As for Libya, locally based militias—some Islamist, some not—vied for control over resources, territory, and political power in the immediate aftermath of the uprising. Over time, Islamist militias, on the one hand, and non-Islamist militias and regime holdovers, on the other, coalesced into two opposing camps. As in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, then, the main fault line in Libyan politics in the aftermath of the uprising became one separating Islamists from their anti-Islamist opponents. Unlike the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, however, outside powers have fueled Libya's civil war, with Qatar and Turkey supplying the Islamists with weaponry and Egypt and the UAE spearheading military intervention on behalf of their secular opponents.

A third cluster of states includes Syria and Bahrain, where regimes maintained their cohesion against the uprisings. One might even say that in Syria and Bahrain regimes had no choice but to maintain their cohesion against uprisings. Thus, once uprisings broke out in these states, there was little likelihood that one part of the ruling institution would turn on another, as happened in Tunisia or Egypt, or that the ruling institution would splinter, as happened in Libya and Yemen.

In Syria and Bahrain rulers effectively "coup-proofed" their regimes by, among other things, exploiting ties of sect and kinship to build a close-knit, interdependent ruling group. In Syria this group consisted of President Bashar al-Assad, his extended family, and members of the minority Alawite community (Alawites are an offshoot of Shi'i Islam and make up about 11 percent of the population. Thus, Bashar al-Assad appointed his cousin head of the presidential guard, his brother commander of the Republican Guard and Fourth Armored Division, and his brother-in-law deputy chief of staff. None of them could have turned on the regime; if the regime goes, they would go, too. As a matter of fact, few persons of note have defected from the regime and, of those who have—one brigadier general, a prime minister (which in Syria is a post of little importance), and an ambassador to Iraq—not one was Alawite.

The core of the regime in Bahrain consists of members of the ruling Khalifa family who hold critical cabinet portfolios, from the office of prime minister and deputy prime minister to ministers of defense, foreign affairs, finance, and national security. The commander of the army and commander of the royal guard are also family. As in Syria, members of a minority community—Sunni Muslims, who make up and estimated 30-40 percent of the population—form the main pillar and primary constituency of the regime. The regime has counted on the Sunni community to circle its wagons in the regime's defense, although the uprising started out as non-sectarian in nature, as had Syria's. But as happened in Syria, repression by a regime identified with a minority community, along with the regime's deliberate provocation of inter-sectarian violence to ensure their communities would stick with the regime until the bitter end, sectarianized the uprisings and intensified the level of violence.

Foreign intervention has played a critical role in determining the course of the uprisings in both Bahrain and Syria. The one thousand Saudi soldiers and five hundred Emirati policemen who crossed the causeway connecting Bahrain with the mainland took up positions throughout the capital, Manama. This freed up the Bahraini military and security services (led by members of the ruling family and made up of Sunnis from Pakistan, Jordan, and elsewhere) to crush the opposition. The regime then embarked on a campaign of repression that was harsh even by Gulf standards. Regime opponents have faces mass arrests and torture in prison, all demonstrations have been banned, insulting the king can result in a prison sentence of up to seven years, and security forces armed with riot gear have cordoned off rebellious Shi'i villages, terrorizing residents with nighttime raids. The government also made it illegal to possess a Guy Fawkes mask, the accessory of choice of anarchists and members of Occupy movements the world over.

All the while, the regime hid behind the façade of a series of national dialogues whose outcomes the regime fixed.

While foreign intervention helped curtail the Bahraini uprising, it had the opposite effect in Syria. Both supporters of the regime—Iran, Russia, and Hizbullah—and supporters of the opposition—the West, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and others—have funneled arms and money to their proxies, while Hizbullah fighters and, perhaps, Iranian soldiers, joined the fray. This has not only served to escalate the violence but has created the environment in which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—later just the "Islamic State"—might incubate before it set out to create its caliphate from portions of the two states. To date, the foreign backers of the government have been more effective in their efforts than the foreign backers of the opposition for two reasons. First, the latter supports a number of groups acting at cross-purposes—ranging from the inept "moderate" forces supported by the West to salafis supported by the Qataris and Saudis. Second, the opposition's supporters act at cross-purposes: The West, fearing a sectarian bloodbath and the strength of Islamist groups within the opposition, has been ambivalent, at best, about facilitating a clear-cut opposition victory. On the other hand, the Saudis and Qataris have supported groups that seek to rule post-uprising Syria according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law. All told, by 2014 Syria hosted approximately 120,000 opposition fighters who had joined upwards of one thousand opposition groups, many of which took control over villages and towns and the surrounding countryside. As the United Nations and Arab League special envoy to Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, put it, in the end the uprising will quite possibly lead to the "Somalization" of Syria. That is, like Somalia, Syria will remain a state on paper only, while real power will be divided among the government and rival gangs which control their own fiefdoms.

The fourth cluster of states consists of four of the seven remaining monarchies—Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman—in which uprisings occurred. Here the word uprising is a misnomer: With the exception of the uprising in Bahrain (and Jordan), protests in the Arab monarchies share two important characteristic that set them apart from uprisings in the Arab republics: They have, for the most part, been more limited in scope, and they have demanded reform of the nizam, not its overthrow.

It is not altogether clear why this discrepancy has been the case—or, for that matter, whether it will continue to be so. Some political scientists have maintained that the reason why the demand in monarchies has been for reform and not revolution is that monarchs have an ability presidents—even presidents for life—do not have: They can retain executive power while ceding legislative power to an elected assembly and prime minister. As a result, the assembly and prime minister, not the monarch, become the focal point of popular anger when things go wrong. Unfortunately, this explanation rings hollow. While it might hold true for Kuwait, which has a parliament which can be, at times, quite raucous, Saudi Arabia does not even have a parliament and the king is the prime minister. Others argue that oil wealth enables monarchs to buy off their opposition or prevent an opposition from arising in the first place. This might explain the Gulf monarchies, but neither Morocco nor Jordan have oil while Bahrain—which has had a long history of rebellion and had a full-fledged uprising in 2011—is hydrocarbon rich.