforms such as ending the rule of the Baath party and allowing multiparty system”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“Demanding economic and political reforms. Ending emergency law and corruption”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“We wanted to change the regime, and to overthrow the Assad family after being in power for over 40 years”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“All we wanted was changing the regime, mostly because the president did not develop the country as we thought he would when he came to power as a young president who studied abroad”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“All we wanted was to put an end to the oppression and to stop military rule over the country, as well as better living conditions and creating more job opportunities”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“The ability to get involved in politics without precautions, which would allow the change of the country’s laws that were in favor of the ruling military elite”</i>

7. How were the goals intended to be achieved?!	
Respondent 1	<i>“Peaceful protest, holding slogans and calling for reforms”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“By protesting. We thought that the government will be on our side and listen to us, especially with people not going to work which would have affected the economy negatively”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“With peaceful protests, but unfortunately peaceful protests soon turned into violent protests”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“By demonstrating. We even thought that by doing so the president himself will resign, similar to what happened in Egypt. when the Egyptian president saw that people did not want him in power, he resigned”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“Through protest demanding change, but when we were met with fire I realized that protests are not going to work out”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“We wanted to set our conditions alongside asking for change. However, with such a regime protests do not work as the regime does not listen to the people”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“Through demonstrations and strikes. As a university student I did not think about getting involved in any violence against the authorities, as it I expected that to be very dangerous.”</i>

8. Why did the people seek their goals through protests and not legislations?	
Respondent 1	<i>“Legislation and the state’s institutions were just theatrical and façade for the game that they [regime] were playing behind. Even before the revolution, none was allowed to complain about anything, even the minor daily life issues, such as electric shortages, under the threat of arrest.”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“Because in reality the parliament does not have power to change anything, and if anyone wanted to introduce change against the Baath party they would be taken and disappear. Even if the whole parliament agreed on changing the president, the parliament members would be changed, but not the president”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“In reality the parliament does not have powers, and there are no real representatives. All parliament members are chosen by the regime and not by the people. However, even the president does not have the full power, only those who changed the constitution back in 2000 [raised the constitutional minimum age of the president] have the full power”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“Because the constitution is not in effect. An example is what happened in 2000 when they changed it, so they can keep the power in the hands of the Assad family”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“Because legislations were made by them [the regime] and it is all just a joke. In 2000 in days only they changed the constitution for the son of the former president to take power, besides that in every presidential election the president won with 99.8% approval, so it is just a show that he is an elected president”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“Because we did not trust the government we did not trust the legislative nor the judicial branches, and even those who issue the laws they do not work by it, the whole system is corrupted. It is a government by the military and it does not operate within laws”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“The legislative branch was just theatricals and in reality, only the ruling elite held any powers and did not abide by laws”</i>

9. Why there were Change in demands from reforms to topple the regime?	
Respondent 1	<i>“After people seeing that no one cared about their demands and that they even wanted to silence them, as if they did not exist, protests spread even more in the country and people saw it as an opportunity to change the system”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“People only asked to bring an end to the oppression and emergency law, but they were met with violence”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“Because some people benefited from the lawless situation in the country and they did not want it to end. Others wanted to change the president, from the beginning, as he comes from a minority group in Syria. Both saw that they are losing their opportunity to achieve these goals and that’s why they turned the peaceful protests into violent ones.”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“Because there was nothing to be fixed and the whole system was wrong since the Assad family came to power. The government operated with this system for over 40 years, and thus people thought that by changing the president would be able to change the whole system”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“What’s based on lies is a lie. We could not ask who tortured us to change, and the people had had enough with the regime. There were many people who hated the president for a long time and they were waiting for an opportunity to get rid of him as soon as possible”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“First of all, we did not see any of the promised change and all that we saw was force. Secondly, the president could not bring about any change, only those who had changed the constitution could, and they wanted him in power. He is just the face of the government, therefore the people wanted to bring the whole system down”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“My demands did not change, it was always doing away with the whole system and building a new one”</i>

10. What is your stance on violence from both sides?	
Respondent 1	<i>“Violence is not accepted from both side and when we used any form of violence the demonstrations were not peaceful anymore. Riots cannot be justified, even if they did not harm anybody, furthermore we cannot act violently and, at the same time, ask to stop the oppression from the security forces’ side”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“I do not agree with violence, however it can be justified if it does not target people. It is a way for people to draw attention to the things that they are angry with by destroying it, and it was also a reaction to the violence that people were met with. There is nothing such as peaceful protests under a repressive regime”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“Any form of violence is not justified, violence is violence, and it does not matter from which side it is or in which form. We cannot solve any issue with violence. Violence against protesters is a dictatorship, and violence during demonstrations is rioting.”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“I do not agree with violence because it would call for the army’s response which would be more violent. I’m also against violence exercised by the security forces as I see that government allowing people to speak out and by trying to meet people’s demands, the government would be able to solve everything and none would ask for a regime change”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“Our actions were just as a way to draw attention to our demands. I justify the reaction to what the regime did for their children in Daraa, but otherwise I do not justify such violent actions”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“Any act of violence is not justified. What happened was just a reaction to the oppression people saw, so they destroyed property. People, however, never thought that everything that was built was paid for by tax-payers money and that they will have to pay again to rebuild”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“The regime started with the use of force since day one of their coming to power. I don’t justify violence, however with such a regime, violence for many seemed like the only viable options, especially after being met with violence and oppression during the uprising”</i>

11. How do you describe 2011 uprising?	
Respondent 1	<i>“A very strong movement of young people, which encouraged everybody to not live in fear anymore”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“It was a very good opportunity to achieve positive change in Syria, however foreign countries’ interests changed that”</i>
Respondent 3	<i>“It was a brave revolution, but a naïve one as well. People did not practice politics for too long, they have forgotten how to do so”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“I remember it in an emotional way, it was not humane and from the beginning it was a negative thing to happen, because all that it brought was destruction and death and more people live in great poverty and very poor conditions after the uprising”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“It was not a good movement, all what it brought was destruction for material interests. I wish that it did not happen at all. However, there were some good points. The regime knows now that people will not always stay quiet and that it needs to pay more attention to the people’s demands”</i>
Respondent 6	<i>“A very wrong thing to do, all that it brought was negative rather than positive. I do not think that the system will change, but that the regime will be stronger and more repressive”</i>
Respondent 7	<i>“It started with educated youth demanding their rightful place in the country, but the movement was hijacked by uneducated masses and external powers.”</i>