

## **Full Length Research**

# **Globalization and its Impact on the Arab Spring**

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**Tendency amongst researchers and some scholars to view Arab Spring as a result of globalization of democratic norms, new media technologies, educated and globalized as main agent of change. The implicit assumption is that the West understands the Arab Spring in terms of 'Western' norms and values. Prevalent orientalist attitudes amongst scholars and policy makers, cannot accommodate explanations that the Arab spring is actually the result of domestic structural change. The role of the West which represented by the US has been one of indirectly mobilizing popular opinion and even demonstrations against Western policies such as the invasion of Iraq, western support for Israel and western backing of authoritarian regimes like Ben Ali's in Tunisia and Mubarak's in Egypt then the dramatic events in Syria. Moreover the new US policy in the region which is called the Smart Power, that she announced about it the former secretary of state B. Clinton. All these factors which I mentioned above have a huge impact on these events which they occurred at Arab region.**

**Key Words:** Arab Spring, Smart Power, Globalization.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, a huge wave of revolutions and protests broke in the Arab world. A sacrifice for freedom was followed by the Tunisian revolution which started afterwards. Its act sparked an uprising in many Arab countries, in away similar to the Domino effect. Insofar cascading effects are not new phenomenon in themselves. In the political world, this period was referred to as The Arab Spring Revolutions. No one can claim that this series of events happened by accident, It was rather the result of accumulated difficulties faced in the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and corrupt political management in these countries. This led to a long, dark, and difficult period of time as a logical result and consequence of such a situation. It was the spring for

hope for Globalization.

Remarkably, most Arab countries suffer from a high budget deficit, economic corruption, low foreign direct investments (FDI), a high debt rate and lack of transparency, which leads to a low standard of living for the citizens and the decline of basic services. Moreover it is more likely that the effects of economic globalization vary according to the type of state and its domestic institutions. For instance the subsidized industry was very weak in the Arab Spring countries, therefore, their domestic markets were swamped by cheap imports, damaging their already weak industries. At the beginning the Arab Spring made its start when Arabs needed change for the better in their lives. They called for freedom and democracy.

There are two factors that motivate this issue, first, an internal one. Secondly there is an external factor, the wave of globalization which provides a favorable environment for change. Coupled with the global economical crisis that hit the world in 2008, which had a huge effect on the whole world, including the United States and the Arab Spring countries as well (Abdul Salam: 2012).

In 2004, a Danish diplomat, Professor Ji Ustream Mueller, published an article on globalization which predicted a number of popular revolutions around the world. This article

was part of the controversy that has accompanied the growing tide of globalized by explaining the linkage between the both social and economic effects of globalization which lead to these popular revolutions (Valiente : 2012).

The aim of this research paper is both to discuss the role and to make clear the real impact of globalization on these uprisings. Of course it will can assess whether globalization has a positive or negative effect on the Arab Spring countries, rather than to address the elements and examine competitiveness in the setting of globalization, growing integration and rapid technical change (Mousavi:2014).

### **Globalization and its Impact on the Arab Spring**

As has been pointed out, economical and political pressures are not the only reason behind the uprisings, but they compound the problems. Globalization itself definitely had a major role in fuelling the Arab Spring. It is important to realize, that the main reasons of these uprisings were poverty and inequality. This research paper will explaining them. Therefore the global political economy is needed now in this issue more than ever. "Globalization generally reduce poverty because more integrated economies tend to grow faster and this growth is usually widely diffused"( Glenn. J, 2007, p178). Under those circumstances, globalization is likely to affect the Arab Spring countries very differently depending upon a host of factors which will it be discussed below:

### **What Is the Element of Globalization That Has Affected the Arab Spring the Most?**

#### **Population Growth**

Of course the extreme population growth and the failure of the economy led to high unemployment rates, especially among the youth. As we know the Arab countries are the first on global unemployment rates. This is one of the challenges as well. In addition the demographics of the Arab countries have changed

significantly and has been exacerbated. There is an official government report shows that in the wake of the Arab Spring, youth unemployment rose harshly and is approximately three times higher than total unemployment and there is no doubt that is the youth bulges are associated with an increased risk of both political violence and uprisings (Glenn.J,2007).

#### **External Debt**

There is a fact, that the low and declining levels of welfare spending as a result of the high debt burden. Furthermore, many of the policies the Arab countries have had to realize for further IMF loans has also led to a decline in these countries welfare expenditure. "According to Jubilee Debt Campaign, Egypt has paid over 80 billion USD in foreign debt and interests since 1981" (Mousavi: 2014). Markedly, these countries are most seriously indebted, these debts perform as an iron cage, by preventing them from the economy recovery and providing even the most essential welfare and the public provision of basic services, such as pensions, education, health care, family credits, etc.(Heydari:2011).

#### **Structural Adjustment**

The impact of globalization on political economy in the Arab world became clear over the last few year. As a fact, all of the national, economic, social, cultural and technical policies are usually under control by the authority of the state, within each one of these countries. Consequently, globalization, began to shift of national authority in the Arab Spring countries, to international economic and financial institutions, specifically the major global companies (O'Brien & Williams :2013). With the time, the impact and influence of those institutions and the various of international agencies has become very clear and has deeply affected all fields of national policy. In addition the crisis of 2008 disclosed the structural contradictions of the system in these countries, twisting economic inequality into social conflicts." In a global pincer movement, the new international of capital is turning whole countries and social orders upside down"( Glenn.J,2007,p136).

#### **Unequal Land Distribution**

Under those circumstances, globalization leads to discrimination on the basis of knowledge and culture, plus an urban-rural schism, as well as money and influence make the classes in society. Accordingly, leads to the transformation of the elite minority in society in to a

spokesman for the people in the international forum and grant them the leadership of globalization in their own country. This naturally leads to the provision of special interests over the public and an increasing imbalance of justice and equality, thus fuelling revolutionary and protest movements. (Glenn. J, 2007).

### **Institutional Racism**

The revolutions were a settlement of accounts between the regimes and the demonstrators. This paper frankly points out one of the hotly debated issues, there was no racial discrimination in the labour market and there were no marginalized ethnic groups in the Arab world societies, maybe many decades ago but definitely not now. On the other hand, the exclusion and discrimination against women in the Arab Spring countries were unambiguous. As a fact unemployment rates for Arab women are among the highest in the world. Therefore, this research can not ignore the fact that the Arab Women's participation has constantly been extremely badly low, particularly at the political life and in terms of their attendance in the economic activity as well (Heydarian:2011).

### **Education**

Obviously, education is viewed as a positive factor promoting growth in developing countries. This gives the people who have money, high educations and political influence more opportunities for development of international relations, than it grants to the rest of the members of the community. As a fact, most of the demonstrators were university students, which means they were educated and they had the ability to use the modern technological equipments, such as, Computers and Smartphone. These poses a host of educational crisis, over crowded classrooms, underpaid teachers and underfunded schools in these Arab spring countries (Glenn.J,2007).

### **Democracy**

The Arab uprisings are transitions away from authoritarianism and hopefully towards democracy. Several political science scholars called these uprisings a "victory of democracy". Unfortunately in the case of Libya we do not see a significant difference before and after the NATO intervention in terms of democracy. The democracy maybe was achieved but the blood on streets (Valiente : 2012). There is no doubt, that the democratic revolution can not restrict itself to simply strict guarantees of human rights and civil freedoms. Therefore, without

free society cannot be guaranteed a worthy existence (Mousavi, 2014). "The absence of democratic institutions in the Arab world prevented people from constructively airing their basic economic grievances" (Heydarian, 2011,p1).

In fact, democracy in the world itself fosters this growth and it should be beneficial for developing countries, like in the Western world. Other opinions claim that the positive and negative special effects of democracy on poverty and inequality can still remain hotly disputed. Nevertheless democracy on its own is certainly not enough for development and growth (Valiente : 2012).

### **Technological Development**

There is no doubt, that the development of technology leads to an accelerating globalization thus radically changing the context for these uprisings. These products of globalisation, as a fact, there is no Arab civil society without the internet. The offer of communications revolution Wide Web and the opportunities to bridge the gap of knowledge between communities, facilitates the means of acquiring knowledge and linkage it with economic progress. The Arab Spring as a victory of globalisation was based upon the role of social media. Undoubtedly technology contributed towards causing the revolts of the Arab spring countries (O'Brien & Williams :2013). Ironically, the new studies of global political economy maybe needs to a new theory to explain these uprisings in the Arab world. This concept should explains how was the technological progress in the field of communications had a significant role to coordinate the demonstrators and their activities with the impact of the process of liberalization of the media and globalization as well.

### **The Political Motivation of Globalization**

As a fact, the Arab Spring is a complex political phenomenon. Many scholars have tried to unpack this political phenomenon and to achieve a theoretically relevant explanation. The political regimes have on the whole had negative impact upon levels of poverty and inequality in the Arab spring countries. No one can deny the role of the international pressure that was exercised on the Arab world in terms of globalization and adherence to international institutions. The effect and intervention led to the demise of the concept of national sovereignty (O'Brien & Williams: 2013). Therefore, Russia and China they have a fear of globalization of the Arab awakening experience to their areas. As a result, these Arab spring governments lose their power and ability to make both the internal and the external national policy independently. There is no doubt that globalization

may be having an independent causal effect upon the behaviour of decision-makers in the Arab world countries.

### The Economic Motivation of Globalization

The phenomenon of "Globalization" has had a huge impact and has clearly cast a shadow over the economy of the Arab Spring countries. Their economic policies and the ideology of hegemony on the market, has been offset by the concept of market liberalization. The free flow of capital, makes the Arab states lose their control over the level of the currency exchange rate (O'Brien & Williams :2013). Because these transnational and international companies with their financial institutions, have control of their resources which are much larger than most of the Arab Spring countries, so that those governments have become affiliated to these foundations and companies so they absolutely adopt policies of the rich countries who own these institutions (Valiente : 2012).

The nature of the external economic environment confronting the Arab spring countries has substantially altered in recent times. The declining authority of these countries is reflected in a growing diffusion of authority to other institutions and associations. Furthermore most of the FDI remains concentrated in just a small number of the Arab Spring countries (Mousavi:2014). As a fact, the levels of these countries in welfare spending was 1.3 per cent of its GDP on social security, which is much lower if we compare to Europe, where countries spent on average 24.8 per cent, coupled with the per-capita and it's possible affect on the Arab Spring countries (Glenn.J,2007).

Finally, the question is: Did the protesters achieve their goals in these uprisings through globalization or they remained a far-fetched?

The answer is "yes" and "no", at the same time. Yes, because the Arab Spring was a series of revolutions and succeeded in over-throwing systems that have been described as dictatorships and toppling these regimes. No, because the youth did not reap the fruits of these uprisings, especially they failed to establish democracy. The overwhelming tendency that the revolutions in the Arab countries have turned to chaos and collapse of economy and financial systems , as well as the deterioration of structures and political stability, also led to a break-down of the institutions of state. Generally, the Arab people need to prepare the coming generations in understanding globalization. The causes are rooted in the inherited structures of the Arab world (Abdul Salam: 2012).

### CONCLUSION

As can be seen, these revolutions should be considered as an alarm for all the world, that adopt authoritarian

system and ignore social issues for the people. In fact, globalization has played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses against the hand of autocracy in the Arab Spring countries. The Arab world is characterized by globalization in particular features when it comes to socioeconomic and political life. It can distinguish them significantly from globalization paths in other areas. The features are very uneven and it is not linked to globalization by conscious strategy.

It is well-known that the capital is always a coward. As a result, political stability, which in turn leads to economic stability, will be promote and attract investment in these countries. A favourable investment climate is needed, otherwise these countries will be forced to revise their policies accordingly. Consequently, unstable and insecure countries find it more difficult to attract investment.

The relative importance of globalization in the Arab world has generated equalizing economic development, for a long time. Civil society and its institutions were a space of consent for the rule of authoritarian regimes. It highlights the important role of both internal and external elements (O'Brien & Williams: 2013).

The stress on external matters can be misguided and is frequently employed in an effort to avoid dealing with domestic issues, such as political, economy, social, and institutional conditions, etc. Furthermore, the Arab Spring countries can be injured or overwhelmed by external events and forces, such as the economic crisis or global inflation (Heydarian: 2011).

Therefore as a conclusion the evidence points strongly at the governments of these countries trying for instance the deregulation of labour markets, corrosion of social welfare provisions and declining expenditure on health and education. These measures are sources of increasing inequality and poverty. The uprisings in the Arab Spring countries started for these reason and their regimes were faced with unprecedented challenges. After that many of these regimes tried to adopt several adjustments of their policies, to correct the situation, with a package of political and economic emergency measures, but then it was too late. To sum up , the situation went from bad to worse.

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