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## **DEMONSTRATION EFFECT IN THE CONDITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION**

**(On the example of events in Arab countries)**

### **Demonstration Effect as a Sign of Social Progress**

The “Arab revolution” for the world, just as for the Arab countries themselves, was virtually “a bolt from the blue.” The situation prevailing in most Arab countries at the time could be explained by words of a classic of political science, namely, that “those at the top were unable to rule in the old way, and those at the bottom did not want to live in the old way.” In Tunisia, where these events began, the situation differed from that in Egypt. And the events in Libya took completely different turn, and besides, its position was not like that in most Arab countries.

Then, certain people began to talk of a demonstration effect, which, as they claimed, was the main reason for mass actions in Arab countries.

Yes, this effect did play its role in mobilizing people who were dissatisfied with their life, mainly the most socially active and dynamic young men. However, this phenomenon is a natural attendant of historical progress.

The role of the demonstration effect grows along with the development and expansion of international ties and the means of communication. The role of this effect was especially important in former colonies and semi-colonies.

Under the influence of the patriotically-minded officers of Egypt headed by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who came to power as a result of a military coup and pursued a course to complete national liberation, similar coups took place in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan.

This demonstration effect is felt in advanced countries, too. For example, the so-called student revolution in France in 1968 exerted a great influence on many European countries, Germany being one of them.

The demonstration effect in the 1960s gave rise to the movement of the “New Left” targeted against “consumer society,” “mass culture,” conformism, unification of human personality, etc. However, soon its participants began to resort to the extremist methods of struggle against official society.

### **Answer of the Authorities to Mass Manifestations of the Citizens Dissatisfied with Their Life**

The answer to mass manifestations and demonstrations in Arab countries could well be predicted. Obviously, the rulers still remembered how Asad, Sr. had dealt with the rebellious citizens of his country in 1982. Having used tanks and heavy artillery, he virtually wiped off the face of the earth a big part of the whole Syrian city of Hama and killed up to 30,000 his fellow-compatriots. And he got away with that easily. The Soviet Union remained silent because it regarded the Syrian regime its ally, but the West did not express great indignation over this brutality either. But times have changed, and people have changed, too.

The western mass media and political analysts, writing and talking of the developments in the Arab world, use such words as “Arab revolution,” “Arab spring,” “long-awaited changes,” etc. But it is too early as yet to judge where there is revolution and where counter-revolution. What is almost certain is that instability in the Middle East and North Africa will persist for a long time to come. The situation in the Arab world is complex and unpredictable, but it is due to quite objective reasons.

### **The Logic of the Arab Upheavals**

One can hear words even at scholarly conferences that revolutions, rebellions, irresponsible manifestations of crowds, etc. are provoked by outside forces, and more often than not the words “Washington’s hand” are heard here and there. But more cautious analysts talk of Washington’s attempts to “redive” the “Greater Middle East.”

The revolutions in the Arab world are one hundred percent ARAB revolutions provoked by Arab realities, but not by outside interference, which can, of course, take place, but it is not the decisive factor, and is not necessarily American, on the contrary, it may be Iranian. The Arab revolutions have been caused by a number of factors.

First, it is the worsening social situation in many Arab countries after the beginning of the world financial-economic crisis. The chain reaction of mass movements began, as is known, in Tunisia in December 2010. Incidentally, it is one of the most developed and cultured Arab countries.

In January 2011 unrest began in Egypt, which was caused by a similar domestic situation – the growing cost of life, higher prices of food, commodities and services, and increasing unemployment, especially among young people.

Secondly, corruption and a wide gap between the rich and the poor, the dictatorial style of the rulers surrounded by their kith and kin, giving over power to their children or close relatives, and disposing of their country's resources as they think fit. These rulers have lost not only connections with their people and true knowledge of the real situation in their country, but even the feeling of time. And how could it be otherwise when Ben Ali ruled in Tunisia for 23 years, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt – 30 years, Ali Abdal Saleh in Yemen – 30 years, Hafez Asad and his son Bashar in Syria – 30 and 11 years respectively, and Gaddafi in Libya – 42 years.

Thirdly, solution of urgent social problems in many Arab countries was rendered more difficult by the rapid population growth. During the past thirty years the number of people in the Arab countries has doubled. Moreover, the poorer the country, the higher the surplus of its population. For example, in Yemen it is 3.1 percent higher than the growth rates of its GDP. The situation has somewhat been alleviated by money transfers from the Yemenis working in the oil-rich countries, primarily in Saudi Arabia. Although the natural population growth in the Arab countries has somewhat decreased from three to 2.4–2.2 percent, the annual surplus of the GDP, except the rich Gulf states, is so small that they are unable to solve the problem of poverty and unemployment successfully. They have either to increase production or introduce family planning as is the case of China.

Fourthly, mass discontent is also caused by the rule of ethnic-confessional minorities. Iraq under Saddam Hussein was ruled by the Sunna minority (about 20 percent of the population). On the contrary, the Shia minority has ruled Syria, having the key commanding posts in the army and business. This regime is backed by theocratic Shia Iran, which dissatisfies several Arab countries, which regard Iran as their rival for leadership in the region. Besides, they still remember that in

the war between Iraq and Iran, Syria sided with the Shia regime of Ayatolla Homeini.

For the sake of justice it should be admitted that in Iraq and Syria the religious factor has not played the decisive role in public life inasmuch as the ruling Ba'ath parties (the party of Arab socialist revival) were formed on the pattern of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The nature of the degeneration of these parties was about the same as that of the communist regimes. But it should also be admitted that the regime of Bashar Asad in Syria is opposed not only and not so much by the democratic forces, as many people in the West imagine or claim, but by the Islamist forces, and this is why it is not known whether it is better or worse for the future of Syria.

During the past decades under the impact of a whole number of factors (the Shia revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Soviet troops' participation in the civil war there, the collapse of real socialism and the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the U.S. aggression against Iraq, and the NATO military operations in Afghanistan) the situation has changed: Islam has begun to fill the vacuum in the ideological sphere.

Fifthly, the turbulent events in the Arab world are, in one way or another, connected with globalization and information revolution. New means of communication between people have emerged in various countries and on the global scale. And a new generation of users of the social networks has come into being, who can rightly be regarded as the "fifth, popular power" and who form their own public opinion. The role of the Internet, which is not under control or under censorship and which has tremendous influence on the formation of new revolutionary consciousness, has not yet been properly described and analyzed.

As to the outside interference, it did take place, but it did not trigger off the Arab upheavals.

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