

## **Trends in Democracy Promotion by Regional Organizations: The Arab Revolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the After-Effects**

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**Abstract:** *Scholarly opinion is divided with respect to the working of regional organizations in context of democracy promotion. Whether, for transition of an authoritarian state, the role of internal or external actors is more involved is always a debate. However, in recent times specially in the post Cold War globalized world scenario, regional organizations have gained significance as well as have become more active as agents of democracy promotion. The recent advents of a spirit of democratization in the Middle East region which commonly is known as the 'Arab Spring' (coined by the Western media) has revived the notion of international democracy promotion.*

*Many regional organizations such as European Union, Arab League, Gulf Cooperation and NATO are involved with the region of Middle East. The Arab revolutions has brought back the question of regional organizations and their role in supporting democratic governance and what are the strategies adopted in this regard specially when Lebanon, Egypt and Syria are still being in a state of political impasse. The paper will construct the present rhetoric in the role of regional organizations for democracy promotion as well as deconstruct the same in the face of current realities implied in Arab revolutions with a few suggestions on the future course of events.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy Promotion, International Organizations, Regional Organizations, Arab Revolution.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Is democracy an ideal form of governance which should be promoted? Till now no valid answer has been given to this simple question. But some of the given things which can formulate the argument for promotion of democracy are that the world has seen the horror of wars and need peace, security, cooperation for economic and social development. A democratic form of government is often viewed as complementary to these ideals and therefore its promotion became an obvious step towards stability and peace in the world. Undoubtedly, democracy after the end of the Cold War became the dominant form of governance in the international system based upon which relationships between nation states and the norms and standards of international organizations were commenced thereafter. But, what is problematic – in this picture perfect scenario espoused by the “democratic peace theory” which states that ‘democracies do not fight war with each other’ – are few latent contradictions within the concept of ‘democracy promotion’.

Early 1990s wide acceptance of promotion of democracy by the international community at large can be viewed from two perspectives. An idealist perspective would recommend that a democratic form of government is compatible with other ideals of international peace, cooperation, and security and therefore to achieve those ideals, it is necessary to spread the gospel of democracy to the world at large. On the other hand a realist perspective would see the Post Cold War order as the triumph of the democratic United States (US) vis-a-vis the communist Soviet Union (USSR) and where the former is engaged in the process of democracy promotion for its own vested interests. The demarcation between the idealist and the realist perspective of democracy promotion is porous and either of the two or sometimes both the realist and the idealist reasons are espoused to prove the utility of democracy promotion as a principle to be adopted by international actors. These international actors can be states (like the United States), international organizations (like the United Nations, World Bank, including regional organizations like the European Union, the Organizations of American States, the African Union), and non-governmental entities like civil society organizations.

The concept of ‘democracy promotion’ is controversial, complex and value-laden. Firstly because, the term ‘democracy’ has myriad interpretations due to which there is no internationally accepted definition of democracy available to be promoted accordingly. There is no single form of democracy, “Democracy is both an ideal to be pursued and a mode of government to be applied according to modalities which reflect the diversities of experience and culture particularities without derogating from internationally recognised principles, norms and standards. It is thus a constantly perfected and always perfectible state or condition whose progress will depend upon a variety of political, social, economic and cultural factors.” (IPU 1997: 1) This unpredictable nature of a democratic form of government is one of the reasons behind the vague identification of ‘democracy’

as an ideal of the United Nations. Nowhere in the Charter of the UN is it mentioned explicitly that the UN promotes democracy.

The second contradiction is related to the word ‘promotion’ which has an inbuilt conception of ‘external influence’ whereas; democracy is a mechanism of governing a state, a domestic political process, much less concerned with outside interference. Initially, most democratization studies gave minimal focus on the role of external actors in transition of states from authoritarian rule to a democratic one (or regime change) (Schmitter 1986: 5).<sup>1</sup> By the early 1990s, studying the role of external actors became a new outlook in contemplating the democratization process.<sup>2</sup> Geoffery Pridham in 1991 mentioned the international influence aspect as the “forgotten dimension in the study of democratic transition” (Pridham 1991: 18). Also studies about the “waves of democracy” pushed some scholars to look into the role of international influences in democratic transitions (Huntington 1991; Ray 1995).

However, it was only recently that linkages between the internal and the external systems emerged as significant for academia in both international relations and comparative politics. Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward (2006) argue that “...international factors influence the prospects for democracy, and that transitions are not simply random but are more likely in the wake of changes in the external environment” (Gleditsch and Ward 2006: 912). In *Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization* (2005), Jon C. Pevehouse refutes the assertion of P.C. Schmitter (1986) that domestic politics has the sole proprietorship of influencing transition of authoritarian states to democratic regimes and that external actors play a marginal role in this transition. One of the generalized results of Pevehouse’s work is that international organizations that are highly democratic [like the OAS (Organization of American States) or EU (European Union)] have a positive impact on the probability of democratic transitions in authoritarian states attached to these organizations (Pevehouse 2005).

Many scholars analysed that until a few years ago, the discipline of International Relations was inadequately dealing with the concept of international democracy promotion (Pridham 1991:1; Carothers 2000: 181; Schraeder 2002: 7; Wolff and Wurm 2010: 2). But greater coverage of the aspects under democracy promotion can now be studied with latest work focusing on the views of ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ countries, along with studying the role of governments, civil society and multilateral organizations (Ottaway and Carothers 2005; Newman and Rich 2004; Youngs 2004; Schimmelfennig et.al 2006). Strategic studies on policies of democracy promotion are also available with edited volumes doing comparative studies with respect to different parts of the world (Brunell 2000a; Magen et al. 2009; Schraeder 2002; Brown 2005; Asmus et al. 2005; Burnell 2004; McFaul 2004). Attempts have already been made at delineating the features of democracy promotion, the measures adopted for promotion of democracy with the often stated distinction between the approaches followed by the United States and the European Union for the promotion of democracy and also few discussions about the results of such efforts with some prospects for the future.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the gap upon which this paper is focusing on is the working of regional organizations in the sphere of democracy promotion by referring to the various historical events which moulded the working of international organizations (here referring to regional organizations as well) toward the promotion of democracy, the latest one being the Arab revolution of 2011.

### **Theoretical Understanding of Democracy Promotion and its Introduction in International and Regional Organizations:**

Democracy promotion exclusively refers to those policies, strategies, and other activities, that are used supported and adopted by external actors (whether states, international organizations and non-governmental organizations) to push political liberalization and democratization in non-democratic states (Schmitter and Bouwer 1999:12). This definition also espouses two problematic characteristics of democracy promotion specially in the wake of transformed global scenario in the late twentieth century. First the term ‘democracy’ consists of various attributes (combining both the procedural and substantive aspects of democracy) and thus can be promoted in various ways. Second, the process of democracy promotion is a gradual one and proceeds at

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<sup>1</sup> The process of promotion of democracy is often equated with the process of regime change. As a concept, ‘democracy promotion’ gained popularity with the America’s growing interest of changing the regimes of authoritarian states using both direct military means (as in Iraq and Afghanistan) and indirect means of greater funding to oppositions in Latin American authoritarian states. The 2003 Iraq invasion distinctly made democracy promotion as a regime change policy of the US specially in the psyche of countries at the receiving end of the democracy promotion spectrum (Bridoux and Kurki 2014: 48).

<sup>2</sup> Democracy promotion aims at facilitating ‘democratization’ (refers to the process of a state becoming democratic) and therefore is a precursor to democratization. On the other hand, by studying the process of democratization one can analyse the working of the policies adopted under democracy promotion. Therefore, the two concepts are often studied simultaneously. Another aspect with which democracy promotion is commonly confused with is ‘democratic assistance’. The latter is often limited to financial and material assistance more in the form of technical support for establishing and consolidating democracy. Whereas, the former is wider in scope involving all kinds of strategic instruments like “...diplomatic pressure, the linking of relevant political conditionalities to financial, commercial, or political agreements” (Burnell 2008: 3).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the leading names dealing with the concept are, Larry Diamond, Thomas Carothers, Michael A. McFaul, Geoffery Pridham, Richard Youngs, Roland Rich and Peter Burnell.

different paces at different places. Democracy promotion may also require huge investments on the part of donors (whether international organizations or individual states) yet immediate results cannot be expected unless direct methods of military interventions are used. These features of democracy promotion make computation and generalization on the subject extremely difficult.

The theory of historical Institutionalism helps in detailing the development of political institutions and treat institutions as sets of regularized practices with rule-like qualities that structure outcomes and actions i.e., Institutions as ‘actor’ in themselves rather ‘agent’ of incentives seeking states as understood by the rational choice institutionalism. The theory was developed from late 1970s to early and mid 1980s by some comparative politics and international relations scholars [Theda Skocpol (1979); Peter Katzenstein (1978); and Stephen Krasner (1980)] (Schmidt 2013: 114).

This paper looks at the perspectives of democracy promotion as done by regional organizations largely from a historical institutionalist perspective. Apart from historical institutionalism there are two more new institutionalist theories namely, ‘rational choice institutionalism’, focused on rationalist interests of the states and institutionalist incentives and the other is the ‘sociological institutionalism’, focused on cultural norms and institutional frames (Schmidt 2013: 109). These two institutionalist approaches can also help to understand the behavior and working of international and regional organizations as ultimately organizations are a combination of states. Moreover, the national interests of states along with the culture and norms of the democratic societies of powerful states like the US, is a vital component in understanding the inclination of international and regional organizations towards democracy promotion. These approaches are more apt in learning about the politics behind the scene prevalent in the mechanisms of democracy promotion by international organizations which itself is an interesting topic (and has been used in this paper at some places), yet it is not included in the purview of this paper. This paper focuses only upon historical institutionalist approach to cover the trends to be seen in the working of international organizations towards democracy promotion.

Historically, traces of how promotion of democracy became significant in the study of international relations is found after the end of the First World War, especially in the mentioning of the fourteen points of President Woodrow Wilson, for whom the entry of the US in the War was premised on the cause of making ‘the world safe for democracy’. By this the US President made a rational choice of opening the gates for the US entry as intervener in affairs of other nations (Powell 2007:1). This might be the genesis of the idea of democracy promotion, yet overt promotion of democracy actually started after the end of the Second World War. The victors that were all democracies except for Russia got engaged in changing or transforming the regime types of the vanquished.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1950s, many post colonial states were internally driven towards a democratic form of government specially due to the domino effect which was triggered with the transition of authoritarian states of Germany and Japan to democracy along with their development as major economic centres of the world. This domino effect can now be studied as an external factor of democracy promotion under Laurence Whitehead’s classification of ‘contagion’ effect to bring about democracy in a state. According to Whitehead, ‘contagion’ works in a non-materialistic fashion, referring to influences (mostly unintended and non-threatening) of a neighbouring liberal democracy or a democratizing country on a non-democratic, authoritarian state (Whitehead 2001: 4).<sup>5</sup> For instance, the democratic contagion effect from Poland was strong enough to be seen in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in the 1980s, also Philippines had a contagion effect on student demonstrators supporting democracy in Seoul from 1985-1987 (Saxer 2002: 24). These were some of the factors because of which democratization was pushed in the international arena after the end of the Second World War.

The creation of international organizations like the League of Nations (LoN) or the United Nations (UN) was premised on the goal of maintaining order, peace and security in the world. It is the linkage with these virtues that helped democracy in gaining the patronage and endorsement of international and regional organizations in the initial years of coming up of these organizations. The interconnection between democracy and peace is manifested in the theory of democratic peace which has been widely regarded as the base theory for the concept of democracy promotion. The theory simply states that democratic states rarely fight war with each other. It finds its origin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century work by Immanuel Kant, “*Perpetual Peace*” (1795) (Kant 2010), but since then the theory has passed through various interpretations and has gained a popularity that made Jack S. Levy remark that the “absence of war between democratic states comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations” (Levy 1989: 88).

The folklore of democracy being a peaceful form of governance was reiterated in a different tone by the ‘Wilsonian Liberalist’ or the ‘idealist’ (as they are commonly called) after the end of the First World War. But soon the theory was again forgotten under the growing trends of pragmatism after the Second World War

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<sup>4</sup> This type of regime change was also prevalent during colonialism where the victors govern and transform the governments of the vanquished, but that was not specific to the promotion of democratic principles.

<sup>5</sup> Laurence Whitehead has mentioned the three Cs of ‘Consent, Control and Contagion’, in explaining how external dimensions impact upon internal dimensions in bringing about democracy (Whitehead 2001).

with the realist theory of IR gaining strength. The theory of democratic peace however, took rebirth in the 1980s (again in the American literature) by the influential works of R. J. Rummel and Michael Doyle from the ashes of Immanuel Kant's work (Doyle 1983 and Rummel 1983). Strong statistical evidence is provided by Rummel's work that between the periods 1816 to 1974, around 350 pairing of nations fought international wars, yet none occurred between two democracies (Rummel 1983).

The sceptics of democratic peace theory do not see eternal connection between democracy and peace and critique that there are certain specific conditions under which the correlation between democracy and peace is most likely to happen. For instance, there are scholars who contemplate upon the degree of economic development of a state or modernity in social and economic context acting as catalyst for democracy's impact upon peace thereby diluting some credit of the democratic peace argument that democracy is the sole condition for maintaining peace among nations (Mousseau 2009; Gat 2005). Some others believe that it is more of a "liberal peace theory" than democratic peace by giving more importance to the idea of free markets and economic interdependence, creation of international law and international organizations which are necessarily liberal in character and which reinforces peace and vice-versa (Doyle 1997; Owen 1997).

Traditional International Relations theories that were rationalist and institutionalist in nature like realism, neo-realism, liberalism and neo-liberal institutionalism, view international organizations as 'agents' of the protagonist i.e., the 'state' and therefore are more concerned with the outcome of interaction among states in terms of conflict and cooperation. These theories consider international organizations only as "an epiphenomenon of state interactions" (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 704). In contrast, the social constructivist believe that since created, international organizations have their own ideas, identities and a set of knowledge similar to the nation-state and therefore, acts like an autonomous 'actor' (Wendt 1992; and Hopf 1998).

Undoubtedly international and regional organizations, since the end of the Second World War, have remained one of the effective mechanisms of statecraft providing a platform for discussion of issues of global concerns with the participation of developed, developing and least developed countries alike. A certain level of legitimacy has been acquired by these organizations since they are constituted by the nation states after good faith is reposed in them that they will achieve aspirations that need collective efforts. Therefore, international organizations (including regional organizations) will have to continue maintaining equilibrium between their role as an 'actor' and as an 'agent'. Dominance of either one of these roles would mean loss of credibility and legitimacy on the part of the international organization.

During the years of the Cold War, both the principles of right to self-determination and Human Rights (under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966) acted as the early shelter houses for democratic values, because international organizations could not at that time take a clear stand between the capitalist West and the Communist East. The open adoption of democratic values by international organizations, specially the UN, would have unbalanced the situation. Scholars like Archibugi claim that it was on Soviet insistence that the word 'democracy' lost its space in the UN Charter (Archibugi 1995: 244). Explaining the situation during the Cold War times, Roland Rich says that "Since democracy conferred a certain degree of legitimacy on regimes, it was a contested concept and both sides claimed to be its true interpreter" (Rich 2001: 22). During the Cold War times political openness was also limited due to the dominating affect of Article 2(7) of the UN Charter which gives precedence to state sovereignty and non-intervention over the spread of democratic values and human rights (UN Charter).

### **The Post Cold War Years: Role of International and Regional Organizations in Democracy Promotion**

Most regional organizations follow the foot prints of the UN and acknowledge the significance of a democratic form of government for maintaining order peace and security in the world. Yet, there are differences in the level of motivation of regional organizations. Regional organizations are engaged in democracy promotion through norms and laws that are contained in their Charters for the governance of their respective member states (Newman 2006: 191). Jon C. Pevehouse mentions three important roles played by regional organizations in democratic transition process of a nation. First, regional organization in association with some internal forces (civil society groups) can help put pressure on the authoritarian regimes which ultimately can result in liberalization of economy or dispersal of some autonomy to media or to the masses in general. Second, membership of regional organizations is a strong mechanism of carrots and sticks to instigate the process of making a non-democratic country tow the path of democratic governance. And last, assistance can be provided by regional organizations (in terms of aid and technical support) which can help in bringing the transition process to a successful end (Pevehouse 2005: 15). These three forms of involvement of regional organizations in the field of democracy promotion have been most actively followed by the European Union (EU), as to other regional organizations.

Gradually, a shift can be observed in the working of international organizations specially with regard to their interfering role as human rights protectors. The norms of human rights made 'intervention' a vital and easy approach to influence a country's political system, which is directly in contrast to the ideals of the Treaty of

Westphalia (ideals like sovereignty, sovereign equality, non-intervention, reciprocity in respect of the recognition of rights and duties, and territorial integrity of states). These interventionist tendencies acquired new ways of gaining strength in the post Cold War years.

Since, the Cold War ended with the triumph of liberal democratic capitalist state of the US over the former communist Soviet Union, the changed world order after the 1990s, gave leverage to the promotion of liberal democratic system accompanied with the promotion of a liberal economic order as well. In the opinion of Milja Kurki, "Increasingly 'implicit' liberal assumptions ..., provide the backdrop for democracy promotion, support and assistance, and delimit the nature and extent of 'debates' that can be had over democracy's meaning in democracy promotion" (Kruki 2013: xii-xiii).<sup>6</sup> Democracy after the Cold War became a popular political system with greater appeal to peace, human rights and freedoms and also economic development. Democracy promotion emerged as a Western concept with strings attached to liberal interventionist tendencies of advanced and developed Western states. (Peksen 2012: xiii). Though the interventionist genes are also present in the working of international and regional organizations, yet the difference lies in the fact that international organizations are more than mere agents of Western democracies. In other terms, they are transnational non-state actors engaged with promotion of democracy at a multilateral level.

Apart from the result of the Cold War (which was in favour of a democratic United States), globalization of the late twentieth century impacted the spread of democracies to regions which were earlier less prone to external influences toward transition of their political systems. This wave of globalization also acted like a catalyst for 'contagion' effect on the promotion of democracy by strengthening economic linkages between nations (geographically close or not) and the spread of idea that decentralization of authoritarian power of a state over markets will result in greater liberalization of state policies and therefore greater democratization.

In the Post Cold War period, UN's assertions about democracy being an integral aspect of the working of its various mechanisms became assertive and frequent. In 1993 the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights combined the aspects of democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as interdependent and mutually reinforcing (OHCHR 1993). Thereafter, various resolutions adopted at many sessions of the Commission of Human Rights embedded democracy in human right laws, for example, the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on Human Rights held in 1999 in Geneva, was titled "Promotion of the Right to Democracy" which reinforced most of the provisions adopted in the Vienna Declaration (UN Commission on Human Rights 1999).

In 2000, the Commission recommended legislative, institutional and practical measures to consolidate democracy (Resolution 2000/ 47 titled "Promoting and Consolidating Democracy"). In 2002, essential elements of 'democracy' were defined in the resolution 2000/46 of the Commission of Human Rights. The Resolution also welcomes the adoption by various regional, subregional and other organizations of,

"... the mechanism designed to promote it (Democracy and Human Rights), to prevent situations which affect or threaten democratic institutions, or to implement measures for the collective defence of democracy in the event of a serious disturbance or disruption of the democratic system" (OHCHR 2002: 2).

UN as a trend setter for many regional organizations has now become vocal in its adoption of democracy agenda in the post Cold War scenario. In 1996, the then UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali presented the Agenda for Democratization to the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly. Lombardo, points out that this was the first time the crucial questions about UN support for national democratization processes were raised at such a level involving significant aspects of international law (Lombardo 2001).

The current Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon provided a Guidance Note on Democracy in 2009 which states that "Democracy, based on the rule of law, is ultimately a means to achieve international peace and security, economic and social progress and development, and respect for human rights – the three pillars of the United Nations mission as set forth in the Charter of the UN" (Ki-moon 2009: 2). From time to time, UN has consciously let the world know that it stands in full support of a democratic form of government, no matter whether its Charter is explicit about this or not. These outward steps by the UN for promotion of democracy set the stage for regional organizations to be more advanced and assertive in their aspects related to promotion of democracy specially within their member states.

Another important global event that impacted the working of international and regional organizations in the sphere of democracy promotion is the 9/11 incident. For example it was in 2001 that the OAS adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter to strengthen and preserve democratic government in the hemisphere. Inter-regional efforts for democracy promotion also became active among regional organizations for promotion of

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<sup>6</sup> For Lins and Stepan, "Democratization entails liberalization but is a wider and more specifically political concept" (Lins and Stepan 1996: 3). The increasing attachment of liberal principles with democracy has made the two intertwined, so much so that, promoters of democracy have now started ignoring the difference between the two.

democracy such as the “OAS-AU Democracy Bridge Forum” to share experiences, practices and learn mechanisms to strengthen and preserve democracy.<sup>7</sup>

Though international norms for promotion of democracy was established first in the UN (specially attached to the issue of human rights), yet more assertive steps have been taken by the regional organizations in this regard. Like the UN, regional organizations are also collective endeavours for maintaining peace and security in the region along with economic prosperity. Development of regional organizations is based upon political stability of the states constituting these regional organizations. Regional organizations are often firm in their norm setting with regard to their members states as countries are given membership on condition of acceptance of norms of the organization. For example, EU democratic conditionality is an important criterion for being member of the EU.

In the sphere of democracy promotion, there is also a noteworthy difference between regional organizations of the West and those of the non-Western origins. Western regional organizations like the EU, OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), Council of Europe, the Organization of American States (OAS) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) are more prone to promote democracy in and around their members states. Non-Western regional organizations like the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN), the African Union (AU), the Arab League, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are steadily growing but do not give equal importance to the issue of democracy promotion as compared to other important economic and security issues. Though the non-Western regional organizations are part of the same liberal order ascending throughout the world due to globalization, yet they are varied in their approach towards democracy promotion due to their diverse composition of member states which are ranging from democratic to semi-democratic and to the non-democratic regimes as well.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the few examples are, the ASEAN Charter gives due importance to principles of good governance, rule of law, democratic principles, human rights, for the creation of better political order in South Asia as well. But here there is a huge gap between practice and rhetoric. For example, ASEAN has achieved little in terms of the huge pressure it tried to mount for democratizing the authoritarian regime in Burma (Dosch 2008). Another example can be the African Union, as nearly half of the members of the AU are non-democratic states, so a resolution in 1997 was passed by the then Organization of African Union against any form of *coup d'état*, as a consequence of which sometimes legitimate efforts for changing non-democratic regimes are resisted as was the case with Madagascar in 2001 (Piccone 2005: 119).

Most of the regional organizations are the product of regional trading agreements (FTAs – Free Trading Agreements) because of which they have a strong economic footing in their respective regions and are therefore less prone towards political issues. In the year's post 1990s, the cost of not joining these preferable FTAs under regional organizations is more than the cost of maintaining an authoritarian state structure. However, it is only with time that these institutions can grow to incorporate issues wide enough to effect regimes of member states. For example – European Union was initially an economic venture which emerged as the *European Coal and Steel Community* in the 1950s, but now it is considered a soft power in the promotion of democracy to regions around the world.

Another factor that has amplified the role of regional organizations in the promotion of democracy is interconnection between issue areas of regional organizations. This notion is well captured by the ‘new regionalism’ theories which consider formation of regional organizations in the post Cold War years as multidimensional, and multifaceted process which is not issue specific to economic and trade integration rather also now dependent upon integration in areas such as environment, social policy, identity, culture, security (resolving regional conflicts without external intervention), and democracy i.e.; including issue of accountability and legitimacy (Percy S. Mistry (2003); Hettne and Söderbaum (2002: 33). Within these sectors, the working of regional organizations has been broadened and interconnections have been made to include myriad aspects for example, issue of ‘security’ has in recent times been given a wide definition of not just inclusion of ‘hard’ security concerns of conflict resolution and prevention to fostering of economic development, but also include sustaining use of natural resources and promoting the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Official Website, URL: <http://www.osce.org/node/108299>). The spill-over between sectors of working of a regional organizations is visible throughout Western and non-Western regional organizations, with a difference that Western regional

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<sup>7</sup> OAS Official Website, “Democracy Promotion and Human Rights”, United States Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States, URL: <http://www.usoas.usmission.gov/democracy.html>

<sup>8</sup> Jon C. Pevehouse who brought the role of regional organizations in democracy promotion into notice, in his work has taken case study of regional organization of the West like OAS and the EU with examples of democracy promotion in Latin America and Eastern European states and has deliberately left the continent of Asia and Africa on the basis that they have fewer regional organizations and those that exist have less democratic nations as their members, which ultimately leads to no systematic influence on the member states of such regional organizations. In other words, democracy promoting capacity of a regional organization, according to Pevehouse, is directly proportional to the density of democratic states as constituent member of that organization (Malamud 2007).

organizations are now fairly stabilized in their efforts for promotion of democracy whereas the latter are still oscillating between the ideal of democracy promotion and their non-democratic member states.

### **The Arab Revolutions and the Trend Thereafter within Regional Organizations:**

Though, democratic peace theory perpetuates that democratic states do not fight war with other democracies thereby commencing peace in the world, yet removing an authoritarian government and establishing a democratic one has hardly ever been a peaceful affair. 'Arab Revolution' is a series of regime transforming events or uprisings which occurred starting December 2010 with a revolution in Tunisia against former leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and which encouraged similar anti-government protests in the form of civil unrest and civil protest in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain. Other countries impacted by the domino effect of these revolutions are Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Israel and Sudan along with minor protest in countries such as Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara and Palestine. There can be many causes for this Arab Revolution but one of the primary reasons was the demand of the people for democracy specially, political rights and freedom of expression along with greater participation in the government.

Four of the regional players studied under this paper for their changing role in the post Arab revolution phase are, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation, the EU and the NATO. The former two are within the Arab or the Middle East region whereas; the latter two are from outside the region. Without going much in detail of the core of how these organizations were involved in bringing the revolution or what was there their involvement with the region during the revolution. The paper will only study some of the trends which are predicted in the working of these regional organizations in the aftermath of the Arab revolution of 2011 and also what prospects do these shifts hold for future working of regional organizations in the sphere of democracy promotion.

#### **i. Transformations in the Working of Arab League and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) after the Arab Revolution:**

Both the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have been the regional organizations of a region which has historically been a closed ground on matters of intervention in domestic affairs of the states. Strictly following the arguments of the Westphalia Treaty, these regional organizations have always given top priority to rules of state sovereignty and non-intervention. However, with the changing trends in the interventionist policies of regional organizations through mechanisms of human rights and maintaining security in the regions Michael McFaul observes that the international norm of state sovereignty, "... still works as normative defense, but much less persuasively than fifty years ago" (McFaul 2004: 13).

Some of the never seen before changes in the working of regional organizations like Arab League, involved with the enclosed Middle Eastern region in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions are: for the first time the Arab League condemned the massive human rights violation done by the states during the Arab revolution of 2011. Apart from this the Arab League also took some resolution that paved the way for NATO's military intervention in Libya and supported United Nation Security Council's economic and diplomatic sanctions on Syria (Al-Sayyid 2015: 60). In the working of the League changes regarding slow but steady increase in issue like human rights and international laws have now been augmented in the post Arab revolution phase.

This was a remarkable change for an organization often referred as 'dictator's club'. Yet, what can be suspected from a 'Realpolitik' perspective is a concern over the distribution of geopolitical power. The widely accepted reason for involvement of the League is due to religious tension between Shia Iran and the mainly Sunni members of the League.<sup>9</sup> Another observation made by scholars is about the relationship between Arab uprisings and the degree of legitimacy of the governments like countries that are monarchical and are oil rich and pro-liberal in economic aspects are less prone to people's uprisings than the countries that are oil poor and are dictatorial republic in nature. According to Williamson and Abadeer, "Of the six countries in the region that were both oil-poor and did not have hereditary monarchies, four experienced uprisings – Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Yemen (Williamson and Abadeer 2014: 3).

Though, some visible stands by the League of Arab States were taken against the repression of uprisings by dictatorial governments for example the Arab League's suspension of Syrian membership in 2011 because of Syrian government's severe crackdown on the pro-democracy protesters against the government of Bashar Assad. Yet, not much has been achieved in terms of democratization of its member states. According to Hüllen, "From the first creation of a Permanent Arab Commission for Human Rights (PACHR) in 1968 to the adoption of the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2004 and its subsequent ratification, there has not been a significant change in the 'democratic quality' of its member states that could account for the Arab League's increasing efforts at governance transfer." (Hüllen 2015: 136).

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<sup>9</sup> Many scholars believe that with the demise of Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq in 2003, a regional imbalance occurred which made the Arab League (A sunni dominated regional organization) worried about the growing strength of the Shiite Club from forming a "Shiite Crescent", including now Iraq, Iran, Syria and Lebanon (Mann 2012).

Moreover, critiques also points to the fact that, some of the Arab League members are silent upon introducing democratic elements in their own states whereas, profoundly gets engaged with the democratising process of a neighbouring state. For example, Qatar does not allow provisions of political parties or national legislature but is engaged in training and arming the Libyan rebels and has pushed for sanctions against Syria (Bushra 2011). Same is the case with Saudi Arabia, having a hereditary monarchy at home the country's support to the revolution is viewed with mistrust.

Whereas, Arab League's membership extends to a wider area of the Arab revolution including countries of North Africa who suffered severe uprisings and where the democratic wave was quite apparent of regime change, the same cannot be said about the countries constituting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The relatively less member states [namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)] of the GCC as compared to the Arab League did faced some popular and governmental reactions to the Arab events in 2011, but no regime overturning event took place amongst the GCC constituents.

Moreover, the GCC is an economic and security organization which has greater ties with the West specially after the European and US financial crises in 2008 for speedy recovery of which the West is partially dependent on the oil and market of the Gulf states. Even the attitude of the GCC states towards handling the situations of revolution in the MENA (Middle East and North African region) states is more in terms of redressing economic grievances of these states like increasing public spending in MENA states and creating new state sponsored jobs for improvement in "the rising cost of living, unemployment, anger over the combination of official corruption, and dilapidated infrastructure and public services" rather than focus on democratic deficit and human rights violations (Spencer and Kinnimont 2013 :62).

The GCC do want an economic advancement of the region on trade and economic grounds with the help of West (specially the US and the EU), but is also wary of the intrusions carried out by the West in the name of democracy promotion and human rights protection. For example in the interior ministers meeting of the GCC held in November 2012, Sheikh Rashid bin Abdulla al-Khalifa (of Bahrain) said that, "Presently, our countries are exposed to a colonial onslaught that uses the names of human rights, freedom or democracy and imposes the concepts of civilizations and cultures that are different from what we believe and want to protect."<sup>10</sup> Most of the work of the GCC in support of the protesters showed double standards in its strategy to support democracy outside the Gulf region whereas, keeping a low profile with the democratic initiatives within the Gulf region. Also the efforts of GCC or Arab League towards promotion of democracy is seem to be attached to their other economic and political motives and here the rational choice of the constituent states prevail over the whatever minimal support the organization as an actor (collectively) gives to the promotion of democracy. Again the member states of the GCC are more willing to promote democracy outside their own borders, for instance, compared to the support that the GCC offered to the revolution in the Arab states such as Libya, Yemen and Syria not much air was given to the prolonged street protest in Bahrain and Oman (Colombo 2013).

Much of the arguments suggest that the Arab League and the GCC has not been successful as regional organizations for handling situations of revolution in the Arab region and have to improve their own standards of democracy in the real sense of the term rather than merely following the promotion of democracy for either pleasing the West, or to pacify a religious power struggle between the Shia and the Sunnis. Apart from promotion of democracy what these regional organizations can strive for are some sanctions upon all member states for incorporation of genuine social and political reforms on the basis of human rights aspects. This will provide more weightage to their support of revolutions in the name of freedom outside their boundaries. These organization need to broaden their base of support to issues of human rights and good governance, to be sympathetic to people's demand for standard living and greater people's participation in the government of their own country. Trends indicate towards greater inclusion of democratic issues in these not so democratic organizations in the post Cold War Years and more so after the Arab revolutions but this is just the beginning.

## **ii .Transformations in the Working of European Union and the NATO after the Arab Revolution:**

European Union after the 1990s has emerged as the champion for the promotion of democracy specially by using its 'Soft Power' status that works for its efforts in the promotion of democracy and human rights even in areas that have traditionally remained closed quarters for external intervention. Towards its Mediterranean and Arab neighbourhood, EU has always shown that commitment with policies of human rights and democracy will be central to its cooperation with neighbours. One of the major shifts visible in the working of the EU is its approach to proceed with promotion of democracy by using indirect mechanisms and more involvement of non-governmental or civil society agents. This shift happened in the aftermath of the 2003 US direct intervention in Iraq which was not fully supported by all the member states of the EU and led to creation of many new instruments for the promotion of democracy like the creation of the European Instrument for

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<sup>10</sup> "Interior Minister Addresses GCC Meeting", *Bahrain News Agency*, 13 November 2012, [Online: Web] Accessed on 28 February 2015, URL: <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/533150>.



Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which seeks support of civil society organizations in non-democratic states for the promotion of democracy.

Similarly, revolutions in the Arab and the Mediterranean region led to the creation of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). It is basically a speedy process of funding activists and human rights protesters, a need that was realised during the spread of Arab Revolutions. Describing the added value of the institution to the existing bunch of EU initiatives for the promotion and support of democracy the European Commission's November 2012 Press Release states that,

“It will offer a rapid and flexible funding mechanism for beneficiaries who are unsupported or insufficiently so, in particular for legal or administrative reasons. Such actors may include: journalists, bloggers, non-registered NGOs, political movements (including those in exile or from the diaspora), in particular when all of these actors operate in a very uncertain political context. This will be precisely the added value of the EED” (European Commission 2012).

Another change was brought by the EU was in its European Neighbourhood Policy after the Arab Spring which now includes new features such as, rewarding democratic reforms and economic transformations on a ‘more for more’ basis with greater EU incentives to more committed reformers of the European Southern and Eastern neighbourhood region. It is basically an incentive driven approach based on more differentiation (Tommel 2013). Example for this is the allocation of an additional One Billion Euros by the SPRING (Southern) and EaPIC (Eastren) assistance programme. Other financial inputs were done by European Investment Bank and by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (European Neighbourhood Policy 2012).

In the post Arab revolution phase, EU has also shown greater inter-linkage between various issue areas of the EU and EU's thrust for promotion of democracy. Under the EU development policy, the European Commission released “An Agenda for Change”, that concluded that, “the objectives of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security are intertwined” (European Commission 2011: 3). The EU's commitment to democracy is not new (specially when EU follows a democratic membership criteria for the inclusion of new member states), rather a new thrust was provided to the old idea of democracy promotion in the post Arab revolution years. In these new policies EU realpolitik interests – of securing borders, fight against terrorism and extremism and the problem of migration – is quite apparent. For these interests EU had in the past supported even dictators for to have some ‘stability’ within the region to ward of such evils. This led to EU's collaboration with non-democratic regime like those of Mubarak, Ben Ali and Gadaffi before the rise of revolutions against these dictatorial regimes (Balfour- Paul 2010: 1).

Similar is the case of the US appeasement of the non-democratic rulers before the Arab revolutions. For example the, the US has significant military ties with the authoritarian Tunisian government of Ben Ali, such as the NATO's Operation Active Endeavor, which provides counter-terrorism surveillance in the Mediterranean, NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, as well as use of Tunisian ports for NATO ships (Devon 2011).

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is basically a security organization, having deep Cold War linkages. Providing the military support (for which the NATO is present in Europe), it functioned quickly when there was a need to use force to protect Libyan people from the atrocities of the rule of Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, under the authority of a United Nations Security Council Resolution (Rasmussen 2011). However, the working of the NATO is often referred as involvement of the US and though the public opinion of Libya wanted NATO's support for military training, weapon support and air strikes during the civil war against Qaddafi, yet a full ground level intervention of NATO was not acceptable by the masses as well as civil society groupings (Kaldor 2012: 97). Despite scepticism attached to US intervention through the NATO, it was still called for help because it is a multilateral regional organization which is more interested in securing the European Southern boundaries and has intrinsically linked the aspect of democracy promotion with its goal of “Security”.

## **II. Conclusion**

The developments in the democracy promotion capabilities of the international and regional organizations in the period post 1990s – is due to rapid globalization, the triumph and sustenance of the liberal market order or due to some world events like the 9/11 incident, the war against Iraq and Afghanistan and the recent Arab revolutions – is a mixed bag approach, where accounting various historical events will provide a broad picture of the overall scenario of changes occurring with every subsequent event. It also provides a historical institutionalist perspective of international organizations (including regional organizations) where their working is assessed in relation to the series of events which occurred and left an impression for the future.

The paper shows that regional organizations like the League of Arab States and the GCC are lacking in proper frameworks, dedicated mechanisms and are driven more by the realpolitick nature of the member states. This is also true of the working of EU and the NATO in the MENA region because of the recent concerns of both Europe and the US regarding security and stability of their borders or the border of their allies.

However, few new trends can be marked in the working of these organizations with the Arab League and GCC going more vocal in its stand against severe human rights violation and atrocities that occurred during and after the Arab revolutions. The working of EU and the NATO become more influential towards mobilization of civil society and using indirect means of promotion of democracy rather using direct military means. These democracy promotion measures can become more assertive and proactive if latent contradictions within the concept of 'democracy promotion' are worked upon. The often asked question that 'what sought of democracy is being promoted?' if answered and unanimously followed by international organizations, will be rewarding in terms of making collective efforts in promotion of both the procedural aspects of democracy (electoral participation and rule of law) as well as achieving ideals of a democratic form of government (freedom, equality, justice, human rights), essential for a peaceful world order.

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