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Arab Spring: The Genesis, Effects and Lessons for the Economies of the Third World

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Abstract

On December 17, 2010, a 26-year-old university graduate, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself ablaze outside the police provincial headquarters in Sidi Bouzid (Tunisia); this act of self-emolition was in protest over the confiscation of the cart and wares that constituted his means of livelihood as a food vendor. Bouazizi had resorted to vending as a vocation following unsuccessful search for employment with his degree; on January 4, 2011, he died of complications from his burns. The public outrage generated by Bouazizi's one-man protest precipitated wild protests in his native Sidi Bouzid, which became the starting point of a socioeconomic, political and constitutional revolution, first by extending to other cities in Tunisia and, by the end of the first quarter of 2011, spreading to several countries in North Africa and the Middle East; that phenomenon became known as Arab Spring. As reflected in the title, this paper seeks to piece together, in one journal article, the genesis, causes, global effects and lessons learnable by leaders across the world especially the leaders and citizens of the developing economies of the Third World.

Introduction

One of the major characteristics of underdevelopment is passivity and docility of citizens. Inertia, inactive, unreceptive, submissive, flaccid and lifeless are some of the synonyms of the word *passive*, while quiet, compliant, tame, meek, obedient and biddable are presented as the synonyms of the word *docile*; invariably, *passive* and *docile* are, virtually, synonymous. Submissiveness of the citizens is a major reason why government functionaries in the Third World generally get away with corrupt practices with special reference to embezzlement of public funds and the product of corruption is an economy that is bedeviled by failed infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, lack of social service and all the malaise that produce a social undercurrent that has the potent capacity to precipitate a revolution. This pair of passivity and docility is responsible for the stay power of authoritarian regimes in the Third World.

This paper seeks to provide an insight into some of the root causes of what came to be known as Arab Spring and to analyze the consequences that the uprisings have had on the political dynamic in the Arab World. The chapter sets off to review the genesis of the phenomenon of Arab Spring, the causes, the global effects and lessons learnable by the developing economies of the Third World.

The Genesis

On December 17, 2010, local Tunisian authorities seized the vegetable cart of Mohamed Bouazizi on claims that it was unlicensed. Following fruitless efforts to retrieve his confiscated cart, Bouazizi set himself ablaze outside the police provincial headquarters in protest. On January 4 Bouazizi died of complications from his burns. A 26-year-old university graduate, Bouazizi resorted to selling fruits and vegetables after all efforts to secure a befitting employment failed. The bread winner in a family of eight, Bouazizi lost his father at the age of three and was saddled with the responsibility of catering for his widow mother and seven siblings. The initial hopes that a university education will afford him a good job and a better life was dashed after searching in vain for employment. He was compelled to settle for cart pushing, a menial job for which he eventually gave up his life; this served as the catalyst that galvanized the population to embark on a revolution against long-serving leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after 23 years in power. The overthrow of the Ben Ali administration had tremendous outcome for not

only Tunisia, but for North Africa and the Middle East as waves of protests spread throughout the Arab world resulting in regime change in Egypt, Libya and Yemen and sociopolitical tremors in Bahrain, civil war in Syria and a hitherto docile citizenry of Jordan that is now audaciously demanding changes including a reassessment of the place and role of the monarchy.

According to reports from Reuters, Bouazizi's grieving mother, Mannoubia had one prayer for the 'killers' of her son: "I ask God that Ben Ali's people, and the Trabelsi family go completely." True to her prayers, on January 14, exactly 10 days after her son died, Ben Ali and his ruling family fled Tunisia and took refuge in Saudi Arabia following an unprecedented uprising as angry demonstrators, demanding justice for the blood of Bouazizi and protesting the circumstances that led to his death, hit the streets of Sidi Bouzid.

Before his tragic end, Bouazizi was a resident of Sidi Bouzid, a small, struggling town in the suburb of Tunisia 250 km (155 miles) southwest of Tunis. Sidi Bouzid was a typical small, remote town in a low-income economy characterized by massive infrastructure decay and high rate of poverty and unemployment. But this town gained global prominence following Bouazizi's self-immolation; in fact, Sidi Bouzid became the starting point of a socioeconomic, political and constitutional revolution, first by extending to other cities in Tunisia and, by the end of the quarter, spreading to several countries in the Arab world.

In neighboring Egypt, Algeria and Mauritania, several nationals, frustrated with the leadership and living condition resorted to the Bouazizi-style of protest by setting themselves ablaze; this heightened the profile of Bouazizi as the hero of change in the region. The triumph of the voices of the Tunisian people inspired similar protests in other Arab countries, including Morocco, Syria, Yemen and Libya.

After Ben Ali, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was next to go. Egyptian demonstrators took to the streets on January 25, protesting against the high costs of food, official corruption, authoritarianism and unemployment and calling for an end to President Mubarak's 30-year rule. For over two weeks, Egyptians besieged Cairo's Tahrir Square daily, defying intimidations and arrests and voicing their frustration with Mubarak's strong grip on power. On February 11, 2011 Mubarak yielded to mounting pressure at home and abroad to step down as Egyptian president.

In nearby Morocco, the "Movement for Dignity" on February 20, rallied protesters, demanding that King Mohammed VI reviews the country's constitution, give up some of his powers and increase food price subsidy. But the protests in Morocco were mostly peaceful and short-lived, perhaps because some of these demands received immediate government attention; or perhaps because despite being under 350 year-old monarchical rule (the Alawite dynasty), Morocco remains one of the most progressive nations in the Arab world with a relatively robust economy, an elected parliament and a monarchy that is open to reforms and tolerates periodic public protests.

From the night of February 16 when disgruntled Libyans filed out against the reign of Muammar Al Gaddafi of Libya, the protests were anything but peaceful. At the end of the quarter, the struggle between protesters and pro-government forces degenerated into a civil war with hundreds of civilian casualties. This prompted a UN resolution for the intervention of allied forces to affect a no-fly zone in efforts to protect civilians.

First quarter 2011 ended with no end in sight for the violence as President Gaddafi clung to his 41-year rule with a vow to repress every act of rebellion against his regime, which commenced following a successful coup d'état he staged in 1969. While the clock was ticking away for the Libyan leader, the revolution spread to Syria; the Syrian protests which begun in earnest on March 15, 2011, became bloody with President Bashar Al-Assad, like his Libyan counterpart, refusing to yield to calls from his people to quit power. After the bloody clash of March 25 that resulted in several losses of lives, the first quarter ended in a stalemate. In other Arab countries, including Jordan, Bahrain and Yemen, there were sporadic anti-government protests which sometimes turned violent. As the curtains closed on the first quarter there were growing fears around the world that the crises could spread to crude oil powerhouses in the Middle East, including Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Causes

Throughout history, revolutions are the result of numerous and sometimes variegated events that totally alter the nature of the society and its political life. For instance, the French revolution (1789-99), was due to factors such as economic difficulties, political rights and rising food prices vis-à-vis diminishing valence—the capacity of incomes to displace goods and services in the marketplace. The main reasons of the Arab revolts are not limited to

internal causes, so it is vital that we also analyze the international causes alongside the internal causes.

Internal Causes

Prior to the self-emolition of Mohamed Bouazizi and the resultant protests, the Arab world was living a very difficult socioeconomic circumstance similar to what Europe experienced in 1848; poverty, rising food prices, inflation, human rights violation, political authoritarianism, sit-tightism, high unemployment and other known characteristics of underdevelopment were the main phenomena the Arabs were facing. In addition there was much corruption of Arab leaders as shown by some of the Wikileaks diplomatic cables. Shaub (2011) highlighted the average per-capita of Egypt and its possible effect on the revolution; he wrote that Egypt has had an immense income gap throughout Mubarak's control, which is clearly the fundamental reason for the revolt. One half of Egyptians live on \$2/day or less; the average per-capita income is just \$6,200." Korotayev and Zinkina (2011) affirm that Egypt had one of the fastest growths of the world food prices, and that, definitely, had influences on the destabilization of Egyptian sociopolitical system.

Unemployment

Globally, unemployment constitutes a major source of socioeconomic insecurity and with a proven capacity for the destabilization of any political system. Regarding the Arab World, Don Tapscott writes that youth unemployment stands at twenty-four percent; (Guardian, 2011) this is considered very high and the Arab countries have been incapable of changing this situation by creating new jobs especially since the world financial crises.

Political and Human Rights

Fundamentally, the stability of any human society is tied to the degree to which political and human rights are guaranteed by the system. Sharabi (2006) holds that even when most states achieved very high level of democracy and political rights, the Arab World still suffers from bad political systems that are mired by pervasive corruption, state of emergency laws, elections that are anything but free and fair, scandalous record of freedom of speech and religious fundamentalism. Even at its relative level of advancement, Egypt was no exception to this advent of pervasive corruption and lack of political freedom. For instance, after the 1967 'Six Day War', the

emergency law number 162 of 1958 was issued; the essence of this law limited the freedom and "[gave] greater powers to the police, suspend[ed] certain constitutional rights in the name of security, allow[ed] the state to detain individuals and censor and close newspapers more easily and allow[ed] authorities to try civilians in front of military and security courts under certain circumstances." (Sehata, 2004) We also note that in Egyptian political history, many events outside of Egypt had an impact on democracy and political freedom; one of such events is the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, U.S.A. This event and the ongoing "War on Terrorism" have been used as an excuse to increase the violation of human rights; they also facilitated the role of the military court.

Technology and the Social Network

Globalization and the explosion of instruments of mass communication especially the social media have made audiovisual human interaction across national boundaries as easy as the push of a tiny little button on a small device that fits into the pocket. With the resultant capacity of transmitting information and pictures thousands of miles across the world, people are now able to access information at the snap of the fingertips and this has affected global consciousness.

Beyond the internal causes of the Arab revolt as enunciated earlier, it is vital to note the pivotal role of the explosion of information technology and the social network (Facebook, Twitter); these facilities enhanced communication amongst the protesters and between the protesters and the rest of the world. Realizing the potency of this, the governments in Egypt and Tunisia at some point shut down the Internet during the protest against Mubarak and Ben Ali, in order to limit communication between protest groups.

International Causes

The geographic location of many Arab states necessitates an analysis of the International causes of the revolts that culminated to Arab Spring. The biggest Arab state and the first state that signed a peace accord with Israel and at the same time enjoyed a solid alliance with the United States in addition to the high influence on Palestinian parties, Egypt is considered the most liberal and west-oriented nation in the Arab World. For a better understanding of the January 25 revolution in Egypt, we shall focus on the relations between Israel and Egypt before the revolution.

Egypt became a strategic ally of Israel, as well as Israel's primary supplier of energy and has also ensured Israel's stability and security. As a result of all of these, it is argued that if God had given the leaders of Israel one wish within the context of international relationship within the Arab World, they would request that Mubarak be granted immortality. Egyptians have always refused the Camp David peace agreement, and, since the fall of President Mubarak, calls for ending the 1979 peace treaty with Israel have reached a crescendo. (*Guardian*, 2011) Matter-of-factly, on Friday, September 9, 2011, protesters broke into the Israeli embassy in Cairo and threw hundreds of documents through of the windows. The failure of the peace process between Palestinian and Israeli, the last aggression against Gaza in 2009 and against Lebanon in 2006 and the Lebanese victory against Israel, gave more reasons and courage to the Egyptians and Tunisians to demonstrate against their regime.

After the resignation of Ben Ali in Tunisia, and Mubarak in Egypt, much occurred: manifestations against governments increased in number, sectarian clashes in Egypt multiplied, and elections were held in both countries amid an Islamic-elite political rule. Rather than holding a political position, we shall give a scientific analysis of the events that have taken place, and evaluate the post-revolution period. The key question to address is whether public policy in Egypt and Tunisia changed in this transitional period?

It is perhaps too soon to adjudicate the work of the new political elite in both countries. However one thing is clear: The Arab people have changed and they will not accept the undemocratic politics of their countries' past. Should they be forced to, they will revolt again to protect their rights and claims as they are currently (November 2012) doing against the Morsi administration in Egypt. Other factors are the failure of the war on terror, the Iraqi war and the US-European strategy of the imported democracy. Another possible reason could be the failure of the peace process in the Israeli-Arabic conflict.

Global effects

Globalization has demonstrated a potent capacity to obliterate national boundaries and, naturally, foster worldwide economic interdependence and international socio-cultural exchange and influences towards the realization of global harmony. This interdependence has led to a situation whereby an event, a decision or an occurrence in one country resonates virtually

instantaneously thousands of miles across the world and impacts other peoples and countries and the process is facilitated by advanced communications system and the advent of social media network. Inevitably, these affect the decision-making process in politics.

In this segment, we shall review the global effects of Arab Spring with special reference to the Occupy Movement that came at its hills and the effects on politics, food prices, oil prices and growth prospects.

The occupy movement

An international protest movement that commenced in New York City on September 17, 2011 with Occupy Wall Street, the Occupy Movement, which was basically aimed at the socioeconomic inequities in human society, came at the hills of Arab Spring; in essence, it sought to globalize the essence of Arab Spring. By October 9, Occupy protests had spread over 95 cities across 82 countries and over 600 communities in the U.S. and in less than a fortnight thereafter, the Meetup page "Occupy Together" listed "Occupy" communities in 2,355 towns and cities, globally.

The movement was initiated by Adbusters, a Canadian activist group, and was partly inspired by the Cairo's Tahrir Square protests, and the Spanish Indignants. The name "Occupy Movement" was derived from Occupy Wall Street commonly used the slogan *We are the 99%* and was organized through websites such as "Occupy Together." The protests were described as a "democratic awakening;" it was, therefore, rather hard to condense the demands and, resulting from this, the project seemed uncoordinated and rudderless. In a critical assessment of the organization of the movement worldwide, the *Irish Times* described it as having "no hierarchical structure."

However, on May 30, Democracia Real YA, a major player in the Spanish Indignants movement, made a call for a worldwide protest on October 15. In mid-2011, Adbusters Media Foundation, generally known for its advertisement-free anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters*, proposed a peaceful occupation of Wall Street to protest corporate influence on democracy, address a growing disparity in wealth and the absence of legal repercussions behind the global financial crisis. According to Adbusters (2011), they basically floated the idea in mid-July and it spontaneously snowballed and took roots worldwide; the protest was promoted with a poster featuring a dancer atop Wall Street's iconic Charging Bull. Also in July,

Adbusters directed that, beginning from the demand for a presidential commission to separate money from politics, the people should commence setting the agenda for a new America. Again, activists from Anonymous encouraged its followers to take part in the protest which increased the attention it received calling protesters to inundate lower Manhattan, set up tents and kitchens, nonviolent blockades on Wall Street.

Objectives and Methods

Initially, analysts observed that it was difficult to discern a cohesive objective for the movement; however, by later October, Adbusters rallied it around a sole and lucid demand for a tax system aimed at taking from the rich and giving to the poor ala Robin Hood. Adbusters encouraged protestors to use tactical frivolity by improvising theatrics, pranks and "subversive performances" resulting from which the movement has been compared to the Situationists and the Protests of 1968, although according to Kalle Lasn, co-founder of Adbusters, this time the "stakes are much higher." The movement went further to create a diverse, multi-media culture of art production and distribution, which has been gathered and archived by the Smithsonian Museum of American History, New York Historical Society and other similar institutions, globally. The purpose of much of the art produced is to visually impact the mainstream through imagery to create solidarity and unity among the 99%.

Activists used web technologies and social media like IRC, Facebook, Twitter, and Meetup to coordinate the events. Indymedia assisted the movement with communications, based on which there were conference calls on Skype with participants from up to 80 locations. The progressive provider, May First/People Link, offered cost-free memberships for dozens of groups, including in Iran and Germany, to host websites, emails, and email lists securely. Bond (2011) offers that many decisions of the movement were taken by "working groups" made up of volunteers, while vital decisions were taken at "General Assemblies." Some sites such as New York and London used a "spokes system," with major issues first discussed at working group level where all protesters were allowed their say, and then at the General Assembly where a designated spokesperson summarized the views of each group. Though the movement tried to create more efficient forms of organization, no universal consensus for doing so emerged.

Chronology of events

As stated earlier, the Occupy Wall Street protests began in New York City on September 17, 2011. On October 9, activists in cities in over 25 countries made calls for global protests on October 15. A list of events for October 15 included 951 cities in 82 countries. From October 15 (D-Day), events were held in many cities worldwide as presented in the following pages based on statistics derived from the websites of various organizations within the domain of Occupy Movement; the presentation is in alphabetical order.

Australia

"Occupy" demonstrations took place in Canberra, Perth, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne. The protests were comparatively small with each attracting at most several hundred participants. At the Occupy Melbourne protest on October 21, approximately 100 protesters defied police orders to clear the area, and were subsequently removed with force; approximately 20 arrests were made.

Belgium

The Occupy Antwerp movement prepared for a first gathering on October 22 at the Groenplaats, next to the cathedral. About two hundred people attended. The small socialist party (PVDA) was present and served free soup as well as propaganda for their miljonairs tax (www.miljonairstaks.be, Dutch). Occupy Ghent started on October 29 with 400 people in the South Park (Zuidpark). They received a visit by supporters attending the 'second day of Socialism' (de Tweede Dag van het Socialisme), also held in Ghent on the same day.

Canada

"Occupy" demonstrations took place in at least 20 Canadian cities from D-Day when 2,000 people marched in Toronto; around 100 continued to occupy St James Park and 1,000 gathered in Montreal and marched down Ste-Catharine Street and 85 tents were set up in Victoria square. In Vancouver, 150 people camped out in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery; the events concentrated in provincial urban areas and there were demonstrations in the territories of Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut. A satirical counter-protest by blogger "toponepercentcanada" was planned for October 30, featuring such signs as "I am the 1% - release the hounds."

Germany

In Berlin, Occupy Movement together with Occupy Frankfurt and Hamburg initiated its protests outside the Reichstag on D-Day. Occupy Frankfurt settled in front of the European Central Bank, and a similar action was planned on the premises of the St. Mary's Church, Berlin.

Italy

On D-Day, about 200,000 people gathered in Rome to protest against economic inequality and the influence of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF on government. Many other protests occurred in other Italian cities the same day. In Rome, masked and hooded militants infiltrated the protests centered in St John Lateran square and committed numerous violent acts, throwing Molotov cocktails and other homemade explosives, burning and blowing up cars, burning buildings, and smashing up property such as ATMs and shop windows. The Roman Catholic Church, Santi Marcellino e Pietro al Laterano, received extensive damage including a statue of the Virgin Mary being thrown into the street and destroyed. Several unexploded petrol bombs were reportedly found on several streets by Italian police. Over \$1.3mn of damage was recorded. At least 135 people were injured in the resulting clashes, including 105 police officers, several of whom were left in critical condition with two news crews from Sky Italia. Two protesters had their fingers amputated by exploding smoke bombs and almost 20 people were arrested.

Mongolia

Mongolia's Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU) announced that the association joins the worldwide occupy protests of Wall Street and other high streets on October 20. CTU's grouse was that bankers charge higher interest rates emphasizing that as of September 2011, the weighted average annual MNT lending rate was 16% in Mongolia.

New Zealand

Six cities across New Zealand (Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill) witnessed "Occupy" protests as of October 17; protests in Auckland drew up to 3,000 supporters.

Republic of Ireland

Protests were held in Dublin, Cork, and Galway; the protest in Dublin was organized by the "Real Democracy Now! Ireland," and "Occupy Dame Street" protest, set up outside the Central Bank of Ireland in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York. On October 22, it was reported that over 2,000 people took part in the Occupy Dame Street demonstration.

United Kingdom

As part of D-Day global protests, protesters gathered in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The London Stock Exchange in Paternoster Square was the initial target but attempts to occupy the square were thwarted by the London Police who sealed off the entrance to the square and a High Court injunction was granted against public access to the square. About three thousand protesters gathered nearby outside St Paul's Cathedral, with 250 camping overnight. Reverend Giles Fraser, the Canon of St. Paul's, said that he was happy for people to "exercise their right to protest peacefully." Additional smaller protests occurred in Nottingham and by October 17, an indefinite encampment was established on College Green in Bristol.

In Northern Ireland, Occupy Belfast initiated its protest outside the offices of Invest NI on October 21; it took residence at Writer's Square, in the Cathedral Quarter and, in Scotland, camps were organized around the financial district of St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh on D-Day; incidentally, St. Andrews Square is the home of the Royal Bank of Scotland headquarters in the Dundas House mansion. Protesters in Glasgow set up camp in the civic George Square.

United States of America

The Occupy Wall Street protests began in New York City in September 2011; the General Assembly met in Washington Square Park, New York City on October 8, and by October 9, similar demonstrations were held in 70 major cities and over 600 communities across the U.S. An October 12–16 poll found that 67% of New York City voters agreed with the protesters and 87% agreed with their right to protest. An October 11, 2011 poll showed that 54% of Americans nationwide favored the protests, compared to 27% for the Tea Party movement, and up from 38% in a poll conducted October 6–10. A

poll published on October 19 for *National Journal* found that 59% of Americans either completely or mostly agree with the protestors, with even support from Republicans at 31%.

On D-Day, the Occupy Wall Street Demands Working Group published the *99 Percent Declaration* with demands, goals, and solutions. The *99 Percent Declaration* is a political document including a suggested list of grievances on which movement organizers tried to get protestors to vote. It called for a United States General Assembly on July 4, 2012 in Philadelphia to support public works programs, tax hikes on the wealthiest, debt forgiveness, ways to get money out of politics, and amendment of the U.S. Constitution. However, in view of the fact that New York City General Assembly official statements were based on consensus and since not all participants agreed with issuing demands, none was made.

Harvard law professor and Creative Commons board member Lawrence Lessig called for a convention to propose amendments to the United States Constitution in a September 24-25, conference co-chaired by the Tea Party Patriots' national coordinator. (Lessig, 2011) Lessig's call for constitutional amendment was subsequently echoed by Dylan Ratigan, Karl Auerbach, Cenk Uygur, and others, including protestors.

Reacting to the phenomenon, United States President Barak Obama, on October 16, 2011, spoke in support of the movement; however, he cautioned that care must be taken to avoid demonizing finance workers. In same vein, Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on October 19, 2011, described the protests as "a warning for all those who are in charge of the processes of governance."

On politics

Lasswell (1979) described politics as the game of who gets what, when and how. This apt and concise expression of political thought captures the essence of individual and group interaction in the political process and this is also relevant to the relationship amongst nations. International politics is, therefore fundamentally, the interaction amongst nations in a global amphitheatre in which every nation seeks advantage over others in neo-Hobbesian state of nature. (Osai, 2012) This is an incontrovertible truth in global politics, which affects every other aspect of human existence in the current global order.

While the Arab Spring sprang from Tunisia and spread across the Arab World, the Occupy Movement, which is, essentially, the same phenomenon as Arab Spring, spread to major cities across the world: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco (US), London (Britain), Paris (France), Madrid (Spain), Milan (Italy); in one country after another, citizens organized themselves and demanded good governance, accountability and greater sensitivity from their leaders. These movements, though not new, are products of the aftermath of Arab Spring.

As a result of the above, world leaders both in the public and private sectors have become conscious of the fact that the led are keeping watchful eyes on their activities in terms of policies with special reference to how these public policies and their outputs play out in the affairs of the public. There is, therefore, greater consciousness within the political leadership that the “Third System” is a potent political instrument.

On oil prices

A common denominator and a major factor in the production process is transportation, which, according to Nkwo (2009), is the movement of people, goods and services from one point to another in the process of their economic and social relationship. A very vital element in the process of this movement is the pump price of energy that drives the transportation subsector. Today, the major source of energy is petroleum—oil. Resultantly, a tremor in the price of crude oil in the international marketplace sends its ripple effects across the world by way of increase in the pump price of petroleum products; a corollary to this is an increase in the cost of transportation and subsequently an increase in the price of goods and services as producers transfer the increase in price to the end users.

The Arab Spring and the resultant volatility of oil-rich North Africa and the Middle East led to sharp increase in oil prices; this caused anxiety about stability in the global oil market. On January 31, 2011, for example, following the upheaval in Egypt, the price of Brent crude oil on the London-based ICE Futures Exchange surpassed the \$100 per barrel mark for the first time since the financial meltdown of September 2008. Major market concerns were the possibility of the Egyptian revolution spreading to other oil-exporting Arab countries and a possible obstruction to the passage of oil-bearing tankers through Egypt's Suez Canal, which remains a very vital and convenient link between millions of barrels of crude oil per day from that

region and the global marketplace. Assurances from market analysts that United States' massive spare capacity will check possible supply disruptions did little to reduce market anxiety. Oil prices remained at elevated levels all through the quarter; this worsened after the crisis extended to Libya.

On Thursday March 31, 2011 (the last day of the quarter), crude oil prices increased to the 30-month high as the fight for rebel-held areas intensified in Eastern Libya. Light crude for April delivery gained 2.45% (or 2.35%) to close at \$106.72 per barrel. Brent crude for May delivery also gained 2.23 (or 1.94%) to close at \$117.36. The revolution in North Africa had the most impact on international oil price movement in 2011.

Regardless of being a minor importer of crude oil, Egypt's control of the Suez Canal and the tactical location it occupies in the oil-rich Arab World, resulted in immense volatility during the civil rebellion there. Regarding Libya, its position as Africa's third largest oil producer with about 1.6 million barrels of crude oil a day, taken alongside its status as the locale of the largest proven oil reserves in Africa, made the civil war in that country a factor in oil price movements. This was further compounded by the fact that Libya exports most of its oil to the developed economies of Europe, including Italy, Germany, Spain and France.

With confirmed reserves of 754 million barrels and 127 million barrels between them, the Middle East and Africa control a total of 66% of world crude oil reserve (at 56.6 and 9.6%, respectively), according to British Petroleum (BP). In a world dominated by a ravenous thirst for oil, the two regions hold the future of the global energy market in their hands; and as Arab Spring spread to the key oil exporting countries in the region, crude oil prices increased by 10.3% in the month of March alone and by 21% in the first quarter of 2011.

On food prices

World Bank's 'Global Food Security Update' reveals that sharp increases in energy price affect the price of food in three main ways:

- They encourage greater use of food in the production of biofuels;
- They feed into the cost of food production through higher fertilizer prices, the cost of irrigation, and other farm inputs
- They increase the costs of crop transportation to markets

According to the report, a 10% increase in crude oil price is associated with a 2.7% increase in the World Bank Food Price Index, which returned to its 2008 peak owing mostly to Arab Spring-related oil price upswing. Multilateral organizations raised alarm over the worsening global poverty level as the extreme poor spend higher percentage of their meager income on food (up to 70% in some instances). Since June 2010, the World Bank estimates that an additional 44 million people fell below the \$1.25 poverty line as a result of higher food prices, part of which is due to higher energy prices.

World Bank reports also show that global maize price (an important food staple in Middle East and Africa) are 17% higher in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the last quarter of 2010, due to increasing demand for industrial uses and dwindling stocks. Several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are presently faced with double-digit increase in maize prices. Year-on-year, the report identifies key staples that remain significantly higher than their price level in 2010 to include maize (74%), wheat (69%), soybeans (36%) and sugar (21%). So, while high food price was one of the major issues that precipitated the Arab Spring uprisings, the effect of the crises led to an additional increase in the prices of food and other commodities. Several countries in the crisis-ridden region, including Iran, Syria and Egypt and also countries in Sub Saharan Africa now struggle with double-digit food price inflation.

An increasingly worrisome characteristic of the food and energy price crises is the emergent use of food commodities for biofuel production in developed as well as emerging economies. In its "Food Price Watch" of April 2011, the World Bank quoting data released by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that the use of corn for biofuel in the US has increased from 31% of total corn output in 2008/2009 to a projected 40% in the 2010/2011 season. The endeavour to avoid the rising price of crude oil is increasing the diversion of food for biofuel purposes, thereby further reducing supplies and increasing prices. The consensus is that if this trend continues, the world could be heading back to a crisis period that is similar to that which it is only just coming out of.

Arab spring, oil price and global economic growth prospects: a survey

Irrespective of the effect of Arab Spring on global oil price and economic growth prospect, growth in the entire Middle East and North Africa region is

still achievable, driven by the oil-exporting economies as they leverage on record high price of crude oil to achieve strong economic advancement.

Growth in Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy, is expected to remain strong for several reasons. It was insulated from the sociopolitical chaos in the region; meanwhile, it remained a major beneficiary in the resultant high price of crude oil, which assisted in boosting economic spending and activities. The IMF gave an upward review of Saudi's 2011 growth forecast sharply, from an earlier 4.5% to 7.5%. For the oil-importing Arab economies, the IMF forecast possible fiscal deficits, deterioration in investors' confidence and capital flight, all resulting from Arab Spring. The Fund saw Egypt as one of the region's economies that would be worst hit by the crisis, especially due to its vulnerabilities as a net-importer, and also because of the sharp slowdown expected from tourism, which is the country's economic mainstay. Egypt's growth prospect was lowered from the 2010 level of 5.1% to just 0.1% in 2011. In the long term, however, the positive changes expected from ongoing political, economic, social and constitutional reforms especially the successful conduct of elections could mark the beginning of a more rapid economic expansion and competitiveness in the region.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the IMF in its April 2011 Regional Economic Outlook projected macroeconomic challenges for the region arising from current swift movements in key prices; though the region was expected to improve on its 2010 growth performance in 2011, from about 4.9% to a robust 5.5% in 2011 and 6.0% in 2012; the report observed that the rising price of commodities would lead to a significant imbalance in growth, from country to country. The big losers, the report forecast, will be the net oil importing economies while the big winners will be the oil exporting economies (Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, etc), which incidentally will be the propeller of the improved growth projection for Sub Saharan Africa.

For the developed economies of Europe and America, growth outlook may dim slightly irrespective of the recovery from the financial crisis. The expected positive impact of the US payroll tax cut policy on the economy in 2011 notwithstanding, a report on the economy by Morgan Stanley (Global Economic Forum) downgraded the country's growth forecast from an earlier 3.6% to 3.3%. A major growth factor observed in the report is the direction of the global energy market in 2011. As it is, gasoline price, which started off the year at \$3/gallon rose to about \$4/gallon later. According to the report, each \$1/gallon change in gasoline price subtracts about \$120 billion from

discretionary spending power, a critical growth indicator for the US economy.

Tapscott (2011) offers that apart from few instances including Greece, Ireland, Spain and perhaps a few others, most economies in the European Union sprang back following the financial meltdown of 2008, but the upswing in the energy prices raked its tolling on the regional economic outlook. In the UK, the Bank of England downgraded its earlier growth forecast for the country citing a great deal of uncertainty arising from price volatility in the global commodities market. From an earlier projection of 2.0% growth, a new estimate put the country's growth in 2011 at 1.7%, and 2.2% in 2012, reflecting a downturn from an earlier forecast of almost 3%. Tapscott further expressed concerns about the inflationary pressure emanating from higher commodity and import prices, and the increase in the standard rate of VAT; developments that will likely push the country's inflation level far above the set target of 2% to about 5% shortly.

Germany, Europe's biggest economy showed resilience despite the rising energy costs. At the end of the first quarter of 2010, the country reviewed upward its growth projections, from an earlier 2.3% to 2.6% in 2011 buoyed by a rise in consumer confidence and spending, households' disposable income and industrial output and demand. In neighboring France, the growth prospect seemed not so bright, as consumer spending plunged by 0.7% in March in response to growing un-employment and energy costs. Inflation was also revised upward from an earlier 1.5% estimate for the year to 1.8%. Crude oil price hike and the rising costs of raw materials were the factors driving France's inflation.

Globally, earlier growth forecast was revised downward from 3.6% to 3.5%; while the 2012 projection slipped slightly to 3.7% from 3.8%, citing volatility of oil prices, the Arab Spring and reverberations from the global supply as a result of Japan's earthquake and tsunami. These factors, compounded further by the rising global inflation and the expected monetary policy tightening in several economies, were obvious threats to global growth prospects and could reduce the progress made by some countries in the path to economic recovery.

Resulting from poor global conditions, most economies hit by the Arab Spring are contending with high inflation and rising unemployment. While a partial return of political stability could permit somewhat faster growth in the

combined output of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen during 2013, weak demand in Europe and other regions will weigh on the Arab Spring states; resultantly, growth is expected to remain below long-term trends and unemployment is expected to increase owing to continued insipid external demand, high food and fuel commodity prices, regional tensions and policy uncertainty. Libya is considered a spectacular exception to the pattern of slow recovery because of its oil wealth and oil output, which is returning to its pre-civil war level faster than expected. (Sampson, 2011)

Analysis

By investigating the characteristics of each country that experienced regime change as a result of Arab Spring, we identified certain trends that would help to predict whether an Arab Spring-like uprising is possible in other African countries on the basis of shared or similar traits. In doing so, we looked at the cases where regime change occurred; these are Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. Although these States are not models, a closer look into their political systems and culture, combined with the regional dynamics, provide important clues as to why revolutions occurred in these countries.

In analyzing each specific uprising that resulted in regime change, with special reference to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, we identified characteristics that combined to result in popular protest and thereafter revolution. Again, vital questions raised about the Arab Spring are: why experts failed to predict the revolts, why it affected some countries but not others, whether the revolts were also an Islamist Spring and what would be the global effects of the phenomenon.

Until the one-man protest by Bouazizi, the resultant Tunisian protests and the spread to other Arab nations, the most interesting issue for Middle East experts was the “remarkable” stability of regional politics since 1970 despite the unpopularity of the authoritarian regimes; infatuated by the seeming stability, experts failed to predict the outbreak of popular revolt that began in Tunisia and this is rather curious.

Introspectively, it is such a wonder that experts did not study the rapport between political regimes and militaries and predict the progression of that relationship in the event of a popular uprising. Gause (2012) identified three types of militaries that played a large role in determining the success of the uprisings. These are (1) corporate militaries: relatively independent military

institutions that are professional and apolitical and can, therefore, survive a regime change; these could afford to support an uprising; (2) patrimonial armies: the commanders of these armies are the blood relatives of a ruler; they, therefore, tend to splinter along family lines; and (3) minority armies: shared the minority identity with the regime and are, resultantly, forced to support the ruler to protect their jobs and, in some cases, their lives.

Countries with significant oil wealth were able to spend money to appease discontented populations and thereby avoid revolt. In some cases, governments provided financial resources or invested in housing to appease the populace; Saudi Arabia and Morocco present veritable instances of this later factor. Again, countries that previously experienced civil wars tended to avoid further conflict.

In countries that have developed more democratic culture and institutions, the results of elections have demonstrated that the Arab Spring is also an Islamist Spring. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Islamist parties in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia occurred due to their better-quality organizational skills sharpened through several years of subjugation. According to Gause (2012), Islamist political positions are currently very popular in the Arab world; denying this fact is tantamount to denying the stark realities before us. Although the Egyptian military seems to be committed to continuing its cooperation with the US, political difficulties could result from cultural differences, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the public's perception of US action in the Arab world. Nuland (2012:60) avers that "Egypt brokered truce after a week of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians;" this has, obviously, added to the political clout of not just the Morsi Administration in Egypt but also to Hamas. Again, the visit by Qatari Emir, Sheik Haman Thani, and other foreign dignitaries to Gaza, the tactical nuances of the conflict vis-à-vis earlier perceptions of the military capabilities of Hamas and the eventual truce have announced Hamas as a player to reckon with in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Elated by the Emir's visit, Tawel (2012:35) proclaims that "this man is bold. I like him. At least he came and visited us, and didn't play games promising like the others...Hamas has won a new victory today and [Abbas] lost." An incontrovertible development is that "the Muslim Brotherhood has exerted influence from country to country as a result of the Arab Spring." (*CNN, The Brief* November 17, 2012)

Protests in Syria have escalated into a full-blown civil war with the various rebel groups forming the Syrian National Coalition (SNC), which has received recognition by the Arab League and verbal encouragement from the US. Again, the phenomenon is making an inroad into Jordan where the people are currently demanding sweeping changes including a reevaluation of what the role of the monarch should be; matter-of-factly, they are demanding regime change—a demand that, hitherto, was unimaginable.

The Daily Sun (2012:14) reports that on November 26, 2012, Mauritanian news website Alakhbar released a picture showing a kidnapped Frenchman, Rodrigo Leal Gilberto, sitting between two armed men from MUJAO (the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa). While this may be considered an isolated case, the name of the group is reflective of its intention and, taken alongside the exploits and averred intentions of Boko Haram in Nigeria, it would not be out of place to conjecture and perhaps concur that the Arab Spring is also an Islamist Spring.

Lessons for the developing economies of the third world

Political authoritarianism, sit-tightism, corruption, selfish exploitation of malleable institutions of government by the leadership, the culture of impunity, human rights' abuse, unpatriotic and inept leadership and passivity and docility of the citizenry are some of the characteristics of the Third World. Resultantly, unemployment, human rights abuse, decaying or collapsed social infrastructure and general despondency in the society in the face of an ever-expanding gulf between the rich and the poor where a few live ostentatious lifestyles while the vast majority wallows in abject poverty become the order of the day.

Instructively, we note that the French Revolution, the Jacobite Revolution, the American Revolution, Tiananmen Square, the Nepalese long-drawn and arduous transition from absolute monarchy to Republicanism and the advent of Arab Spring present the flipside of the power equation; the string that ties all of these historical milestones of the “Third System” is the human resolve to reject and resist authoritarianism and bad governance and insist on a change in the regime and system. The phenomenon of Arab Spring has clearly demonstrated that the citizens of any nation have the potency to rise up and demand accountability and good governance from its leaders and that when that is not forthcoming, they, the citizens, can, with sufficient resolve, bring about a revolution that sacks a non-performing and, therefore,

unwanted regime. As demonstrated by some cases, a revolution does not have to be violent as the success of passive resistance in numerous cases has shown. As for the leaders of the developing economies of the Third World, the averment by Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is apt: Arab Spring is “a warning for all those who are in charge of the process governance.” This statement is reminiscent of the words of late President John F. Kennedy of the US to the effect that “those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable.”

Conclusion

At the twilight of 2010 and the beginning of the 2011, a series of demonstrations and protests began to rise in the Arab world. Ashley (2011) With the successful dethronement of Ben Ali (Tunisia), Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Abdullah Saleh (Yemen), Muammar Gaddafi (Libya) and the consistent spread of the protest across North Africa and the Middle East, the protests became known as the "Arab Spring."

The revolution was precipitated by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on December 18, 2010 in protest of ill-treatment by the authorities of the city of Tunis; it effectively rattled the foundations and pulled the rug off the feet of authoritarian leaders and regimes across the Arab World in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan and Syria: on January 14, 2011, President Ben Ali of Tunisia and his ruling family fled and took refuge in Saudi Arabia; the Mubarak (Egypt) administration fell on February 11, 2011. On October 20, 2011 Libyan rebels killed Gaddafi in his home town of Sirte; this brought a tragic end to his 41-year rule and on February 27, 2012 Yemeni President, Abdullah Saleh, ceded power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Hadi, and went into exile after 33 years in power. Saleh became the fourth Arab leader to fall at the feet of Arab Spring.

Two years after the precipitant of Arab Spring occurred in Tunis, Damon (2012) reports that Jordanian demonstrators, angry over increase in fuel price as a result of removal of fuel subsidy, are chanting against the king and demanding regime change; something rather rare in the otherwise peaceful Jordan with a hitherto sedate citizenry. (CNN, *The Brief*) Across the northern border of Jordan, rebels claim that the death toll in the Syrian civil war is approaching 40,000. The SNC has been recognized by the Arab League while France became the first western country to recognize it as the legitimate representative of the people of Syria. Though the US has not

accorded it recognition, it (US) has offered words of support. It would not be out of place to conclude that we are contending with the twilight of the Assad regime.

Obviously, the Arab Spring has emerged a new global phenomenon in the study of political economy with special reference to the capacity of citizens to transcend socioeconomic, cultural and religious differences and organize themselves against authoritarian and corrupt regimes; while the full consequences of the phenomenon are yet to crystallize since Syria is currently under regime-threatening siege by SNC and Jordan is steaming with protests that are hitherto unheard of, an incontrovertible point that has been made so far is that sit-tightism, authoritarianism and corrupt and inept leadership have been dealt a mortal blow in the affairs of men; passivity and docility of the citizenry as a characteristic of underdevelopment has been laid to rest at least regarding the Arab World.

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