ISSN: 2054-7412

SERVICES FOR SCIENCE AND EDUCATION UNITED KINGDOM

EJAS European Journal of Applied Sciences

VOLUME 8, NO 2

An Appraisal and Popular Notion Surrounding The Arab Spring: The Marxist Analyses

[1]Nelson Goldpin Obah-Akpowoghaha, [2]Momodou Lamin Tarro, [3]Ogunmilade Adekunle

[1]School of Arts and Science, University of The Gambia (UTG)

[2]School of Business and Public Administration

University of The Gambia (UTG)

[3]Faculty of Environmental Management and Social Science

Lead City University, Ibadan

akpowoghaha@gmail.com; dakpowoghaha@utg.edu.gm

ABSTRACT

Studies on the Arab Spring have advanced economic reason as propeller to various ugly events that have changed the face of most states in the Middle East and North Africa. Most of this literature undermined the influenced of external motivations and knowledge which have been instrumental to certain occurrences in developing countries. This piece identified existing stereotypes which have been underscored by western thoughts and advanced an opposing narrative. This narrative seems to gain less attention compare to western views on the issues that surround the Arab quake. However, this investigation relied on secondary sources of data which is mainly extant literature vis-à-vis Marxist theories with the view of de-emphasising certain notions and bring to the fore realities of events in the Middle East and North Africa.

Keywords: Arab spring, Marxist Analysis, Popular Notion, Economic, Pro-democracy, External factors

1 Introduction

The Arab Spring is a phrase used to describe an uprising resulting from the failure of the ruling elites to honour a consensus that bothered on the citizenry. This concept is pronounced in the field of conflict studies that revealed why men rebel against the state that was used by Robert Ted Gurr in his book (Gurr, 1970 and Rummel, 1977 cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013). Ted Gurr and most Marxists believed that citizens pick arms against the state as a result of economic deprivation and frustration in the political system (Saleh, 2013). This philosophy was also entertained in the theses of Thomas Hobbes and John Lock on the premises of state formation. Hobbes and Lock support citizens overthrowing the existing status quo when the contracting or pack binding the governors and the governed is breached by the former. The Arab spring underpinned the aforementioned philosophies resulting in the matrix whereby citizens marched against the unfavourable system. This solidarity was described in most documentation as a pro-democracy movement against authoritarian and monarchical systems of government. Before this Pro-democratic movement, studies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) focussed more of terrorism and its impact on global peace.

Consequently, the United Nations (UN) and other international actors have adopted scholarly recommendations arising from extensive studies yet the life span of insurgencies and terrorism has remained intact and breeds other terrorist forces in the MENA. The act of terrorism in the MENA has led to the loss of life and wastage in various countries which has contributed to leadership decays in

DOI: 10.14738/aivp.82.8425
Publication Date: 11th June, 2020
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.14738/aivp.82.8425

the Middle East and North Africa. The activities of the Al-Qaeda; Daesh or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP); Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) have been seen as inimical to the development of the MENA by most liberal theses (Munir and Muhammad Shafiq, 2016). To other climes, the identified terrorist groups are an instrument to dethroned or of enthroning and maintaining certain Islamic doctrines, faith and culture against external values (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013; Meierrieks and Gries, 2013). In the course of this struggle, the Arab spring emerged which defies the existing authoritarian and monarchical values aligning with external values, hence, democracy as a means of survival. This investigation unearthed the matrix that engulfed most countries in MENA vis-à-vis political leadership. Primarily this piece reflected on the following questions as a basis further research and issue of conflict studies in the Middle East and North Africa: what are the issues that propelled the Arab spring? What is the fate of these countries after the uprising? Is the uprising a means or an end in itself? The aforementioned questions guide this research and essentially provide information on whether the Arab spring was needful or unnecessary.

In addressing this, the works of Robert Ted Gurr; Thomas Hobbes; John Lock and Karl Marx were utilised as ideals to understand the involvement of the actors in the Arab spring. A brief historical overview; conceptual clarification; cases; and conclusion served as the organisation of the study.

2 Theories of Conflicts

Theories are fundamental principles that possess universal appeal in explaining the phenomenon based on cause and effect which further give a foundation for a system and further investigation. In the physical and biological sciences, theories are more direct and precise than its utility in social sciences. This complexity occurred as a result of the object that scientist in pure sciences and those social sciences deals with. In social science, the human-being form the centre of investigation and specimen for the conduct of research under the purview of the human or social environment.

The human environment described the laboratory of social scientists while a confined and controlled lab forms the centre for those in the biological and physical science. The thought of Robert Ted Gurr, Karl Marx, John Lock and other conflict theories explain expressed certain behaviour of human being on the grounds of why, how, when and the trajectory (Gurr, 1970 and Rummel, 1977 cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013; Richardson, 2011; Pettigrew, 2015)

3 Robert Ted Gurr, Karl Marx and John Lock Thoughts

The thought of Gurr on why men rebel provided information on the occurrence of war, social unrest, ethnic clashes, terrorism and the acts of deviance in human society. For Robert Ted Gurr identified the deplorable condition of citizens as a premise for citizens to rebel against the ruling elites (Gurr, 1970 and Rummel, 1977 cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013; Saleh, 2013). Karl Marx has a similar belief whose doctrine is primarily anchored on the perpetual exploitation of the working class (Proletariat) by the industrial owners (Bourgeoisie) leading to excruciating and unbearable lifestyle. This stage was described by Marx as the evil that destroyed the economy system. For John Lock and Thomas Hobbes, social contract theories see the occurrence of rebellion on the grounds of breach of the social contract by the constituted authority. The aforementioned analyses revealed that Ted Gurr; Karl Marx; John Lock; and Thomas Hobbes advocated for revolution as a desirable condition to solve existing imbalances or inequality which explain the Arab spring.

The suicide mission committed by Mohamed Bouazizi, in December 2010 in Tunisia (Abdelsalam, 2015), revealed the aggressive animosity citizens have against the leaders of the Arab world that justified the theses of Ted Gurr; Hobbes and John Lock. This act led to Pro-democratic movement in Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen and other Arab states. The unpopularity style of leadership resulting from the failure of the then government to meet up with the stated agreement built on neopatrimonialism happened to be the root cause of the general awakening.

In Syria, revolution protest began early 2011 that seek for the removal of government led by President Bashar Al-Assad. The aggressive demands led to a warlike affair between major factions, the Assad loyalist and opposition forces. A similar occurrence happened in Bahraini, primarily to gain institute rule of law in terms of political freedom; and equity Shia's people population. But these uprisings were mitigated by the military intervention of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) supervised by Saudi Arabia. The role of the GCC did not exclude Saudi Arabia from revolutionary symptoms. At the beginning of 2011, Saudi Arabia has already witnessed certain disaffection from the masses leading to special provision towards the needs of the people and Gulf states witnessed the same fate. In Jordan continuing protests have already led to three changes of cabinet and have begun to be directed at the monarch, King Abdullah II, and his family. King Abdullah II was, therefore, able to assuage the protesters by installing three different prime ministers in 18 months and also accepted certain reforms (Abdelsalam, 2015),.

As of August 2012, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen governments have been toppled and overthrown by acclaimed Pro-democratic groups. At this point, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisian fled the country in January 2011. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who has been in power for three decades submitted resignation letter in February 2011 after an ugly face-off with the Tahrir Square demonstration. In Libyan, it takes the efforts of international military bodies coupled with unprecedented domestic protest to successfully overthrown the leadership of Muammar Gaddafi resulting in his death on October 20, 2011. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemeni resigned and one Abdal-Rabah Mansour Al-Hadi known as his successor officially succeeded him in February 2012. The successes of these overthrown did not give birth to immediate peace or end the solidarity struggle, for example, the Yemeni population still seek for self-determination and immediate action on inequality in the country (Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East – Policy Brief, 2012).

4 The Middle East (ME) and the Arab Spring

The phrase the Middle East was brought about by a security and conflict expert Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1902 to refer to a zone that fell within the contour of the Arabia and India. It embodied the transcontinental area between Western Asia and Egypt. Existing literature classified the following territories as countries that formed the Middle East: Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt and Libya (Abdelsalam, 2015).

External influence and the problem of identity are dominant variables that essentially characterised the activities of the Middle East both past and present. The communist, monarchical and authoritarian systems anchored on neo-patrimonialism described the reigning currency in her political system. Before the Cold War and the collapsed of it the ME host on the strength of foreign powers economically and otherwise. This marginally altered the sovereignty of countries in the Middle East resulting in the weak political system. This porous system catapulted democratic ideas as a means of the strong political system in terms of a free-market system that ushered in capitalism.

This system invoked the destruction of statist mechanism and enthroning privatisation of state-own establishment. This western plot gain momentum due to economic woes that the ME encountered for decades leading to the attraction of foreign aids to cushion the deplorable conditions of citizens. This was evident like foreign policy inculcated oriented and tie to external economies. In a study by the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East – Policy Brief (2012) revealed that:

The 'troika' also agrees that Tunisia would benefit from a diversified foreign policy, fostering stronger relations with emerging economies such as Brazil, China, and India. Another novelty in Tunisian foreign policy, based on ideological similarities, is Tunis' growing links with Turkey and Qatar, which have been extending their influence throughout the region (Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East – Policy Brief, 2012:4).

In Egypt, there is a strong foreign policy pack with the Israel government since 1979 that has been opposed by some protesters and while President Morsi has made a serious commitment in strengthening the bilateral relation with Israel and will not be rescinded. The neopatrimonialism system was primarily premised on patronage or patron-client relationship whereby leaders signed a certain pack with citizens and in exchange for political support and loyalty. The system makes provision in terms of relative free healthcare, social facilities and massive subsidies on goods and services. This system gives birth to highly educated youth that is mostly trained abroad and with western inclinations of liberty, rule of law, fundamental human rights and democracy. The nature of education or knowledge acquired by the youth lacks entrepreneur skills and rather the youth mostly depends on white-collar jobs for survival. This system of education opposes the fundamental doctrine of democracy and capitalism that make the individual stand-alone and serve as an embodiment of initiation or inventor. In other words, the ME youths weren't prepared for the absolute transition from an authoritarian system to democracy. This has been the remote cause of insurgencies, unrest and protracted Middle East crisis.

In the presence of this awakening in the MENA and the place of Palestinians, existing literature noted that Palestinians viewed the Arab Spring as a window of opportunity, anticipating that new Arab regimes will see the need to support Palestinian path. This was proved by the change in the Egyptian attitude to Hamas, the fundamental improvements at the Rafah crossing, and the Egyptian effort to prevent Israeli aggression against Gaza. Egypt is expected to play a constructive role in mediation between Israel and Palestine on the one hand, and between Fatah and Hamas on the other. It is also expected that under the greater umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas will become more moderate and eventually be integrated into the political system.

Extrapolating from the above analyse, the Arab spring is a function of external infiltration in terms of colonial ties or heritage; education and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). ICTs like Twitter, Facebook, and other social media influenced the direction and the political landscape of the ME. These technological mechanisms were extensively utilised during a suicide event that occurred in Tunisia that dazed the Arab world and global politics.

Massive solidarity against the ruling elites vibrated into various Arab states on the grounds of deplorable conditions of citizens and the same time the ruling elites flow in affluence. In essence, the essential element that orchestrated the emergence of the uprising in the Arab World in the Middle East and North Africa was the need for development. The authoritarian and monarchical systems of leadership were no longer sustaining, hence, political leaders failed to honoured social contracts that

have united various territories for years. A popular writer on conflict studies, Mohammed Ayoob argues that:

The Arab Spring has boosted both mainstream and radical Islamism heightened the prospects of a third intifada and exacerbated regional power rivalry in the Middle East. When adding these dynamics to the stalling Israel-Palestine conflict and ever-tense U.S.-Iran relations, the Middle East faces the prospect of a major implosion or a series of smaller, interconnected ones that could have implications for regional global security (Delgado, 2014:1).

Inferring to the work of Arayssi, Fakih and Nathir Haimoun (2019), identified that the Arab spring altered the growth pattern (that is, burdened growth) of other countries, indicating that public policies need to be cognisance of aftermath conflict era.

Essentially, the crisis in the Middle East whether Arab spring or awakening or Post-Arab spring touches the security architecture of global politics on grounds of ideological linings, growth and development, and the need for peace. According to Arayssi et al. (2019), noted that the event has created a fragile matrix for development and growth. In a similar context, Acemoglu et al. (2017), added that the Arab Spring events resulted in significantly less efficient financial markets, creating a nosedive in economic growth in the zone. This was also revealed in the report of the World Bank that the region annual growth rates in terms of output witnessed radical reduction if it is put side by side with developing-nation index (World Bank, 2014). This was further captured by Devarajan and Mottaghi, (2017) and Trading Economics, (2018) cited in the study by Arayssi et al. (2019: 2), that:

Syria's gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 16 percentage points on average each year from 2011 to 2014 and witnessed a contraction by another 16 per cent in 2015, 4 per cent in 2016 and 3.4 per cent in 2017. Real GDP in Libya is estimated to have declined by 8.9 per cent in 2015 and by 2.5 per cent in 2016; additionally, absence of financing imports in Libya, mainly food, led to scarcities in basic commodities, flourishing black markets in different sectors.

Remarkable about the Arab awakening is the negative impact on the macroeconomic stability that altered budget and raised public debt (Arayssi et al., 2019). Extant literature aligned and revealed that political upheaval and violence have skewed nations macroeconomic and financial development in most conflict-oriented countries in the world (Abadie and Gardeazabal, 2008; Roe and Siegel, 2011; Pástor and Veronesi, 2013; Francis et al., 2014), ultimately leading to a reduction in economic growth and development (Blomberg and Hess, 2006; Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Meierrieks and Gries, 2013; Arayssi and Fakih, 2017). Findings on protracted Syrian conflict on neighbouring states in terms of burden noted that Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt suffered an estimated output of about $35 billion, measured in 2007 prices, similar to the 2007 Syria's GDP (Arayssi et al., 2019)

5 The Outcome of the Arab Spring

The goal of a democratic system has been relegated; hence, there is an aggressive autocratic government confining oppositions and cracking down on civil liberties. The awakening has revealed that there is power on ICT as a means and also an end, most especially when is bought by the majority. The Arab Spring revealed the place of Arab world international politics in terms of beliefs and leadership—that millions of people living in Islamic nations in contemporary societies believe in free expression and democratic governance. The Arab spring attested to the theses of Thomas; John Lock; and Ted Gurr in terms of breach of a social contract.

Studies that investigated the Arab spring have shown and revealed three distinct variables that countries like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait… technically managed to secured peaceful deal with the

protesters (1) the quality of governance institutions for security, (2) the ability to use redistribution to appease angry populations, and (3) the intensity and type of external interventions in the context of past policies of exclusion and overlapping polarization along regional, ethnic, and sectarian lines (Lanchovichina, 2018). Furthermore Lanchovichina (2018), argued in her book that inequality is not the possible cause of the Arab spring rather the erosion of middle-class wages, bonuses and the poor standard of living. But in her book, she was unable to identify what constituted erosion of middle-class salary and the growing disaffection.

A growing body of literature on peace and conflict studies re-resonance the strategic manipulative devices and influences of foreign powers on the occurrence of violence, war, and political upheaval in all epochs. This has been shown in most events in developing states, which has made the Arab spring not an exemption. The need to buy into democracy and its entrenchment was one of the primary instigators of the Arab spring; this was spearheaded by the youth intellectuals educated through western norms and values.

6 Conclusion

This investigation revealed the Marxian perspective to the events of the Arab Spring and its implication for further study. It exposes the aggressive nature of education system acquired by the citizens of the Middle East and North Africa without basic skill for self-development and innovation. This exposed the belief and inclinations in terms of western cultures and lifestyle that gave birth to democratic norms and values, hence, prodemocracy surge.

The Arab Spring demonstrations focused on internal issues by calling for democracy, justice, and social equality; however, they were silent about the Palestinians cause. The dissatisfaction of Arab youths is likely to persist if not adequately addressed by the reform policies of the remaining or newly formed regimes. A policy that aggressively educated the youths on foreign education and waiting for white-collar jobs is antithetical to development. This opposes fundamental principles of the capitalist system, individualism or democracy as a thrust for modernisation. Reforms should identify vocational education, entrepreneurship primarily on skills acquisition. The utilisation of foreign aids on the establishment of capital projects that generate incomes should be prioritised. The Arab world is facing unprecedented transformation, a process few analyst foresaw based on the previous stability of Arab autocracies. However, there is need for more theories to unearth issues of conflict and violence that underscored the Middle East and North Africa. This piece is limited to Marxist analyses and in the absence of liberal theses. Additionally, there is dichotomy among scholars on workable solution to tame further uprising and conflict in the Middle East

REFERENCES

[1] Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East – Policy Brief (2012). The Arab Spring. Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference. The Middle East Conference on A Wmd/Dvs Free Zone Nos. 9/10

[2] Acemoglu, D., Hassan, T. A., and Tahoun, A. (2017). The power of the street: Evidence from Egypt's Arab Spring. The Review of Financial Studies, 31(1), 1-42.

[3] Abadie, A., and Gardeazabal, J. (2008). Terrorism and the world economy. European Economic Review, 52(1), 1-27.

[4] Abdelsalam, E. (2015). The Arab Spring: Its origins, evolution and consequences… four years on Intellectual Discourse, 23:1 (2015) 119-139. IIUM Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284181844_The_Arab_spring_Its_origins_evolution_and_consequences_four_years_on.

[5] Arayssi, M., & Fakih, A. (2017). Finance–growth nexus in a changing political region: How important was the Arab Spring?. Economic Analysis and Policy, 55, 106-123

[6] Arayssi M, Fakih A, and Nathir Haimoun (2019). Did the Arab Spring Reduce MENA Countries' Growth? Discussion Paper Series. IZA – Institute of Labor Economics. www.iza.org

[7] Blattman, C., and Miguel, E. (2010). Civil war. Journal of Economic Literature, 48(1), 3-57.

[8] Blomberg, S. B., and Hess, G. D. (2006). How much does violence tax trade?. The Review of Economics and Statistics, 88(4), 599-612.

[9] Delgado, C. M (2014). Book Review: Will the Middle East Implode? by Mohammed Ayoob https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2014/06/05/book-review-will-the-middle-east-implode-by-mohammed-ayoob/

[10] Francis, B. B., Hasan, I., and Zhu, Y. (2014). Political uncertainty and bank loan contracting. Journal of Empirical Finance, 29, 281-286.

[11] Kinsella, D. (2002). Rivalry, Reaction, and Weapons Proliferation: A Time-Series Analysis of Global Arms Transfers. International Studies Quarterly, 46(2), 209. https://doi-org.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/10.1111/1468-2478.00230

[12] Lanchochivichina, E. (2018). The Eruptions of Popular Anger The Economic of the Arab Spring and Its Aftermath. MENA Development Report https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle /10986/2168.

[13] Munir M. and Muhammad Shafiq, M. (2016). Global Threat: A Comparative Analysis of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). IPRI Journal XVI, No.2. 1-16

[14] Meierrieks, D., and Gries, T. (2013). Causality between terrorism and economic growth. Journal of Peace Research, 50(1), 91-104.

[15] Pástor, Ľ., and Veronesi, P. (2013). Political uncertainty and risk premia. Journal of Financial Economics, 110(3), 520-545.

[16] Pettigrew, F. T. (2015).Samuel Stouffer and Relative Deprivation, Social Psychology Quarterly, 2015, Vol. 78(1) 7–24. American Sociological Association. http://spq.sagepub.com

[17] Obah-Akpowoghaha, G. N. (2013). Theoretical Understanding of Conflicts and Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Militant and Northern Islamic Sect Boko Haram in Perspective. Public Policy and Administration. Vol.3 (10). www.iiste.org

[18] Roe, M. J., and Siegel, J. I. (2011). Political instability: Effects on financial development, roots in the severity of economic inequality. Journal of Comparative Economics, 39(3), 279-309.

[19] Richardson, C. (2011). "Relative Deprivation Theory in Terrorism: A Study of Higher Education and Unemployment as Predictors of Terrorism". http://wwwRelativeDeprivationTheory TerrorismPredictorsofTerrorism aspx

[20] Saleh, A. (2013). Relative Deprivation Theory, Nationalism, Ethnicity and Identity Conflicts. Geopolitics Quarterly, Vol.8, No 4, PP 156-174

[21] Raab, N. A. (2017). All Shook Up : The Shifting Soviet Response to Catastrophes, 1917-1991. MQUP.

[22] World Bank (2014). "Regional Economic Outlook for the Middle East and North Africa", The World Bank, Washington, DC.