Group 11: Causes of the Arab Spring: A Mixed Qualitative GIS Approach
Sami Eria & Jason Anderson
(Reviewed by Atanu Roy & Akash Agrawal)

Problem Motivation: The motivation of the problem is very straightforward. The serial revolts and uprisings in the middle-eastern countries and north african countries leads to an inconsolable amount of lives lost and a huge amount of public property damage. Thus being able to predict this uprisings will bring stability to the region and will lead to improvement of the quality of life of the citizens in that part of the world. This problem thus has a high societal impact and is vitally important for the stability not only the region, but also in having a peaceful world to live in.

Problem Statement: What are the socio-economic, political, technological, cultural, and geographical factors or variables that lead to uprisings and regime change in some Arab countries.

The research question is to find out the factors which lead to revolts in Arab countries.

Challenges: Quantifying/predicting human behaviour is challenging. This is the primary challenge of the research. Moreover social phenomena are complicated. We felt choice of the variables which lead to a revolt is also a major challenge in this research.

Proposed Approach: The research used

- Qualitative data in the form of personal interviews of citizens of the affected countries
- Literature survey
- CIA factbook

to search for the factors affecting revolts in the Arab countries.

The research sub divides the factors into 3 sub-divisions.

- well understood
- not well understood
- novel concepts

Novel/Better: The paper claims its novelty from the fact that the research is inter-disciplinary. Use of mixed methods where it mixes interviews with GIS. The research comes up with a taxonomy from various sources which can be a novelty claim too.

Validation: The research put equal weights to all the variables and based on it they rank the probabilities of revolt for a country. Higher the score, greater is the probability. Moreover the research also implements a decision tree. There are nodes in the tree which are together but one of them had a regime change while the other did not.

Presentation Critique: The talk was very well organized and easily understandable and time management for presentation was very good. The talk covered and explained the key ideas well. The speakers gave satisfactory answers to the questions asked by audience. We would rate this talk 9.25 on a scale of 10. The professionalism of the speakers were very impressive.
For each of the 6 elements the score is as follows:
Motivation: 10.
Problem statement: 10
Challenges: 9. Choosing the factors is a challenge!
Proposed Approach: 10
Novel/Better: 9, Novelty slide had only a few references. Would have been better with a tree/matrix like diagram.
Validation: 8, The decision tree needs some work.