

Arab spring media perception assignment



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Introduction The Arab Spring (literally the Arabic Rebellions or the Arab Revolutions) is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests that has been taking place in the Arab world since December 18th, 2010. Prior to this period, Sudan was the only Arab country to have successfully overthrown dictatorial regimes, in 1964 and again in 1985.

To date, there have been revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt; a civil war in Libya; civil uprisings in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen; major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman, as well as on the borders of Israel; and minor protests in Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara. This research paper will focus on the recent uprisings in Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and Morocco. The revolutions in the Middle East countries aim at attaining freedom and building up a democracy.

It is of great interest to nations worldwide to observe how and when they attain freedom and whether they are able to successfully run the country. Media has played a very significant role in the projection of these issues and in shaping public opinion. Media of all countries are covering it, forming different perspectives. The intent of this study is to analyze all the different sides of the story media has been managed to portray. The focus of this paper will be on the media perspective of three different regions-US, Britain and Arab.

This study includes the analysis of editorials to explain the stand of newspapers of every region and will also look at the prominent role played by social media. 1. Arab Spring: The Revolutions and Its Impact The ‘ Arab Spring’ refers to the revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests that

begun in the Arab world since December 2011. ‘ Arab Spring’ may also be referred to as the “ Arab Awakening” or “ Arab Uprisings”. So far demonstrations in two countries have yielded successful results: Tunisia and Egypt.

Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia on 14 January following the Tunisian revolution protests, and in Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak resigned on 11 February 2011, after 18 days of massive protests, ending his 30-year presidency. The most recent waves of demonstrations that swept the Arab world have been in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. These are the countries where revolts have received the maximum coverage from the media. A summary of the media coverage of the protests in these countries as well as those in Morocco have been given below. Syrian Uprising of 2011 The Syrian revolution is known for its bloody nature. It is the most violent of all the revolutions in the Arab world with the death toll reaching over 1, 500. In Syria, protests began in January 2011, and by March 2011, took the proportions of an uprising. The uprising in Syria has been described as “ unprecedented. ” Like the revolutionary movements in Tunisia and Egypt, it has taken the form of protests of various types, including marches and hunger strikes, as well as vandalism of government property and rioting of shops.

The Syrian administration led by President Bashar-al-Assad has come under heavy criticism from the international community for letting loose a reign of terror with acts of violence being committed against protestors by Syrian security forces loyal to the president. The Syrian government’s response to the protests was criticized by The European Union, the Secretary-General of <https://assignbuster.com/arab-spring-media-perception-assignment/>

the United Nations, and many Western governments. ??? Bahraini Uprising of 2011 The 2011 Bahraini uprising is also called the ‘ Pearls Revolution’. The revolution in Bahrain is of a sectarian nature to a very large extent.

The Bahraini protests were initially aimed at achieving greater political freedom and equality for the majority Shia population. The Bahraini uprising has not lagged behind Syria when it comes to violence. The police response has been described as a “ brutal” crackdown on protestors, including doctors and bloggers, many (though not all) of them unarmed and peaceful. ???

Yemeni uprising of 2011 The Yemen uprising of 2011 calls for the ouster of Ali Abdullah Saleh who has been the president of the country for 30 years. The people of Yemen have been asking for change. They call for economic reforms and an end to corruption.

Yemenis complain of mounting poverty among a growing young population and frustration with a lack of political freedoms. The country has also been plagued by a range of security issues, including a separatist movement in the south and an uprising of Shia Houthi rebels in the north. Besides, there are fears that Yemen is becoming a leading al-Qaeda haven, with the high numbers of unemployed youths seen as potential recruits for Islamist militant groups. 1. 1 Impact of the Arab Spring Middle East uprising’s effects are not limited to Asia or Africa. Some of the adverse effects of the Arab spring are explained as below: ??? Oil

As many of the world’s major oil producing countries are in the Middle East, the unrest has caused a rise in oil prices, causing the 2011 energy crisis. The International Monetary Fund accordingly revised its forecast for 2011 oil

prices to reflect a higher price, and also reported that food prices could also increase. Additionally, concerns about Egypt's Suez Canal have raised shipping and oil prices. The oil supplies have been seriously affected, the unrest has spread and led to regimes willing to use their crude stocks for political purposes. There has been a spike in oil prices, but for the moment that is all it is.

The cost of crude oil is almost approaching the record levels of \$150 a barrel.

2 ??? Global peace index The GPI is the world's leading measure of global peacefulness. It gauges ongoing domestic and international conflict, safety and security in society and militarization in 153 countries by taking into account 23 separate indicators. The 2011 Index dramatically reflects the impact on national rankings of the Arab Spring. Libya saw the most significant drop falling 83 places; Bahrain dropped by 51 places, the second largest margin; while Egypt dropped 24 places. 3 The economic cost of this to the global economy was \$8. 2 trillion in the past year. Violence cost the global economy more than \$8. 12 trillion in 2011. 3 ??? Reduction in growth The World Bank's June 2011 Global Economic Prospects report estimates that the turmoil may reduce growth in the region by 1 percent or more, with countries such as Egypt and Tunisia registering growth rates 3 or more percentage points lower than what they would have been in the absence of the crisis. Overall GDP in Egypt is projected to rise 1. 0 percent in 2011. 4 2. Arab Spring and the American Media The American media has been among the leading international media to have given coverage to the events of the Arab Spring.

They have been constantly following the developments of the revolutions. The U. S. strategic interests in this case are many. This has been reflected in their media content. The source of American media content- news stories, editorials, columns and opinion pieces that appeared in leading national dailies (The Washington Post and The New York Times), contents of magazines such as The New Yorker as well as videos found in the websites of news channels (CNN) – a few trends have been found in the coverage of the uprisings in the Arab world.

This chapter will provide the analysis of a few editorials and columns that appeared in two newspapers: The Washington Post and The New York Times. They are followed by reports on coverage of the Arab Spring by The New Yorker and CNN. The chapter ends with a summary of the trends that were observed in the coverage of the revolutions in Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and Morocco by the American media. 2. 1 Analysis of Editorials Newspaper editorials play a key role in determining which issues require attention. In other words, they perform the function of agenda setting. The editorials largely influence public opinion.

The editorials took an anti- autocracy stand and voted for democracy. A large number of editorials in American newspapers took up U. S. interests in these revolutions and their role to be of great significance. Newspapers, through their editorials condemned the suppression of the revolts by the security forces and voiced their support for freedom and democracy. A few of the editorials have been explained below. 2. 2 Editorials of The Washington Post i) Shameful U. S. Inaction on Syria’s Massacres (April 23, 2011) This editorial is a good example of the tough stand taken by the Washington Post <https://assignbuster.com/arab-spring-media-perception-assignment/>

gainst the Obama administration for being unable to keep his promise of supporting the aspirations of Arabs for greater freedom. They have attacked President Obama for not taking concrete actions in the face of inexcusable repressive measure taken by Assad in Syria. “ As a moral matter, the stance of the United States is shameful. To stand by passively while hundreds of people seeking freedom are gunned down by their government makes a mockery of the U. S. commitment to human rights. “ 5 The editorial states that there is nothing for it but Assad to go. The expectations of the U.

S. that there could be any reform with Assad still in power are ill founded. According to the Washington Post, “ Mr. Assad will hardly be a credible partner for Israel. And no matter what happens, Syria will not return to the police-state stability it has known during the past several decades. “ 5 The newspaper makes its stand clear that the U. S. should withdraw its ambassadors from Syria as is done by Western democracies in cases of large massacres such as those in Syria. This will send out a strong signal of disapproval which is necessary in this case.

On the whole, the Obama administration needs to go beyond merely commenting and denouncing the violence. ii) Preventing Chaos in Yemen (June 09, 2011) The Washington Post suggests that Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh should not be allowed to return to Yemen and should be made to step down. This editorial talks about how Saleh should use his medical condition as a platform to make a slow exit. “ Though unfortunate for the 69-year-old Mr. Saleh, the relative good news may be that his medical condition could by itself ensure his indefinite exile. 6 The Washington Post also expresses worry over the fact that there is nobody who seems capable

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of taking the country forward after Saleh's exit. The editorial describes the condition of Yemen to be 'dirt poor', 'complex' and 'dangerous'.⁶

Moreover, the paper talks about the role of the U. S. in Yemen in the post-Saleh scenario, in which it will need recovery on a financial front. 'Already dirt poor, Yemen will desperately need economic resuscitation when and if the current crisis can be overcome.

That should provide the United States a means of leverage with a new regime. iii) Applying Pressure on Bahrain (May 10, 2011) The Washington Post editorial board states that Syria and Libya have put Bahrain out of focus. The paper states that, "Bahrain could prove crucial to the outcome of this year's Arab uprisings and to whether it advances or damages the strategic interests of the United States."⁷ Here again we find the media's concern of the U. S. interests. "Bahrain is host to the U. S. 5th Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf and is vital to the containment of Iran."⁷ The editorial condemns the ruling party al-Khalifa family's policy of suppressing revolts and gives a clear picture of the extent to which protestors have become victims. 'Since the crackdown began March 14 more than 800 people have been arrested, mostly from the majority Shiite community; many have been tortured and four have died in custody. More than 1,000 people have been fired from their jobs in a country of 700,000. Government employees are being pressured to sign oaths of loyalty to the Sunni regime.'⁷ The editorial talks about the Obama administration's need to harden up on the crackdown on protestors in Bahrain. The best way to protect American interests is to tell both regimes that a continued security relationship with the United States depends on an end to policies of sectarian repression and on the

implementation of moderate reforms. ” iv) Reforming the Arab Monarchies (June 21, 2011) In this editorial The Washington Post has expressed its support for the Moroccan reform as proposed by King Mohammed IV. According to the editorial, although the proposed reform is flawed, it is workable and should be given a consideration. The Moroccan reform, which will be put to a referendum on July 1, could nevertheless be workable if it is accepted by all sides as the beginning and not the end of a political transition. It could also serve as a model for Jordan’s King Abdullah II and Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, both of whom are considering similar incremental measures. “ 8 According to The Washington Post, the rulers should try to arrive at a compromise with pro-democracy movements. They should tolerate and not suppress peaceful opposition demonstrations and speech. 2. Editorials of The New York Times i) Syria’s Nightmare (June 17, 2011) In this editorial, The New York Times brings to light the extent of brutality of President Assad’s crackdown on protestors in Syria. “ Reports of Mr. Assad’s savagery are mounting. In the last two weeks, he has sent tanks and troops into the north and east, forcing about 10, 000 Syrians to seek refuge in Turkey. Over three months of protests, more than 1, 400 people have been killed and 10, 000 detained. “ 9 The editorial sympathizes with the protestors applauding them for their courage. Still, thousands of Syrians poured into the streets of Damascus and other cities on Friday in another courageous show of defiance. “ 9 It is suggested that the U. S. needs to take a tougher stand on Syria and should campaign hard to ensure that tough sanctions are imposed on Syria by the United Nations Security Council. ‘ In his Arab Spring speech, President Obama said Mr. Assad should lead a pro-democracy transition “ or get out of the way. ” The Syrian leader has done

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neither and Mr. Obama has done too little to rally international pressure to force him to make that choice. New York Times states that Assad has to step down at any cost. “ The only way to end Syria’s nightmare is for Bashar al-Assad to go. “ 10 ii) They Should Be Condemning Syria (May 09, 2011) The New York Times strongly criticizes the Asian Bloc as well as the Arab nations of the United Nations for not pushing for Syria’s withdrawal from the race for membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council. “ Mr. Assad knows no shame. But shame on the Asian bloc for not insisting that Syria withdraw. India, Indonesia and the Philippines would be a lot more credible candidates if they refused to run with Syria.

Shame, too, on the Arab members of the United Nations that reaffirmed support for Syria’s election even after Mr. Assad turned his guns on his people. “ 11 Syria should not be running for membership in the first place let alone its election. “ It is outrageous that Syria is even being discussed for membership. “ 11 Syria has become an example of gross violation of human rights and its candidature for the membership of UNHRC is the biggest irony that could ever be. On no account should this be allowed. “ Electing Syria would make a mockery of the Council; one from which it might never be able to recover.

And it would make a mockery of all the countries that voted for Syria. Syria must be dropped from the slate. ” iii) President Assad’s Crackdown (April 28, 2011) The New York Times takes a hard stance on President Assad of Syria and slams his dictatorial ways. “ Now Mr. Assad appears determined to join his father in the ranks of history’s blood-stained dictators, sending his troops and thugs to murder anyone who has the courage to demand political

freedom. “ 13 Obama’s efforts to engage Syria has been said to be insufficient. According to the New York Times, there should be no time wasted in throwing out Assad.

Washington, apart from taking a tough stand itself, needs to convince the Arab league as well as the United Nations Security Council to take a tougher line on Syria. “ Mr. Obama has done too little to rally international pressure to force him to make that choice... Washington needs to mount an all-out campaign to pass a tough United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Syria and imposing sanctions. The paper mounts criticism on Russia and China. “ Russia and China have inexcusably blocked a vote for weeks. “ 13 “ Russia and China, as ever, are determined to protect autocrats. 13 iv) They’re Not Listening (March 14, 2011) This editorial talks about how Bahrain and Yemen are both important to American strategic interests. “ The former is home to the United States Navy’s Fifth Fleet; the latter is battling, with Washington’s frequent participation, one of Al Qaeda’s stronger affiliates. “ 14 This has been said to be the main reason for the Obama administration not taking a strong stand and suggests that with the situation going out of hand in both the countries Washington needs to switch over to another plan. Quite diplomacy will no longer work.

The need for a tougher stand on the part of the U. S. has been reiterated. “ The Obama administration needs to press both governments a lot harder. The window for encouraging peaceful change is closing fast. “ 14 The New York Times emphasizes that the rulers of Yemen and Bahrain need to hold dialogues with the opposition instead of trying to suppress them using security forces and thugs. v) Belated Realism on Yemen (April 6, 2011) The <https://assignbuster.com/arab-spring-media-perception-assignment/>

editorial supports the Obama administration's efforts to ease President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen from office.

But it also states that the efforts should have started weeks ago. Yemen is identified to be of great importance for U. S. strategic interests. In an earlier editorial published on March 14, The New York Times had taken a stand that President Saleh needs to negotiate with his opponents and rein in his security forces and thugs. 15 Within a matter of 15 days, the newspaper has begun hinting that Saleh should resign. “ Yemen needs to move ahead without President Saleh and with more American support. “ 15 2. 4 Analysis of columns and opinion pieces

In this section, articles written by two veteran journalists- Nicholas Kristof and Thomas Friedman are analyzed. Both Kristof and Friedman have years of experience in reporting from the middle east and their articles provide in depth knowledge of the state of affairs in the Arab world in a simple and easy to understand style. A few of their articles have been explained here. i) Is This Apartheid in Bahrain? (Nicholas Kristof, February 22, 2011, The New York Times) In this article, Nicholas Kristof raises the issue of sectarianism- the main cause of Bahraini protests.

He deems it unfair that a minority Sunni should rule over and oppress a majority Shia population. He presents examples to show the plight of Shia at the hands of Sunni. Kristof points out that the sectarian nature of the protests is a worrisome factor. He finds sectarianism dangerous. According to him, the protestors comprising of the majority Shia should reach out to the minority Sunnis and should make sure that if they come to power the

minority should not suffer at their hands. ii) Unfit for Democracy? (Nicholas Kristof, February 26, 2011, The New York Times) In this article, Nicholas Kristof puts forth his views on the question as to whether the Arab world is ready for a democratic administrative set-up. His answer is emphatically in the affirmative. Often several doubts are raised over the ability of the Arab world to handle a democracy. Kristof calls this a 'crude stereotype'.¹⁷ He cites several examples of countries where revolutions overthrew the autocratic administration to make way for democracy and contends that they are more or less successful.

This gives rise to hopes for the countries of the Arab world. He points out that it is wrong to underestimate the potentials of a people fighting so valiantly for freedom and democracy. iii) Standing Up to the King (Nicholas Kristof, June 18, 2011, The New York Times) In this article, Nicholas Kristof gives credit to Morocco's King Mohammed IV for trying to put up a tolerant face to the pro-democracy protests. But Kristof calls this wisdom on the part of the Moroccan king 'a low bar'.¹⁸ This, says Kristof, is something that rulers of other Arab countries should take a cue from.

He says that Morocco stands out among other countries of the Arab world in the sense that at least people are able to voice their dissent without the fear of being silenced or tortured by the establishment. Kristof hopes that King Mohamed IV would have the sense to turn Morocco into a British style limited monarchy giving space to democracy. This would bode well for Morocco as well as the Arab spring as a whole. iv) They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (Thomas Friedman, May 21, 2011, The New York Times) Thomas Friedman

describes the uprising in Syria to be of a completely different nature from those in other countries of the Arab world.

According to him, the Syrian revolution is capable of having a large impact on the protests in other countries. In his words, “ Libya implodes, Tunisia implodes, Egypt implodes, Yemen implodes, Bahrain implodes ??? Syria explodes. The emergence of democracy in all these other Arab countries would change their governments and have long-term regional implications. But democracy or breakdown in Syria would change the whole Middle East overnight. ” 19 He points out that Bashar-al-Assad’s regime won’t last long for the people of Syria have now become fearless.

Friedman argues that though it is debatable as to whether the people of Syria will be able to build a successful democracy after Assad’s downfall there should be no doubt over the fact that people power is supreme and should be heeded on all accounts. 2. 5 CNN coverage of Arab Spring The broadcast media covered the revolutions of the Arab Spring extensively. The revolutions in Syria received the most coverage followed by those in Bahrain and Yemen. Any outbreak of violence in these countries made Breaking News.

Detailed accounts of deaths and injuries were consistently provided by CNN. The fact that CNN has been denied the permission to report from inside the country did not deter them from covering the protests in Syria. The videos and images of the protests shown in the reports of the CNN speak a thousand words. Videos of swarms of protestors thronging the streets carrying flags gave a fair idea of the magnitude of the protests in these

countries. CNN reports show videos of horrifying acts of atrocities committed by security forces on protesting civilians.

In a report, CNN anchor Anderson Cooper says, “ The regime that doesn’t just torture and murder its own people... doesn’t just shoot them down on the streets... the regime that continues to arrest its children, torture them and murder them...the regime of Bashar-al-Assad in Syria... They try to hide their crimes by keeping reporters out but the videos continue to emerge. ” The videos show Syrian soldiers stomping and kicking helpless citizens after gagging them and tying their hands. Appalling cases of innocent children being tormented by Syrian soldiers were brought to light by CNN.

A CNN correspondent in Bahrain spoke to Nabeel Rajab of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights who said that people are hanged, tortured and sexually harassed in Bahrain. The report stated that most of the sources who agreed to talk to them disappeared. Those close to them said that they had been arrested or gone into hiding after machine gun holding security forces raided their homes and threatened them. Nurses who treated wounded protestors, doctors and lawyers are among those who have been victimized by the forces said the report. This brings out the cruelty of the rulers to the people.

Shocking images of torture and massacre uploaded on YouTube are shown by CNN. If Egypt was dubbed the Facebook revolution then Syria is perhaps becoming the YouTube revolution even as the use of social media becomes more difficult and more dangerous. “ It is their last window to the world”, said a report on CNN. A point to be noted is that CNN, while showing most of the videos acquired from YouTube and Facebook, mentioned that it was

impossible to confirm the authenticity of the videos. Certain videos that the channel showed were too graphic.

Several feature stories were done by CNN. In one such program, Syria's secret doctors, CNN takes an exclusive look into an underground network of doctors working to save lives in Syria. CNN met some of the victims of the Syrian crackdown. The videos shown were explicit and could be disturbing to certain viewers. However, they aptly brought out the agony of those harassed by the security forces. 3. Arab Spring and the British Media British Media has covered the Middle East crisis from the very beginning. It has reported every injury, arrest, rape and death without any inhibitions.

Arab Spring: Where It Is Now and Where It May Be Going (Feature Story By Frank Gardner BBC Security Correspondent) This feature story brings out a very important side of the Middle East crisis. It explains that there are 22 Arab countries out of which 5 have had uprisings. Some have succeeded and some are yet to run their course. This article explains the differences between the revolts of all 5 countries and their reasons. The media made a mistake by trying to apply a one-size-fits-all template to every Arab country currently experiencing upheaval.

However, the writer says that the mold has been broken and what has started to take place in Middle East is irreversible. He quotes “ for those at the forefront of change, their message is simple: the mold has been broken and we will not accept a return to the status quo. “ 22 3. 1 The difficulty of reporting from inside Syria Editors of BBC have formed an online forum where they express their views on current issues. In one of these editorials,

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Jon Williams threw light on the troubles that journalists have gone through in order to report Assad's hostilities on the civilians of Syria.

The journalists have been harassed by the Syrian military. They are denied visa to the country, arrested, kidnapped and thrown out of the country. Many French, American and Arab journalists complained of similar problems. The editor talking on behalf of all the journalists says " There are few more frustrating experiences for a journalist than knowing a huge story is happening, but being unable to cover it. " 3. 2 The Economist i) Who Will Take on Assad? (June 16, 2011) This editorial enlists all the mistakes done by the Syria's President Bashar Assad.

The editor finds similarities between Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar Assad and terms them as " odious dictators". 23 He criticizes the killing of protestors by Assad as well as by his father Hafez. The editor also points out that the violence caused by the dictators has strengthened the revolts. This article explains that NATO was able to control the violence in Libya and save a lot of lives; however, Syria is too big and complicated for any outsider to step in. Syria is making a lot of enemies by being stubborn. Its precious ally Turkey also feels troubled now that a significant number of Syrians are taking refuge there.

The editor is very confident that Dictator Assad will be over thrown and thus quoted " If he refuses to budge, the Syrian people will bring him down in the end- on their own and bloodily. " 23 3. 3 The Guardian During the critical hours of the revolt in the Middle East countries, hour to hour updates have been provided on the website of The Guardian. They tried to report as many

killings as possible. They practiced bold journalism. As the Libyan government moved for tighter control over how the conflict in the country is reported to the world, the journalists of The Guardian has been expelled a number of times because of their bold journalism.

They have maintained absolutely no discretion while reporting the brutalities on the protestors. i) Syria: Butchery, While the World Watches (June 12, 2011) “ Bashar al-Assad’s medical training in London once gave rise to western illusions about him as a potential reformer, but as the northern city of Jisr al-Shughour was subjected to an all-out assault yesterday, such hopes were forgotten. “ 24 The editorial begins bluntly by making the above statement. It is a very inspirational editorial for the powerful to read since it condemns violence on the face of it.

It appeals to the world to get its response in order and help the innocent people being victimized in Syria. Both the UN and NATO should be taking actions according to the editor. He also calls China and Russia “ a disgrace” for backing Syria. 24 This article demands full range of diplomatic, financial and legal sanctions to come into play. This editorial ends with a warning: “ The world would then pay a high price indeed for having pretended that Assad was somebody else’s problem. “ 24 ii) Democracy Yet to Dawn (June 21, 2005) This editorial vastly talks of democracy and dictatorship.

It starts with encouraging signs of democracy making its way through many countries. Here it talks of developments in Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Iran and Iraq. While talking about dictatorship, the editor criticizes the very concept of it. The hold of old political clans and families over a country is disapproved

of. The editor says “ In the secretary of state’s pledge that the United States will support the democratic aspirations of the people, there is a hint that America will not in future support the manipulations of democratic forms intended precisely to block such aspirations. 25 The editorial is concluded with the hope that a democratic era in the Middle East would truly dawn. iii) Syria: The National Monologue (June 20, 2011) This editorial is in reference with Bashar al-Assad addressing the nation for the third time since the uprising began in Syria. Assad had promised “ an ambitious and far reaching program of reform” which obviously went in vague. 26 Instead he ended up naming the dead reformers as “ vandals, saboteurs, Muslim extremists, wanted criminals”, he added another one: “ germs”. 6 He finally pretended to notice some of the problems but the solutions suggested by him sounded like a joke to Syrians and again protests took place and the streets were flooded with unhappy citizens demanding for more. Assad has started to think that his vague promises would change minds but the editor concludes with “ The reality is the ironwork is firmly jammed, and will not move again until he goes. “ 26 3. 4 The Telegraph From The Telegraph, Con Coughlin’s columns on the Middle East issue have sparked interest in Arab civil unrest.

He has played a vital role in dealing with the controversial issues of Middle East peace. His articles gained popularity and were criticized as well. i) From Arab Spring to Boiling-hot Summer (May 10, 2011) According to Con Coughlin Arab Spring started with an objective of encapsulating the youthful exuberance of the pro-democracy movements that had sprung up to the Middle East. But after a few months it has turned extremely violent and has

taken an ugly turn. Though Tunisia was quickly rewarded victory, the other countries did not have the same journey.

In many countries like Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain the problems have risen and taken a toll on human life. The protestors are having a very tough time and Con Coughlin says “ In Egypt and Bahrain, as well as Libya and Syria, the hopes they inspired have been nipped firmly in the bud. “ 27 What makes the subject further more boiling hot is that even countries like Tunisia who managed to gain democracy are now facing problems and are resulting in renewed street protests. Thus, the Arab spring has not turned into a boiling hot summer. i) Yemen and Syria Pose a Greater Threat to us than Libya (March 24, 2011) In this article Con Coughlin writes that unlike Libya both the countries, Yemen and Syria, pose an active and current threat to England. Though he fully concedes that Muammar Gaddafi and his dysfunctional family should be removed from power at the earliest opportunity, but these days they can hardly be said to pose a serious threat to their security, having surrendered their investment in nuclear proliferation and international terrorism many years ago. On the other hand, Syria and Yemen have made various attempts to court the west.

Con Coughlin also brings this issue to the notice of the politicians. iii) Why the Bahrain Rebellion Could Prove Calamitous for the West (March 17, 2011) Con Coughlin compares the situation in the rest of Middle East to Bahrain. He says the crisis of Bahrain is different from the rest because they are not demanding for the overthrow of their King. 29 They are not looking for a revolution; they are looking for a reform altogether with respect to

sectarianism. Though Saudi Arabia is giving all its support to the King it will be very difficult to avoid the protesters and their demands.

However, Con Coughlin sadly says “ But the mood darkened considerably in the weeks after the demonstrators set up camp on Pearl roundabout, not least because of the security forces’ heavy-handed response to the initial protests, which led to several deaths and many injuries” 29 iv) Yemen Must Reform to Counter al-Qaeda Threat, Hague Warns (February 9, 2011) Con Coughlin talks about William Hague’s warning that Yemen must undertake urgent political reform to counter the mounting threat posed by al- Qaeda militants who are using the country as a base to launch terror attacks against Britain.

This article again, is concentrated towards the safety of Britain. Many of Con Coughlin’s columns on the Middle East issues are in line with the safety of Britain too. Since a power vacuum is developing in Yemen, because of the demand of democracy, there is a very good chance that al- Qaeda will take advantage of the fact and try to consolidate itself there. “ The Yemeni government is not taking as effective action as it could against the al-Qaeda threat,” said a senior intelligence official in Yemen. ” 3. 5 The Independent i) Endgame in Syria? (May 30, 2011)

The editor starts by giving an overview of the Arab Spring and the journeys taken by the protestors in past half year. He analyzes the revolts in Syria to be fierce and the most destabilizing. He talks of the video issued by Assad and the failure of his intention. He quotes “ If he wanted to regain the political initiative, he conspicuously failed. And if he intended to extend an

olive branch to his opponents this is not the message they understood. “ 32
As a result there was displeasure among the people and they instantly
protested by taking to the streets.

The video was the first time Assad expressed regret for the death of
protestors and held out prospect of a ‘ national dialogue’. But at the same
time he also blamed and threatened the opposition. The editor again
criticizes the attempt of a balancing act which he says “ is unlikely to come
to any good end. “ 32 4. Arab spring and the Arab Media The Arab media has
evolved and branched out through the years. Across the Middle East, new
television stations, radio stations and websites are sprouting like
incongruous electronic mushrooms in what was once a media desert.
Meanwhile newspapers are aggressively probing the red lines that have long
contained them. Newspapers in the Arab countries can be divided into three
categories: those that are government-owned (together with semi-official
papers such as al-Ahram in Egypt), those owned by political parties, and the
“ independent” press. Very few of the privately-owned newspapers can be
considered editorially independent; they are often owned by wealthy
individuals who have political aspirations or seek to wield influence.

Qatar, for instance, has six newspapers ??? all of them technically
independent but actually owned by members of the ruling family or
businessmen with close ties to the ruling family. Until the 1990s almost all
television channels in the Arab countries were government owned and rigidly
controlled. These channels still exist but the situation began to change in the
1990s with the spread of satellite television. Privately owned and non-
governmental channels introduced livelier programs aimed at a pan-Arab

audience and also adopted a more professional approach to news and current affairs.

Social media has taken a center stage in the Arab world now. Social media is pulling the rug from under traditional media. The Arab Spring has changed the role of traditional media in many ways; whereas social media has facilitated the Arab Revolution. 4. 1 Importance of Arab Media's Projection Arab media's coverage of the Arab Spring is not only significant at a local level but also on the international arena. It not only communicates the developments of the uprising to the local and universal audience but also plays the role of a catalyst.

It holds true of global importance as the worldly states and leaders form a perception about the countries' governance, administration, security and other directorial issues based on these projections. In a world of global markets, networks and challenges, the divide between global and local is largely gone. The choices media makes affect broader policies. And the issue of Arab Spring has proven to be a national security implication for various countries. 4. 2 Al Jazeera Al Jazeera English (AJE) is a 24-hour English-language news and current affairs TV channel headquartered in Doha, Qatar. It is the sister channel of the Arabic-language Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera English is the world's first English-language news channel headquartered in the Middle East. It is owned by Qatar Media Corporation which is a Middle Eastern multimedia corporation based in and owned by the state of Qatar and is the parent company of Al Jazeera and most of the domestic media of Qatar. Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani is the chairman of the organization. Since its inception in 1996, when the emir of Qatar took over the BBC's failing Arabic <https://assignbuster.com/arab-spring-media-perception-assignment/>

television service, Al Jazeera has evolved into the most potent catalyst for change across the Arab world.

Today, AJE can be seen in 220 million households around the world, via a network of 15 satellites and countless cable companies serving viewers in 120 countries from Albania to Zambia. AJE provides an in depth analysis of each of the Arab uprisings in the form of videos, opinions, features, spotlight coverage, briefings, public opinion, interactive discussions and story-telling in the form of pictures only. It is the only media outlet to have covered the Arab Spring as a whole, as extensively as it has. Al Jazeera is the primary source of news for and about the Arab world.

The recent Arab uprisings have mostly reconfirmed the channel's distinctive position. The channel is seen by both the protestors and the regimes themselves as vital for disseminating real-time information about the riots. But it is also being accused of incitement as it inadvertently becomes sympathetic to the rioters. In the absence of independent local media, the channel tries to be the independent source of information. But because of its pan-Arab reach, it is turning localized unrest into a pan-Arab revolution. 4. 3

Criticism of Al Jazeera

Before the Arab Spring, Al Jazeera's motto was "The opinion and other opinion" a simple way of saying that it aimed to provide different views on important issues. The news network's talk shows and news coverage followed this motto by hosting officials representing Israel as well as "Forces of Resistance" or "Qawat Al Mumana'h" – Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah – groups or governments that are officially at war with Israel and oppose

Western policies in the Middle East. 35 At the time, it was criticized for giving a platform to Israeli officials.

It also was accused of being biased towards these forces of resistance. But Al Jazeera justified its position by citing the need to give a voice to all political views, including those who were traditionally shunned by the Arab and Western media. By doing so, Al Jazeera gained a great deal of legitimacy and popularity in the Arab world. Al Jazeera English was hailed by no less a person than U. S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for providing “ real news. ” Viewership of the Los Angeles public television station, KCET-TV, increased by 135 percent after it started broadcasting Al Jazeera English.

However, Al Jazeera has been strongly criticized for the way it has been covering the Arab Spring. Many Arab journalists accuse it of providing inconsistent and biased coverage, saying that it is harsher on some Arab leaders than on the others. Al Jazeera’s coverage of Bahrain and Syria, in particular, has come under fire. These shows used to cover taboo topics and give a platform to guest speakers who bluntly criticized U. S. war policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the undemocratic policies of Arab regimes.

Arab journalists were shocked by Al Jazeera’s decisions, and some even wondered whether the news outlet could maintain its popularity. The channel’s director general, Waddah Khanfar defended the changes, saying Al Jazeera had to stay competitive by providing continuous live coverage of the Arab uprisings. 35 Al Jazeera’s motto, “ the opinion and other opinion,” which appeared under its logo for the past 16 years, was replaced with a new one: “ Continuous Coverage. ” 4. 4 Exceptional Coverage of Egypt and Tunisia

When the Arab Spring started, AJE did a creditable job of reporting the oppression and violence that the pro-democracy protestors experienced in Egypt and Tunisia. While other news organizations scrambled to book flights, Al Jazeera's crews were in the thick of the Arab world uprising, transmitting live footage of frenzied protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square. And even though some of its journalists were banned or imprisoned in Tunisia and Egypt, it continued broadcasting images of demonstrators killed and injured by government security forces.

AJE took these images from social media such as YouTube, Facebook and even Flickr. It also provided up-to-the-minute Twitter feeds on the situation. The 24 hour live feed by AJE of crowds gathering in Cairo's Tahrir Square that ultimately lead to the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, earned the channel laurels for its bold coverage. This is being hailed as the ' Al Jazeera Moment' just as coverage of the 1991 Gulf war by an upstart cable channel is said to have been the ' CNN moment' that transformed American news. . 5 Unequal Coverage of Bahrain Uprising Qatar-based Al Jazeera, the leading Arabic language network, was pivotal in keeping up momentum during protests that toppled Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, both entrenched rulers who were no friends of Qatar's ruling Al Thani dynasty. But for viewers watching protests spread across the region, the excitement stopped abruptly in Bahrain. Scant coverage was given to protests in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council member. 4. 6 Arab News (Newspaper) Article: Obama, Clinton among millions watching Al Jazeera (April 15, 2011) The article published in Arab News, the Middle East's leading English daily, talks about the success of AJE in covering the Arab Revolution. It includes

quotations from significant world leaders citing their views on the role of AJE in the revolution. It mainly reflects how the perception of US about the channel and its projection policy has undergone a major transformation. This is all a far cry from the years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks when the Qatar-based network was seen by many in the Bush administration as the enemy.

Donald Rumsfeld, then Pentagon chief, scathingly said in 2004 that the network's coverage of civilian casualties during Operation Vigilant Resolve in Fallujah were "vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable." 37 Rumsfeld described it as tantamount to an arm of Al-Qaeda, and accused the network of being "a mouthpiece of Al-Qaeda" and "inexcusably biased." 37 But today, Al Jazeera's English-language network, formed in 2006, is deemed so essential that it is beamed directly into the Oval Office of the US President Barack Obama.

The impact of Al Jazeera in English in the US in the past two months has been all the more remarkable because, despite huge public demand, it can only be seen on cable in a few cities: Washington DC; Toledo, Ohio; Burlington, Vermont; and, for part of the day, Los Angeles. Millions of Americans, however, are now watching the channel live-streaming on the Internet and Al Jazeera has received tens of thousands of e-mails praising its coverage. The article emphasizes on how the Obama administration is courting the pan-Arab television network Al Jazeera in an attempt to improve a history of testy relations with one of the most influential news outlets in the Middle East. ii) Article: Yemen On The Brink (Yemeni author, July 13, 2011) The editorial talks about the urgency of the crisis in Yemen needing to be contained for the fear of it affecting the neighboring Gulf Co-operation

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Council (GCC) states as well. It highlights how important it is to find a solution to the Yemen crisis as the security of the entire peninsula depends on it.

It points out the fact that if the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), taking advantage of the opportunity, were able to establish a base in the country, it would use it to launch attacks on Saudi Arabia, other GCC states and Western targets in the region and elsewhere, thus putting the security of various nations at risk. Earlier this year, AQAP was seen as a relatively minor threat. It existed but as tool in the hands of Yemen's political and tribal leaders who used against rivals or as a useful means to scare money out of the US and others on the basis that it needed to be contained and only they could do it. ⁸ It did not have a viable independent existence. But AQAP can no longer be so easily dismissed. It and its allies in the 'Ansar Al-Sharia' are fast filling the vacuum resulting from the collapse of central power across of the country, notably in the restless south. There it has been able to hook itself into the popular demand for autonomy or even independence. The editorial underlines the ill effects of the crisis not being resolved, on Saudi Arabia and Oman. It also highlights the increasing economic instability and the looming battle of Aden and the possibility of Al Qaeda flourishing amidst the chaos.

It suggests a federal Yemen to be a solution to the problem. If not, at least a solution to the problem is essential. The editorial has taken a strong stand against the Yemeni government. Though it has a balanced take on the events that mark the uprising and its ill effects on the citizens as well as the other GCC countries, it criticizes the failed meet of John Brennan, the

counter-terrorism adviser sent by US President Barack Obama and the Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh to try and revive the stalled GCC settlement plan. . 7 Campaign Middle East (Magazine) i) Article: Why Bahrain Could Damage Al Jazeera's Image (March 27, 2011) The article is about the Arab media, Al Jazeera in particular, facing difficulty in one area of coverage: Bahrain. It highlights the fact that how Al Jazeera's impartiality is being severely tested due to Bahrain's proximity to Qatar, Al Jazeera's home base. It also throws light on how the Bahrainis would be raising questions on Al Jazeera's prioritizing of events and their propagandistic attitude.

The editor has also stated how Al Jazeera could possibly undo the flak received, by adhering and acting to their set of values of “ honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political over professional consideration” and cover the uprising with the same intensity as that of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. It also discussed how 60 to 70 percent of Bahrain's population is made up of Shia Muslims, while the ruling Khalifa dynasty, which has ruled for over 200 hundred years, is a Sunni Muslim minority. 1 So wherever you have such a small minority imposing its views on a majority, you have got a recipe for trouble. Anybody could have predicted once the Arab spring broke out in Tunisia that Bahrain would be an early place. The editorial has taken a tough stand against the Arab media and has criticized its uneven coverage of Bahrain. The editorial has put forward a valid point that the media outlet cannot regain its lost reputation unless it addresses its real issue of multiple stakeholders hailing from Qatar and influencing the coverage decision based on their ties with Bahrain rather than the journalistic bias. The Bahrain

coverage has been put into question not because of journalistic bias, but because of a complex relationship between the organizations's multiple stakeholders. The sooner Al Jazeera addresses this, the less bumpy it will find the road ahead as it further consolidates its leading position. " 41 4. 8

Inconsistent Syria Coverage Al Jazeera's coverage of the demonstrations in Syria has been inconsistent. For years, the news outlet kept from criticizing the Syrian government. And for the first few weeks of the recent demonstrations, it did not report them.

But when the demonstrations spread and became more violent, Al Jazeera started reporting them, focusing on the brutality of the regime against civilians. Analysts believe this was one of the tactics used by Al Jazeera to shift the focus from the criticism their Bahrain coverage had been receiving. But for giving the demonstrators center stage in all its recent reports, a rift has been created between it and the Syrian government, forcing Al Jazeera to scale back its operations in that country.

The Syrian uprising is not leading the hour for the main Arab satellite networks like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, but the Syrian uprising continues apace, while the Assad regime's countermeasures are becoming increasingly brutal. Given the size of the uprising, people are in the streets of every major Syrian city except Aleppo and the bravery of the demonstrators, there's been little attention paid to it. After all, these are not Egyptian security forces under the command of a U. S. ally like former president Hosni Mubarak.

The same Arab media that covered the Egyptian uprising as it unfolded is all but absent from Syria. The Assad regime has done an excellent job of keeping the curtains closed on events, so that the main source of news coming directly out of Syria is almost exclusively from the Internet, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The social media galvanized Egyptian and Tunisian protestors, but for the Syrian opposition it is the main source of media they have to show the world what's happening. 4. 9 The Daily Star ??? Lebanon (Newspaper)) Article: The Shameful Arab Silence on Syria (April 07, 20110)

The article reflects the utterly inadequate coverage of the current upheaval in Syria. It gives its view as to why the major satellite stations; Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya have been so profoundly reluctant to highlight the Syrian protests. Due to political pressure and strict press regimes in the nation, the Arab media has lagged behind in covering the uprising, points out the article. It explains the attempt made by the Syrian president, Bashar Assad, to try and keep the media glare away from the nation.

In his speech before the Syrian Parliament, Bashar Assad bluntly accused the Arab satellite stations of inciting the rallies against his regime. But what the Syrian president was really doing was sending a message to the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Qatar principally, informing them that if they really wanted him to stay in office, they were better off keeping a lid on their satellite journalists. That warning, or threat, appears to have had an impact. Nothing prevents these stations from borrowing much more from social media or strengthen their anemic reporting. Showing telephone videos of people marching, or being shot at, is useful. However, without a context, without an informed explanation of what is going on and what viewers are seeing;

without playing these videos on air to Syrian officials and demanding that they explain the murder of unarmed civilians expressing themselves peacefully, the power of media is stunted. ii) Column: For Syria, One of Three Likely Outcomes (Columnist: Rami G. Khouri, July 13, 2011) In this column, Ram G.

Khouri talks about how it may be too late for either “ dialogue” or “ reform” in Syria because so many Syrians and others abroad have lost confidence in the security-based style of governance of President Bashar Assad. He has been critical of his governance. 43 In his view, President Bashar Assad has not played his cards well; most notably a degree of genuine domestic support that still manifests itself, and widespread regional and global reluctance to take a chance on the consequences of regime collapse.

The two-day national “ reform dialogue” that took place, is the latest of a series of such attempts by the president to soften the opposition by moving towards limited democratic transitions in various spheres. 43 The problem he encounters now is that the Syrian regime’s core legitimacy has been badly shaken by the expanding domestic challenge. Genuine democratic self-transformation has never happened at the hands of incumbent Arab regimes in modern times. The chances of Syria being the first example of this are slim.

The writer puts forward three options that would then seem to be the most likely. One, the government uses more force to subdue the citizen revolt for some time to come. Two, the opposition tires and accepts to engage in dialogue that leads to some political liberalization, keeping the current

leadership in place; three, a sustained revolt that shatters the economy, pushes millions of Syrians into dire economic straits, and ultimately brings down the regime because cracks appear in one or more of the three key constituencies for the ruling authority.

This way, Khouri opines that reform and dialogue may have worked months or years ago, but they will no longer satisfy the escalating demands of the demonstrators who want a more comprehensive and democratic reconfiguration of how political authority, security operations, and economic power are managed. iii) Column: That Noise is of the Arab Order Breaking (June 15, 2011) The column is a very positive write up on the Arab awakening.

It has orchestrated the entire Arab revolution and the various efforts of people in the form of protests and demonstrations to overthrow the dictatorship, in a nutshell. Rami Khouri has glorified the successful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia along with describing the on-going unrest in countries like Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, as a pedestal to a number of changes to be brought about in the governance of Middle East. Khouri has given significant credibility to the racket of citizens trying to create stable and responsive governance systems all across the region.

The important thing is that nearly a century after the false birth of nominally sovereign Arab states after World War I, the people of the Middle East are now working in earnest to establish governance systems that respond to their rights and needs more efficiently than has been the case to date. He cites the examples of various changes that have taken place in the due

course of time in the Middle East. In Syria, thousands of residents of the northern town of Jisr al-Shoughour have streamed across the Turkish border seeking refuge from a state-run military operation in response to a growing nationwide citizen rebellion. 4 Turkey has held parliamentary elections that have ushered in a third consecutive victory for the ruling Justice and Development Party, marking another milestone on that country's steady transition from military rule to civilian democracy. And in Jordan, King Abdullah announced that he would institute citizen demands that the prime minister be named or dismissed solely according to the wishes of the majority in the elected lower house of Parliament.

Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and other Arab lands are in the midst of their own political transitions, grappling with coalitions, constitutional changes, and decent governance systems to replace the security-dominated abominations that have defined the Arab world for half a century. In his opinion, these immensely complex political landscapes today, with a variety of power structures and political dynamics, encapsulate the entire history of human political life, from the most advanced constitutional democracies to the most vicious and ugly of police states.

Each country provides a different model of how power is wielded and how citizens seek to make their voice heard. The important thing, he believes, is that at last they are all in the midst of historic changes, after decades of stagnation. 4. 10 Creditable Yemen Coverage When Al Jazeera's cameras turned to Yemen, it was as though its guns were trained on the next target in an uprising. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, whose impoverished country of 23 million is not a member of the affluent Gulf Arab club, accused

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Al Jazeera of running an “ operations room to burn the Arab nation. The Arab media has covered the Yemen protests extensively, without any bias in spite of the government revoking the Al Jazeera correspondents’ licenses over its coverage in Yemen. Many analysts believe that the Yemen demonstrations are being covered without any propaganda owing to the fact that the news channel does not have any political ties with the country. “ The Al Jazeera viewers in Yemen perceive the channel as unbiased in its reporting of the two major news events in Yemen; the Southern Yemenis Movement and the Northern Yemenis Rebellion.

Its Yemeni viewers perceive Al Jazeera news coverage on the nation’s uprising as credible. ” 4. 11 The National The National is a Middle Eastern English language daily launched in April 2008 and owned by Abu Dhabi Media Company. With more than 250 journalists based in the country’s seven emirates and in foreign bureaus throughout the world, The National tells the story of the Middle East as seen through the region’s eyes. The newspaper has extensively covered Arab Spring. Unlike Al Jazeera, it has given the maximum coverage to the protests in Bahrain, followed by Syria and Yemen uprisings.

The media has also given coverage to the demonstrations taking place in the neighboring countries of Jordan, Oman and Morocco. The number of editorials and news pieces published in the daily indicates the same. i) Article: More of the Same from Syria’s Leader (June 21, 2011) The editorial is on the speech given by the President Bashar al Assad at the Damascus University. It has severely criticized his actions and failure in handling the

Syrian crisis. In politics, as in war, timing is everything. After his oration in Damascus, it's clear what eventuality Syrian president

Bashar al Assad is preparing for. It states how if Mr. al Assad had spent 70 minutes in March mapping out a course of political reforms and a “national dialogue”, Syria's stability might not be in question. 47 But as Al Assad took the podium at Damascus University, expectations for real reform were already low. And by this measure the president did not fail to deliver.

Rattling off a litany of allegations against evil forces and anti-government “saboteurs”, Al Assad sounded very much the disillusioned dictator demonstrators accuse him of being. 7 The president offered no timetable for vague promises to reform to the economy, nor did he elaborate on plans to loosen the Baath party's grip on power. And while he acknowledged the “historic” nature of the unrest gripping Syria, he seemed more interested in pointing fingers than taking blame. 47 ii) Article: Inclusive Talks are Bahrain's Only Way Ahead (June 29, 2011) The editorial is on how genuine political reforms could be brought into action by a degree of compromise between the government and the opposition by reconciliation dialogue.

The largest opposition movement, Al Wefaq has been indecisive of participating in the reconciliation talks between the government and pro-reform Shiite groups. Al Wefaq knows that its absence would hugely diminish the credibility of talks. It remains hesitant to get on board while trials of activists linked to the Shiite-led campaign for greater political rights are set to take place, and as many other demonstrators continue to be detained. Whether the party takes its seat at the table on Saturday will depend in part on feedback from its supporters.

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The government has repeatedly called for reconciliation and a negotiated settlement. Certainly the streets of Manama have been far quieter than in recent months, but there have been lasting wounds inflicted by both protester violence and the heavy-handed response by security forces. These talks are vital to begin repairing the damage. The editorial has voiced the necessity of a resolution in the interest of the citizens. The editorial has taken a pro-government approach. It has appreciated the attempts made by the Bahrain government to initiate the settlement talks between them and the opposition movement.

It's of the view that the Bahrain government's show of goodwill in holding reconciliation talks needs to be seen by all sides as more than just a show. For all Bahrainis, Shiite or Sunni, pro-government or opposition, the turmoil of the past months has been a tragedy. The government has consistently espoused a policy of gradual reform – a return to internecine violence will only make this more difficult. It points the fact that for these talks to reap genuine results, all sides need to show a degree of compromise. Al Wefaq should join the negotiations, and the government should extend a hand so the opposition groups can do so in confidence. ii) Article: Syria's Friends Must Give it Good Advice (June 15, 2011) The editorial talks about the lack of international help and response garnered by Syria on the current unrest. ' Sometimes only friends can tell you when things are going wrong. In Syria, unvarnished counsel may well be what leaders in Damascus need to hear. '50 Tough talk from friends could save lives and maybe turn this cycle back. Yet so far, much of those within Syria's orbit have been mute. It does not help anyone when friends in Russia, China, Lebanon, Venezuela, Iran, India

and Brazil tell the regime that there is nothing wrong with its response. .
Journalists in Peril In the midst of political upheaval throughout the Middle East, journalism is experiencing a revolution of its own. Besides toppling their state governments, citizens across the Muslim world are equally retaliating against and rejecting state-owned media institutions. As mouthpieces of the authoritarian regimes currently being threatened and unseated by the revolutionary masses, state-run media in the Middle East has been called into question by the social and political upheaval in the region.

In the period of January 2011 to April 2011, 15 journalists have been killed and around 400 incidents of assaults on reporters have been recorded in the Arab states alone. The following are a few of the reported incidents in Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria etc. which raise the question on the perils of journalism: March 15, 2011 ??? YEMEN: Two American correspondents were expelled, mob attacks journalists' union office. BAHRAIN: Photographer Mohammed Almoukhraq was assaulted by security forces. Al??? Wasat newspaper office attacked. March 17, 2011 ??? BAHRAIN: CNN correspondent Mohammed Jamjoom expelled. March 18, 2011 ???

YEMEN: Photographer Jamal al-Sharaabi of the weekly Al-Masdar shot dead. March 22, 2011 ??? YEMEN: 2 Al-Jazeera and 6 other journalists expelled. March 23, 2011 ??? YEMEN: Freelance Jamal Shar'abi killed when gunmen fire on protesters in Sana'a March 25, 2011 ??? YEMEN: Al-Jazeera office closed, staff beaten. SYRIA: At least six journalists held in Deraa. April 06, 2011 ??? SYRIA: Mohamad Zaid Mastou of Al Arabiya arrested. April 08, 2011 ??? YEMEN: Al-A

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