Research Paper

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN MDGs) and the Geographies of the Arab Spring: A Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT:- This paper identifies some of the "preludes" to the Arab Spring by taking the. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as independent variables and seeks to explore the root causes of the Arab Spring, as well as the (in)ability of MDGs to react to political, economic and social upheaval. In order to present a cohesive and consistent argument, we focus on the preludes to the Arab Spring in selected countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. This research provides insights and implications for the post-2015 MDG agenda, therefore one critical questions whether the UN MDGs provided early warning signs and to what extent, if any, did the MDGs capture the realities of the "preludes", namely, the context leading to the social, political, and economic turmoil that cascaded across various geographies. Our critical policy conclusion is that MDG's were not designed to be flexible enough to account for more complex political processes that, over the longer term, increase wellbeing and quality of life through civil society activism. The MDG post-2015 agenda/framework is a promising means to address historically rooted social and economic problems not only in the Arab Spring countries, but also on a global level. We propose that a post-2015 framework should be redesigned in order to better monitor and address opportunities for a better future in the Arab World by policies and institutional reform directed toward economic and social justice through sustained, equitable, and inclusive growth.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Most Western social scientists and Arab academics and secular intellectuals alike utterly failed to predict the powerful social and political explosion that led to a change of regimes in several Arab countries including Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen. Among Arab Nations this phenomenon has been referred to as an 'Arab Awakening' while in the West it has been called an 'Arab Spring'. TariqRamadanexplains that there is a lack of consensus on how to refer to this historical turning point for the Arab World; "some call it the 'Arab Spring', others, the 'Arab Revolutions'; still others more cautious, use the neutral term 'Arab uprisings'. It remains difficult to ascertain, and to assess, what has happened, and what is happening, in the Middle East". He goes on to say, "An irreversible shift is clearly underway but no one is able to pinpoint exactly what is going on in these mass protests or to predict their ultimate outcome" (Ramadan, 2011). No matter what name we give it, the phenomenon was a result of a combination of both socioeconomic and political grievances. In the midst of this complexity, our aim is to understand if MDGs provided a concrete background to illuminate the preludes to the Arab Spring.

Given that many issues pertaining to youth unemployment and social inequalities are shown as common denominators for the revolution-affected countries, the first MDG, eradicating poverty, receives particular attention. According to Onis (2012), a unique characteristic of the Arab Spring countries' experience was that the process of change was predominantly internally driven. The global context was influential in many respects, but most importantly the global economic crisis certainly had an impact through rising food prices, falling remittances, and declining demand for Arab exports (Onis, 2012). Also, Onis emphasized that effective communication among civil

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society groups and protesters and their ability to join forces, undermined the power of the authoritarian regimes from within, as part of a bottom-up process (2012).

The countries chosen, were selected inter alia, for their ability to illustrate the wide range of outcomes for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), as well as illustrating the broad range of processes in the dynamics of the Arab Spring. In Tunisia, the first state to experience a full revolution during the 'Arab Spring', the political situation remains somewhat unstable. The countries selected in this paper represent various states according to Arab regional groupings: Egypt and Syria form part of the Mashreq countries, Tunisia represent's the Maghreb states, while Yemen is part of the Arab Least Developed States grouping. The only group not represented here are those forming part of the core Gulf Cooperation Council States, several of which have also indirectly experienced the Arab Spring, and although they have a role to play in outcomes and international civil society engagement in the MDG process regionally, they are more or less 'on-track' to achieve the MDGs compared to the other state groups (United Nations, 2010).

In this context, Hoeven (2012) argued that increasing inequalities and current geopolitical transformations requires a new and more all-encompassing approach to the post-2015 framework. Not only is a new and upgraded social contract is necessary for development professionals, but, as mentioned earlier, the role of civil society should be well integrated into the post-2015 agenda and into the social contract awaiting the publics of the Arab Spring countries (Hoeven, 2012). There is no doubt that the post-2015 agenda will need to take into account the historical patterns of poverty, inequality, and levels of human development. According to Galal and Selim (2013), using the US$1.25/day poverty line (in 2005 PPP), poverty in the region is only around 4 percent, which is less than one-fifth of the average poverty rate for developing countries and similar to the much richer Latin American (LAC) region. Based on the US$2 a day threshold, poverty in the Arab countries is still lower than half of the average for developing countries.Taking into account the social and economic development trends in the region, this paper aims to explore the ways in which specific Arab countries experienced the Arab Spring and progressed toward achieving the MDG's. The ways in which the Arab Spring and the MDG's are related in their contribution to encouraging human dignity will be explored alongside the limitations and challenges of the relationship.

On January 14, 2011, Tunisia's president, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and as of mid-March 2013, Tunisia's new Islamist-led broadened government, who won the constituent assembly's approval, set a timeframe for the completion of a draft constitution by April of 2013, with   elections expected to take place by December 2013 at the latest. The situation in Syria, which began with a civil uprising has evolved into a severe humanitarian disaster and to date, there are over 1 million Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries. In Egypt, Tahrir square has become a global icon and February 11, 2011 is a very important day for Egyptians as it was the day that Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak resigned after 30 years of power. However, general political dissatisfaction and protest is ongoing. Finally in Yemen, despite the replacement of the Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh on February 27, 2012 by his successor Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi as a result of presidential elections, Yemen remains largely off-track for improvements in quality of life due to ongoing instability.

It is interesting to note that the main reason why Arab monarchies have held on to power and have temporarily succeeded in maintaining the status quo, while popular uprisings have swept through the region, is directly attributed to a resource rich nation's ability to meet the needs and expectations of their citizens. In the case of the "resource poor monarchies" like Jordan and Morocco, they have made political concessions by suggesting constitutional reforms, which have temporarily stabilized these regimes and kept them in power. These reforms included the establishment of an "elected government with the prime minister chosen by the electorate rather than the monarch, independence of the judiciary" and the establishment of a "legislature with genuine law-making powers", (Rogan, 2011).

Before we discuss the effects of the Arab Spring on the achievement of the MDGs and on Arab civil society, it is important to identify the common features of the national uprisings in the countries included. One significant common feature among the five countries studied is the fact that the demonstrations were primarily youth-driven (Rogan, 2011). This element is very important, because as Adeel Malik has pointed out, "The real struggle for change in the Arab world will only begin when the dust of the youth revolutions has finally settled down." (Malik, A. &Awadallah, 2013). According to Omani professor Zidjaly, the phenomena that hit the Arab world could best be described as a 'youthquake' initiated by internet-savvy Arab youth (Zidjaly, 2011). Other common features include the fact that rising aspirations among people in the region which were directly a result of

rising literacy rates and better access to higher education combined with a lack of economic opportunities and no concrete government reforms. Further, the use of modern technology such as mobile phones, the internet, and social networking technologies including Facebook and Twitter were also common denominators. Through harnessing the potential of these modern technologies most of the movements organized, communicated, raised awareness and were mobilized. In all of the countries studied except Syria, sustained campaigns of civil resistance such as rallies, strikes and protests helped bring about the fall of the despotic regimes. Another significant point to mention is that in the cases of all the countries studied, the various national uprisings came out of grassroots movements and in none of these countries was there any visible leadership behind the movements.

All these revolutions shared similar slogans and tactics and seemed to find inspiration from each other. A good example is the Tunisian revolution. It inspired the events that led up to the popular protests in Egypt that ultimately led to the collapse of Mubarak's regime. An increase in human rights violations, political corruption, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, despotism and more importantly an unequal distribution of wealth that seemed to be concentrated in the hands of the few elites were significant preludes to the Arab Spring that led to the fall of several authoritarian regimes. Although there are many similarities in these countries' experiences there is also one significant difference and this difference has to do with the role of the military in the uprisings. In the case of Syria and Yemen, the military stayed loyal to the regime, while Egypt and Tunisia had a totally different experience (Rogan, 2011).

The Arab World's pre-Arab-Spring progress in achieving the MDGs differed from country to country. The latest reports on the MDG's in the Arab region were prepared in 2010, when major concerns included food security and food prices as well as the ramifications of the global financial crisis (United Nations, 2010). Albeit, according to the MDG Report 2012, there have been pervasive positive general trends that could be valid for the Arab world as well. For instance, both the number of people living in extreme poverty and poverty rates fell in every developing region. Reporting on indicators for achievement of the MDG's varied greatly between states in 2010, with some countries close to attaining their goals, while in many instances movement toward achieving the MDG's had encountered severe obstacles (United Nations, 2010). The accuracy and reliability of official statistics is a further challenge to assessing MDG achievement. Another crucial challenge, as presented by DaniRodrik, is the claim that there is little evidence to suggest that those successes were the result of the MDGs themselves. China implemented policies that engineered history's greatest poverty eradication program prior to, and independently from, the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.[2]

While some scholars argue that the Arab Spring was a promising movement for enduring improvements in quality of life led by civil society mobilization, the immediate result in terms of MDG achievement is in a sense backtracking due to the instability created through popular protests, which is ongoing. The protests that have taken place after the fall of the previous regimes have claimed even more lives in some of these countries than during the initial revolutions. This section will review the progress of the selected states as indicated by 2010 reporting and considering the effects of their experience of the Arab Spring in achievement of the MDG's. While the Arab Spring appears to have caused a set-back in the MDG's, this paper suggests that rather the MDG's were not designed to be flexible or able to account for more complex political processes that, over the longer term, increase wellbeing and quality of life through civil society organizing.

The purpose of this analysis is to illustrate that although the MDGs were not specifically designed in order to account for or to react to significant changes in political leaderships or systems of government, and despite the lack of reporting on the MDG's for many Arab states as a result of the Arab Spring, it is evident that MDG's progress was made in many areas since 2000. Yet it has to be underlined that poverty and inequality levels based on official statistics could be misleading in many ways, which in turn decrease the legitimacy of MDGs (Breisinger et al, 2012). The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven across and within regions and countries. Furthermore, for the purpose of this analysis, the fact that the MDG's process is currently winding down and will be replaced with a very different set of priorities and indicators, will be considered. The idea that the

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[2]http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/after-the-millennium-development-goals-by-dani-rodrik#cXlmEw3viuui6WIk.99

MDG's represent a consciousness to reduce global deprivation and as an ongoing 'work in progress' that may have different future incarnations is most useful in consideration of the time-bounded nature of the MDG's and the relevance of this article (Hulme, 2009).

The MDG's, as a framework for mobilizing resources and political will toward reducing deprivation, were developed over several years and are the product of 'complexity and contingency' and even serendipity (Hulme, 2009). The MDG's as a structural entity came about through the trajectory of previous meetings, positions of specific individuals and OECD member states' political climates during the preceding decade, as well as the increasing focus on impact and indicators within the development industry, culminating in high-level Millennium Declaration in the year 2000 (Hulme, 2009). By the time of the United Nations Millennium Assembly of 2000, the compilations of goals for development were re-imagined and Kofi Annan prepared the document 'We the Peoples', aimed at attracting a broad range of actors and interest groups around the world around common goals (Hulme, 2009). The Millennium Assembly asserted the 'Millennium Development Goals', which were defined with indicators in September 2001, after which implementation of the first global time-bound quantitative process for global development began, and was signed onto by 191 heads of state (United Nations, 2012).

Analysis of MDG implementation:
Even though the MDGs were mainly developed with the Least Developed Nations (LDCs) specific needs' in mind it was also meant to serve two other very important purposes. One purpose of the MDGs is to serve as criteria for donor countries in their decision to allocate international aid to developing countries and also to allow developing countries and the international community to monitor donor's commitment and fulfillment of the aid. Implementation of the MDG's became fully operational, and was implemented through all the UN agencies and various stakeholders through a variety of funding mechanisms. Insufficient financing of the MDG's emerged as a significant threat to their achievement following the global financial crisis in 2008. Due to funding shortfalls, significant efforts have been made since 2000 to address funding needs and provide innovative funding mechanisms, yet by 2008 and the global financial crisis, significant financial obstacles were indicated as a hurdle to overcome in achieving the MDG's (Reisen, H. 2004). The Arab Spring is also a reaction to the reverberations of the global financial crisis, and it is largely recognized that the food price riots and unemployment, paired with repressive political regimes, are the most salient issues that led to the Arab Spring. In addition, disenfranchised youth, who felt a lack of opportunities and economic inclusion, contributed significantly to the popular protests and uprising. After all, it was one young Tunisian man, who set himself aflame to protest this lack of economic opportunity, his inability to support his family through his small business and the overall injustice and oppression propagated by the authorities.

The MDG's are a state-led process, with national policy frameworks, whereby government representatives participated in formulating national strategies, policies and reporting on MDG achievement over the past 15 years. This factor is significant to keep in mind when considering the Arab Spring, in that civil society movements were directly oriented toward ousting their political leaders and the establishments that had signed-on to the Millennium Development Goals and process. This does not mean that the goals themselves became suspect or the object of protest, but that the political leadership that had instated the MDGs either disappeared, or acted against the principles of the MDG's. Despite this fact, the 2012 United Nations Report on Global MDG's mentions the Arab Spring only in passing in a few instances, as a challenge to achievement of specific MDG's due to conflict situations and political transitions (UN Task Team, 2012). This limited analysis of the link between the MDG's and the regional uprisings may be due to the fact that financing for the MDG's has attempted to de-politicize finance mechanisms.

The efforts to increase funding in order to propel MDG achievement often de-politicize the 'development' process. Before the Arab Spring, concerns for achievement lay mainly in resource mobilization. This approach may have ignored the power dynamics and structures that maintained repressive regimes. The MDG focus on results through indicators and country-ownership may have sidelined a deeper understanding of the process and the complexities of social change. Although the MDGs can serve as possible indicators of quality of life as well as give us some insight into the conditions of various populations, in the Arab region, relying on them exclusively can pose some problems due of the complexity of the region.

Civil Society and MDGs in the Arab World

Prior to the Arab Spring, there was an overall assumption that civil society played an insignificant role in the Arab World in terms of promoting social justice and that civil society lacked organization and influence in the region. It was believed that civil society played a different role in the Arab World which consisted of relieving some of the pain that the regime had caused the people with their oppressive rule. The majority of the NGOs and civil society organizations were set up to serve a more philanthropic or charitable purpose. It was also believed that since many of the most effective and organized NGOs and civil society organizations were funded by the West, they ultimately were imperialistic in nature and served the interests of the West and not those of the Arab World. Most of these organizations and NGOs operated under the ethos of social justice under the banner of democratization. The Arab Spring has drawn attention to the role of civil society and social movements in the Arab World during the democratic transition process.

This section aims to assess the role of civil society in the Arab World, both prior to the Arab Spring and in the post-Arab-Spring era. In an effort to identify the root causes of this Arab Spring, it is necessary to understand the socioeconomic conditions of the Arab World leading up to the Arab Spring as well as the advancements and/or challenges in achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), prior to and as a result of the Arab Spring. Figure 2 demonstrates that civil society is a critical and intuitive lens to understand the connection between Arab Spring and the MDGs.

Figure 2
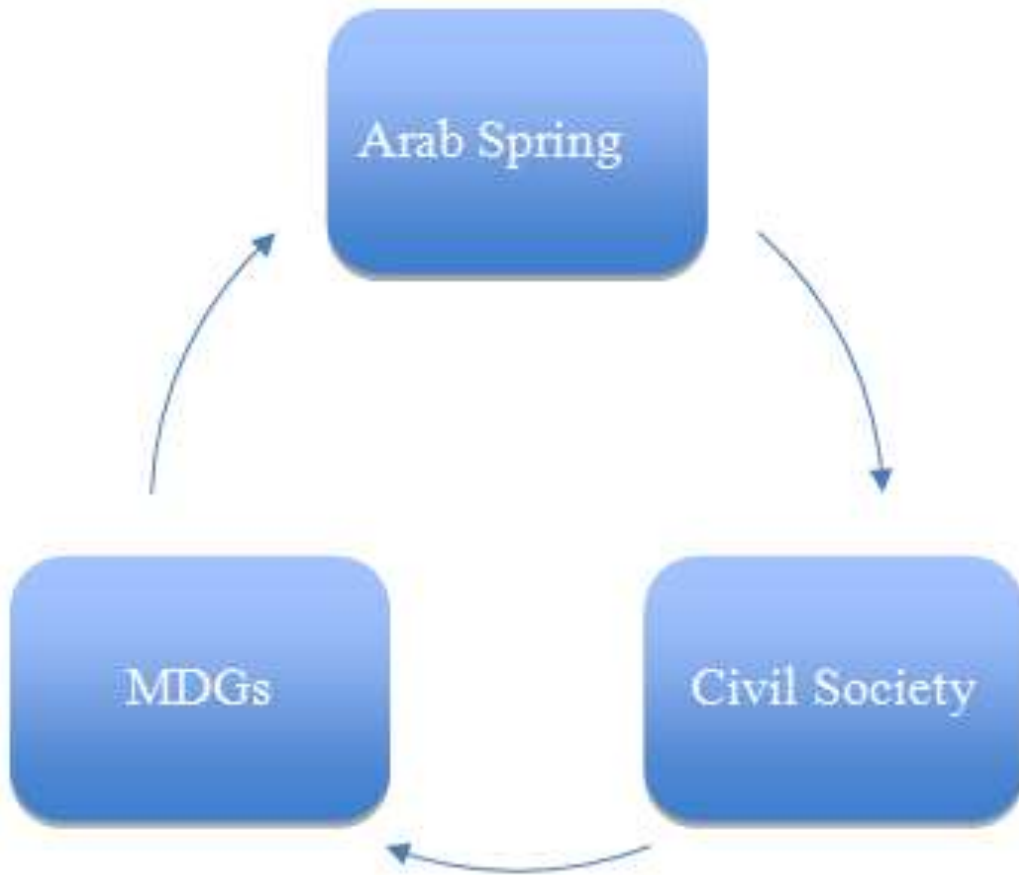
Food inflation, high unemployment, especially among the youth, unequal distribution of wealth and a lack of economic opportunities, an absence of freedom and a lack of space for political engagement are just a few causes for the popular protests and revolutions that swept the Arab world beginning late 2010. Before understanding the role of civil society in the Arab World, it will be necessary to identify an adequate definition of civil society that could apply to the region. The traditional western definition of civil society and all that it entails is problematic and it will be difficult to use it in the same context to describe the rise of and role of civil society in the Arab world.

Although there is more than one definition of civil society, from a western perspective, civil society has come to mean the third sector of society in addition to the government and private sectors. Civil society is made up of both individuals, organizations and institutions that are either non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political or non-political organizations (NPOs), unions as well as other organizations that are meant to represent the will of the citizens.

In an academic webinar titled, "Strategic Nonviolent Struggle in the Middle East Before the 'Arab Spring', Benedetta Berti explains that the reason why it was so difficult for political scientists to predict the Arab Spring, was that there was a lack of complete data, somewhat flawed and limited analysis of the region, as well as the fact that there are risks in applying an actual model of predicting revolutions. More importantly, she argues that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is extremely diverse and complex with so many different socioeconomic development rates, populations, and so it would be nearly impossible to draw one single trend from the region. Bertialso argues that it was also assumed that civil society in the region was either collectively dormant or not at all present (Berti, 2013)

In spite of the regional instability that has come about as a direct result of the Arab Spring, the region has seen some positive changes including the removal of authoritarian rulers like Mubarak that had oppressed it's citizens for far too long. Almost immediately after the fall of several of the previous regimes, we began to see the development of constructive democratic opposition and dissent leading to the foundations of pluralistic governments that serve the broad needs of their citizens. Tunisia is a great example of this. Arab civil society has been given credit for being a driving force in the revolutionary movements. This momentum and leadership within civil society has added to its legitimacy and many civil society organizations have entered the political arena and have even gone as far as establishing political parties and competing for parliamentary seats.

Previous regimes not only suppressed dissent but used intimidation and bribery to maintain power and keep the masses off the streets. They even utilized the military internally against the people to ensure the security of their regimes. They subjected their own people to massive human rights violations and this is significant to understand because the main contributing factor leading Egyptians, Syrians, and Tunisians to take to the streets in rejection of the status quo and what led to the powerful movements that pushed the despot leaders out of power ultimately came out of the people's assertion of their right to live a dignified life and to pursue social justice in a society where their needs would be met.

A further major positive result of the Arab Spring is the fact that public political debate that had previously been outlawed is now flourishing in the press and streets. Tunisian and Egyptian coffee shops are filled with people who are impatiently watching the daily news unfold while they discuss ways as to how they can contribute to their country's political future. Today, more than ever, a significantly larger percentage of Arabs sit around their TVs every night watching programs either on Al Jazeera or on the independent Egyptian Channel, Dream 2. Egyptians sit intensely in front of their television every night at 10pm to watch the popular political news commentator, Wael Al Abrashy analyze the events of the day and discuss the pressing issues Egypt still faces under the new regime while hosting various important political and civil society actors on his show. Even though the current Egyptian regime has vocally disapproved of Al Abrashy's criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood and of the regime, they have not made attempts to forcefully shut him down. To date, he has been allowed to continue to publicly air his opinion, without the same fear that was felt under the despotic regime of Mubarak. An even more important contribution of the Arab Spring was the opening of public space for Islamist movements to form political parties and to participate politically.

April of 2012, The Centre of Conflict, Development and Peace-building (CCDP) held a workshop in Amman, Jordan that resulted in the publication of a conference report and issue brief which helps to identify and address the challenges that lie ahead for Arab civil society organizations. Some of these main challenges include divisions both between and internally among civil society organizations. The Amman Issue Brief, published in August 2012, explains that religious and secular Arab civil society organizations have two distinctly different understandings of civil society. Arab civil society organizations tend to be either secular in nature, promoting human rights and a "modernist agenda of development" or are more local/traditional in nature and usually are religious or charitable in nature (CCDP, 2012). Another main distinction among Arab civil society organizations is that some of them are not directly promoting democracy and the organizations that claim to have a pro-democracy

agenda either have not been democratic in nature or have supported the status quo. Compare to where this is different if saying is "different". There are many non-democratic NGOs around the globe, are there not?

The political and social contexts of the Arab Spring were complex and diverse. It is clear that currently Arab civil society is playing an increasingly prominent and political role in political reform. The following section of this paper explores the process in each country selected for this study: Yemen, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. Each country will be explored in terms of its achievement in 2010 toward meeting the MDG's, the political process of their respective Arab Springs, and their estimated current prognosis vis-à-vis MDG attainment. Due to availability of data, post-2011 period is not included to make a more robust comparison.

Figure 3 MDG Progress (Achievement of MDGs Prior to the Arab Spring)

MDGs		Yemen	Syria	Egypt	Tunisia
1	Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Fair
2	Achieve Universal Primary Education	Likely	Fair	Fair	Likely
3	Promote General Equality and Empower Women	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely
4	Reduce Child Mortality	Likely	Fair	Fair	Fair
5	Improve Maternal Health	Unlikely	Fair	Strong	Unlikely
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases	Unlikely	Fair	Unlikely	Unlikely
7	Ensure Environmental Sustainability	Unlikely	Fair	Fair	Fair
8	Develop Global Partnership for Development	Likely	Fair	Fair	Fair

Source: The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Financial Crisis

The summary of the MDG Progress Reports for Arab States published online on September 23, 2013 by UNDP suggests that, "The Arab region has made impressive progress towards some MDGs. But achievements are uneven". The report further explains that that region also "lags behind" on several of the important targets, including addressing and resolving the issue of hunger. Many of the MDG gains in several of the countries in the Arab region have either ceased or regressed. This is as a result of the "political, social, and economic transitions" that have taken place since 2010, shortly after most of the MDG Progress Reports for the Arab States were written. The region's least developed country (LDC) Yemen's MDG progress have also fallen short of any major achievement and especially on issues related to "nutrition, food security, access to water and sanitation, and child and maternal mortality". Prior to the Arab Spring, the region had experienced some progress in the achievement of some of the MDGs including primary school enrollment, which rose from 85% in 1999 to 92% in 2011, and reducing infant mortality by two thirds (UNDP, 2013). The region continues to lag on the goal of empowering women. "And with

high levels of youth unemployment and overall low employment levels, political tensions and social instability are expected to increase across the MENA region well into the 2020s (Schulz, 2012)".

"Over the past decade, the MENA region has witnessed economic growth of only 2 per cent per annum. This growth rate has proven too low to generate sufficient employment opportunities for the fast-growing population and many workers only find jobs in the informal economy (ILO and UNDP, 2012). Indeed, unemployment in the region remains the highest in the world, at least 2 percentage points above rates observed in the Developed Economies and European Union region, which had experienced a serious deterioration during the crisis. In contrast to many other regions, however, in the MENA countries the worsening of labour market conditions was mainly a result of the political instability that arose after 2011; the global economic crisis did not contribute significantly to labour market development in the region" (ILO, 2014a).

The biggest challenge for all the countries mentioned in this study will be to provide employment opportunities for its citizens and especially for women and the youth (UNECA, 2013). This is only one of many internal challenges. Other major external challenges include limited and dwindling natural resources like water, food and energy. Regional and international efforts will be essential to ensure Food and water security.

Prospects for the Region in the Post 2015 Era:
The authors of the Arab Development Challenges Report published by UNDP in 2011 assert that "the Arab world is richer than it is developed" and as such "it will be necessary to rethink a "new Arab development model, where issues of stability are not addressed solely from a security standpoint and above all where progress is not simply viewed in terms of utility of goods and services (such as a growth in per capita income), but rather in terms of substantive capabilities to choose a life one has reason to value" (UNDP, 2011).

Concluding Remarks and the Post-2015 Agenda
The transformation during the course of the Arab Spring was extraordinary in the variation of its nature and intensity. While the positive side reveals that highly entrenched dictatorships have come to an end, the future of political liberalization in the region is uncertain, with many commentators pointing toward the "possibility of authoritarian reversals and even an Arab 'Winter' replacing the Arab Spring" (Onis, 2012). This paper argues that sustainability of MDG progress in the post-Arab-Spring period could be reached if the post-2015 MDG agenda is more attuned to the social and economic realities of the crisis-prone countries. An integral requirement of this process is to rethink and reevaluate the power, dynamism, and essential role of civil society in the Middle East.

According to Hoeven (2012), Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan were among the eight best performing countries with respect to progress in the MDGs during 2010. Despite this glowing performance on MDG progress, however, youth unemployment was and remained significantly high in these countries. Therefore, progress in achieving the MDGs is not a guarantee for socially inclusive and economically sustainable growth.

Across the four countries reviewed, in 2010 many were already predicting significant limitations to total achievement of the MDGs. Challenges were identified in the 2009/10 reports, borne out in the political upheavals of 2011, suggesting that instability would create a severe obstacle to MDG achievement. Despite the challenges, the dissolution of despotic power and the rise of civil society to claim its rights are outcomes that may lead to increased capabilities for transformative social change outside the realm of MDG indicators. In Egypt and Tunisia, the initial revolutions resulted in new political leadership regimes. These revolutions, led by civil society, were political processes that enabled populations to pursue regime change and eventually meaningful reforms. In Syria, however, the regime has not been changed and a massive humanitarian emergency has resulted.

The political process of the Arab Spring has slowed economic growth in the Arab region, yet it is likely that, despite the continued crisis, the post-MDG process and attainment of indicator results will be bolstered by populations cognizant of their rights and of the possibility of successfully claiming them. Furthermore, theories of change that take into account more complex contexts and contingencies may be developed that allow space for consideration of political processes and permit more flexibility in calculating their general impact (Vogel, 2012). At present, it is important to remember that long-term forecasting for the region will be difficult, because as British politician and Respected Member of Parliament (MP), George Galloway, explained, a revolution is a process and

not an event, and since it was only a little over two years ago when the first revolution ignited the region, it is far too early to predict the final outcome (Salman, 2013).

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