

The Nature, Characteristics & Influence of the Drastic Changes in the Middle East

MA Lirong^①

(Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies
University)

Abstract: *The continuously evolving political turbulences and upheavals of the Arab countries can be regarded as an endogenous Arab democratic movement. In this evolving process, “the Islamic Elements” once again become an important source of spiritual and ideological resources for its social transformation. Now as the situation becomes more and more obvious that various factions of Islamic forces are accelerating their proceedings of “realignment” and “differentiation”, an extremely intrigue complex of interconnections is emerging between different Islamic factions and between religious politics and geopolitics. This situational evolution is not only influencing the Middle East region, but also affecting the peace and development of the whole world.*

Key Words: *Drastic Changes in Middle East; Islamic Democracy;*

^① Dr. MA Lilong, Professor & Deputy Director of the Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, Deputy Managing Editor-in-Chief of the *Arab World Studies*. This article is an early stage achievement of the research work for “the Studies on New China’s Humane Diplomacy towards Middle East States”, a Key Research Program (10JJDGJW021) of the Key Research Bases of Chinese Education Ministry; for “the Studies of New China’s Humane Diplomacy & Strategies towards the Middle East & Islamic Countries”, a research program (11BGJ033) financed by China’s National Foundation for Social Sciences; for Chinese Educational Ministry program “Islamic Middle East Region and the Transition of International System” (08JZD0039). and it is also supported by the Shanghai International Studies University “211” program (Stage III).

I. An Endogenous Arab Democratic Movement

The word democracy originated from the words of “deoms” (which means people) and “krato” (which ruling) in ancient Greek, so its meaning can be interpreted as “the reign of people”. Religion and democracy are contradictory to each other in their natures, but some kind of support is always needed to be sought out from religion during the process of actual construction of democracy. As a matter of fact, religious faith has an apparent influence over a person’s political aptitude and activities, although they might also be determined and shaped by that person’s social status and orientation of interest. “The scriptures or doctrines of some religions might offer certain ideas that support the establishment of democracy, or some benefits that make it easier for people to achieve a successful democracy. Therefore it could be concluded that some religions are able to provide limited political or institutional resources for a nation in pursuit of democracy.” (Wang, L., 2007: 135). The Islamic religion, which emerged from the Arab Peninsula in the early Medieval age when the Arabs were in a process of transformation from a primitive society to a class society, can be looked on as a combination of religious revolution and social revolution, an integration of ideas that plays a very important role in the political lives of Muslims. Its innate strong political ideas and politicized pursuits indicate that it is both a religious faith and a kind of political culture that can influence or even shape the political reforms of Islamic countries, including these countries’ process of democratization (Wang, L., 2007: 144).

The democratic ideas of the Islam, mainly include the following several aspects. 1) The equality of each person’s human rights is an important basis of the religion of Islam. In the March of the year 632 A.D., the Prophet Muhammad in his famous *Farewell Sermon*

emphasized that “all men are equal in front of Allah” and that “all the Muslims in the world are brothers”, which should be defined as a kind of equality of all men’s human rights, a certain type of Islamic democratic thought. Therefore the *Farewell Sermon* made by the Prophet Muhammad has always been honored as “the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights”, and the slogan that “all the Muslims are brothers” has endowed the religion of Islam with an overwhelming power of solidarity.

2) The Islam strongly advocates the principle of justice and fairness. In addition to the commentaries presented by the Hadith, the Quran^① also talks of the principle of fairness and justice, ranking it as the supreme virtue following the faith of Tawhid and regarding it as one of the most fundamental beliefs of the Prophet Muhammad. (4:58/57:25/16:90/5:8) The Quran cherish it as a universal doctrine and a born right that surpass the boundaries of creeds, religions, nations, and blood ties (4:135/5:8/60:8/5:42/4:105/42:15/6:115), putting it in the list of major methods to establish the veneration and worship of a pious disciple of Islam (5:8/6:152/6:152/89:17/93:9/107:2/ 4:3). A famous Islamic jurist argued that “adherence to fairness almost equals conversion to the faith of Allah”. In brief, even western scholars admit that the Islam can be characterized by those perceptions of “endurance, tolerance, fairness, and the belief that all Muslims are brothers” (Choudhury, 1990: 21).

3) The Islam advocates that “those who rule the world for Allah” shall piously adhere to the laws of Allah and do benevolent things. “Piety to Allah’s laws” and “benevolence” should simultaneously cherished as dual doctrines of the Islam that should be observed by all the Muslim rulers. Therefore it is emphasized that “the identity of those who rule for Allah pre-determines that they should provide Tawhid-based good governance to the lands on behalf of Allah, and they should not limit their duties to the self cultivation of the five

^① The Quotations of the *Quran* in this article are all taken from the Chinese Version translated by MA Jian, Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1981.

daily ritual prayers offered to Allah". "Every man who rules for Allah should do his best to persuade people to approach virtues and refrain from vice, to rescue those in danger and relieve those in poverty, to take an effort to promote public interest, and to be ready to help others, which shall become an integral part of the nature and character of each ruler. For rulers, it would be a serious violation of moral doctrines if he solely protects his own interest without a consideration of the macro public interest, or even promotes his own interest at the expense of the interests of other people"(Li, F.) The Islamic idea of ruling for Allah refers to the thoughts of "introducing the reign of the heaven to the earth so that people are able to determine their own affairs and take the responsibilities of their own deeds". This actually suggests that people should be given the sovereign on their own activities (Yang, Q., 2000: 140). In this way, the disparity between "the sovereign of the god" and "the sovereign of the people" are skillfully eliminated, with coherence successfully created.

4) The Islam advocates that "persuading people to approach the virtues and refrain from vice" should be valued as one of the three major obligations of a sincere and pious disciple of Islam. The ideological system of Islam can be summarized into six major faiths (the faiths on Allah, angels, scriptures, heralds, previous existence, and afterlife), five major ritual prayers (praise, worship, fast, charity, and pilgrimage), and three major obligations (preach of Islam, endeavor, and persuading people to approach the virtues and refrain from the vice). The *Holy Quran* repeatedly declares that a pious and sincere disciple of Islam should be honored with a major obligation to persuade people to approach the virtues and refrain from the vice. In addition to that, the Hadith also points out that a Muslim should not only accomplish his own perfection, but also contribute his effort to assist the people in the world, so it argues that persuading people to approach the virtues and refrain from the vice should be valued as a good way for Muslims to achieve their own perfections.

The Islamic forms of the practice of democracy are as follows.

1) The “Shura” tradition of the Arab tribes has a profound influence over the democratic practices of Islam. The word “Shura” in Arab language originally means “consultancy” or “deliberation”. It was later codified as one the major theoretic doctrines of sharia, and elaborated as a practice that most important affairs of a community or state are determined by collective negotiations or consultancy. Therefore it was an original and ancient tradition of consultation and deliberation amongst the Arab tribes. Confirmed by the Islamic religion, it is passed down from ancient times. Quran takes Shura as the title for its chapter 42 and put a stress on rulers’ obligation to be in full consultation with the public. So Shura gradually became a basic principle for negotiation and consultancy. Particularly, during the age of the Four Great Caliphs, the principle of Shura developed a connotation of seeking advice, consultation, and recommendation. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Great Caliph, on his death designated six persons to form a Shura conference to fulfill the duty of consultation and discussion for recommending a new Caliph. However, since Muawiyah’s seizure of power, Shura was gradually downgraded into a empty body of consultancy, and a system of hereditary appeared. In this way, the Shura lost its effect of checking the Islamic regime (Wang, L., 2007: 155).

Ibn Taymiyah, the famous jurist of the Al Hanbaliyah School in 14th century advocated that caliph (sultan or Imam) need not be very erudite or learned on sharia, because professional Islamic scholars, who should have a skillful and sophisticated command on the knowledge of sharia, could tackle those legal affairs through collective consultations. Since then Shura was again put into serious considerations by sharia scholars and jurists as a kind of political principle. In modern history, particularly since the beginning of 19th century, Islamic modernists and fundamentalists reinterpreted it. Particularly, Sayyid Qutb of Egypt argued that an Islamic country that deserved its name should take “sharia (Islamic laws)” as its most fundament law and implement extensive political consultative systems. Moreover, Maududi of

Pakistan called it as the “Islamic system of democracy”. As the Islamic rejuvenation movement took a dramatic rise from the 1970s, the various fundamentalist factions and sects further reinterpreted the Islamic political consultative system and requested that their ruling governments should enforce this system.

2) The principle of “ijma” for public consultations, which emphasizes a “unanimous consensus”, could provide legal basis of civil participation mechanism for those Islamic countries. The original word of “ijma” in Arab means “determining to do something”, “unanimous consensus”, “universal agreement”, and “collective consistency”. In brief, the “ijma” is regarded as “the legal verdict over some specific issue, which is made by domestic scholars qualified for legal inference through universal consensus in a certain age after the pass-away of the Prophet Muhammad”.

“Ijma” is treated as the third most important sources of sharia following the *Holy Quran* and Hadith, and also taken on as one of the most outstanding legal sources for analogous inference based on the opinion of the majority. At the turnover between 8th and 9th centuries, most scholars of sharia took the civil customs of local Muslim communities as their theoretic basis for their jurisprudence, and shaped various schools of jurisprudent thought. In this way, the opinion that “ijma will never be wrong” was formed. The celebrated Islamic jurist al Shafi’i advocated that the uniformed will of all the Muslims of the world should be treated as the most authoritative basis for Islamic legislature, which could be reflected through unanimous agreed resolutions of learned and authoritative jurists. After the 9th century, although the original status of “ijma” was relatively restored by jurists, the al Shafi’i’s concept of “ijma” was still cherished as the theoretic evidence that could be used to certify the legitimacy of something, which was justified by the opinion that the general public of Muslims owned unique capacities of differentiating good from evil and distinguishing right from wrong because of their enlightenment brought by the blessing of the Allah. However, the Al Hanbaliyah

School of sharia scholarship had some reservations on it, because Ibn Taymiyah, the famous scholar of this faction argued that the jurists of later generations shall have the freedom to create legal practices, and shall not be restricted by the traditional "ijma".

Since the beginning of the modern history, for the purpose of rejuvenating the Islamic sharia, many scholars dissented with the opinion that "the ijma will never be wrong" and thought that the modern ijma should be a kind of Islamic legislative conference attended by various factions of sharia scholarship, political parties, groups, and representatives from diverse sections of the countries, who should be elected by the general public. It might be defined that "participation" is the preliminary condition of "ijma", and "unanimous agreement" should be its consequence. Only when all the Muslims participated could a kind of unanimous agreement be created. The supreme goal of "ijma" is the unanimous opinion of the whole population of Muslims, which means a great importance is attached to the unanimous participation of all the Muslims into political activities and social lives (Wang, L., 2007: 163).

(3) "Ijtihad" is a mechanism of self-renovation of the Islamic civilization that could play an active role of promotion to the Islamic democratic practices. The original meaning of the word "ijtihad" in Arab was "effort" and "diligence" that could be interpreted as "renovation". To be more specific, when tackling new situations, matters, and problems emerging from current historic conditions, the authorities of the sharia scholarship should use their wisdoms to infer a series of conclusions and doctrines consistent to the general principles of the sharia system through methods of ijma and analogy in accordance with the fundamental essence of Quran and Hadith. The whole process of their reasoning, including their reinterpretations and implementations of Quran and Hadith, as well as their formulation of new rules, could be summarized as the Ijtihad.

Ijtihad can be divided into the "Ijtihad Kamili" (the complete renovations, which refers to the specific creation and explanation on

the rules) and the "Ijtihad Tehleiji" (the creative renovations, which refers to studies on the new things that have never been contacted by predecessors). In the early stage of the history of sharia, the essence and basic requests of ijti had had already been established. The Prophet Muhammad and the Four Grand Caliphs all dealt with new problems by taking inference from the texts of Quran, so the jurists of later generations were able to learn their precedents and create new rules. During the 8th and 9th centuries, the Ijtihad entered a period of flourishing and development. In the discipline of sharia, amid the emerging of various ideas and thoughts, a diversity of schools and factions of sharia scholarship were created, such as al Hanafiyyah, Malik, al Shafi'I, and Al Hanbaliyah. After mid 10th century the door to the creative ijti had was closed, but it was re-opened since 17th century by many Islamic scholars. After the 1970s, many Sunni scholars again advocate the re-opening of the door to the ijti had. In brief, ijti had created a broad road for the development of the sharia, and enriched the explaining power of the Islamic civilization towards the reality in pace with the continuous rise of new things. Therefore, it might be concluded that the Islamic civilization depends on its self-renovation mechanism of ijti had for its gradual opening and prosperity, otherwise the Islam might fall into decline. This is because the ijti had contains the adaptability of Islam to the modern society and the reinterpretation of Islam in accordance with the demands of the time. From this understanding could be derived the significance of ijti had towards democratic practices (Wang, L., 2007: 163).

With strong cravings for democracy and influenced by the Islamic democratic ideas of fairness, justice, ruling for the Allah, shura, ijma, and ijti had, Muslims could be mobilized in their pursuits for democracy, and "a kind of adherence could be created between peoples of different skin colors, different nations, different countries, different classes, different positions, different thoughts and customs, different political attitudes, different cultural levels, and different ages. In this way, a kind of social entity based on common faith, worships,

organizational forms, creeds, doctrines, rituals, and modes of activities could be established.” (Zhang, T., 1991: 4). Aspired by all these Islamic democratic ideas, 1.5 billion Muslims of the whole world are united with each other through a common system of faith that combines historical traditions, spiritual pursuits, values, and lifestyles. The common Islamic identification that “all Muslims are brothers” blends factors of blood ties with religious connections, thus strengthening the solidarity and stability of the Islamic faith commonwealth. Therefore each individual Muslim could be aspired to take actions of support by their sympathetic emotions of brotherhood. It is this emotional connection that creates domino effect in the Arab world since the breakout of the pro-democratic movements in Tunisia and Egypt.

It is reflected as follows. 1) The extensive protests and demonstrations against ruling governments by Muslims in the Arab countries, particularly by the young elite groups, can be viewed as a kind of resistance against a series of social injustices, such as corrupted bureaucracies, serious inflations, soaring prices, and constant high level unemployment rates. All these social injustices, which were aggravated by the global financial crisis, resulted from the deviations of ruling Arab governments from the Islamic principles of fairness and justice. So it is righteous for the Muslims in the Middle East region to make large scaled protests and demonstrations in the streets.

2) In this so-called “Arab Spring”, Muslims of various Arab countries expressed their similar requests that those tyrannical dictators should resign from power, reflecting their wishes to achieve reforms through regime changes. This means that those Arab rulers who ruled for the Allah violated the fundamental Islamic ideas of governance in the policy level and committed countless atrocities in their practices, which inevitably stimulated widespread resentment from commoners. Therefore the qualifications of “those who rule for the Allah”, particularly their degrees of observations to the Islamic principle of reverence to the Allah and benevolence to their peoples, are closely connected to the degrees of tension or intimacy between

Islamic religion and politics, and also at the same time linked to the stability and development of their societies.

3) The Shura tradition did not form a series of strict or effective procedures or institutions for actual operation, and the Shura conferences usually consist of core members in charge of substantial power (Wang, L., 2007: 135). However, the Shura and ijma to some extent promote the participation of collective bargaining from various social levels, because of the practice of the principle of ijma and its advocacy for "unanimous agreement" that attaches great importance to the participation by the whole population of Muslims into politics. Such participation is similar to the civil participation principle in the typical theories and ideas of democracy. Anyway, the actual vitality of Islamic democracy has been embodied in the unique forms of Islamic public life, such as the Shura conference held in the house of tribal patriarchs, the collective "ijma" in the mosque, and the current mass protests in the squares. These are the ways in which Muslims take part in democracies.

Nevertheless, the westerners universally employ the term "democracy deficit" to describe the political realities of the Arab countries. Some western scholars, such as Samuel Huntington, even clamored the "Islamic exceptionalism", arguing that "the barriers of many Islamic countries to democracy are basically cultural" (Huntington, S., 1998: 379). After 9/11, some experts of Middle East affairs such as Bernard Lewis and Martin Cremer concluded that the roots of the terrorist attack against US lie in the domestic problems of the Islamic societies-the lack of democracy and freedom. However, Gorbachev, the former Soviet president, maintained that "the religion of Islam contains great potential to pursue social justice and peace. If these values could be defended, Islam will enjoy a grand prospect. Nowadays, in such countries as Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia, the democratic process and economic achievement have become a reality. When all these examples are taken into considerations, optimism can be reasonably established." (Gorbachev, 2011: February 24). The

Turkish Premier Erdogan pointed out in his speech made in Harvard University in January 2003 that “the Turkish model certifies the incorrectness of the exceptionalism”, that “democracy is not an exclusive right that could only be enjoyed by some special groups of the society,” and that “democracy is universal and should be regarded as a basic demand of modern life” (Altunisik, 2005: 56).

In fact, the Middle East is a region where the first powerful state of the world appeared about 5,000 years ago, and where Turkey, Iran, and many other Arab countries own rich experiences of democratic political operations because of their existing parliamentary systems. Compared to the Western democracy, Islamic democracy contains outstanding Islamic characteristics although it is still outlined by the basic principles of democratic politics (Ma, L., 2007: 228). In other words, Islam is not completely consistent with the democratic liberty, but nor is it inherently contradictory to it. It is true that the democratic politics has been on a very slow pace in the Islamic world, but that does not mean that Islamic culture endogenously rejects democracy. The slow pace only indicates that there exists a problem of how to coordinate with and adapt to each other. It might be concluded from a perception of the evolution of the world that the Islamic world is now confronted with the problem of how to absorb democratic elements into its own system and how to get democracy Islamized (Gao, 2005: 83).

Furthermore, “there is a rather elusive relation between Islam and democracy. Islam could be both used to support some democratic ideas and utilized to act as a basis for opposing democracy. The amounts of opposition or support it could provide is determined by the specific methods to interpret the religion of Islam, and by the specific social, economic, and political environments that interact with the Islam. The Islamic value could either strengthen or restrict the democratization process through its influence on the society, politics, economy, and culture.” (Wang, L., 2007: 135). So “the Islamic traditions cannot be evaluated in an isolated way, and the best understanding

over Islam can only be based on an overview on the unique features of Muslims against the global background of democratization.” Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the Arab countries are still lagged behind the overall pace and speed of democratization process of the world, which is really a unique situation in the world politics. After the 9/11, the US government has been accelerating the pace of political realignment and “democratic transformation” in the Middle East region, under its slogans of “anti-terrorism”, “nuclear non-proliferation”, and “promotion of democracy”. These measures not only deal a great impact on the national regimes of the Arab world, but also stimulate a lot of general concerns over the major issues of the Arab democratizations. On February 19th, 2004, the Saudi Arabia newspaper *Life* criticized the “Grand Middle East Initiative” advocated by the George W. Bush administration, and pointed out its four major mistakes:

“The first mistake is imposing an external will onto the countries in this region. The second one is a lack of confidence for responding to the missions of reforms of those Arab states. The third one is negligence on the major problems facing the Arab states. The fourth one is ignorance on the natures and characteristics of the countries and peoples in the target of this proposal. Therefore the Arabs must refuse any external reform plans.” (Gao, 2005: 83).

On March 12th, 2004, the Alexandria Convention assembled by the President Mubarak declared that “they believe that reform is an urgent and necessary problem whose major motive originates from inside the Arab societies and shall satisfy those democratic desires to formulate a complete reform plan aiming at a systematic transformation on all the sections of a nation, including the politics, economy, society, and culture” (Gao, 2005: 241).

This narration emphasized that “the more closely the Arab democratic movement follows the local traditions, the more actively it gets itself connected to the Quran and responds to the Islamic advocacy of promoting freedom, the more powerful it will surely

become. In the Arab world, the principle of justice is superior to the idea of freedom. Therefore, now the best excuse for current Arab regimes to slander the so-called harmful western influence is to adopt an attitude of patriarchic arrogance of moral complacency." (*International Herald Tribune*, 2005: March 25). Moreover, "the uniqueness and complexity of the state-religion relations of the Middle East region determines the toughness and long-term sluggishness of democratization of this region." (Wang, L., 2007: 144; 200). Pressed by the "Grand Middle East Initiative" of the Bush administration in 2004, the Arab people finally managed to get an access to the ballot boxes. However, those radical Islamic organizations that won the elections on ballot, such as Hamas, cannot be sincerely accepted by the western world, nor can they bring real democracy for these Arab countries.

The agora protests that swept across the Arab world, which originated from inside the Arab societies and collectively expressed the Muslims' hopes to formulate a complete reform plan aiming at a systematic transformation on all the sections of a nation, including the politics, economy, society, and culture", can be defined as an endogenous democratic movement, which has been mainly agitated by the new media and become a totally unexpected surprise. Now it seems that the general profile of the Arab democratic practice has been partly revealed as follows: 1) The democratic pursuits of the Arab countries are expressed by the mass rallies on the squares of central cities. 2) The social democratic basis is constructed through the extensive participation of common people that constitute the majority of the mass rallies. 3) The democratic desires and expectations of Arab people cover almost all the fields of their countries, including the deliberately obscured issue of Middle East peace process. 4) This Arab Spring movement has created a strong domino effect and evolved along these several stages: the stage of mass rallies participated mainly by the social elite of the Arab youth→the stage of regime changes shaped by the military and economic interferences made by western

powers→the stage of reconstruction and social transformation promoted and participated by the international community→the stage of twists and turns of the Arab democratic movement pushed by different social groups of the Arab world. 5) The democratic practices of the Arab countries again certifies that democracy cannot be transplanted or molded in a hasty, and that the real democratic goal of the “Grand Middle East” should be fulfilled through a path of an unique democratic politics that combines the cultural dignity with the interests of nation states.

In summary, this endogenous Arab democratic movement again overthrew the so-called “Islamic exceptionalism”. Ali Gomaa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, argued that “Islam shall own a seat in the Egyptian democracy, and will become a support to the freedom and tolerance, not a means of repression.” (Gomma, 2011: April 2). Even western scholars admit that “as one of the largest religions of the world, Islam plays a critical role in the evolving events happening in the North Africa and Middle East region, which indicates that the currently developing situational change brings the hope to construct a fair and benevolent new political regime despite of all kinds of risks and dangers in this process. Anyway, fairness and benevolence are still the two major columns of the faith of the Islam. To our western world, this means we shall eliminate some long term maliciousness towards Muslims and Arab.” (Carol, 2011: March 10).

II. The Increasingly Apparent “Realignment and Split” of Various Islamic Factions

This Arab democratic movement also contributes to the ups and downs of the various Islamic factions in the Middle East, which is now dominated by the trend of “Realignment and split”.

1. The Gradually Declining Appealing of the Islamic Extremism

After the 9/11, the Arab-Islamic world is confronted with a dilemma: to take the US side and repress the Islamic extremism, or to

protect Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda? If they chose the former option, they would take tremendous risks because they would be regarded as participating into anti-Muslim western alliance. On the other hand, they would be regarded as a peer of the "axis of evil" in collaboration with the terrorists and punished by US military actions and embargos if they chose the latter option. As a matter of fact, bin Laden had been able to find sympathizers and even followers in almost each Islamic country because of the simple instinctive identification of the Pan-Arab commonwealth of faith, which had been verified by the "increasing number of terrorists appearing from increasing anti-terrorist actions" during the past decade of American anti-terrorist campaigns. However, as the Arab countries are increasingly marginalized in the process of globalization, someone appeals that "it is time that we transfer indignation into strength, melancholy into work, criticism and condemnation into responsible actions and meticulous plans." (Baha'al-Din, 2005: 45). The Arab democratic movement of 2011 showed at the extremist ideology of the Al Qaeda had apparently lost its appealing, as its long term "3+1" model (which meant to use Jihad to fight against "the major three enemies: US, Israel, and pro-US Arab states") had been seriously overshadowed by the newly emerging waves of Arab indigenous democratic movement. The surging waves of Arab mass movements are circumventing the two core principles of the Al Qaeda's doctrines: violence and religious fever. Reconsidering the Islamic religion and supporting democracy, the protesters of these movements only used restrained defensive force, a phenomenon that bin Laden and his followers were reluctant to see (Shane, 2011: February 27).

In other words, the masses of the Arab world overthrew the pro-US Arab states such as Tunisia and Egypt through such methods as mass rallies and protests on the square. They expressed their strong dissatisfactions against external interferences from US and other western powers and dealt a huge blow to the domestic and foreign policies of Israel. This means that they have to some extent fulfilled

the “major three goals” of the Al Qaeda by peaceful means and completely negated its “3+1” model. Therefore, “the situational changes of the Arab countries in 2011 should be regarded as a kind of strategic failure for the Jihad soldiers advocating violent means”, because “here we see a movement that is far more extensive, participated into by more members, and a lot more influential than the movement of 2001” (Shane, 2011: February 27). On May 1st, 2011, Osama bin Laden was shot to death by US, and On May 28th a branch of the Al Qaeda declared that they established an “Islamic Emirate” in the south of Yemen. All these events indicated that the Al Qaeda is not a major player of this Arab democratic movement, but an onlooker that has been seriously weakened in recent years and attempts to take some advantage from the disrupted circumstances (Ma, X., 2012: 102).

2. The Expanded Influence of the Islamic Centristism

Some Arab advocates of the “centristism”, such as Yussuf Gordwin, argued that any “inadequate” or “excessive” words or deeds run counter to the faith of Islam, so any terrorist activities in the name of Islam fundamentally violate the true nature of peace of the Islam. They think that only when the complex political, economic, and military roots that have nurtured the terrorism in domestic and foreign affairs are eradicated, could it be possible to completely destroy terrorism. In this sense, anti-terrorism must be operated simultaneously with the practices of opposing hegemony and power politics. They also argue that a process of social reform and democratization should be regarded as the priority to tackle Islamic-Arab social difficulties. So the Ijtihad of Sharia should develop forward in pace with the marching of time, absorbing new elements and disposing of obsolete parts, because it is an anachronism to maintain outmoded ways or preserve traditions that are incompatible to modern life. As the time and space is changing continuously, and the society is evolving endlessly, it is requested that the “textual jurisprudence” be transferred into “fluid jurisprudence”. Standing the point of current time, we shall take a balanced review over some of the

opinions or ideas that were adopted in the historic past (Wang, T., 2010).

In brief, the “Islamic Centrism” aims at offering a guidance to “establish an impartial and balanced religious value, a peaceful and democratic political value, a pluralist dialogue for the coexistence of diverse civilizations, a viewpoint of legal reform over the Ijtihad of Sharia, and an idea of fair and harmonious social development. It regards centrism, fairness, and tolerance as its policies for the purpose of drawing a definite line between itself and the ideologies of extremism and terrorism” (Zhu, W., 2010: August 18), so that the prejudice of the west towards Arab-Islamic world and its misinterpretation on the core values of the Islamic civilization can be revised and corrected to some degree. Not a completely new value, the thoughts of “centrism” insists on its own cultural roots, with an effort to make cultural innovations through a resort to the centrist Islamic thoughts and its capacity of self-renewal, so as to offer a kind of methodology and a roadmap for practice that can be used to respond to the challenges of globalization and to sort out an appropriate path of development. In this way, it is hoped that the Islamic world can be able to achieve its self-relief, self-adjustment, and self-renewal. Owing to its tremendous theoretic and practical significance, the idea of “centrism” has attracted extensive attention from the Arab-Islamic world. For example, a Centrist Party was established in Egypt in 1996, and relevant institutions for the research and publicity of this ideology has been established in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, with some research achievements already published in some newspapers of western countries (Wang, T., 2010). In the recent Arab democratic movement, the influence of the idea of “Centrism” has been spread to social groups of grassroots from social elites, which helps to publicize the core Islamic value of “peace and centrism” to the whole society and resist the negative effect of the opinion of “Islamic Threat”. Moreover, it also helps to construct a multi-value system in the structure of global governance.

3. The Rise of Moderate Islamic Forces as Important Political Strengths of the Middle East

In the most recent parliamentary elections that appeared in this Arab democratic movement, some moderate Islamic groups, such as the Islamic Renaissance Movement of Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party of Morocco, the Freedom and Justice Party and the Illuminati Party, stepped onto the front stage one by one. Meanwhile the leadership of the Libyan Transitional Committee claimed that they will base their legislature on the Islamic religion. These signs show the rise of moderate Islamic forces through the parliamentary path. "The new generation of Arab-Islamic intellectuals indicates their flexible gestures to get adapted to the globalized world without abandoning their own values" (Makarkin, 2011: October 27). The most outstanding case in this situation might be the Muslim Brotherhood, which was established in 1928. As a mass organization for Muslims that originated from Egypt and spread its influence all across the Middle East and even the whole globe, it is regarded as an Islamic political organization that enjoys the longest existence of modern history, and owns the largest membership, the most tightly organized structure, and the most extensive influence, amongst all the Islamic political organizations of the world. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has been enjoying enormous popular support for its long standing reputation of sponsoring social charities in mosques, and its unwavering anti-US and anti-Israel stand. It got involved into political struggles from social and cultural activities in 1938, setting up an ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic state. After 1982, it claimed to abandon activities of violence so as to keep itself from radical and extreme Islamic forces, and began to indirectly participate into parliamentary politics. In the Egyptian Parliamentary election of 2005, it won 88 seats and became the largest opposition party. In the 2010 parliamentary election, it did not win any seat, so it launched a boycott against the 2nd round of election.

In April of 2011, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood established

the Freedom and Justice Party, which might enable it to obtain the control over the future of Egypt through democratic electoral procedures. Its maturity and modesty that has been fully reflected in the most recent Egyptian social transition process, will not only play a shaping role in the political trend and national future of Egypt during the "Post-Mubarak" age, but also have a far-reaching effect on the peace and development of that region and the whole world. Although western scholars admit that "the Islamists will get a complete victory in a fair and just election", they are worried about the reemergence of the "Iran Model". In fact, the victories of the Islamists in the Arab world have never led to a rule of theocracy, and it is even more impossible for those newly elected Islamists to establish theocracy at present. "The development of Islamism is a special response of Muslim society towards an accelerated westernization. There are over 1 billion Muslims and over 50 Islamic countries in the world. Meanwhile Muslim communities exist in over 120 countries. This has created many problems in the international relations that involve the national interests of almost all the world powers and many other countries through geopolitics." So "the politicized Islam has become an integral part of the political lives of almost all the countries in the Arab Orient".

Its actual social and economic achievements might be far from fulfillment of its multitude of promises. However, it has to be admitted that its ideology still has a great influence over Muslim inhabitants." Furthermore, "the contemporary ideology of Islam has a transnational influence that is sensitive to any political change of the Middle East, so it is already impossible to eliminate the hotbeds of politicized Islamism one by one within separate national borders." (*A Geopolitical View on Kazakhstan's Taking the Rotating Presidency in the Islamic Cooperation Organization*, 2011: June 29).

The 2005 "Transformation of the Grand Middle East" led by the US resulted in the victory of the Islamic radicals such as Hamas in the elections, which has been termed as "a hijack to democracy". The 2011

Arab democratic movement has created the increasingly apparent trend of “realignment and split” of various Islamic forces, which is a very special phenomenon in the waves of democratization of the world as well as an important situation of the evolving Arab democratization movement. This situation can be explained from the following perspectives.

First, this is a reflection of the Arab mass pursuits for political changes.

The global financial crisis has inevitably created a series of serious social problems, such as wide disparity between the rich and the poor, the soaring prices, the high level of unemployment, and the dramatic increase of population. The so-called “youth of U generation” (*The Arab Spring*, 2011: July) between the ages of 16~30, who are unfulfilled, not included into the society, underemployed, and underestimated, gradually became the major anti-government force. This specific group accounts for a majority of the Arab population, who become the sympathizers and even followers of Osama bin Laden after US launched the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War for the revenge of 9/11 attack. Some of them were even listed as the major target for the recruit of Jihad soldiers by the Islamic extremist organizations, such as the Al Qaeda and the Taliban. As the social-economic conditions of the Arab societies are continuously deteriorated, “the Arab spirit has been fragmented by poverty, unemployment, and widespread declines” (Lancaster, 2011: February). The self-immolation of Mohammed, a Tunisian youth of the “U-generation”, finally detonated the fire of the Arab democratic movement. The living conditions of the Arab youth, a miniature of the impoverished material and spiritual lives of the general public of the Arab world, became the fuse leading to the extensive Arab social movement expressing their requests against background of worldwide economic crisis. This means that the demands and requests of the masses of the Arab world has been transformed from past populist hatred against “Western heretics” through a way of “blood for blood” during the period of 9/11, into a

pursuit for social and democratic reforms integrating themselves into the globalization. Under such circumstances, the appealing of the Islamist extremism inevitably declines.

Second, this is an embodiment of the reconstruction of the core value of the Islamic civilization.

After 9/11, the Western media recklessly propagated the talk of "Islamic Terrorism", and connected the 9/11 and terrorism with what was happening in the Arab countries. They tried to take advantage of the unfortunate contingency to convince the world that the terrorism should be attributed to the Islam and the Arab. In this way, they confused legitimate self-defense with aggression, national liberation movement with terrorist activities, and sacrifice for justice with terrorist suicide (Zhu, W., 2010: August 18). As a result, the Islam became the scapegoat. It is not fair. The Islam is based on the classics that crystallize the true rules of the world, and attaches great importance to the interpretation of the Islamic classics such as *the Holy Quran* and the Hadith. However, many disagreements appeared not only in the world external to the Islam, but also inside the Islamic world itself, due to the diversity of the explainers and the inherent complexity of Islamic civilization, and because of the aphasia of the whole Muslim population being on the defensive position after 9/11. The ambiguousness on the thesis of "whether Islam is peaceful or violent" is not only related to the perception of the core value of the Islamic civilization, but also linked to the value orientations of the ideologies of the Arab-Islamic states, and even connected to the problem of how to get Islam integrated into the pluralist system of world civilizations. The politicians, priests, and intellectuals of the Islam, are jointly endeavoring to reconstruct the core value of the Islam through an inheritance to the Ijtihad tradition, and an effort to get the interpretations of Quran and Hadith adapted to the current mainstream spirit of the time, for the purpose of recovering the true nature of peace of the Islam. This endeavor is exemplified by the "dialogues between civilizations" advocated by former Iranian

President Khatami, the “Month of Imam Preach” organized by the Al-Azhar University, and the historic meeting between Saudi Arabian King Abdulla and Pope Benedict XVI. The continuous expansion of the Islamic centrism in this most recent Arab democratic movement, means that “peace and development” has become an widespread consensus among the Arab societies and that Middle East Muslims are now unavoidably making an exploration for a possible global identification across diverse ethnic groups, religious factions, and regions, which might lead them out of the muddle of being marginalization in the globalization process.

Finally, this is an indication that the Arab Muslims try to relieve themselves from the dilemma between “peace and democracy”.

Ever since the Arabs lost of their holy land of Jerusalem in 1967, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been gradually upgraded into a conflict between the whole Arab or even Islamic world, and the Western world. “All the Islamic countries regarded Israel as the biggest threat to the Islam, and the biggest menace to this region.”(Associated Press, 1997: December 6). Driven by this strong sense of Islamic identification, the “issue of Palestine” has become the core interest of the Arab-Islamic world and also the great concern of the Arab democratic reform. In the *Issues of Arab Reform: Plan and Implementation*, published on the Arab World in 2004, it is emphasized that:

“This plan should fully reflect the general and structural requests of the common characteristics of the Arab societies, and at the same time enable various parties to solve their own problems. Such a plan shall permit each society to come up with its own reform plan, and at the same time avoid mutual isolation from each other. Furthermore, this plan shall be able to lay a sound foundation for the regional cooperation and convert the Arab countries into a active player on the international stage. However, the internal reform shall not distract us from dealing with most urgent regional issues, of which the most important one shall be to offer a fair solution to the Palestinian issue

on the basis of the international resolutions.” (Gao, 2005: 83).

This document of outline clearly ranks the “fair solution to the Palestinian issue on the basis of international resolutions” as the “most important” one of all the regional issues, with a separation of “the Arab Model” from the “Turkish Model” and the “Iranian Model”. To the Arab nation, the relation between “the Palestinian issue” and the Arab reform is actually an issue dealing with the relations between peace and democracy, and between peace and development. Although externally pressed by “the Grand Middle East Transformation” launched by the Bush administration, the common people of the Palestine still cast their votes for the radical Islamic forces such as Hamas in the year 2006, pushing them to the front stage, and failing the hope of “peace and democracy”. In 2011 the Arab mass put their hopes on the moderate Islamic forces such as the Muslim Brotherhood, so as to get loose from the dilemma of “peace and democracy”. As matter of fact, the “Palestine Issue” has become an excuse used by those Arab rulers who plotted to repress democracy, reject reform, and transfer their domestic dissatisfaction to external affairs, which has entrapped the “peace” and “democracy” of the Middle East into difficulty. On the one hand, the “Palestine Issue” becomes the loincloth used by the Arab ruling class to cover up their unwillingness to take reform, which means that peace has become a barrier to democratic reform. On the other hand, the “Palestine Issue” on some occasions becomes a symbol for these rulers to win support from common people and deepen their democratic reforms, which means that peace could act as a force driving democracy. Meanwhile some Western policy makers think that an acceleration of the Israel-Palestine peace process can appease the general public. However, they have not taken into consideration the fact that the Arabs have already alienated themselves from the current peace-making effort, because the Arabs regard the effort as a foreign plan, not a domestic plan. They even “take it for granted that a peace agreement can be accepted by the masses of the Arabs as long as it is

accepted by the leaderships of both Western and Arab states. Nevertheless, such an agreement is more likely to be treated as an imposing unequal agreement and be criticized as liquidation to their cherished course.

The downfall of Mubarak in 2011 and his trial can be regarded as a kind of liquidation for his policy of protecting the interest of US and Israel on "the Palestine Issue" that damaged the interest of the Arab state, nation, and its religion. In this sense, the western policy makers are also revenged for their "trick" of taking "the Palestine Issue" as "a tactic" to deal with the Muslims. In 2011, a US-sponsored international survey shows that the Arabs regard both the "Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory" and the "US intervention into Arab countries" as the largest barriers to the peace and stability of the Middle East. Obama has got his image seriously damaged after he dealt with the Palestine-Israel issue because the two matters on which he had input huge amount of time and energy got only lowest rates of agreement, less than 9%. "The decline of the American prestige can be taken on as the disillusion of the high expectancy brought by the inauguration of Obama, who had created not the problem, but the expectancy that the existing problem can be resolved." (Halif-Ramo, 2011: July 20).

It is quite obvious that neither Mubarak nor Obama had been able to resolve the dilemma of "peace and democracy" in the Arab world. The only viable salvage comes from the Arab people themselves. So the most recent Arab democratic movement brought the issue of Palestinian nation building after the Egyptian people overthrew the pro-American Mubarak. A series of events after the overthrow of Mubarak, such as the Egypt-Israel border conflict, the Palestine-Israel exchange of prisoners of war, the Palestinian application for UN membership, and the Palestinian participation into the UNESCO, indicate that the Arab Spring has already had an effect of promoting the Middle East peace process. From the point of view of the Arab scholars, this Arab Spring highlighted a series of core values, such as the freedom, justice, fairness, and dignity, and the Arab general public

played the role of leadership in this movement. This means that the recognition of the specific identities of social groups is a fundamental and universal human demand, to which the Palestinians are no exception." Therefore it is rightful for Palestinians to apply for a membership in UN, and it is the right time for the international community and the US in particular, to recognize and meet this demand, because this recognition is not only important to Palestinians, but also critical to the spirit of the Arab Spring." The effect of this Arab Spring towards the Middle East peace process will gradually reveal itself to the world.

In summary, promoted by this Arab democratic movement, the "realignment and split" of various Islamic forces will become increasingly apparent as a general trend for the future. Meanwhile the Islam will turn out to be more and more politicized, secularized, and tolerant, which can be treated as a basic impetus of Islam to deal with the challenges of globalization. In this way, integration will take the place of confrontation as a rational choice in conformity to the evolution of history. Furthermore, the essence of this "realignment and split" of various Islamic forces is an adjustment of the social demands, values, and behavioral modes of the Arab people in their response to the challenges of globalization, which refracts the profound changes in the politics, economy, and culture during the social transformation process of the Arab world. In brief, the "realignment and split" of various Islamic forces become one of the most outstanding characteristics of the temporary pains of the Arab societies.

III. The Complex Political Effect Created by the Inside-Out Confrontations between Various Religious Factions

In 632 A.D., Prophet Muhammad passed away and the internal factional struggles were exploded by the discussion on the issue of successor. The whole Islamic religion was split into two major factions:

the Sunnis and the Shias. The word "Sunni" originally meant "the followers of traditions" in Arab, because this faction regarded all the caliphs as legitimate rulers and later became the orthodox and majority of the Islam, whose population account for over 85% of all the Muslims of the world. The word "Shia" originally meant "the follower" or "party" in the Arab, as this faction argued that only the relatives and direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad were qualified for the throne of caliphs and that all the other caliphs were usurpers. They later became the minority of the Islamic religion and accounts for around 15% of all the Muslims of the world.

The commonalities of these two factions include: faiths to the "Six Major Beliefs", the "Five Daily Ritual Prayers offered to Allah", and the "Three Obligations" of the Islam. On the other hand, their differences include the following points. 1) The Shias believe Imam, and they are split into sub-factions in accordance with their definitions of the legitimate numbers and the degrees of holiness of the imams. 2) The Sunnis take the "major Six Hadiths" as their sources of legislature, which is represented by the Al-Bukhari's Account of Hadiths, while the Shias regard the "Four Major Collections of Hadiths" as their source of legislature, which is represented by the Complete Works of the Religion. 3) The Shias established a religious system of hierarchy including the Grand Ayatollah, the Ayatollah, and the Hojatoleslam, and only a very small number of Shia scholars (Ulamā) can climb to the rank of Grand Ayatollah, such as the late Iranian Supreme Spiritual Leader Khomeini. 4) In addition to the major three holy cities of the Islam, the Shias have their own holy cities, such as the Najaf and Karbala of Iraq, and the Mashhad of Iran.

Because of their profound disagreement on the doctrines and Sharia of Islam, the Sunnis and the Shias continuously confronted and conflicted against each other for a long time, and even fought wars for determining the qualified successor to the Prophet Muhammad. The deep-rooted historic resentment and grievance have turned their split into the largest source of internal strife of the Islam.

In addition to the disagreement on doctrines and the resentment originating from history, the factional struggles can also be traced to the colonial ruling of modern history. At that time, in consideration of their own interests, the European rulers decided to take advantage of the local diversity of the religious factions and ethnic groups, and transferred to the minority the major rights of representation in the colonial troops and governments. As a result, those Arab states born from the colonialism gradually evolved into tyrannies, although they had been expected to achieve a religious solidarity for all the factions. When these Arab states suffered severe defeats on the battlefields and the internal governance, the factional prejudices were even deepened. The Arab societies have been so deeply influenced by such circumstances that their motive for solidarity has never been sufficient to converge the various tribes, religious factions, and ethnic groups (*If the Arab Spring Changes Its Course*, 2011: August 27). Particularly, when the British ruled the Middle East, they adopted a policy of propping up the minority to rule the majority, which not only transferred the local dissatisfaction towards colonial rulers, but also made local rulers completely depend on British colonialists to maintain their ruling. The Shias have been the majority faction in the Gulf Region, but all the Gulf countries, except Iran, have been controlled by the Sunnis, which nurtures continuous and fierce factional struggles. (See Table 1)

Table 1: The Proportion of Population of Two Major Islamic Factions in Gulf Countries^①

States	Percentage of Shia Population to the Total	Percentage of Sunni Population to the Total
UAE	15%	85%
Oman	5%	95%
Bahrain	70%	30%
Qatar	10%	90%

^① Data is taken from Wang Lian, *The Politics and Societies of the Middle East*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009, p. 130.

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Kuwait	35%	65%
Saudi Arabia	5%	95%
Iraq	65%	35%
Iran	90%	10%

In addition to the instigation and sabotage of the western colonialism, the religious factional struggles become even more complicated as the US infiltrated into this region for its own interest. During the first half of the 20th century, the Sunni states of this region split into two parts: the Pan-Arab states (such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Libya) and the Monarchies (such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and other Gulf Countries). The Sunni faction took a leading role in the Middle East geopolitics. However, the strength of Shia faction began to be on a rise since the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and they managed to launch a wave of rejuvenation in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Faced with the anti-Americanism surging from the Iranian revolution, US decided to support the Sunni Arab states and took it as its basic Middle East strategy. Consequently, the Sunni states such as the Saudi Arabia become US allies or the states accepting US aids, while the Shia states, such as Iran, were regarded as members of the “axis of evil” by US. This situation has flared up the confrontations and conflicts between Sunnis and Shias. For example, the Shia Muslims account for 65% of the total Iraqi population, but they were brutally repressed by the Saddam’s regime for long. So the religious resentment had been existing in this country for a long time. After its invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US changed its policy and began to support the Sunnis and suppress the Shias. Then the Shias and the Kurdish controlled the new Iraqi government, so the resurging conflicts between different religious factions again become a great barrier to the Iraqi post-war reconstruction. Under such circumstances, Iran unexpectedly became the biggest winner of the Iraq War, posing a serious damage to the US interest in this region. Again Iran becomes the largest enemy of the US in this region. On the other hand, the factional conflicts nurtured by

the Iranian Revolution led to the strife between Iran and Saudi Arabia. "The Shia theocracy of Tehran is now in an antagonism against the ultra conservative Sunni monarchy of Riyadh for establishing hegemony over this region that owns the largest reserve of oil resource." (Shellac, 2011: March 19). Meanwhile some Sunni Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, have felt greatly threatened by the rise of an ambitious Iran in pursuit of regional hegemony based on its ownership of nuclear weapons. Therefore, to some extent, Iran becomes the enemy of Saudi Arabia and some other countries.

The Gulf Sunni states share with the US a common enemy: Iran. Meanwhile they also meet each other's demands. The US seeks its strategic interests in this region, such as energy resources, military presence, and other strategic interest. On the other hand, the foreign policies of the Gulf States are centered on the "security supported by external powers." These states choose US as the external power that offers them military protection, leading to the externalization of their own security issues, and therefore opening the gate to foreign military presence. Their strong dependency on the international energy system has seriously limited their foreign relations, and made these relations extremely complicated. Some alliances in this region are established only for the purpose of maintaining the status quo, and some choices made by these states are often self-contradictory and abnormal (Ferdinandes, 2011: March 9). On the issue of Iran, the Sunni states such as the Saudi Arabia find a converging point of interests with the US. On the other hand, the dispatch of troops by the Gulf Cooperation Council and the internationalization of the issue of Syria show the integration of religious politics and geopolitics. There are three reasons that can be used to explain the US military confrontation against Iran on the Hormuz Strait: 1) using the issue of Iran to attract more votes for Obama; 2) threatening the Bashar's regime by showing a tough attitude towards Iran; 3) instigating religious factional conflicts through a flamboyant exaggeration of the Iranian nuclear issue. Its plot of "killing three birds by one stone" is making the issue

of Syria even more complex and more internationalized.

If the NATO air raid on Libya could be regarded as a symbol of the change of this Arab democratic movement, the internationalization of the issue of Syria shows the deliberate complication of this movement. Now the Arab League is entrapped into a dilemma due to the domestic and foreign complexities of the religious politics and geopolitics, although it had expected to resolve the tough issues inside its own framework. On the one hand, it lacks the necessary resources to unify the stands of its members, which seriously damages the effects of the "Arab Peace Appeal" and its dispatch of inspection group. Under such circumstances, the Syria problem will be unavoidably internationalized. On the other hand, this issue cannot be internationalized if a series of important factors are put into consideration, such as the religious factional conflicts, big power relations, and the infiltration of the Al Qaeda. In fact, the discourse power of the Arab League is gradually hollowed on the important issues of Palestine, the Gulf Crisis, and the Iraq War. At the same time it is "used" in this disruptive Arab democratic movement and losing its leadership bit by bit. On January 22nd, 2012, it urged Syrian President Bashar to transfer his power to his Vice President, which shows that its general frame of solution to the Syria problem has still been locked on the resignation of Bashar, a goal pursued by the US and UK. The frequent dilemmas, in which the Arab League was entrapped during its handling of regional issues, reflect the historically rooted internal grievance of the Islam, and the outcomes of various political games between various interests. In this sense, the complex links between religious factional conflicts, the religious politics, and the hegemonic politics, have jointly influenced and even shaped the general trends of the regional or even the world political patterns. Therefore Syrian President Bashar criticized that "the Arab League has been unable to protect the Arab countries for the past six decades. We will not be surprised if it continues to be so feeble in this way." (Li, Y., 2012: January 11).

The connections between perceptions, interests, and activities, which is emphasized by the constructivism, play an outstanding role in the conflicts between the Islamic world and the west. If the Arab-Islamic states encounter military interventions or economic sanctions brought by western powers, "the only ideology that is able to unite them into solidarity and mobilize them to take actions, is the Islam." (Jin, Y., 2002: 756). The Islamic factional identification is a factor that both brings solidarity and causes internal strife. Particularly, "the threats to the Gulf states include the ideological threat related to the cross-border religious factions and ethnic groups. It has been certified by facts that these religious and ethnic identities can be used by the leaders as powerful weapons to launch transnational social movements (Ferdinandes, 2011: March 9). Under the influence of globalization, the Arab-Islamic states might not be able to resist the modernization process of the whole world and therefore have to accept many new ideas brought by the west. Nevertheless, they still belong to the general frameworks of the faiths and values of Islam. In this way, this Arab democratic movement turns out to be more and more complicated because the religious factional conflict is used by the religious politics and hegemonic politics. So the prospect of this movement is highly uncertain and unpredictable.

In summary, this Arab democratic movement is a very rare case in world politics, because the number of countries and regions involved in this movement is extremely large, the factors linked to it are unprecedentedly extensive, including religious, ethnic, and racial ones, and its influence is incomparably widespread and far-reaching, over world economy, politics, cultures, and even global social governance. To some extent, the desires of the Middle East Muslims for democracy and reforms are awakened by the waves of thoughts on globalization, so they decide to take actions to express their desires. Their desires to the real world and their means to express themselves are now spreading all over the globe, so some theorists argue that "these events are just the omens of structural changes in an even

larger scale in the whole organizational system of current world order and societies. The Arab countries are not only the major suppliers of energy resources to the world, but also important players of the world politics whose complete Islamization might interrupt present world system and even create worldwide clashes of civilizations. This is the key problem related to the present situational changes." Therefore, the Arab Spring can be interpreted as a challenge to the present global capitalist system that is sliding in the direction of increasingly deteriorated unfairness. It is predicted that "the mass movements demanding more socialization and more fairness will spread all over the world at different pace with various degree of radicalization" (The Fair Time, 2011: March 2).

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