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**American Foreign Policy and the Arab
Uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria**

Diplomová práce

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Abstrakt

Diplomová práce *Americká zahraniční politika a povstání v Egyptě, Libyi a Sýrii* se zabývá primárně konfliktem mezi podporou demokratizačních tendencí a strategickými a bezpečnostními zájmy v zahraniční politice Spojených států ve vztahu k revolucím, které na počátku roku 2011 vypukly v Egyptě, Libyi a Sýrii. Dále se práce zabývá tím jaké postupy a nástroje pro podporu demokratizace nebo strategických zájmů Spojené státy zvolily a jakým způsobem svůj postoj veřejně prezentovaly. Práce je rozdělena na tři hlavní části, přičemž první z nich se zabývá obecným vymezením podpory demokratizace v rámci americké zahraniční politiky a jejího konfliktu s ochranou důležitých amerických zájmů. Druhá a rozsahově nejdelší část se zabývá průběhem povstání v jednotlivých státech s důrazem na postup zahraniční politiky Spojených států. Třetí kapitola pak na základě dvou předchozích vyjmenovává a vysvětluje základní systémové znaky přístupu administrativy Baracka Obamy ke zmíněným povstáním a hledá faktory, které toto jednání zásadním způsobem ovlivnily. Práce byla zpracována s použitím převážně novinových článků a expertních komentářů, neboť vzhledem k aktuálnosti tématu není tato problematika ještě zcela zpracována v rámci odborných publikací. Dále byly použity americké oficiální vládní zdroje, analýzy a projevy politiků.

Abstract

The Master Thesis *American Foreign Policy and the Arab Uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria* concentrates primarily on the conflict between democracy promotion and pursuit of strategic and security interests within the U.S. foreign policy with respect to uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria that broke out in the beginning of 2011. The thesis also concentrates on the processes and the tools used by the United States to support either democratization efforts or their vital interests and how these processes were

publicly communicated. The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part analyzes history of democracy promotion in the U.S. foreign policy and its conflict with interest-based stability promotion. The second, and the most extensive, part examines the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria with an accent on the U.S. foreign policy. The third part seeks to identify patterns and features of the U.S. foreign policy with respect to the uprisings in the mentioned countries using the facts mentioned in the previous two chapters. The thesis uses mainly newspaper articles and expert opinions as the principle sources. As the topic is a very current issue there is no huge number of academic sources available especially concerning the later phases of the uprisings. Also, official sources like analyses and public speeches were used.

Klíčová slova

Americká zahraniční politika, povstání, demokratizace, strategické zájmy, strategie, rétorika, veřejné mínění.

Keywords

U.S. foreign policy, uprising, democracy promotion, strategic interests, strategy, rhetoric, public opinion.

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V Praze dne 5. ledna 2015

Jakub El-Ahmadieh

Poděkování

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V čem se oproti původními zadání změnil cíl práce? Cíl práce se, stejně jako základní výzkumné otázky, významně nezměnil. Došlo nicméně k posunu koncentrace práce směrem ke konfliktu mezi podporou demokratizačních tendencí a propagací strategických zájmů.	
Jaké změny nastaly v časovém, teritoriálním a věcném vymezení tématu? Teritoriální vymezení je stále stejné, v práci se budu věnovat Libyi, Sýrii a Egyptu. Co se týká časového vymezení, budu se věnovat celému období samotných povstání včetně.	
Jak se proměnila struktura práce (vyjádřete stručným obsahem)? Strukturu práce bych rád více zaměřil na jednání americké zahraniční politiky. Bude tedy kladen menší důraz na samotné dění v jednotlivých státech. Jednotlivým zemím bude ale tak jako tak věnována jedna samostatná podkapitola s důrazem na přístup americké zahraniční politiky. Dalé zahrnu do práce komparativní kapitolu, ve které vypíchnu společné a odlišné aspekty přístupu a pokud sám se vysvětlit důvody těchto odlišností.	
Jakým vývojem prošla metodologická koncepce práce? Z metodologického hlediska se bude jednat o analýzu americké zahraniční politiky a faktorů, které ji ovlivnily.	
Které nové prameny a sekundární literatura byly zpracovány a jak tato skutečnost ovlivnila celek práce? OZ, Hassan. <i>Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination</i> (New York: Routledge, 2013), 229 p. INDYK, Martin S. et al. "The Arab Awakenings," <i>Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy</i> . (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 342 p.	
Charakterizujte základní proměny práce v době od zadání projektu do odevzdání tezí a pokuste se vyhodnotit, jaký pokrok na práci jste během semestru zaznamenali (v bodech): Pokrok jsem zaznamenal hlavně v oblasti prostudování části relevantní literatury. Další posun v tomto směru očekávám během svého studijního pobytu v USA.	
Podářilo se mi také sumarizovat základní fakta k situacím v jednotlivých zemích, což mě vedlo k poznatku, že se hodlám věnovat hlavně perspektivě americké zahraniční politiky.	
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Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa which are often referred to as the MENA region encompass the Arab countries of North Africa, Western Asia, and Iran.¹ Since the end of World War II, the MENA region has been confronted with decades of conflicts between Arabs and Israelis, Sunnis and Shiites, civil wars and additional violence. In the early 2011, the Arab nations revolted against their current governments catching the world by surprise as nobody such rapid and widespread protests. From Morocco to the Persian Gulf masses of people protested against their current governments and even though the protests across MENA differed a lot in terms of demographics and patterns they used, people everywhere demanded changes in the way their countries were governed.² In some cases, namely Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, long term and seemingly stable authoritarian regimes fell apart. The headlines of newspaper around the world described massive Arab movements, which, after years of different kinds of dictatorships, expresses need for democratic governments and so contributed to the initial success of the movements.³

The United States of America saw the Middle East and the North Africa not only as places of bloody conflicts but also area of vital interests. Abrupt and unexpected changes in the places of high importance to U.S. national security plans were a new and potentially dangerous challenge. Some of the dictatorships in the region not only acted in favor of American interests but also received direct support from the United States (e.g. Egypt, and Saudi Arabia)⁴. Therefore, the task for foreign policy makers was to keep U.S. interests in the area without compromising the image of a pro-democracy superpower. It was also important to distinguish between the approach to the dictatorships favored by the United States (e.g. Saudi Arabia) and to the dictatorships that were not on the list of American allies (e.g. Syria).

¹ the definition taken from
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,menuPK:247619~pagePK:146748~piPK:146812~theSitePK:256299,00.html>

² Lisa Anderson. „Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Foreign Affairs“, [downloaded on November 14, 2014] from:
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67693/lisa-anderson/demystifying-the-arab-spring>.

³ Matthew Campbell. „Al Jazeera Coverage Enrages Dictators, Wins Global Viewer. Bloomberg, [downloaded on November 14, 2014] from: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-25/al-jazeera-enrages-dictators-wins-global-viewers-with-coverage-of-unrest.html>.

⁴ Martin S. Indyk, et al. *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy* (Washington D. C.: Brookings Institution, 2012), p. 145.

The main focus of the thesis is the American foreign policy towards the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria, especially the influence of American interests in the region in the relation to the idea of democracy promotion. The decision-making process was influenced by many circumstances including U.S. domestic affairs and also by different approaches and opinions regarding possible threats and future developments of the respective countries. The most noticeable conflict of ideas was the dispute between ideas of democratization, represented for example by Samantha Power, and the desire to maintain interests in the region because it was quite obvious from the beginning that promoting democracy might also in some cases compromise vital U.S. interests as represented by Robert Gates or Hillary Clinton.⁵

This conflict of ideas wasn't the only issue the policy makers were facing when developing new approaches to the Middle East. The clash of interests and ideology was definitely important but there were other serious issues like the threat of radical Islam or potential instability regarding the future of the countries if the regimes were to change.⁶ When the uprisings started, Americans still remembered the failures of the second war in Iraq after Saddam Hussein was removed from power leaving a political vacuum with many different political groups competing for power in the environment of complicated religious and ethnic structure. In Iraq this deadly combination of factors led to years of violence which in times bordered a civil war. This happened despite the fact that tens of thousands of American troops were on the ground.

This thesis seeks to answer following question: When making foreign policy decisions with respect to uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria, did the United States use more ideological approach or was the decision-making process rather influenced and guided by interests? This leads to the following underlying questions: What was the pattern of the relation between democracy promotion and interest based stability promotion and which factors contributed to the final outcome? The thesis seeks to compare Egypt, Syria and Libya based on the level of U.S. interest in these countries and the potential issues and threats which might arise in the context of regime change.

To be able to successfully measure the level of interest, it is necessary to identify key American interests in the region (e.g. ensuring security for Israel, economic interests, human rights related interests etc.) and also identifying the position of the

⁵Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.160.

⁶Ibid., p. 19

country with regard to each particular interest. It is also important to assess the countries importance with respect to particular interest by objectively assessing the role of the country regarding any particular issue. Such an approach allows evaluating each country's significance correctly, regardless of the any regime.

In regards to the issues and threats mentioned above, three main issues will be presented. First is the issue of radical Islam which is regarded by the United States as a great threat to its national security.⁷ Second is the issue of possible instability that is likely to spread across the region.⁸ Finally, there is a concern over possible ethnic or religious unrest stemming from great religious and ethnic diversity in those countries.⁹ To measure the seriousness of these issues and threats it is important to assess three primary factors. These include stability and history of the main opposition forces (how well established they were in the country and whether they had any feasible projects for the future of the country), level of ethnic and religious diversity and animosities between groups and factions (e.g. how did the groups interact in the past, is there any significant history of violence etc.).

The pre-Arab uprisings regimes in Egypt, Libya and Syria before were not similar; however, they had important common features that may have served as common influence for the U.S. foreign policy. Also, the movements that took part in the uprisings were not the same but had important common features:

- In all of the uprisings, a component of a radical Islamist group or faction was present.¹⁰
- The regimes against which the uprisings occurred constituted, to some extent, stable and predictable forces that ensured that, as long as they were in power, the U.S. foreign policy could reasonably predict their behavior.
- All of these regimes were more or less secular, as they were afraid of radical Islamism, which they saw as a threat to their own security and

⁷ Ibid., p. 20

⁸ Ibid., p. 21

⁹ „The Sunni-Shia Divide.“ Info Guide Presentation by Council on Foreign Relations, [downloaded on November 14, 2014] from: <http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#/!/>.

¹⁰ Michael J. Totten. „Arab Spring or Islamist Winter.“ World Affairs, January/February 2012[downloaded on November 14, 2014] from: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/arab-spring-or-islamist-winter>.

existence. In the context of the war on terror, these regimes could have been used as allies on the basis of a common enemy.¹¹

- All of the mentioned countries have a strong ethnic or sectarian component that may have been seen as a source of possible violence and instability after the fall of oppressive, but consolidated and stabilizing regimes.¹²
- The opposition movements in Egypt, Libya and Syria were not homogenous and had no common vision of the post-revolution period which constituted danger of descending into chaos and conflicts between groups.

The hypothesis of the thesis is set as follows: In the initial stage (approximately first few weeks) of the uprisings Americans would be tempted to make contribution to the ideological side of the problem and support democracy promotion but after some time (generally a few months), interests would outweigh ideology because of the number of possible threats and issues. This would vary depending heavily on the importance of each country for the United States and their interests in the MENA region, meaning that the more important the country is for American interests, the less open their foreign policy is to risk democracy promotion experiments in such fragile and unstable environments. This would consequently lead the United States to abandon or, at least, postpone the democracy promotion in Egypt, Libya and Syria until the major threats disappear, despite heavy rhetorical declarations of support for democracy.

The thesis consists of three main chapters. The first chapter discusses theoretical concepts, the second chapter examines the actual situations and the third looks at common features and patterns that can be seen in the approach of the U.S. foreign policy to the discussed cases.

The theoretical concepts of democracy promotion and foreign policy realism are discussed in the first part of the thesis. In the American foreign policy, the conflicts between realism and democracy promotion ideas is not a new thing but an ongoing process that was shaped in recent history. It was the most remarkably present during the

¹¹ Guo Xiangang. „The Religious-Secular Clashes of the Arab World“. China Institute for International Studies, [downloaded on November 14, 2014] from:
http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-01/07/content_6594756.htm

¹² Barah Mikail. „Sectarianism after the Arab spring: an exaggerated spectre.“ Fride Policy Brief, No. 131, June 2012, [downloaded on November 14, 2014] from:
http://fride.org/descarga/PB_131_Sectarianism_after_arab_spring.pdf

process of democratization of Latin America some decades ago when the fear of the possible spread of communism led Americans to support often violent dictators. In this chapter, the tools that foreign policy uses to promote democracy in general will be also discussed because tools used in individual cases of Arab countries is one way to examine how seriously the democracy promotion was taken in each case.

The second is devoted to the analysis of situations in individual countries. For each case, the chapter will examine the importance of each country to U.S. interests by analyzing the issues from the point of view of U.S. foreign policy goals. At the same time, the second part of the thesis will follow narratives of individual countries showing how the events in each country influenced American foreign policy and how such foreign policymaking was affected by the conflict of interests and democracy promotion. In this part of the thesis the nature of the Arab Spring protests in Egypt, Libya and Syria will be briefly examined because as we mentioned earlier, it is by no means obvious that the protests had a pro-democratic nature, on the other hand, they were an expression of desire for change but not necessarily democratic change. This chapter will be also the most extensive as it will examine all three cases.

In the third chapter the information from the previous section will be used to find general pattern which appears in the foreign policy making in relation to the Arab uprisings in the three mentioned countries. This pattern should express the relation between the importance of each country regarding U.S. interests and U.S. eagerness to apply democracy promotion or to support pro democracy tendencies. Also common features that influenced discussed policies will be listed and examined in the context of the general strategy applied by the United States.

The topic of U.S. foreign policy and its relationship to uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria is still current news. Especially when discussing later phases of the uprisings. Therefore, the main sources of this thesis were official documents (speeches, foreign policy analysis, Congressional Research Services policy briefs etc.) and newspaper articles (mainly to introduce and support factual information). Other important sources came from foreign policy oriented websites like www.foreignaffairs.com, www.foreignpolicy.com, and www.cfr.org as articles on these web sites are written by foreign policy experts and well known intellectuals with extensive experience with foreign policy making.

So far, there have been only a few relevant academic publications that would extensively address the issue of U.S. participation in the relation to the uprisings.

However, there are some academic works that were used as important sources for this thesis. The following were the most important. A book by Oz Hassan called *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination* in which Hassan gives an extensive overview of democracy promotion in U.S. foreign policy and puts it into the context of the Arab uprisings. He uses frequent examples of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Hassan also gives helpful insight into internal function and division of power inside the Administration, explaining how some of the decisions were controversial even within the circle of foreign policy makers.

Another important source was the book by a collective of authors edited by Martin S. Indyk called *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*. Especially the section called *Arab Awakenings*, which compares U.S. foreign policy in each country including Egypt, Libya, and Syria and assess it from the point of view of U.S. interests in the region. The authors cautiously and accurately explain the implication of each policy for the future of the relationship between the country and the United States.

Given the importance of Egypt, the works of Jason Brownlee who is one of the foremost experts on U.S. foreign policy in the country were used. Especially his book *Democracy prevention: The Politics of the U.S. – Egyptian Alliance* was useful and served as the main source when analyzing U.S. foreign policy in Egypt. It also helped to identify core concepts of the democracy promotion (or rather lack of democracy promotion) in relationship with Egypt. For the purposes of explanation of the democracy promotion concept and its often present conflict with U.S. interests, articles from various think tanks were used. Most prominently articles found at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where foremost experts on the topic regularly contribute, including Thomas Carothes, Amy Hawthorne, and Marina Ottaway.

For a lack of reliable sources that would accurately examine the internal relations inside the administration and explain the real motivation for certain steps, the book *Hard Choices* by Hillary Clinton was also used. This source was mainly used to illustrate the environment inside the Administration and to provide possible outlook on real motivations. On the other hand it must be understood that this publication is primarily a political pamphlet that was designed to facilitate future political career of its author. Nevertheless, I believe that bearing in mind possible biasness of the source, it serves an important purpose within the framework of this thesis.

1. The Democracy and Stability Promotion in the U.S. Foreign Policy

1.1 Types and Tools of Democracy Promotion

The idea of democracy promotion and its potential conflict with foreign policy based on the doctrine of realism needs to be explained before examining individual cases of U.S. policies during the uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria. For the purposes of this thesis, democracy promotion will be defined as “*a set of approaches that aim to foster democratic governance and support the formation of civil society groups and democratic political parties*”¹³ The foreign policy realism should be understood as set of policies that intend to pragmatically support American interests without following any specific ideological guidelines regarding democracy. Such policies may also be subsumed under the term of Stability promotion.

Democracy promotion may take different forms and use different tools. External democracy promotion, which is the main concern of this chapter, has several different possible actors ranging from international organizations, to national governments to NGOs. Specific actors that regularly participate in the global process of democracy assistance include European Union, the United States and the United Nations Development Program which are bodies that spend the most money on democracy promotion or assistance.¹⁴

From the point of view of theoretical conceptualization, scholars distinguish between four modes under which democracy promotion may operate. These modes include democratization by Coercion, Conditionality, Persuasion and Socialization. Each of these modes represents different cases of external democracy promotion but for the purposes of this thesis the democratization by persuasion in connection with democratization by coercion are the most applicable cases as the former is the mode that applies to the Arab uprisings and the later is the mode under which the U.S. foreign policy has been operating after 9/11. Coercion operates under the conditions that “*a democracy sender imposes its ideas on a country where no democracy exists. On the receiving side, there are either too few oppositional actors to make a domestic regime*

¹³ Jan Hornát. Democracy Promotion: Competing Perspectives with Grave Consequences, in Kryštof Kozák et al., *U.S. as a Divided Nation*. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2014), p. 287.

¹⁴ Timm Beichelt. *The Research Field of Democracy Promotion*, Living Reviews in Democracy, vol. 3, 2012, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from:
<http://democracy.livingreviews.org/index.php/lrd/article/viewArticle/27/40>.

change probable and/or the conditions for democratization are unfavorable“.¹⁵ The democracy sender shall be understood as the subject that forces democratization upon another subject (in this case the United States). The mode of democratization by coercion represents forceful implementation of democracy and apart from successful examples of Germany and Japan after the Second World War this mode is rarely lasting and successful. Attempted democratization in Iraq conducted by President Bush may serve as one of the examples of failure.

The case of Arab uprisings cannot be mostly subsumed under the coercion mode though. On the contrary, in the beginning, the uprisings were almost a clear example of democratization by persuasion which “*is based on the idea that values of individuals are heavily influenced by arguments and reason.*”¹⁶ The Arab spring has been actually the biggest wave of democratization by persuasion in history with visible influences from ideas brought from outside via media and social media. On the other hand, the mere fact that people in MENA region rebelled against established dictators does not constitute a democratization process, which is much more complicated than just overthrowing a dictator. In this respect the Arab Spring proved to be rather popular movement for change than a movement for democracy in particular.

Similarly, in the later stages of the uprisings (apart from Tunisia which turned into relatively stable and democratic country thus representing the only successful example of Arab uprisings so far), external actors started to temper with the revolutions and started to impose their pro-democratic views either directly (Libya) or indirectly (Syria) which led to the shift from persuasive democracy promotion towards coercive democracy promotion. In some cases the external actors used their influence to act against the forces that declared themselves as democratic. This happened in Bahrain, where the governing dynasty enjoyed strong support of Saudi Arabia and subsequently the United States and thus managed to come out of the protests unharmed.

Tools of democracy promotion may range from rhetorical support to actual military intervention.¹⁷ They may include financial or political support for various groups as well as simple spreading of information about democracy and civil society. In his article *The State of the Art in International Democracy Promotion: Results of a Joint European-North American Research Network*, Peter J. Schraeder divides democracy

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Timm Beichelt. *The Research Field of Democracy Promotion.*

¹⁷ Jan Hornát. Democracy Promotion: Competing Perspectives with Grave Consequences, p. 297.

promotion tools into seven categories which are (a) classic diplomacy; (b) foreign aid; (c) political conditionality; (d) economic sanctions; (e) covert intervention; (f) paramilitary intervention; (g) military intervention.¹⁸

Thomas Carothes looks at democracy assistance from two different angles and he distinguishes between political and developmental democracy assistance policies. While the political approach concentrates on narrow perception of democracy as political system and therefore political democracy assistance is concerned about free elections and how the institutions work,¹⁹ the developmental democracy assistance is based on broader definition of democracy and tries to achieve justice and socioeconomic development along with the political development.²⁰

The support for democracy promotion can be also done by different types of assistance. Political democracy assistance distinguishes between direct and indirect tools depending on the subject that is being supported. Direct support includes assistance directly to the actors themselves (activists, political parties, politicians etc.), indirect support can be done by funding or otherwise assisting the institutions themselves (e.g. by funding independent electoral commissions etc.)²¹ The developmental democracy assistance pays attention mainly to indirect support because of the need to develop the society via its own institutions. It also focuses on human rights and civil liberties.²² This shows that democracy promotion can be done not only by military interventions but also by set of gradual steps that create an environment favorable for democracy development. Later in this thesis, it will be shown, that Obama administration did not make use of these possible approaches and stayed with hard force and exaggerated rhetoric.

¹⁸Peter J. Schraeder. *The State of the Art in International Democracy Promotion: Results of a Joint European-North American Research Network*, Democratization, Vol 2, Issue 10, 2003, p. 26.

¹⁹ Thomas Carothers. *Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/01_20_1_carothers.pdf, p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Thomas Carothers.. *Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?*, p. 7.

²² Ibid., p. 9.

1.2 Democracy Promotion and Foreign Policy Realism from the Historical Perspective

The conflict between democracy and stability promotion and has been present in political and academic debate for decades, but, if we exclude Wilson, it has been only since the presidency of George W. Bush that the democracy promotion has become one of the main ideas in foreign policy making of the United States.²³ Earlier, especially during the Cold War, the United States was reluctant to support popular movements because it feared the spread of communism, especially in Southeast Asia and Latin America when Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. His famous comment illustrates the disdain for popular legitimacy: “*I don't see why we need to stand by and watch country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people.*”²⁴

Walter Russell Mead divides American presidents into four historical categories based on foreign policies they pursued. According to Mead, there are four types of presidents. Hamiltonians represent policies of realism connected to economic advantages for the U.S. while being actively engaged in global affairs. Wilsonians pursue more idealistic global policies supporting democracy promotion and human rights. Jeffersonian presidents are isolationists who think the U.S. should disengage from activities abroad and focus on building a splendid example at home for others to follow.²⁵ Mead calls the last group of presidents Jacksonians and he comments on them as follows: “*Jacksonians are today's Fox News watchers. They are populists suspicious of Hamiltonian business links, Wilsonian do-gooding, and Jeffersonian weakness.*”²⁶ These divisions, however, are not crystal clear as most of other presidents combined aspects of some of those approaches. At the same time, Mead’s article demonstrates the historical roots of the debate on U.S. foreign policy course and in this debate Democracy promotion was almost always an issue to consider.

The whole idea of promoting democracy abroad is closely related to the American exceptionalism which logically motivates people to desire to promote their “superior”

²³ Epstein, Susan B., Serafino Nina M., Miko Francis T. *Democracy Promotion: Cornerstone of U.S. Foreign Policy?*, CRS Report for Congress from December 26, 2007, downloaded on October 27, 2014] from <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34296.pdf>, p.1

²⁴ quoted in Blum, William. *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 2003, p. 209.

²⁵ Walter Russell Mead. *The Carter Syndrome*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2010, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from: <http://www.cfr.org/history-and-theory-of-international-relations/carter-syndrome/p21106>.

²⁶ Ibid.

system of government and society abroad. This grew gradually more significant as the United States started to be local and later global power which meant that U.S. style democracy was a viable, stable and desirable system, leading the some politicians in the United States to seek its promotion globally.²⁷ In the later 20th century democracy promotion was often a side issue²⁸ used selectively. The Government's double standards were used against enemies but ignored in case of allies or were just rhetoric but not real policies, for example in the MENA region.²⁹

Democratization enjoyed its greatest success during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the peak time of a so called Third wave of democratization when overwhelming numbers of countries turned into different types of democracies. This became in the late 1970s when Governments of Spain and Portugal turned democratic, but the democracy domino effect came later in the 80s when Eastern Europe and Latin America chose democratic Governments.³⁰ According to Diamond, depending on the definition of democracy, in 1995, there were between 76 and 117 democracies worldwide.³¹ What counts as a democracy is also quite important question because emerging democracies in Central Europe differed from emerging democracies in Africa and Latin America.³² Nevertheless, the mid-1990s witnessed the greatest number of democracies ever present in the world.

This period was very specific as a lot of the democratization happened in direct connection with the fall of Soviet Union. Also, the sudden change in the global equilibrium of powers helped the democracy to develop because it was seen to be as the "better" system that emerged victorious from the decades-long battle between the superpowers. Therefore, it was much easier for American presidents of the 1990s to apply policies of democracy promotion. This applies particularly to Bill Clinton who served his two terms in office in the 1990s. But as any other president, while Clinton pursued democratization efforts in Russia and Latin America to incorporate economic,

²⁷ Jan Hornát. *Democracy Promotion: Competing Perspectives with Grave Consequences*, p. 289.

²⁸ Thomas Carothers. *Democracy and Discontent*, Democracy: Journal of Ideas, issue 10, 2008, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from:

<http://www.democracyjournal.org/10/6645.php?page=all>.

²⁹ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*. p. 11

³⁰ Thomas Carothers.. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 1999, p. 4.

³¹ Larry Diamond. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999, p. 1.

³² Steven Gilbert. *The U.S. Policy of Democracy Promotion in Latin America*. Eastern Michigan University, 2008, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from:

<http://commons.emich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1147&context=honors>, p. 5.

security and democracy interests, he also significantly avoided democracy related questions and pursued foreign policy realism in the Middle East, Central Asia, China, Indonesia and other regions.³³ So even during the most favorable times for democracy promotion, the United States did not apply any consistent policies to promote democracy abroad. However, during his presidency, Bill Clinton contributed to the institutionalization of the democracy promotion by supporting funds for democracy assistance abroad increased from 100 million USD a year in 1990 to 700 million annually in 2000.³⁴ These resources were spent by agencies and NGO's running programs supporting civil societies and civil engagement in various countries in Africa and South East Asia.

The history of American democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East is worth further examination as it has always been a very strategic region filled with tension and since the post-WWII era, a region of increasing U.S. interests. These interests (mainly security related), however, seemed to always prevail over the notion to support local citizens in choosing their own political directions. As Hassan argues, the Eisenhower doctrine encouraged democracy promotion in the MENA region but this was also the time when rhetoric was in sharp contrast with reality as the United States supported authoritarian regimes.³⁵ The reasons for a support of authoritarian dictators included the fear of the spread of Communism, the need to preserve the oil flow and, later, the safety of U.S. closest ally, Israel. This led the United States to support of dictators in Iran (before the Islamic revolution), Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan etc.

1.2.1 Democracy Promotion under George W. Bush

The presidency of George W. Bush brought unprecedented changes to the foreign policy and the role of democracy promotion in it. Despite the fact that democracy promotion was declared as the main foreign policy goal, Bush did more harm to the concept than any other president before him because he made his globally unpopular foreign policy steps under the banner of democracy promotion. Especially in the MENA region his policies were certainly not a good way to advertise democracy promotion as

³³ Thomas Carothers.. *The Clinton Record on the Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/16carothers.pdf> p. 2-3.

³⁴ Thomas Carothers.. *The Clinton Record on the Democracy Promotion*, p. 4.

³⁵ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 11.

they were applied with military force and in ignorance of local communities and consequences that could or did arise from such policies.

Democracy promotion under Bush had three components. These included high-flying rhetoric, pressure on specific countries to modify their domestic policies and creation of Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), an organization designed to finance and support democracy promotion related programs.³⁶ As will be shown later, all of these components had mixed impacts on possible democratization and combined with the unpopularity of Bush and his administration, they often seemed only as intentionally constructed tools to impose American interests and values on the countries in the MENA region.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 played an important role in defining new foreign policy agenda, but it took successful campaign against Taliban in Afghanistan for the Bush administration to start labeling its policies as democracy promotion, in this case specifically as liberation of Afghani people from autocratic and religious oppression.³⁷ This occurred despite the fact that initial idea of the invasion in Afghanistan had nothing to do with promoting freedom and democracy. According to Hassan, the fact that the war in Afghanistan was labeled as liberation demonstrates "*how the projection of US power, and the US construction of a crisis, could be assimilated into the rubric of democracy promotion and liberation*"³⁸

From this point onwards the Bush administration started to construct its foreign policy using the idea of democracy promotion as a reason behind everything. It was used as an excuse after it turned out that accusation used to advocate invasion of Iraq were false. It was also used to pressure long standing American allies like Egypt to liberalize their systems of government. This means that Bush administration has engaged in democracy promotion in the MENA region more than any other administration before.³⁹ An important shift also occurred in the internal structure of power division inside the administration where after seemingly successful mission in Afghanistan the power momentum moved from the Department of State and Colin

³⁶ Marina Ottaway. *Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Restoring Credibility*, Policy Brief 60, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/pb_60_ottaway_final.pdf, p. 1-2.

³⁷ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 105.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 106.

³⁹ Thomas Carothers. *Democracy Promotion During and After Bush*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from http://carnegieendowment.org/files/democracy_promotion_after_bush_final.pdf, p. 5.

Powell in the direction of vice-president Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who represented the more radical “hawkish” side of the administration.⁴⁰ This was important for future policies to develop as the radical wing around Cheney was open to persuade Bush into pursuing controversial and often counterproductive policies under the banner of democracy promotion.

Democracy promotion served as a part of the War on Terror that Bush waged (usually as reasoning and excuse to support President’s policies), and therefore the MENA region was one of the most influenced parts of the world. As Condoleezza Rice stated in 2005 at the University of Cairo “*for sixty years, the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy (...) and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspiration of all people.*”⁴¹ The idea behind the democracy promotion through the war in Iraq was that it would create a domino effect of democratization in the whole region.⁴² This idea, however, did not prove to be viable and after a few years this sort of democracy promotion started to be associated with “*costly war, the loss of thousands of lives of U.S. servicemen, the deaths of hundreds of thousands Iraqi citizens, and no satisfactory democratic outcome.*”⁴³

The problem of the Freedom Agenda that Bush administration constructed as a main democracy promotion policy concept was not democracy promotion itself, but its rather simplistic and narrow-minded application and execution. The strong rhetoric that often did not match reality inherently led people in the Arab world to see the democracy promotion as “a euphemism for forcible regime change”.⁴⁴ Also after facts and evidence discovered after Saddam Hussein was out of power directly contradicted the pre-war claims of the administration that the invasion would make USA safer, the democracy promotion narrative started to replace previous claims,⁴⁵ but at the same time, the U.S. was unable to secure safe and democratic system in Iraq. Therefore, these policies had significantly detrimental impact on perception of democracy as well as democracy promotion among the people in the region.

⁴⁰ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America’s Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 106.

⁴¹ quoted in Amaney A. Jamal. *Lost in the Middle East*, The Cairo Review of Global Affairs, September 16, 2014, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from:

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=259>.

⁴² John Mueller. War, democracy and peace, in Lindestad, Geir. *International relations since the end of Cold War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 78.

⁴³ Jan Hornát. Democracy Promotion: Competing Perspectives with Grave Consequences, p. 297.

⁴⁴ Marina Ottaway. *Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Restoring Credibility*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America’s Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 120.

Moreover, the policies of democracy promotion were inconsistent and selective in the same way as they were in the past.⁴⁶ While toppling Hussein and Taliban and pressuring Mubarak to reform, Bush maintained friendly relationship with Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf autocracies. Even the pressure conducted on the chosen countries was made inconsistently and often in connection with promised economic advantages, mostly free trade agreements. It is also important to mention the establishment of MEPI which, as mentioned earlier, was one of the three central components to the democracy promotion efforts under Bush. Funded by more than 400 million USD over six years of its existence during Bush presidency it had grand plans to support and promote democracy abroad by funding various types of activities such as civil society support and opposition funding. However, it did not gain as much publicity as other democracy promotion “achievements” of George W. Bush and remains unknown outside the group of the recipients of funding.⁴⁷ Thus, the MEPI project which might have been a good achievement remained shadowed by exaggerated rhetoric that did not match the reality and unsuccessful experiments in democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The Freedom agenda under Bush kept going almost for the whole time of his presidency although at the end his low approval rates combined with emerging economic crisis led to a downplay of the issue. Nevertheless, democracy promotion was a central concept of Bush’s foreign policy and as such it got significantly harmed in the eyes of many people not only in the MENA region.

1.2.2 Barack Obama and his Version of Freedom Agenda

When Barack Obama entered office, the American public as well as public worldwide expected great changes and new directions from the new president. In the field of foreign policy, Obama inherited number of disastrous situations, including two wars, and reputation of his country damaged on several different fronts. On the front of democracy promotion, the situation was difficult because of the reasons explained in the previous sub-chapter. Therefore, Obama and his foreign policy team decided to

⁴⁶ Marina Ottaway. *Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Restoring Credibility*, p. 1-2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

resurrect not only America's image abroad but also the image of democratization processes.⁴⁸

Obama did not have an easy job because he needed to affirm the role of democracy promotion as an important part of U.S. foreign policy while distancing himself from his predecessor who had damaged the reputation of the United States significantly. Therefore Obama started with much less polarizing rhetoric when giving his outreach-to-the-Muslim-world speech at the Cairo University where he said that "*no system of government can or should be imposed by one nation on any other.*"⁴⁹ However, despite being accused of returning to the foreign policy of realism, Obama did not give up on democracy promotion as he appointed several democracy promotion enthusiasts (e.g. Samantha Power and Tamara Coffman Witten) into important offices.⁵⁰

Also as Thomas Carothers argues, the assumption that the administration which will replace Bush should abandon democracy promotion because when applied by Bush it had disastrous outcomes is wrong on multiple levels, but mainly because Bush didn't really practice democracy promotion in full but only selectively.⁵¹ This approach is problematic on many different levels, but prominently it made the U.S. foreign policy and its democracy promotion component seem as only an excuse for pursuing hidden goals. Nevertheless, in broader terms democracy promotion was associated with policies of George W. Bush and therefore, Obama needed to make slow and cautious steps when engaging with MENA region in order to reestablish mutual trust and better relationships, which was very well visible in the case of Iran.⁵²

Simply said, Obama did not want to follow the policy of confrontation and wanted to negotiate through compromise rather than through forcefully imposing the United States values on other societies.⁵³ Unlike Bush, Obama wanted to promote democratization through development and giving people hope, thinking that terrorism and anti-Americanism stem from underdevelopment in the same way as it was seen during the Cold War when development was thought to be a method to contain communism.⁵⁴ This approach makes sense because people living in difficult conditions

⁴⁸ Thomas Carothers.. *Democracy Policy Under Obama: Revitalization or Retreat?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012, [downloaded on October 27, 2014] from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/democracy_under_obama.pdf, p.8.

⁴⁹ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 158.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 160

⁵¹ Thomas Carothers.. *Democracy Policy Under Obama: Revitalization or Retreat?*, p. 16.

⁵² Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 161.

⁵³ Thomas Carothers.. *Democracy Policy Under Obama: Revitalization or Retreat?*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 163.

are much more likely to fall for radical ideas that offer seemingly simple solutions to their problems. And in the MENA region during the Bush presidency, a lot of problems could have been directly attributed to American insensitive policies. For example the situation in Iraq after the U.S. invasion turned into a bloody insurgency that often bordered with full scale civil war and caused hundreds of thousands Iraqis to lose their lives and many more were forced to leave. Under such conditions it is not difficult to promote and implement anti-American ideas.

From the beginning of his presidency, Obama faced fierce criticisms for downplaying democracy promotion from the side of Republicans despite the fact that he actually did not make any major step to cut funding for democracy assistance or to accommodate authoritarian regimes any more than his predecessor did.⁵⁵ Although most criticism was unfounded (mainly because the Republicans were happy to criticize President Obama basically for every step he did), Obama's stance on democracy promotion was not very clear in the first months of his presidency. However, in the late 2009 the administration started to be more engaged in the issue of democracy promotion.⁵⁶

However, with the outburst of Arab Spring uprisings which actually brought the domino effect of democratization Bush desired, Obama could no longer pursue this gradual strategy but he was forced to quickly and consistently decide on the policy towards these unexpected and fast-moving situations. Unlike Iraq, in which Bush invaded Iraq on purpose using false evidence while disguising it as liberation and democracy promotion efforts, the Arab Spring was imposed on Obama unexpectedly and the president had no other choice than to support one or the other side. The situation was the more complicated as various American interests were included and often preserved by the old regimes and at the same time the President could not openly support authoritarian dictators against seemingly pro-democracy movements.

Regardless of what Barack Obama did as the President of the United States before the Arab Spring uprisings started, the democracy promotion record of his presidency will be judged almost exclusively upon the way he handled the Arab uprisings. And despite the fact, that there are several issues and questions when it comes to democratization of the MENA region, these uprisings were the first attempt of people of Arab countries to actually move towards more democratic societies. If Obama does not

⁵⁵ Thomas Carothers.. *Democracy Policy Under Obama: Revitalization or Retreat*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

handle the situation in pro-democracy way, he will probably be regarded as pragmatic realist who did not make sufficient efforts to help democracy to develop. As of the end of 2014, it does not seem that democracy will establish firm roots in the MENA region in the immediate future.

2. U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab Uprisings

In a foreign policy of a country, interests always play an important role. The more coherent and precisely defined the interests are, the more likely the county is to pursue them effectively. The United States have had a set of core interests in the Middle East that stay mostly unchanged since the end of World War II.⁵⁷ When the revolutions in the MENA region started to spread, the U.S. government needed to figure out quickly, how its core interests would be affected and what measures should be taken to preserve them while not compromising its international image of democracy supporter. This task proved to be difficult, and President Obama and his administration were often criticized for unclear, slow, and indecisive responses to the actions that were taking place in the MENA region.

In the following chapter, uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria will be briefly described from the beginning until October 2014 and assessed from the point of view of the U.S. foreign policy. The assessment will especially concentrate on the balancing between interests and democracy support. This is not to say that democracy support cannot be part of broader set of U.S. interest, however, it is often overweighed by other interests. Therefore, it is important to first identify the interests that the United States have in the MENA region.

At the same time it is necessary to assess the nature of protests in the MENA region that started in 2011. Western media were quick to label the demonstrations as struggle for democracy and this image later developed and was adopted by the U.S. government, at least judged by public appearances and speeches of the President and other foreign policy makers. However, the movements that revolted against authoritarian regimes were not homogenous. They consisted of people of different life experiences, different social background, and different perception of a role of religion in the society. This was actually one of the reasons why most of the regimes managed to maintain power for such a long time - they did not face homogeneous and persistent opposition (mostly because they managed to suppress it continually and intensely).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Aaron David Miller. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*. Foreign Policy, August 15, 2012, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/15/the_politically_incorrect_guide_to_us_interests_in_the_middle_east.

⁵⁸ Toby Dodge. *From the 'Arab Awakening' to the Arab Spring; the Post-colonial State in the Middle East*. The London School of Economics and Political Science, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

The movement demanding change in most of the rebelling MENA countries was spontaneous and therefore had no common constructive political cause. For example, documentary *The Square*, which maps lives of a few Egyptian revolutionaries throughout the protests, shows how these differences were initially set aside by common cause of removing the old regime.⁵⁹ There were real pro-democracy intellectuals, but also people who just wanted more socially stable lives without every day presence of corruption and police mistreatment. The disparity between the protesters is visible in the movie as well and is represented by the fear that the secular actors have of the Muslim Brotherhood and its future engagement in politics.⁶⁰ Similarly, the most famous story of the Arab Spring was about practical difficulties an average person had to face because of the authoritarian regime. Mohamed Boazizi, who set himself on fire and thus started protests in Tunisia, was frustrated about corruption and bad treatment he received from local police.

This is not to say, that the goals different people had in mind when protesting cannot be reached by establishing functional democratic system. The point is, however, that democracy itself would not guarantee those goals and therefore for most people democracy itself was not the primary goal. For example in Tunisia, for majority of people, economic prosperity was more important than democracy in 2012.⁶¹ Given that Tunisia was always one of the richer countries in the region, it shows that some other assets may be more important to people than democracy itself. On the other hand, “*transition from sclerotic, relatively-stable autocracies to more successful societies is certainly to be tumultuous and to risk many dangers*”⁶² and despite the fact that so far the Arab uprisings have not been successful (with the exception of Tunisia), this experience may contribute in favor of those seeking more democratic societies in the future.

http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR011/FINAL_LSE_IDEAS_fromTheArabAwakeningToTheArabSpring_Dodge.pdf

⁵⁹ *The Square*, movie directed by Jehane Noujaim, 2013.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Seth G. Jones. *The Mirage of the Arab Spring: Deal With the Region You Have, Not the Region You Want*. Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, January/February 2013, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138478/seth-g-jones/the-mirage-of-the-arab-spring>

⁶² Graham Allison, Nicholas R. Burns, Ashraf Hegazy, Joseph S. Nye, Stephen M. Walt "What Role Should the U.S. Play in Middle East?" *Belfer Center Newsletter*, Harvard University, Summer 2011, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/21022/what_role_should_the_us_play_in_middle_east.html?breadcrumb=%2Fproject%2F66%2Findia_and_south_asia_program

2.1 U.S. Interests in the MENA Region

There are basically three main reasons why the United States wants to stay engaged in the MENA region. Some of them are persistent and have been present for decades, some of them emerged as reaction to new threats and some of them have diminished over time as other threats disappeared.

When defining U.S. interests in the MENA region in May 2011, Barak Obama said: “*For decades, the United States has pursued a set of core interests in the region: countering terrorism and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, securing the free flow of commerce and safeguarding the security of the region, standing up for Israel's security, and pursuing Arab-Israeli peace.*”⁶³ When commenting on the same topic in 2013, the President stressed that the United states want to see stable, prosperous and democratic Middle East but at the same time acknowledged that it is not in U.S. abilities to force such changes.⁶⁴ However, both speeches combine interests that are vital for U.S. policy makers and interests that are not as important but declaring them makes better image.

One of the interests of crucial importance is certainly keeping Israel safe,⁶⁵ which has created a lot of animosities against Americans in the region. Despite the fact that under Obama the relationship has gone significantly colder, Israel is still the most prominent U.S. ally. However, there has gradually been more and more criticism claiming that the relationship is one-sided and does not provide any advantages to the United States anymore.⁶⁶ Historically, the United States managed to mediate peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and Jordan which were two of three biggest former enemies of Israel. Also, the U.S. commitment to keep Israel safe have sometimes conflicted with its other key interest which is energy security, more specifically uninterrupted flow of oil.⁶⁷

Energy security is probably the oldest interest maintained continually since the World War II up until present time. Earlier in the second half of 20th century, the United States along with Western Europe, were heavily dependent on the oil coming from the

⁶³ Aaron David Miller. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*.

⁶⁴ Jim Garamone. *Obama Describes Core US Interests in the Middle East*. American Forces Press Service, DoD News, U.S. Department of Defense [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120847>

⁶⁵ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination*, p. 18

⁶⁶ Aaron David Miller, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*.

⁶⁷ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda*, p. 18

Middle East, in 1955 90% of oil consumption in the U.S. came from this region.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that U.S. dependence on imported oil is decreasing, it is still very important for the United States to keep the regimes in the Persian Gulf stable.⁶⁹ The oil is also one of the reasons the United states often engaged in security and economic support of undemocratic regimes, for example Saudi Arabia or Iraq in the 1980s. It also took the United States to engage in military adventures in the region, most prominently the second war in Iraq.⁷⁰

Another important goal is to prevent terrorists from attacking the United States or its citizens.⁷¹ The MENA region is full of possible threats and instability in some parts of the region is often a prospective breeding ground for such threats to develop.⁷² This interest is closely connected to preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapon, because the United States fear it would use it to support terrorism or as a weapon against Israel, and is also one of the reasons why the United States seems to be suspicious about new political movements and parties in the region especially if they contain religious or Islamic component. This is not to say, that Islamic component automatically constitutes security risks but given experiences from post-war reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, Islamist groups are more likely to pursue anti-American goals sometimes even for understandable reasons.

As Hassan explains, U.S. interests in the region are expanding. There are economic interests in infrastructure and development projects⁷³ and also, since the administration of George W. Bush, assisting democracy in countries that have authoritarian regimes. As the number of interests grows, the more likely a conflict of these interests becomes, because safekeeping of oil interests in Saudi Arabia cannot possibly be merged with idea of democracy promotion. Because of its rhetoric and political traditions, the United States “cannot be, or appear to be, indifferent to an Awakening in which individuals are claiming rights our own revolutionary Constitution declares to be their endowment”⁷⁴ but at the same time there is no guarantee that if a new democracy or a MENA version

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 16

⁶⁹ Aaron David Miller. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*.

⁷⁰ Toby Craig Jones. *America, Oil, and War in the Middle East*. The Journal of American History, Oxford Journals, 2012, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/99/1/208.full>

⁷¹ Aaron David Miller. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*.

⁷² Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda*, p. 17

⁷³ Ibid., p. 18

⁷⁴ Graham Allison, Nicholas R. Burns, Ashraf Hegazy, Joseph S. Nye, Stephen M. Walt "What Role Should the U.S. Play in Middle East?"

of democracy establishes roots in any country that is important to the United States, that it will not turn against U.S. interests in the same way it happened with Iranian revolution which started as a promising democratic project but was latter hijacked by religious wing and turned into ante-Western theocracy.

2.2 Egypt

*"Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."*⁷⁵ The words of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton from January 25, 2011, show that U.S. Government has not been prepared to see one of its key allies in the MENA region stepping down. However, pressure from tens of thousands of Egyptians forced Hosni Mubarak to leave office in early February of that year. For the United States, Egypt was of vital importance not only because of its stabilizing role in relation to Israel, but also because of its large population and economic potential.⁷⁶ Therefore, since the signing of Egypt-Israel peace treaty, the government of Hosni Mubarak has been receiving big portion of U.S. foreign aid⁷⁷ for keeping those interests in place plus suppressing potential threat from the Muslim Brotherhood. Most of the aid went to support military budgets.

2.2.1 Egypt's Role in the U.S. Interests

Egypt wasn't always an unconditional U.S. ally as we know it today. In the years of Cold War, it had close relations with USSR, especially under president Nasser who pursued Soviet military support.⁷⁸ However, after Arab-Israel war in 1973, Egypt and its president Anwar Sadat realized that the United States will constitute the decisive power in the region for the time to come. Sadat applied policies to obtain Western and mainly U.S. military equipment and then placed Egypt on tack of pursuing peace deal with

⁷⁵ quoted in: *US urges restraint in Egypt, says government stable*, Washington, Reuters, January 25, 2011, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/25/ozatp-egypt-protest-clinton-idAFJOE70Q0KF20110125>

⁷⁶ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012, p. 142

⁷⁷ *Strengthening the U.S.-Egyptian Relationship (A CFR Paper)*, Council on Foreign Relations Press, May 2002, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.cfr.org/egypt/strengthening-us-egyptian-relationship-cfr-paper/p8666>

⁷⁸ Michael Scott Doran, *The Heirs of Nasser: Who Will Benefit From the Second Arab Revolution?* Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, May/June 2011, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67695/michael-scott-doran/the-heirs-of-nasser>

Israel. In doing so he advanced Egypt to the position of one of the U.S. top allies in the region.

As the most populous and most powerful of Israeli neighbors, ensuring peace between the two countries was a major step to ensure safety for Israel. In this context, the Egyptian political regime was the safeguard of peace, because the deal was not very popular with Egyptian public.⁷⁹ “*As a consequence, Israel and Egypt became subsequently the highest recipients of US aid. Combined, these two countries received almost 93 per cent of all annual funding to the region.*”⁸⁰ Keeping Israel safe is not the only reason for preventing another war between Israel and its Arab neighbor. It is also closely connected to another crucial U.S. interest which is uninterrupted flow of oil. Conflicts between any Arab country and Israel always brings almost all Arab countries together and these are rarely occasions when they are capable of cooperating and reach common goals. Similarly, after the last war in 1973, the oil embargo and subsequent economic shock followed when Arab countries pitched together to express their malcontent over the U.S. support of Israel.⁸¹

After the 9/11 and under President George W. Bush with his emphasis of democratic values, the U.S. relation with Egypt entered into the years of crisis and mutual mistrust. Bush increased funding for democracy assistance programs dramatically⁸² and his policies were supposed to support creation of civil society in Egypt. Democracy assistance efforts go back to the 1990s when U.S. agencies started to include democracy promotion into their programs through which they pursued establishment of more politically and socially engaged public.⁸³ But the regime was still receiving much more funding than democracy promotion activities. In exchange for the aid, U.S. government would receive almost unlimited military rights regarding Egyptian territory such as prepositioning of U.S. soldiers and military vehicles, almost unlimited overflight rights over Egypt, and expedited passage through Suez Canal, etc.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Dan Eldar. *Egypt and Israel: A Reversible Peace*. Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2003, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://www.meforum.org/565/egypt-and-israel-a-reversible-peace>

⁸⁰ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda*, p. 18

⁸¹ Jason Brownlee. *Democracy prevention: The Politics of the U.S. – Egyptian Alliance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 5

⁸² Erin A. Snider and David M. Faris. *The Arab Spring: U.S. Democracy Promotion in Egypt*. Middle East Policy, Fall 2011, Volume XVIII, Number 3, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/arab-spring-us-democracy-promotion-egypt>

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance” – A Conversation with Jason Brownlee. Project on Middle East Political Science, November 29, 2012, [downloaded on November

Even under Bush, who was dedicated to fight Islamic terrorism by promoting democracy all over the MENA region, Egyptian regime had a powerful argument why it is important for the United States to keep Mubarak in place. Muslim Brotherhood, illegal but still most prominent opposition force in Egypt, was regarded as a threat to region's stability.⁸⁵ On the other hand it is only fair to say that Mubarak regime was skillful in portraying the Brotherhood in this way ignoring the fact that Muslim Brothers were popular rather because of their social programs than because of mass inclination of Egyptian public to radical Islam. And finally, as Jason Brownlee points out, even under Bush, the pressure on Egyptian leadership to democratize and liberalize had only little to do with actual Egyptian domestic politics. According to Brownlee, almost every time such a pressure occurred, the U.S. government was following interest-based goals, mainly in connection to Israel-Palestine conflict, in particular maneuvering Egypt into supporting policies that favored Israel regarding border security and Hamas in Gaza.⁸⁶

Egypt still stays as one of the most important countries in the MENA region in respect to the interests of the United States and any radical changes on the political scene of Egypt may seriously compromise U.S. efforts in the region regarding safety of Israel, fighting terrorism and dealing with economic issues.⁸⁷ As it was shown, democracy promotion was never the main interest in Egypt because any big changes were just too risky regarding U.S. interests.

2.2.2 The U.S. Foreign Policy and the Uprising in Egypt

When Mubarak stepped down in early February of 2011, it was for the first time since 1979 that important U.S. ally was swept away by a popular movement.⁸⁸ The representatives of the uprising were not happy with just the removal of Mubarak; they also did not want to see Egypt being ruled by the same group of people only with Mubarak out of the picture.⁸⁹ The Egyptian revolution, however, ended in exactly this

17, 2014] from: <http://pomeps.org/2012/11/29/democracy-prevention-the-politics-of-the-u-s-egyptian-alliance-a-conversation-with-jason-brownlee/>

⁸⁵ *Strengthening the U.S.-Egyptian Relationship (A CFR Paper)*

⁸⁶ Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance" – A Conversation with Jason Brownlee.

⁸⁷ Michelle Dunne, "Egypt: From Stagnation to Revolution," in *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East: The Obama Administration's Policies*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 72.

⁸⁸ Jason Brownlee, *Democracy prevention*, p. 2

⁸⁹ Ibid.

way when the power was taken by the military and the new president Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, who continues to rule and enjoys U.S. support.

General notion in U.S. foreign policy in the MENA region in last few decades has been the support for autocratic regimes even against public of their own countries. However, if the pressure was too strong to keep the allied regime in force, the United States would be ready to change sides.⁹⁰ This way, Mubarak's time in power has come to its end as he was no longer supportable. Unlike other leaders in the region, Mubarak was directly dependent on the support of Egyptian army and the United States and when those two main allies turned their backs on him, he had no other choice than to step down.

However, removing Mubarak was only the first step because people demanded more than just a cosmetic change and the United State was, at least temporarily, forced to venture into unknown waters. President Obama hoped that with military still staying intact and being able to act as a mediator, Egypt will go onto the path of gradual democratization, but he also feared that if elections of new president take place too soon, it would be too favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹¹ Before Mubarak stepped down, the United States was trying hard to ensure the transition of power was as gradual as possible and without any abrupt and unexpected turns.⁹² Obama stressed this notion in his speech from February 2, 2011, where he said that the change in Egypt must be meaningful, peaceful and orderly.⁹³

From the beginning of the whole Arab Spring uprising, the Obama administration was divided into two opinion groups one of which favored democratic transition on more idealistic basis while the other pursued more realistic approach and was unsure about quick and possibly dangerous changes. The first group included Susan Rice, Samantha Power or Tamara Coffman Wittes all appointed by President Obama and wanted to make sure that democracy promotion was not going to be downplayed in his administration.⁹⁴ The other group around Vice-President Biden, Secretary of State

⁹⁰ Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance" – A Conversation with Jason Brownlee.

⁹¹ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," p. 146

⁹² Ibid., p. 147

⁹³ *Obama says Egypt's Transition 'Must Begin Now'*. CNN, February 2, 2011, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/02/01/us.egypt.obama/>

⁹⁴ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda*, p. 160

Clinton and other older politicians did not want to abandon Mubarak without having clear plan for what is going to be the future of Egypt.⁹⁵

Hillary Clinton explains the dilemma in her book *Hard Choices*: “*It’s easy to give speeches and write books about standing up for democratic values, even when it may conflict with our security interests, but when confronted with the actual, real-world trade-offs, choices get a lot harder.*”⁹⁶ President Obama was rather favorable of the first group of policy makers and it was one of the reasons why the pressure on Mubarak to leave his office was so unexpectedly quick. Clinton also voiced traditional concerns that should follow after an abrupt change in leadership. These concerns included the fact that the only organized opposition group was the Muslim Brotherhood, possible instability or rise of radical Islam. At the same time she notes that “*free and fair elections would be necessary, but not sufficient. Functioning democracies require the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a free press and civil society, respect for human rights, minority rights, and accountable governance.*”⁹⁷

Shortly after Mubarak lost power temporary sitting President Tantawi came into office along with Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) with declared goal to prepare Egypt for democratic transition towards new Constitution and elections. From the U.S. point of view, the most important thing was that the new rulers decided to keep Egypt’s international commitments despite the fact that Egyptian public opposed some of those, such as guaranteeing peace deal with Israel.⁹⁸ After all, SCAF did not represent any major change when compared to Mubarak and Egyptian public started to grow impatient. New waves of protests against military rule broke out and intensified in autumn 2011. Despite statements about need for gradual change towards democracy that were coming from White House, the U.S. government did little to pressure the military to give up the power.

At this time of the revolution, the U.S. government started to establish contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood⁹⁹ as the Obama administration realized that this movement may play decisive role in the post-Mubarak transition period. The

⁹⁵ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 2014, p. 335

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 337

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 340

⁹⁸ Jason Brownlee, *Democracy prevention*, p. 163

⁹⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: A Victim of its Own Success? *Middle East In Focus*, Middle East Policy Council, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.mepc.org/articles-commentary/commentary/muslim-brotherhood-egypt-victim-its-own-success?print>

administration realized that there might be no other way to maintain influence on Egypt without cooperation with the Brotherhood. The parliamentary elections that took place for weeks showed that they were right as the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated party took almost half of the seats in the Parliament's lower house. The success of Islamists was even more prominent as Salafis took another quarter of seats.¹⁰⁰ This success was later confirmed when Mohamed Morsi became the first democratically elected Egyptian president ever in June 2012.

Morsi's presidency, however, did not bring Egypt to stability or advanced it towards democracy and ended in a military coup about a year later. When in power Morsi was accused of disrespect to human rights and accumulation of power. The Brotherhood grabbed power hard and showed little interest in negotiating their choices with other political powers which obviously led to great mistrust between the President and other actors in Egypt and abroad.¹⁰¹ This led people to come to the streets and protest again.

Despite many conspiracy theories about the Obama administration being infiltrated by Muslim Brotherhood and even many Egyptians perceiving that the United States supports Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood was never regarded as an American ally and cooperation between those actors was rather cold.¹⁰² On the other hand Obama and his team respected the position of the Brotherhood in Egypt and were aware of the fact that there is no way towards democracy in Egypt without active and constructive participation of this political and social force. There was even a moment of close cooperation when Morsi helped negotiate truce between Hamas and Israel, a moment that led people in Washington to believe that "*his pragmatism would outweigh his ideological preferences.*"¹⁰³

The relationship between Obama administration and Mohamed Morsi and his government was complicated. There was a little public communication about the issue on the U.S. side. Moreover, during anti-American protests, that took place across the

¹⁰⁰ *Egypt's Islamist parties win elections to parliament.* BBC News Middle East, January 21, 2012, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16665748>

¹⁰¹ John Esposito, *Egypt: Difficult Challenges for US policymakers post-Arab Spring.* Middle East Monitor, June 1, 2013, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/guest-writers/6166-egypt-difficult-challenge-for-us-policymakers-post-arab-spring>

¹⁰² Marc Lynch, *Downfall in Cairo.* Foreign Policy, July 3, 2013, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/07/03/morsy_military_coup_egypt_us_obama

¹⁰³ Ibid.

MENA region following release of US-made anti-Islamic film, Obama said: “*I don't think we would consider them an ally, but we don't consider them an enemy. They are a new government that is trying to find its way.*”¹⁰⁴ This statement may seem exaggerated from the leader of the country that supports Egypt with all kinds of foreign aid given the fact that Egypt did not change its policies concerning the United States in any major way. Jason Brownlee explained Obama’s remark as aimed at president Morsi rather than on Egypt in general. Brownlee then continues to explain that U.S. government has no problem in supporting religious based government (like Saudi Arabia), but the fear is rather in expressions of nationalism and independence.¹⁰⁵

Despite Obama’s statement from September, however, U.S. maintained connection and relations with Egypt and its new government also because while there were disturbing changes taking place inside Egypt, Morsi’s government did not make any moves to counter U.S. interests in the region, which he demonstrated by the mentioned cooperation on the Gaza conflict in September 2012.

Even with Morsi in power, the Egyptian military was not put aside and there was still clear division of power between civilian government and the military¹⁰⁶ which could have been another reason why Morsi’s moves on domestic scene did not cause as much outrage as they could have. The fact that the military is not out of power even though Morsi tried to diminish its influence was demonstrated clearly when after a few days of popular protests and riots, Morsi was ousted, put in jail and the military took control again. In his reaction, President Obama voiced concern over military’s action¹⁰⁷, but did not take any steps to put real pressure on Egyptian new leaders to continue democratic transition.

At this time, policy making circles in Washington were defined by lack of consensus on what the next steps in Egypt should be. While the U.S. military considered

¹⁰⁴ *Obama: Egypt not an ally of US, but not an enemy.* NBC News, September 12, 2012, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:
http://firstread.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/09/12/13836414-obama-egypt-not-an-ally-of-us-but-not-an-enemy?lite

¹⁰⁵ Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance” – A Conversation with Jason Brownlee.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Statement by President Barack Obama on Egypt.* Office of The Press Secretary, The White House, July 3, 2013, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/03/statement-president-barack-obama-egypt>

Egypt an important strategic ally,¹⁰⁸ and therefore preferred the situation with Egyptian military in control, democracy promotion enthusiasts from the first Obama administration criticized the President for not putting pressure on Egyptian military. Tamara Wittes and Amy Hawthorne both called for suspension of the military aid stating that Egypt was on the track to a new military dictatorship.¹⁰⁹ Former officials also described the frustration that was present in the Department of State over lack of coherence of U.S. policies in Egypt.¹¹⁰

Surprisingly for many interested actors, President Obama decided to suspend the military aid for Egypt in the fall of 2013 but only to restore it in July 2014. Despite the fact that the suspension did not really achieve any significant action in terms of democratization¹¹¹, it definitely showed Obama's dedication to at least try helping possible democratic changes in Egypt. However, given the importance of Egypt, the United States could not really afford antagonizing new Egyptian leadership, mainly because stability of Egypt is central to keeping U.S. interests in this country and the region.

Obama's approach to Egypt showed two things. Firstly that his administration was actually quite open to the gradual process of democratization in Egypt which it demonstrated by cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood and even by temporary suspension of the military aid, however cosmetic and inefficient it has been, and secondly, U.S. approach also showed that stability of Egypt (currently represented by the military) is the cornerstone of the U.S. approach. The arguments of democracy promotion supporters that democracy and respect for human rights are the only things that can keep the region stable in the long-term perspective¹¹² might certainly be right, but in order to achieve the desired stability the transition process has to be gradual.

U.S. security interests in Egypt cannot be set aside by democracy promotion. Even Amy Hawthorne, an advocate of more enthusiastic democracy promotion approach

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy M. Sharp. *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relation.*, Congressional Research Service, June 5, 2014, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ John Hudson. *Former Obama Admin Officials Turn On U.S. Egypt Policy*. Foreign Policy, August 16, 2013, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

[http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/08/16/former obama adminOfficials turn on us egypt policy?wp_login_redirect=0](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/08/16/former_obama_adminOfficials_turn_on_us_egypt_policy?wp_login_redirect=0)

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Getting US Policy Right in Egypt: Where Does Democracy Promotion Fit?* Atlantic Council, January 23, 2014, video [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/events/past-events/getting-us-policy-right-in-egypt-where-does-democracy-promotion-fit>

states that “(... *concerns about democracy (...) are not going to drive the relationship, and the United States will not walk away from Egypt.*”¹¹³ Also, despite public image in some MENA region countries, the United States is not omnipotent and cannot always achieve the exact outcome it desires for and the situation in Egypt demonstrates that clearly. Despite the fact that President Obama and his administration tried to pull strings to aid democratic transition, stability of Egypt was much more important to them and thus when reaching the limits of influence they had over the events, the U.S. government gave preference to stable, even if authoritarian renewed military rule.

2.3 Libya

*“The United States also strongly supports the universal rights of the Libyan people. That includes the rights of peaceful assembly, free speech, and the ability of the Libyan people to determine their own destiny. These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country. And they cannot be denied through violence or suppression.”*¹¹⁴ President Obama’s remarks on Libyan uprising that started in mid-February 2011 represent a general rhetorical narrative that U.S. government observed throughout all Arab Spring uprisings. Despite the fact that in case of Libya the United States were in much easier position than in Egypt mainly because Qaddafi was disliked not only in the U.S. foreign policy apparatus but also among Arab countries and even among most of usual U.S. critics,¹¹⁵ the United States executed rather hesitant policies without clear and sound objectives which after initial success of Qaddafi’s removal from power led to eventual significant decrease of U.S. activity in Libya.

2.3.1 Libya’s Role in the U.S. Interests

The story of Libya regarding U.S. interests is a much different story than Egypt as Libya does not occupy important role, nor does it have any significant asset like

¹¹³ Amy Hawthorne. *Getting Democracy Promotion Right in Egypt*, Rafik Hariri Center For the Middle East, Atlantic Council, January 2014, [downloaded on November 17, 2014] from:
http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Hawthorne_Getting_Democracy_Promotion_Right_in_Egypt - Jan 2014.pdf

¹¹⁴ Jesse Lee. *President Obama Speaks on the Turmoil in Libya: „This Violence Must Stop.“* The White House Blog, February 23, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/02/23/president-obama-speaks-turmoil-libya-violence-must-stop>

¹¹⁵ Shibley Telhami. *Libya Action in U.S. National Interest*. Brookings, March 28, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/03/28-libya-telhami>

strategic location or huge amounts of oil. Therefore, the United States have no vital interests in Libya,¹¹⁶ plus unlike Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Qaddafi was never in a position of a U.S. ally and although he normalized relations with the United States when President Bush was in office, he was never even close to earn a position of an important ally.¹¹⁷

Even during the debate on what to do about raging civil war in Libya “*senior officials, notably the national security adviser, Thomas E. Donilon, have made it clear that the United States does not view Libya as a vital strategic interest.*”¹¹⁸ On the other hand, the fact that the United States had no vital strategic interests allowed them to pursue regime change a play a role of democracy promoter to its full scale at least at the beginning of the conflict.

The fact that Libya does not play an important role regarding U.S. interests does not mean that it is not regionally and economically important country. Instability in Libya caused multiple problems for neighboring Mali, and vast and unoccupied desert regions may serve as perfect terrorist hide-out and cause subsequent spread of militant activities over Libya.¹¹⁹ Also economically, Libya produces significant amount of oil, specifically 1, 6 million barrels a day before the revolution and about half of this amount as of the end of 2014.¹²⁰ However, Libyan oil was not used by American companies because they found the environment of Qaddafi regime to unpredictable and unfriendly while European companies seemed to be more successful.¹²¹ Generally speaking, European powers, especially France, Great Britain and Italy, had more important interests to guard in Libya than the United States which was visible on the much fiercer and decisive reaction to Qaddafi attacks against the rebel groups and protests.

¹¹⁶ Graham Allison, Nicholas R. Burns, Ashraf Hegazy, Joseph S. Nye, Stephen M. Walt. "What Role Should the U.S. Play in Middle East?."

¹¹⁷ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 159.

¹¹⁸ Anthony Shadid. *Libyan Forces Rout Rebels as West's Effort for No-Flight Zone Stalls*. The New York Times, March 15, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/africa/16libya.html? r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/africa/16libya.html?r=0)

¹¹⁹ Chris Stephen. *US expresses fears as Isis takes control of northern Libyan town* . The Guardian, December 6, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/06/us-fears-isis-nothern-libya-derna>

¹²⁰ *A Sticky Problem*. The Economist, November 1, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21629484-warring-factions-quietly-co-operate-keep-up-oil-exports-it-may-not-last>

¹²¹ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 159.

Another important thing for the United States regarding Libya was its leader. Colonel Muammar Qaddafi was in power for more than four decades, a majority of which he spent as U.S. enemy and unlike his Egyptian counterpart he never came really close to being U.S. ally. However, for the Bush administration, limited cooperation with Qaddafi was understandable, as he limitedly helped fighting Al-Qaeda because Libyan jihadists were enemies to his regime.¹²²

One of the main points of conflict between Qaddafi and the USA were Libya's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and when in 2003 the dictator announced that he will dispose of them and welcomes international inspections it was a big surprise and Libya has been since then portrayed as an example of voluntary disarmament.¹²³ It is difficult to define which Qaddafi's motivations were, but his decision suspiciously coincides with U.S. led removal of Saddam Hussein. If it was really so, it can be only seen as a bitter irony given how Qaddafi himself later ended his term in office.

2.3.2 U.S. Foreign Policy and the Uprising in Libya

With no crucial interests at stake and rather complicated history of the relationship, the Obama administration was much freer and had much less to lose when reacting to the Libyan uprising than in the case of Egypt. However, the President proved not to have proper, coherent, and conceptual strategy in terms of MENA region policies.¹²⁴ Another important difference was visible from the beginning of the Libyan conflict, namely the fact that the American government pursued multilateral solution and response to the situation reason for which was the fact that they had no vital interests and thus could afford making compromises on the multilateral basis.¹²⁵

The uprising against Muammar Qaddafi started on February 18, 2011 in Benghazi that became a stronghold of resistance for the months to come. As the protests were gaining on strength and Qaddafi's response gained on violence, President Obama clarified the U.S. position on March 3, 2011, when he said that Qaddafi has to go, but

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Kelsey Davenport. *Chronology of Libya's Disarmament and Relations with the United States*. Arms Control Association, February 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/LibyaChronology>

¹²⁴ Daniel W. Drezner. *Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?* Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, July/August 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67919/daniel-w-drezner/does-obama-have-a-grand-strategy>

¹²⁵ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 160,165.

U.S. policies shall be coordinated on the bases of multilateral consensus.¹²⁶ Few days later, however, Qaddafi's forces launched massive and successful counter offensive which increased the pressure in the international community to react to the situation by imposing a no-fly zone, official reason being protection of civilians.¹²⁷

As the pressure to intervene in Libya mounted, Obama's administration experienced once again a division of opinions on how fierce the response should be. Issues discussed included arguments that the United States cannot ignore struggle of Libyan people for democracy and stay on the side made by John Kerry and Hillary Clinton, while others, namely Robert Gates argued that it is not the best time to get involved in another war overseas.¹²⁸ Moreover, the public opinion was not much in favor of U.S. involvement in Libya. According to Pew Research Center for People & the Press, only 27 % of Americans thought their country had a responsibility to do something about Libya fighting and also a strong majority opposed any military involvement of the U.S.¹²⁹ Obama was also afraid that military intervention with a capacity to instigate a regime change might compromise the uprising in the eyes of world public making it look like American fabrication rather than spontaneous popular movement.¹³⁰

Unlike hesitation in the U.S. foreign policy apparatus, eagerness and proactive approach to counter Qaddafi were present among leaders on the other side of Atlantic, namely in France and Britain. David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy were the loudest advocates of the military involvement of NATO in Libya.¹³¹ European eagerness to act was not surprising given that historically and economically, Europeans had much more interests at stake, for example Libyan production of oil was crucial for many European countries including Great Britain and France.¹³² Although the support for military

¹²⁶ Massimo Calabresi. *Obama Refines Talk of Libya Intervention*. TIME, March 4, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0.8599,2057191,00.html>

¹²⁷ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 161

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ *Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya: Broad Concern that U.S. Military is Overcommitted*. Pew Research Center for People & the Press, March 14, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.people-press.org/2011/03/14/public-wary-of-military-intervention-in-libya/>

¹³⁰ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 161.

¹³¹ Dominique Moisi. *France had a duty to intervene in Libya*. The Guardian, March 23, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/23/france-libya-sarkozy>

¹³² *Relying on Libya*. Economist Online, February 25, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/02/libyan_oil

solution of Libyan crisis was coming from multiple sides including 22 Arab nations, Obama was still very hesitant to act.¹³³ However, the events on the battleground and imminent massacre of civilians in Benghazi pushed the American government to authorize military based measures, despite a division among its own policy makers.¹³⁴

On March 17, 2011, resolution 1973 was passed, establishing no-fly zone, imposing arms embargo and most prominently authorizing Member States to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and thus basically enabling military intervention. However, there was no remark on possible regime change or Qaddafi removal.¹³⁵ For President Obama the resolution meant two things, first he had to continue the process of justification of yet another American military involvement in the MENA region, but it was made easier by Qaddafi's violence, the fact that there was actually a surprisingly broad consensus on the resolution, and the fact that the majority of the operations was supposed to be taken by European NATO allies. He also emphasized that America cannot afford to stand aside when atrocities endangering peace and stability are taking place.¹³⁶ Second issue arising from the new situation was a combination of domestic factors and divided administration on the issue. Hillary Clinton recalls that as nobody could really anticipate what outcome the war and possible regime change could bring, the options how exactly proceed with the military power were broad and decision was difficult to make especially in the context of many different opinions on the matter even within the administration itself.¹³⁷

Apart from internal disputes, Obama faced fierce criticism from both sides of political spectrum with arguments either saying he is being too soft not assuming leadership in the operation or saying that the United States should ease on their activity in the operations.¹³⁸ On the other hand, Obama's rhetoric activities were often contradictory, because while speaking about limited U.S. involvement to protect

¹³³ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 162

¹³⁴ Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 365

¹³⁵ *UN security council resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya – Full Text*. The Guardian, March 17, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/17/un-security-council-resolution>

¹³⁶ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 163

¹³⁷ Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 367

¹³⁸ James Zogby. *Obama faces fire from both sides in Libyan intervention*. The National, MArch 27, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.thenational.ae/the-national-conversation/comment/obama-faces-fire-from-both-sides-in-libyan-intervention>

civilians, he still pursued the idea that Qaddafi has to go.¹³⁹ On the domestic front Obama got into even more trouble widening the gap between supporters and critiques of the approach when he decided not to pursue Congressional approval for the Libya mission.

As NATO bombing continued and eventually managed to play a decisive role in favor of rebel forces, more questions arose. NATO was criticized for not sticking to the boundaries of the resolution and actually pursuing the regime change rather than just protecting civilians.¹⁴⁰ This suspicion actually seriously damaged the achieved consensus and served as a negative sign for China and Russia later when discussing intervention in Syria in 2012 and how to deal with increasing instability in Iraq.¹⁴¹

The military actions lasted for about six months, much longer than the administration had expected.¹⁴² From the U.S. perspective it may be called a successful move as the dictator was removed and massacres of civilians mostly prevented with no Americans losing their lives, spending only of 1, 1 billion dollars and all of this under broader international consensus.¹⁴³ Even though Obama's strategy was a bit pejoratively nicknamed as leading from behind,¹⁴⁴ in the first stage, the United States achieved what they wanted overseeing their allies and partners in doing so which may be considered an efficient strategy. However, the democracy promotion in Libya as broader concept was just beginning as Qaddafi's removal was necessary in the process of democratic transition but later proved to be insufficient when not followed by comprehensive building of new order.¹⁴⁵

The United States constantly supported the interim Libyan government that came to power as rebels were gaining ground but that was subsequently unable to secure stable system in the country.¹⁴⁶ However, from the end of the revolution up until

¹³⁹ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 164

¹⁴⁰ Šéf OSN brání NATO před kritikou libyjské operace. Oficiální portál Informačního centra o NATO, December 15, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: http://www.natoaktual.cz/na_media.aspx?c=A111215_191727_na_media_m02

¹⁴¹ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 165

¹⁴² Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 370.

¹⁴³ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 165, 166

¹⁴⁴ Rya Lizza. *Leading from Behind*. The New Yorker, April 26, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/leading-from-behind>

¹⁴⁵ Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 370.

¹⁴⁶ Christopher M. Blanchard. *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*. Congressional Research Services, September 8, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33142.pdf>, p. 1.

September 2012, the United States was assisting Libya not only economically, but also providing assistance with elections and security issues.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, even at this time Libya was not on the list of U.S. top priorities. Since 2011, the United States have spent about 240 million dollars in assistance to Libya, most of which was spent as humanitarian assistance during the conflict itself.¹⁴⁸ When compared with Egypt, where the yearly numbers of U.S. assistance goes into billions each year, it is visible that Libya was not as important to the United States by far. Also, after the fighting ceased, Libya slowly disappeared from newspaper headlines and statements by Administration representatives were also on decline.

Libya came back to the top of the attention once again on September 11, 2012, when a terrorist attack killed U.S. Ambassador to Libya and three other U.S. nationals. This major blow into American position in Libya later turned to be decisive point for the future engagement. The Obama administration got under immense public and opposition pressure for not acting to prevent loss of American lives and Benghazi became a top issue in the press and politics for weeks to come and every now and then it pops back up even as late as 2014.¹⁴⁹ The immense pressure that the administration experienced because of the terrorist attack led to subsequent decrease in U.S. activity in Libya,¹⁵⁰ although foreign financial aid has increased significantly since 2012.¹⁵¹

The increase in money spent on Libya, however, does not relate to democracy promotion and institution building but rather to security issues which are the only possible interest that the United States may currently have in Libya as fighting broke out in multiple locations in 2013 and 2014.¹⁵² Moreover the Department of State identified Libya as one of possible terrorist safe havens due to the weak government and increased activities of various terrorist groups.¹⁵³ To illustrate how unimportant to the United States a democracy promotion in Libya has been in 2013 and 2014, it is important to

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Government Assistance to Libya. U.S. Department of State, April 15, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.state.gov/s/d/met/releases/198354.htm>

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Steve Holland, Patricia Zengerle. *Benghazi: The issue that lives on, and on, and on*. Reuters, May 6, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/06/us-usa-obama-benghazi-idUSBREA450TX20140506>

¹⁵⁰ Christopher M. Blanchard. *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*. p. 9.

¹⁵¹ Data taken from:

http://www.foreignassistance.gov/web/OU.aspx?OUID=304&FY=2011&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab_Bud_Spent&tabID=tab_sct_Peace_Disbs

¹⁵² Christopher M. Blanchard. *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*. p. 3-9.

¹⁵³ Chapter 5: *Terrorist Safe Havens (Update to 7120 Report)*. Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, 2013, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224828.htm>

look on amounts of money spent on democracy assistance in these years. In 2013 the amount was 0,8 million dollars, in 2014 even less than 0,5 million dollars.¹⁵⁴ Compared to Egypt with its current military rule that received over 17 million dollars in democracy assistance money and more than 600 million in total in 2013, the Libyan figures are self-explanatory.¹⁵⁵

Democracy promotion in Libya may have seemed as something extra at the beginning of the uprising, something that will not endanger U.S. interests which were almost none, but at the same time may be taken as multilateral action while supporting democracy building image of the United States. On the other hand, with Qaddafi out of the picture, problems inside Libya spreading quickly, and domestic pressure because of the Benghazi attack, the Obama administration had no rational reason to keep pursuing unsure and possibly lasting for many years project of committing greater amount of resources for democratization of the country that has no real potential to become a crucial ally in the future.

2.4 Syria

Out of all Arab Spring uprisings, Syria is by far the most horrifying, tragic and bloody. The conflict between President Assad and revolutionaries have caused about 200 000 deaths and more than 3 million of people to leave their homes causing humanitarian catastrophe that has no match in recent years.¹⁵⁶ The Syrian conflict also stepped out of the line by the usage of extremely violent practices on both sides that included such atrocities as mass beheadings or torturing of children.¹⁵⁷ In Syria, Obama's hesitation to act was much more visible and destructive than in previous cases and in spite of much more complicated circumstances than in previous cases, Barack Obama did not manage to keep coherent line of goals and at least try to fulfill them.

¹⁵⁴ Data taken from:

http://www.foreignassistance.gov/web/OU.aspx?OUID=304&FY=2014&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab_Bud_Spent&tabID=tab_sct_Peace_Disbs

¹⁵⁵ Data taken from

http://www.foreignassistance.gov/web/OU.aspx?OUID=165&FY=2013&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab_Bud_Spent

¹⁵⁶ *Quick facts: What you need to know about the Syria crisis.* MercyCorps, August 29, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.mercycorps.org/articles/turkey-iraq-jordan-lebanon-syria/quick-facts-what-you-need-know-about-syria-crisis>

¹⁵⁷ Renee Lewis. *UN Report condemns torture, sexual abuse of Syrian children.* AlJazeera America, February 5, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/5/un-report-condemnsunspeakableatrocitiesagainstsyrianchildren.html>

2.4.1 Syria's Role in the U.S. Interests

Syria's case and its position in the U.S. interests is far the most complicated. Despite being labeled as an enemy for long years, the regime of Assad family was very skilled in balancing different interests and managed to stay on the edge of strategic partnership with Iran and activities seeking to accommodate some of the U.S. interests.¹⁵⁸ On one side of the coin, there are activities and policies that Syrian regime pursued that countered American interests like strategic partnership with Iran, supporting Hezbollah and Hamas, and still being at war with Israel.¹⁵⁹ On the other side of the coin, there are hard facts that put Syria as a country into an important position in U.S. interests. Because of its central location in the region, stable Syria was crucial to maintain stability in neighboring countries, the best demonstration of which is current instability (as for November 2014) that threatens Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and parts of Turkey because of massive refugee flow, threat of radical Islamists, and overall humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place in Syria.¹⁶⁰

Even before the war started, the Syrian regime was a key player in tempering with stability in neighboring Lebanon which it militarily occupied since 1976 till 2005 and after that intervened frequently using its foremost Lebanese ally, the Shiite group Hezbollah. In general, the Syrian regime was very skillful in balancing different political influences and pressures. When Bashar Al-Assad came to power in 2000 following his father's death, expectations in the United States were high in terms of possible liberalization and democratization of Syria and indeed Assad really started mild and mostly economic liberalization but it was later abandoned and the regime kept its firm grip on the country.¹⁶¹

Despite Assad's open alliance with Iran and support for Hezbollah, the Obama administration was willing to engage in economic cooperation just before the start of the uprising.¹⁶² This shows that Syrian regime was no ostracized, isolated dictatorship in the corner. Bashar is not as skilled politician as his father was, but he evidently still realized how important his country is in the regional context and understood that as long as he

¹⁵⁸ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 167-168.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 166-168.

¹⁶⁰ Fred Dews. *Syria's Refugee Crisis Threatens Regional Stability*. Brookings, February 23, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/02/syria-refugee-crisis-threatens-regional-stability>

¹⁶¹ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 166-168.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 169

can balance different influences while keeping the country stable, his reign will not be over.

As complicated as Syrian conflict has been so far, new threats to U.S. interests have arisen in the course of the conflict. Among those threats, a few were of a great concern to the U.S. government, mainly rise of various Islamists groups and most recently ISIS that spread to Syria from Iraq, alleged use of chemical weapons by Assad's forces and humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented scale.¹⁶³ However, the security questions always prevailed in the debate over the initial democracy promotion ideas, which is visible on the approach international community decided to take against ISIS that presented itself as number one security threat.

In general terms and in relations to U.S. interests, Syria is somewhere in the middle between Egypt and Libya. Similarly to Libya, there were no important U.S. interests before the uprising started in the country itself because the regime did not cooperate with U.S. goals like for example Mubarak in Egypt, it does not possess any oil, and it is not important trade destination for U.S. businessmen.¹⁶⁴ However, unlike Libya, Syria, thanks to its central location, constitute a strategically important player in relation to Israel and to various groups that are considered terrorist in the United States. Similarly, stability in Syria is crucial for stability in neighboring country, especially the more fragile ones, namely Lebanon and Iraq.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, if approached conceptually from the beginning, the Syrian uprising had great potential to serve U.S. interests largely by getting rid of non-cooperative dictator while supporting pro-democracy movement and creating friendlier country in the heart of this important region. Therefore at the beginning of the uprising, Syria "*represented a rare case in which American interests and values coalesced.*"¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Mary Beth D. Nikitin. *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*. Congressional Research Services, September 17, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf>, p. 14,17,23.

¹⁶⁴ Kenneth M. Pollack. *An Army to Defeat Assad: How to Turn Syria's Opposition Into a Real Fighting Force*. Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, September/October 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141848/kenneth-m-pollack/an-army-to-defeat-assad>

¹⁶⁵ John Calabrese. *The Regional Implications of the Syria Crisis*. Middle East Institute, December 21, 2012, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.mei.edu/content/regional-implications-syria-crisis>

¹⁶⁶ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 173.

2.4.2 The U.S. Foreign Policy and the Uprising in Syria

“We have more difficult circumstances than most of the Arab countries but in spite of that Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people. This is the core issue. When there is divergence between your policy and the people's beliefs and interests, you will have this vacuum that creates disturbance.”¹⁶⁷

This is an extract from interview given by Syrian President Assad to the Wall Street Journal on January 31, 2011 and given the follow-up events it is only a bitter irony that from one of the most stable countries in the region, Syria has come to the most chaotic and unpredictable war mess.

The Syrian uprising came less than two months after Assad’s statement about stability and it had different pattern than revolutions in Egypt and Libya as it came from peripheries to the center.¹⁶⁸ Also Assad’s exaggeratedly violent reactions were repeatedly followed by promises to reform and discuss Syria’s future with opposition.¹⁶⁹ However, given the brutality of Assad’s armed forces and anger and hatred initiated by such a reaction, the dialogue with Assad still in office became less and less likely to happen. In fact, Assad’s reaction to the protests were so brutal that even his closest allies, Iran and Hezbollah representatives, urged him to “respond to legitimate demands of Syrian people ‘as soon as possible.’”¹⁷⁰

In the initial stage of the Syrian revolution, the United States refrained from using any kind of hard power and only condemned actions of the Syrian regime. President Obama on multiple occasions condemned violence on both sides, and as the conflict gained on intensity, the President went on to impose new wave of sanctions on Assad and other regime representatives.¹⁷¹ However, it took Obama five months to call for Assad’s resignation, a timeframe unseen in the revolutions in Libya and Egypt, where the President was always quick to ask the dictators to leave.¹⁷² Administration officials

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Wall Street Journal, January 31, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

<http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703833204576114712441122894>

¹⁶⁸ Martin S. Andyk et al. “The Arab Awakenings,” *Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy*, p. 170.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 170-171

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 172

¹⁷¹ Steven Lee Myers, Anthony Shadid. *U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Syrian Leader and 6 Aides*. New York Times, May 18, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/world/middleeast/19syria.html?_r=0

¹⁷² Obama calls on Syria’s Assad to step aside. AlJazeera, August 18, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/08/2011818125712354226.html>

explained this delay by “concern that the Syrians could depict such a step as evidence that Assad’s removal was being engineered by Washington.”¹⁷³

The situation considering American hesitation to talk about Assad’s removal is even weirder given how quick and eager the United States was to remove Qaddafi who ruled a country with no U.S. interests being at stake while Syria, if nothing else, was close Iranian ally in the regionally important strategic area. The main reason for this approach was that the United States did not have as many tools that could serve as leverage as they had in Libya.¹⁷⁴ From the military perspective, Syrian army was considered a strong adversary especially in connection with their allies from Iran and Hezbollah, plus there was no consensus among UN Security Council permanent members, as Russia and China were backing Assad. Finding consensus was difficult even among countries in the MENA region despite the fact that Arab leaders were unhappy about Assad’s alliance with Iran, they were afraid of consequences a military intervention in Syria could have in broader regional context. Using sanctions was also impossible as there already were comprehensive sanctions in place¹⁷⁵, and most importantly, unlike in Libya, Syrian rebels did not want U.S. intervention.¹⁷⁶

In order to be fair to Obama and his administration, it is important to stress that there were internal issues complicating the decision making process. The biggest issue was and still is the Syrian opposition itself because from the beginning of the uprising it has been disorganized, unpredictable and internally divided. Even two years into the uprising, in 2013, it still lacked coherent and clear leadership.¹⁷⁷ Such a situation obviously increased a danger of various violent or even terrorist groups to gain ground in a very confusing and chaotic environment. Similarly, Syrian Christians voiced concerns about the safety of their future in case Assad is removed from power.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Jason Ukman, Liz Sly. *Obama: Syrian President Assad must step down*. The Washington Post, August 18, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington/post/obama-syrian-president-assad-must-step-down/2011/08/18/gIQAM75UNJ_blog.html

¹⁷⁴ Martin S. Andyk et al. “The Arab Awakenings,” *Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Eli Lake. *Syria Rebels don’t want U.S. aid, at least for now*. The Washington Times, March 27, 2011, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/mar/27/syrian-rebels-dont-want-us-aid-at-least-for-now/?page=all>

¹⁷⁷ Yezid Sayigh. *The Syrian Opposition’s Leadership Problem*. Carnegie Middle East Center, April 3, 2013, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/04/03/syrian-opposition-s-leadership-problem>

¹⁷⁸ Martin S. Andyk et al. “The Arab Awakenings,” *Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy*, p. 173.

By the end of 2011, international peace efforts started to take place. Arab League observes are allowed into the country in December 2011 but suspend their mission because of dangerous conditions and Arab League asked the UN Security Council to back its attempts to achieve peace in Syria.¹⁷⁹ International community, however, did not send Assad signals that his actions are condemned globally and throughout most of UNSC he enjoyed almost unconditional support of Russia and China.¹⁸⁰ On the domestic front, President Obama started to experience mounting pressure from the Republican Party at the beginning of 2012.¹⁸¹ At the same time special envoy Kofi Annan was appointed by the UN and Arab League to negotiate settlement between the fighting parties.¹⁸²

The debate over intervention, various peace plans, air strikes and other measures that could have been taken to stop bloody conflict in Syria went on for months without almost any practical results. It does not serve any purpose to discuss chronologic list of more or less important failures that did not achieve intended purpose. To understand the dynamics of American foreign policy concerning Syria it is important to look at two issues that arose in the course of the conflict. Firstly, it is the question of chemical weapons and secondly it is the ISIS issue that came to existence in summer 2014. The way U.S. foreign policy dealt with those issues is in my opinion instructive in determining how interests and idea of democratization interfere with each other even in cases where there is almost no disparity between the two.

The chemical weapons issue came to the spotlight in 2013 when Assad's military allegedly used them against civilians, although Obama has brought up the issue of chemical weapons as soon as August 2012, when he spoke about chemical weapons use being the red line for possible military intervention.¹⁸³ When a year later, the chemical weapons were actually used, the President backed from his previous statement. The truth is that UN investigation team remained silent on who was responsible for the chemical attack while Assad claimed they were used by rebels, and that after negotiation with Russia, the deal was secured on destruction of Syrian chemical

¹⁷⁹ Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 452.

¹⁸⁰ *Syria Profile*. BBC Middle East News, September 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>

¹⁸¹ Josh Rogin. *Conservatives Call for Obama to Intervene in Syria*. Foreign Policy, February 17, 2012, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/17/conservatives-call-for-obama-to-intervene-in-syria/>

¹⁸² Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Hard Choices*, p. 453.

¹⁸³ Robert Farley. *Obama's Blurry Red Line*. FactCheck.org, September 6, 2013, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.factcheck.org/2013/09/obamas-blurry-red-line/>

weapons,¹⁸⁴ but the whole issue was just another proof that Obama was extremely reluctant to instigate the regime change in Syria. Moreover, U.S. insecurity about chemical weapons was solved as well because their destruction would prevent terrorist groups from obtaining them as well as Assad from using them.¹⁸⁵

U.S. intervention in Syria, however, was destined to come anyway. Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, as known as ISIS, came to the spotlight of the Western media in June 2014 when it captured Iraqi cities of Mosul and Tikrit and even though the group was present in both Iraq and Syria much longer, it was the summer of 2014 when it launched its successful military but mostly information, propaganda, and marketing campaign.¹⁸⁶

Information about atrocities, beheadings and enslaving of people base on religion or ethnicity flooded Western media. The media campaign of ISIS concentrating on violence and shocking videos of beheadings of American and British citizens achieved in less than three months what seemed almost impossible for the past three years. In September, the United States started to carry out air strikes against ISIS' positions in Syria. The President announced intention to strike against ISIS in Iraq and later Syria by saying that terrorists who threaten America will find no safe haven.¹⁸⁷ However, Obama spent most of his speech explaining how it is not a real war and only limited involvement, distancing this military effort from previous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁸⁸ The air strikes against ISIS are still in progress as for now (November 2014) so it is impossible to judge how efficient or useful they will turn out to be in broader context, it is, however, unlikely that they would be sufficient to defeat the militants without any organized ground force.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ *Syria Profile.*

¹⁸⁵ Kate Pound Dawson. *Obama: Syria's Use of Chemical Weapons Is Threat to US Interests.* Voice of America August 30, 2013, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-syrian-government-launched-chemical-attack/1740454.html>

¹⁸⁶ *ISIS Fast Facts.* CNN Library, CNN, November 17, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/isis-fast-facts/>

¹⁸⁷ Dan Roberts, Spencer Ackerman. *Barack Obama authorizes air strikes against Isis militants in Syria.* The Guardian, September 11, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/10/obama-speech-authorise-air-strikes-against-isis-syria>

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Patrick Cockburn. *Air strikes will not beat Isis, but on the ground it's hard to tell friend from foe.* The Independent, September 24, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/air-strikes-will-not-beat-isis-but-on-the-ground-its-hard-to-tell-friend-from-foe-9754119.html>

ISIS was also the first Syrian issue in more than three years that led American government to seriously discuss options of arming moderate Syrian rebels.¹⁹⁰ Although there were attempts to provide assistance to fight Assad, the Obama administration did not pursue it for multiple reasons, mainly because of uncertain outcome, fragmentation of opposition and the risk that the arms may actually end up in the hands of possible terrorists.¹⁹¹ There were some efforts to support Syrian rebels even before the rise of ISIS, however, they were limited and not targeted well enough and was often non-lethal.

The idea of the Obama administration was to arm moderate rebels but in the environment that was created in Syria over three years of fighting, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between individual groups and to determine which group would be at least partially open to share the views of the United States while a lot of commentators actually believe that there is no such force that would share American views of what should Syria look like after Assad is gone.¹⁹² The United States has made some progress with cooperation with opposition since May 2014 when they recognized Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) a later started considering support of Syrian Military Council (SMC), but the two organizations were getting into disputes often and there was no clear leadership structure in the SMC.¹⁹³

The issue of Syria is extremely complex and complicated and as for the late 2014, the prospects for future development are not great with parts of Syria controlled by different forces, namely Assad and his allies, ISIS, Kurdish forces and then multiple different opposition groups. While there is probably no future for Syria with Assad in power, there is currently no group with sufficient support both internal and external, organization and project for what to do with Syria in the future to actually be an alternative to the previous regime.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Julian E. Barnes, Adam Entous, Carol E. Lee. *Obama Proposes \$500 Million to Aid Syrian Rebels*. The Wall Street Journal, June 26, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-proposes-500-million-to-aid-syrian-rebels-1403813486>

¹⁹¹ Mark Mazzetti. *C.I.A. Study of Covert Aid Fueled Skepticism About Helping Syrian Rebels*. The New York Times, October 14, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/us/politics/cia-study-says-arming-rebels-seldom-works.html?_r=0

¹⁹² Michael Pizzi. *Question for Obama's Syria Plan: Who are the moderate rebels*. Aljazeera America, October 2, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/10/2/syria-moderate-rebels1.html>

¹⁹³ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Mary Beth D. Nikitin. *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, p. 5, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Ghazi Dahman. *Are the Western allies looking for alternatives to Assad?* Middle East Monitor, September 13, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/14105-are-the-western-allies-looking-for-an-alternative-to-assad>

Regarding the U.S. foreign policy, the Syrian uprising and then civil war showed that importance of security threats in connection with domestic public opinion is much more important than humanitarian crisis and possible war crimes. Obama was reluctant to do anything about Syria even after chemical weapons were used but when publicly supported strike against ISIS came up he did not hesitate to authorize them.¹⁹⁵ What is ironic about the whole situation is that strikes against ISIS might at the end of the day actually help Assad in his fight with the opposition if they are not followed with consistent measures and plan to solve Syrian crisis.¹⁹⁶

President Obama showed that democracy promotion in Syria is not his priority even despite the fact that initially it could have actually served American interests in the region. Even though the United States exercised some pressure on the Syrian President they did not make any real effort to push him hard enough so that he would give up his office but when a supposed security threat of ISIS came to the spotlight, Obama took steps that may actually be beneficial for Assad and his regime. However, to be fair to Obama we only have to repeat what was mentioned earlier that Syrian case is extremely complicated, Syrian opposition extremely fragmented, and the situation highly unpredictable and given American public animosities to military campaigns in the MENA region and Obama's overall concentration on domestic issues, we have to conclude that President's position was not an easy one.

¹⁹⁵ David V. Kearns. *Attacking ISIS: Military Force, U.S. Public Opinion and the Long War on Terrorism*. Huffington Post, September 23, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-w-kearns/attacking-the-islamic-state_5868712.html

¹⁹⁶ Robert Fisk. *Syria air strikes: America's attack on Isis may help Bashar al-Assad keep his regime alive*. The Independent, September 23, 2014, [downloaded on December 6, 2014] from:
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-air-strikes-americas-attacks-on-isis-may-help-bashar-alassad-keep-his-regime-alive-9751776.html>

3. The Patterns and Features of the U.S. Foreign Policy Regarding the Arab Uprisings

The U.S. foreign policy regarding uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria has several common features that influenced the outcome of U.S. participation in the conflict greatly. Most of the common features may also be applied to the broader context of the MENA region, although each country has its specific issues that make it unique.

President Obama has been considered a politician that concentrates on domestic issues. Since his first election campaign in 2008 the foreign policy has been considered his weakest point that has earned him a lot of criticism.¹⁹⁷ President's policies proved to be rather domestic-oriented and Obama became to be seen as a Jeffersonian kind of isolationist President.¹⁹⁸ However, when the President took office in 2009, he had plenty of visions of how to improve U.S. foreign policy assets in the world. Unfortunately, these visions conflicted greatly with his inner realism and desire to have coherent foreign policy.¹⁹⁹

Obama's visions of friendlier approach to the Muslim world and Arab countries which he outlined in his famous Cairo Speech in 2009,²⁰⁰ was complicated by the outburst of uprisings in this part of the world which created a completely new reality and brought Obama's administration to the often mentioned conflict of interests and democratic values.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and explain these features and uncover patterns that guided the Administration of President Obama to pursue the respective policies. First, the general pattern of U.S. foreign policy approach will be examined and then common features will be outlined and explained.

¹⁹⁷ Clinton: Obama is naive on foreign policy. NBC NEWS, November 16, 2007, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: http://www.nbcnews.com/id/19933710/ns/politics-the_debates/t/clinton-obama-naive-foreign-policy/

¹⁹⁸ Walter Russell Mead. *The Carter Syndrome*.

¹⁹⁹ Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth B. Lieberthal, Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive Pragmatist Tries to Bend History*, Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations, May/June 2012, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137516/martin-indyk-kenneth-lieberthal-and-michael-eohanlon/scoring-obamas-foreign-policy>

²⁰⁰ Obama's Speech in Cairo, The New York Times, June 4, 2009, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

3.1 Security, Security, Security – The General Pattern

Given the events that took place in Egypt, Libya and Syria as they were outlined in the previous chapters, it is visible that security interests were the main driving force behind most of the major decisions.²⁰¹ This is not to say that Obama administration did not at some stage of the uprisings pursue the ideas of democracy promotion. On the contrary, in each of the cases, there was a moment when pro-democratization steps were taken. In the case of Egypt, it was unexpectedly quick pressure to force Hosni Mubarak to step down,²⁰² and later the cooperation with newly elected Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi. In Libya, the United States militarily supported opposition forces against Qaddafi, and in Syria there were attempts to find and support opposition groups that would be moderate enough to be acceptable for the U.S. foreign policy.

On the other hand, in each of the cases, there were specific security oriented interests which at some point overshadowed the desire for democracy support. In Egypt, it was the mere fact that instability in Egypt would endanger number of U.S. interests, such as safekeeping of Israel.²⁰³ Therefore, when Egyptian military stepped in as a stabilizing force against President Morsi, the United States silently accepted the coup.²⁰⁴ In Libya, the security issue that led the United States to downplay the democracy promotion was the Benghazi terrorist attack which caused the Administration to reconsider its engagement in Libya.²⁰⁵ In Syria, the security threat of ISIS encouraged President Obama to authorize airstrikes against this militant Islamic group, in spite of the possibility that attack against ISIS might be beneficial for Syrian President Assad.²⁰⁶

The general pattern is clear. First, the United States rhetorically supports the undergoing democratic transition and exercise pressure to encourage such a transition. However, later, as events develop, the Obama administration would decrease the pressure on democratic transition or lower its engagement in the process due to specific security oriented reasons. The amount of pressure exercised in order to boost

²⁰¹ Maria do Céu de Pinho Ferreira Pinto. *Mapping the Obama administration's response to the Arab Spring*, Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0034-73292012000200007&script=sci_arttext

²⁰² Obama says Egypt's Transition Must Begin Now'.

²⁰³ Michelle Dunne, "Egypt: From Stagnation to Revolution," in America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East:

The Obama Administration's Policies, p. 72.

²⁰⁴ Sahar Aziz. *U.S. Foreign Aid and Morsi's Ouster*. Middle East Institute, July 31, 2013, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.mei.edu/content/us-foreign-aid-and-morsis-ouster>

²⁰⁵ Christopher M. Blanchard. *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*. p. 3-9.

²⁰⁶ Robert Fisk. *Syria air strikes: America's attack on Isis may help Bashar al-Assad keep his regime alive.*

democratic transition as well as security reasons for retreating from the initial position depend on two aspects.

First, it is importance of each country with respect to the U.S. interests in the region. In Egypt, which is crucial for U.S. interests,²⁰⁷ the United States was reluctant to risk any hasty steps that could endanger stability of the country. It was only by diplomatic pressure and cooperation that the United States exercised their will in the country. On the other hand, in Libya, where no vital U.S. interests were present,²⁰⁸ Americans were willing to risk military intervention that poses more threats regarding possible future instability of the country. In the case of Syria, the relative unimportance of the country (or rather complicated relationship with the regime) was represented by Obama's reluctance to act more decisively against Syrian President Assad.²⁰⁹

Second, it is U.S. ability to achieve its goals in each country. Thus in Egypt, the United States had the biggest leverage as the regime of Hosni Mubarak was partially dependent on the U.S. financial and military support.²¹⁰ Unlike Mubarak, Qaddafi was much more independent as his regime did not rely solely on foreign support, thus the United States did not have sufficient leverage to diplomatically pressure Qaddafi to step down. On the other hand, unlike Assad in Syria, the Libyan dictator did not have any powerful allies that would back him against the intervention of the international coalition. This means that the United States could pursue military action against Qaddafi by successful diplomatic campaign in the United Nations while in Syrian case Assad was always backed by Russians and Chinese.²¹¹

The interest-based thinking in the U.S. foreign policy is visible in one more feature. It is the lack of future prospects for the democracy promotion in the less strategically important countries. As it was mentioned in the previous chapters, democracy promotion may have different types and use different tools. While in Egypt the United States exercised cautious approach in order not to trigger destabilizing

²⁰⁷ *Strengthening the U.S.-Egyptian Relationship (A CFR Paper)*

²⁰⁸ Graham Allison, Nicholas R. Burns, Ashraf Hegazy, Joseph S. Nye, Stephen M. Walt. "What Role Should the U.S. Play in Middle East?"

²⁰⁹ Juliet Eilperin, David Nakamura. *Obama ready to strike at Islamic State militants in Syria, he tells policy experts*. The Washington Post, September 9, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-prepared-to-order-airstrikes-in-syria-as-part-of-strategy-against-islamic-state/2014/09/09/058199e2-3834-11e4-bdfb-de4104544a37_story.html

²¹⁰ Sahar Aziz. *U.S. Foreign Aid and Morsi's Ouster*.

²¹¹ Ian Black. *Russia and China veto UN move to refer Syria to international criminal court*. The Guardian, May 22, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/22/russia-china-veto-un-draft-resolution-refer-syria-international-criminal-court>

forces, in Libya the military action was taken without further consideration of its possible destabilizing effects.²¹² Destabilizing effects of U.S. foreign policy were visible in Syria as well, however, in this case it was caused rather by the inability to either find broader consensus or to take unilateral steps to support one party or the other.

3.2 Strategy of Not Having a Strategy – Features of the U.S. Foreign Policy

It would be inaccurate to say that the United States managed to pursue policies exactly according to their interests. On the contrary, the Arab Spring showed that “*no longer does the US have the prestige and resources to dominate Middle East affairs to the degree it had.*”²¹³ Obama administration was often criticized for the lack of strategy and coherent approach to the Arab uprisings. However, the approaches to each of the cases had three similar features that appeared almost every time a major decision was about to be taken.

First, it was exaggerated rhetoric used by President Obama and his Administration’s foreign policy makers.²¹⁴ Using strong statements that were followed by hesitant implementation became typical for U.S. foreign policy regarding Arab uprisings. In all the three cases, President Obama appeared frequently when the uprisings started stating that the United States will support aspirations of local people for more democratic societies, however, in reality the Obama administration failed to pursue these aspirations all the way to the end. The most significant moment in this context was the famous Red line speech when addressing Syrian chemical weapons.²¹⁵ In general, Syrian conflict was the most significant in terms of the gap between declared goals and actual policies. President Obama declared support to the rebels on multiple occasions which he did not later fulfilled as shown in the previous chapter.

Second, decisions regarding foreign policy making regarding Arab uprisings were highly influenced by public opinion in the United States. This influenced mainly conflicts in Libya and Syria, because in Egypt, the possibility of direct military

²¹² Timothy Akexander Guzman. *Chaos in Libya: How the US-NATO War Destabilized North Africa and Now Threatens Europe*. Centre for Global Research on Globalization, May 17, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/chaos-in-libya-how-the-us-nato-war-destabilized-north-africa-and-now-threatens-europe/5382675>

²¹³ Allen L. Keiswetter. *The Arab Spring: Implications for US Policy and Interests*. Middle East Institute, January 13, 2012, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.mei.edu/content/arab-spring-implications-us-policy-and-interests>

²¹⁴ Martin S. Andyk et al. “The Arab Awakenings,” p. 165.

²¹⁵ Robert Farley. *Obama’s Blurry Red Line*.

intervention was never discussed and therefore the topic did not become as polarizing from the point of view of the U.S. public. Therefore, Americans generally approved of Obama's strategy not to interfere in Egyptian affairs especially at the time of military coup that removed president Morsi.²¹⁶ In Libya, the public opinion crucially influenced the U.S. post-Qaddafi engagement in the country when the terrorist attacks in Benghazi caused huge discussion and criticism of the administration. In reaction to that the Obama administration tuned down its presence in assisting Libyan government in other than security issues.²¹⁷ In Syria, American public was against the strikes by quite overwhelming majority even in autumn 2013 when the chemical weapons issue was discussed.²¹⁸ However, when videos of decapitations committed by ISIS flooded the western media, Americans started to see this group as a threat to U.S. security and more than two thirds actually supported the idea of military action.²¹⁹

Third, it is Obama's concentration on domestic issues. Barack Obama ran for President on the platform of Change for the United States, on the platform of changing some important aspects of the system like healthcare and immigration laws, and most importantly on the platform of distancing himself from his predecessor.²²⁰ As President Bush junior was associated with costly wars and strong commitments for U.S. military in the Arab World and surrounding regions, Obama could not easily pursue similar policies that were in hot water with American public for quite some time. President's reluctance to create new commitments for the U.S. military are visible in his speeches advocating air strikes in Libya and against ISIS where he strongly stresses the fact that all military engagement is limited and does not constitute a new war for the United

²¹⁶ Chris Callizza. *What does the American public want in Egypt? Not much.* The Washington Post, August 15, 2013, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/08/15/what-the-america-public-wants-in-egypt-not-much/>

²¹⁷ Emily Swanson. *Benghazi Poll Finds More Disapprove Than Approve Of Obama's Handling Of Attack Aftermath.* The Huffington Post, October 5, 2013, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/10/benghazi-poll_n_3255403.html

²¹⁸ Paul Steinhauser, John Helton. *CNN poll: Public against Syria strike resolution.* CNN International, September 9, 2013, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:
<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/09/politics/syria-poll-main/>

²¹⁹ James M. Lindsay. *American Public Support for Air Strikes Against ISIS Grows.* Council on Foreign Relations, September 9, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:
<http://blogs.cfr.org/lindsay/2014/09/09/american-public-support-for-air-strikes-against-isis-grows/>

²²⁰ Jeff Zeleny. *As Candidate, Obama Carves Antiwar Stance.* The New York Times, February 26, 2007, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/26/us/politics/26obama.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

States.²²¹ Another factor that contributed to Obama's reluctance when dealing with Arab uprisings was his foreign policy inexperience for which he was a frequent target during his first presidential campaign.²²² Before taking office, Obama had never worked on anything related to the real foreign policy making focusing mainly on domestic issues and legal matters, be it in his legal practice or his career as a Senator.

Because of the above stated reasons the approach of the Obama administration to the Arab uprisings lacked coherent strategy and especially in the countries of lower interest to the United States, this led to significant downplay of democracy promotion efforts. In general, it is not possible to expect that even if having a proper strategy, the United States would abandon their vital interests for the sake of democracy promotion in countries like Egypt or Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the existence of coherent and thought-out approach could have made a difference in the case of Libya and especially in the case of Syrian civil war. The mere fact that Obama changed his strategy in Syria twice shows to significant amount of ambiguity in the Administration policies.²²³

²²¹ Dan Roberts, Spencer Ackerman. *Barack Obama authorizes air strikes against Isis militants in Syria*.

²²² Michael Cooper. *McCain Sharpens His Foreign Policy Attacks on Obama*. The New York Times, June 3, 2008,

[downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/us/politics/03mccain.html>

²²³ Obama seeks review of Syria strategy, sees Assad removal as necessary: CNN. Reuters, November 12, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/13/us-mideast-crisis-obama-syria-idUSKCN0IX03T20141113>

Conclusion

The Arab uprisings that started in December 2010 in Tunisia and spread across the whole region brought unexpected challenges for the foreign policymakers of the United States. The region of Middle East and North Africa experienced unprecedented changes, although in some cases it was just in the form of attempts for such changes. At the end of 2014, it is safe to state that massive democratization as expected at the start of uprisings did not take place with only Tunisia being more or less successful case of democratization.²²⁴ On the other hand, big countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Iran maintained mostly unchanged status quo with only Egypt having come through 2 years of turmoil before returning back to military based regime that characterized it before the uprising started. Last group of uprisings is represented by countries that came into chaos and anarchy as a consequence of the uprisings. Libya managed to oust its former dictator, but did not manage to find stability, and currently the country is struggling with multiple security threats including danger of radical Islam. In Syria, the success of the uprising did not even come as far as in Libya, with President Bashar Al-Assad still in power and full scale civil war raging all over the country causing humanitarian crisis and regional spillover of the conflict.²²⁵

In the history of the MENA region, the United States of America has played an important international role for decades. The U.S. influence was often decisive in regional conflicts and its support has been crucial for number of authoritarian regimes in the region. Despite the fact that the U.S. influence and image in the MENA region has gone through difficult phase under previous administration of President George W. Bush, they still had a great deal of potential to significantly influence the outcome of the uprisings.²²⁶

In the foreign policy of the United States there was always a great deal of conflict between democracy promotion and strategic interest-based stability promotion. Especially in the MENA region the U.S. government frequently ignored their declared democratic values and did not hesitate to support authoritarian regimes if their

²²⁴ *The Relative Success of Tunisia: A light unto the Arab Nations.* The Economist, October, 25, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21627622-tunisia-works-it-fragile-rest-world-should-give-it-hand-light-unto>

²²⁵ Daniel L. Byman, Kenneth M. Pollack. *The Syrian Spillover.* Foreign Policy, August 10, 2012, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/08/10/the-syrian-spillover/>

²²⁶ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda: Democracy and Domination.* p.146.

representatives were willing to secure vital security, strategic, and other interests.²²⁷ Since the engagement of the United States in the MENA region started after World War II, the main U.S. interest was the energy security, in particular an uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf countries.²²⁸ Thus the United States offered support to dictators in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other oil rich Persian Gulf countries. Later on, new issues appeared among the top U.S. interests in the region like the safekeeping of Israel, countering of Islamic terrorism. The number of interests is constantly increasing and it is more and more likely that some of these interests may conflict with one another.²²⁹

When the Arab uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria broke out, President Obama had a difficult position as he had to react under different circumstances considering multiple threats but at the same time address the fact that there is a movement for democratic change in this part of the world. Unfortunately, President Obama and his administration did not manage to apply coherent strategy that would somehow match the pro-democracy stance with U.S. interests but rather presented the picture of the United States losing its once prominent influence over the region.²³⁰

Despite the strong rhetoric applied by President Obama, the United States did not manage to pursue the democracy promotion to the successful end in any of these countries. In Egypt, initial pressure on President Mubarak and success of the uprising made it seem that the United States are willing to support the popular movement. This notion was later strengthened when Obama administration pursued limited cooperation with Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi who was not considered as a likely U.S. partner. However, increasing protests, instability, and uncertain goals of Muslim Brotherhood leadership led to military coup by General Abdel Fatah El-Sisi which took Egypt basically to the same situation it was before the uprising started. Despite the leverage the United States could have used to pressure the new regime to open door for the new wave of democratization, Americans silently accepted the new reality and were unwilling to risk any further instability in a country of such vital importance for their interests in the region.²³¹

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 18

²²⁸ Aaron David Miller. *The Politically Incorrect Guide to U.S. Interests in the Middle East*.

²²⁹ Oz Hassan. *Constructing America's Freedom Agenda*, p. 18

²³⁰ Allen L. Keiswetter. *The Arab Spring: Implications for US Policy and Interests*.

²³¹ Elliott Abrams. *What Relationship with the United States Does Sisi Want?* Council on Foreign Relations, November 6, 2014, [downloaded on December 17, 2014] from: <http://blogs.cfr.org/abrams/2014/11/06/what-relationship-with-the-united-states-does-sisi-want/>

In Libya, the United States initially pursued pro-democracy stance by pressure to remove Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi. At the same time, the complete lack of security or strategic interests in the country enabled them to pursue multilateral solution of the problem. An international coalition was authorized by the UN Security Council to take necessary measures to protect civilians against the Qaddafi forces. The decisive support the coalition provided the rebels with led to removal of Colonel Qaddafi and establishment of new government. Unfortunately, democracy promotion activities on the part of the United States came to an end after terrorist attack in Benghazi in September 2012 when public outrage and political criticism forced Obama administration to refrain from the most of the activities it exercised in Libya. Unlike in Egypt, no vital U.S. interests were at stake here, thus Obama could afford to use more extreme tools of democracy promotion but backed off when security threat turned public opinion against the engagement in Libya.²³²

The worst case of U.S. foreign policy reluctance, however, appeared in Syria. The raging civil war and humanitarian crisis that struck the whole region has already cost tens of thousands of civilian lives and created number of new security threats. Paradoxically at the beginning, U.S. interests could have been easily merged with democracy promotion and support of forces opposing Syrian President Assad.²³³ However, in the case of Syria, reluctance of U.S. government to act against the Syrian dictator was the most evident feature of the U.S. foreign policy. Despite the strong rhetoric that President Obama used when speaking about Syrian conflict, he was not willing to militarily support rebelling forces despite horrible atrocities and also alleged use of chemical weapons by the regime. Like in the other two cases, in the end, it was the security interests that forced the United States to actually take action. This time it was the Islamic militant group ISIS.

In general, the pattern of U.S. foreign policy towards uprisings in Libya, Syria and Egypt was characterized by initial enthusiasm for democracy promotion that was later restricted due to security interests. This pattern was largely influence by several factors, namely U.S. domestic public opinion, the fact that there was a significant gap between rhetoric and actual policies, and President Obama's concentration on domestic issues and inexperience with foreign policy.

²³² Christopher M. Blanchard. *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*.

²³³ Martin S. Andyk et al. "The Arab Awakenings," *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, p. 173.

It is difficult to determine, whether proper and coherent strategy would make much difference regarding the outcome of uprisings in discussed countries, however, for the United States the Arab Spring was a unique chance to support democratic tendencies in countries with basically no democratic history. On the other hand the Arab uprisings showed that creating functioning democratic society is not just a matter of removal of the old regime and that there are plenty of issues in each of the countries that severely complicate possible democratic transition. One thing, however, is clear. The United States under President Obama certainly made some limited effort to boost democratic tendencies in the Arab world. On the other hand, in general and long-term perspective, the United States obviously chose to go with maintenance of their interests and made the democracy promotion seem as an extra option that could be abandoned in any time when it may be convenient for pursuing vital strategic and security interests.

Souhrn

Diplomová práce *Americká zahraniční politika a povstání v Egyptě, Libyi a Sýrii* se zabývá konfliktem mezi podporou demokratizačních tendencí a strategickými a bezpečnostními zájmy v zahraniční politice Spojených států ve vztahu k revolucím, které na počátku roku 2011 vypukly v Egyptě, Libyi a Sýrii. Dále se práce zabývá tím jaké postupy a nástroje pro podporu demokratizace nebo strategických zájmů Spojené státy zvolily a jakým způsobem svůj postoj veřejně prezentovaly. Práce je rozdělena na tři hlavní části, přičemž první z nich se zabývá obecným vymezením podpory demokratizace v rámci americké zahraniční politiky a jejího konfliktu s ochranou důležitých amerických zájmů. Druhá a rozsahově nejdelší část se zabývá průběhem povstání v jednotlivých státech s důrazem na postup zahraniční politiky Spojených států. Třetí kapitola pak na základě dvou předchozích vyjmenovává a vysvětluje základní systémové znaky přístupu administrativy Baracka Obamy ke zmíněným povstáním a hledá faktory, které toto jednání zásadním způsobem ovlivnily. Práce byla zpracována s použitím převážně novinových článků a expertních komentářů, neboť vzhledem k aktuálnosti tématu není tato problematika ještě zcela zpracována v rámci odborných publikací. Dále byly použity americké oficiální vládní zdroje, analýzy a projevy politiků. Na základě výše uvedeného byly vyvozeny následující závěry. Americká zahraniční politika ve vztahu k revolucím Arabského jara v Egyptě, Libyi a Sýrii se ve všech třech případech projevovala velkým rozdílem mezi deklarovanou a reálnou politikou. Z jednání Spojených států ve vztahu ke zmíněným událostem je možné vyzvat konkrétní vzorec přístupu, kdy v počátečních fázích byly podniknutы kroky, kterými se americká vláda snažila vyjádřit podporu demokratizačním krokům, následně ale ve všech případech převážil určitý bezpečnostní zájem, který vedl k částečnému nebo úplnému opuštění podpory demokratizačních aktivit. Ochota Spojených států podnikat riskantní kroky ve prospěch demokratizačních tendencí byla také přímo ovlivněna důležitostí konkrétní země ve vztahu k zásadním americkým zájmům v regionu.

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