# CORRUPTION, YOUTH, INTERNET AND … ARMY

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**Abstract**

In this paper there is analysis of motives, wheels and conditions that led to a wave of mass protests against authoritarian rulers in Arab states of Near East and Maghreb. It is shown that corruption in the state power system served as the main incentive for mass protests, and their major wheel was represented by the youth as the most educated, informed and oriented at postindustrial development models part of society. Social networks based both on postindustrial technologies, and on the traditional for the Arab world "technique" of a Friday prayer became an organizational and communication ground. Position of the army serves as a factor influencing "toughness" and duration of resistance in a determinative way. This study was carried out within "The National Research University Higher School of Economics' Academic Fund Program in 2013-2014, research grant №12-01-0150".

**Keywords:** Mass protests, authoritarian regime, corruption, youth, postindustrial technologies, army

## 1.  Introduction

Arab states of Near East and Maghreb are captured with a wave of mass protests against authoritarian rulers, who have held the state power in their hands for decades. Under pressure of such protests, the president of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled since 1987, the president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled since 1981, the president of Yemeni, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled since 1978, and the leader of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, who had ruled since 1969, lost their powers. But the time will show whether these events will become really revolutionary and will lead not just to a change of the ruler, but to replacement of the authoritarian regime of the personal power to a democratic-type political regime, which will provide systemic change of ruling elites.

## 2. Objectives

Objectives of the present research consist in analysis of incentives, wheels and conditions, which led to occurrence of circumstances for possible bifurcation in historical and political process of development of states where authoritarian governments in places seemed unshakable for decades.

## 3. Methods

Methodologically the research is based on the new institutional approach which emphasizes institutional environment, fundamental political, social and juridical institutions, norms, relations and values. The basic tool in present research is the method of data mining for study economic, social and communicatory conditions of mass protests against authoritarian rulers in Arab states of Near East and Maghreb and the method of situational analysis of political process, generated by mass protests in this states.

## 4. Motives, wheels and conditions of mass protests in Arab states of Near East and Maghreb

### 4.1. Economic conditions

A special place among "rebellious" states is occupied by one of the richest state and at the same time with a small population size of the Arab world – Bahrain where a specific dominant factor appears to be represented by a religious factor of opposition of the ruling Sunni minority (25%) and dependent on them Shiite majority (75%). On the other hand, one of the poorest states of this world – Yemen (gross domestic product (GDP) per capita makes up only $1118[302]), where mass poverty is the first key and all-defining factor, stands out of the whole group.

In the rest of the states – Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, where mass social and political protests have already appeared more or less distinctly notwithstanding Marxist theory of economic determinism, the incentive is not of an express economic nature. No serious economic cataclysms have been observed in these states lately. GDP growth is not high, but positive and in 2009 made up from 2.1% in Algeria and Libya, and up to 4.9% in Morocco. GDP per capita swings from $2270 in Egypt to $4216 in Jordan; only rich in oil Libya with GDP per capita $9714 (for comparison, GDP per capita in such successfully developing BRIC states as Brazil makes up $8121 and India - $1134) somewhat stands out.

### 4.2. Major incentive for mass protests

Major incentive for mass protests was corruption in the state power system according to statements of the most of observers and protest members themselves. Indeed, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Syria belong to states with high corruption level (CPI≤3,4), according to information on Corruption Perception Index provided in 2010 by nongovernmental anti-corruption organization Transparency International. Corruption situation is somewhat better in Jordan and Tunisia, but even in these states corruption level is above the average (CPI<5) [2]. This situation in general is confirmed by results of the Governance Matters research, within which Control of Corruption Index is determined, provided in 2010 by the World Bank [3].

The indicated research first of all evaluates level of economic corruption, though corruption in modern states has both economic and political component. The both corruption components are underlain by a common institutional mechanism, essence whereof is in abuse of various types of administrative resources of state power for the purpose of obtaining some illegal advantage, personal or group both financial and non-financial (political) benefit [4].

Corruption in "rebellious" states has become a basis for their functioning, acquired a systemic nature and such complex form as "state capture". Power in states captured by means of corruption was completely privatized by the ruler and his clan which allowed direct all types of administrative resources in political terms to liquidation of the political opposition in order to hold the power, and in economic terms – to use of national resources for the ruler's and his clan's personal gain. Thus, a corrupted authoritarian rule has been formed and has effective for decades. Rule of the President Mubarak in Egypt, which was based on introduction in 1981 and almost thirty-year duration of an emergency situation, government of Bouteflika, the President of Algeria, which was also based on an emergency situation introduced in 1992, nineteen years ago, and Gaddafi's over-forty-year regime of "socialistic Jamahiriya" in Libya, can be set as examples.  Liquidation of the total political and economic

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[302] Hereinafter, unless it is specifically indicated, there are provided data covering 209 states and territories for the period since 1960 till 2009 [1].

corruption and the authoritarian rule based thereupon became the major mobilizing motto of the mass social and political protests.

## 4.3. Main wheel of social and political protests

Youth, which in "rebellious" states at the age of 15-25 makes up to a third of the population, and that at the age of 15-35 – 35-40%, became the main wheel of social and political protests. And "20% of resources yields 80% of result", as the famous Pareto principle states. And the youth's key role is determined not only by its quantitative, but qualitative features.

Youth is one of the most mobile and socially active group, being in the ultimate need for possibilities of self-fulfillment and social lifts. But in "rebellious" states, unemployment level among the youth from 15 to 25 is 2-3 times higher than on the average in all age groups. So, in Egypt with an average unemployment level of 9.4%, unemployment among young men in the specified place makes up 23.3%, in Tunisia – 14.2% and 31.4% respectively, and Morocco – 9.6% and 18.2%. Moreover, in 2005-2008, youth at the age of 15-35 in such states as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria made up from 82 to 89% of all the unemployed, according to the International Labour Organization [5].

And at the same time, the youth is certainly the most educated, informed layer of the society oriented at models of post-industrial political and social-economic development not only in "rebellious" states. Young men are the core users of such modern information and communication technologies as the Internet, mobile connection, satellite television, which provide transboundary distribution of information and knowledge and allow their users extend vision of the social realm. Though, degree of connectivity to such technologies in the Arab world in general is significantly lower, than in economically developed states, but even currently it covers a remarkable part of young people in "rebellious" states. So, in these states, mobile communication connectivity makes up from 34 % in Syria up to 93% in Algeria, and that of the Internet – from 11.95 in Algeria up to 33% - Morocco (for comparison, average word level of the Internet connectivity makes up 25.6%, in Europe – 52%, and in Russia on the average ~ 40% [6]). The only exclusion is Libya, where level of the Internet connectivity makes up only 5.1%, but at the same time level of the mobile communication connectivity reaches 77%.  Similar, on the whole, picture of the Internet and mobile communication connectivity is drawn by data of the US Central Investigation Bureau [7].

Significant effect on development of protest ideas with young men of the "rebellious" states was made by such political-process phenomenon as increase of migration mobility. Essence of this phenomenon lies in the fact, that due to liberalization of the migration policy and improvement of transportation technologies, people received opportunity to move to other states and other continents, both for obtaining new information, knowledge and education, and searching for work and better life conditions. And at the same time, they obtained opportunity to study new lifestyle, other systems of values, culture, and historical customs, various approaches to organization of political and social-economic activity. It is natural, that the major number of international migrants is made up of the youth, whose part upon receiving education or after working abroad, returned to their homeland for some reasons. But even those who move to other countries for good, as a rule, keep their previous family and friendship connections, increasing transboundary information exchange flows.

Thus, it is logical and fair enough that the "last drop", signal for beginning of mass protests of the youth in Tunisia was self-immolation in Sidi Bouzid of a young university graduate Mohamed Bouazizi who could find no other work than street trading, and when by decision of the local authorities he lost this source of living, he set himself on fire [8].

### 4.4. Organizational and communication basis of the protests

Social networks became an organizational and communication basis of the protests in "rebellious" states, these networks in this context can be defined as a social structure composed of nodes represented by certain individuals. In the post-industrial world, such networks become a basic information-communication and organizational element of various forms of the society's self-organization, including political form.

A number of publications addressing the events under study assign the key and prevailing role in organization of protests to social networks based on such Internet technologies, as Facebook and Twitter [9, 10]. However, such opinion seems to be not completely justified. First of all, attention should be drawn to the provided data on the Internet connectivity in "rebellious" states, which is clearly not sufficient for the dominating role of the Internet in the society. Besides, it should be noted that disconnection from the Internet in Egypt for the night of 27-28 January 2011, only three days after the start of mass protests on 25 January didn't affect during five days of their existence either intensity, or the scale of constantly growing protests [11].

Certainly, social web networks played a significant part as an information-organizational catalyst of the mass protests of the youth which became the major wheel, but one shouldn't depreciate importance and decisiveness of social networks based not on postindustrial technologies, but on the Friday prayer "technique" traditional for that world. As history of all events under study showed, in all "rebellious" states a significant increase of mass protests was observed after the Friday prayer. In Arab states, technological achievements and caused by them social transformations of the "third wave" civilization development [12] do not yet significantly prevail over the religious factor in terms of influence on political and social processes. And, position in opposition of authorities and protesters, which the Muslim religious leaders and clergies take, significantly influences the nature and outcomes of such opposition.

### 4.5. Factor of army position and actions

Another important factor, which clearly appeared in a number of "rebellious" states and makes in many ways determinative effect on "severity" and duration of an opposition of authorities and protesters, is position of the army, which in Arab states always played and plays an important part in the politics. However, position and actions of the army shall be conceptually considered apart form position and actions of the police or other enforcement bodies designed to ensure public security in the state.

Legislation includes into the police duties response to mass riots and protests, aimed at disposition of the political system. That is why at the initial stage of protests, the police always sides with the authority at place.

And the police as an outpost of the state authorities in their direct interaction with citizens gets in direct contact with protesters and become a first object whereupon they physically and morally "slop out" their dissatisfaction with the authorities. Being under constant pressure of the protesters, and as a rule, sharing many their requirements, as the intensity increases and upon achievement of certain scope by the protests, especially, when resources and funds of the police become insufficient for their suppression, common policemen either walk away from the streets or transfer to the protesters' side. The army is always considered to be an elite part of the society designed to provide its international security, protection of the state from foreign enemies and not to interfere with the internal political processes. Professional soldiers in a social context stand somewhat apart from the main mass of the citizens and at the initial stage of protests, as a rule, take position of outside observers, realizing that interference of the army determines a  nature that a social and

political conflict will gain: peaceful or armed. In this case, it concerns the situation when professional soldiers do not become a wheel of the military coup d'etat.

However, as the intensity and scope of the protests grows, especially when the police loses control over the situation, and social-political conflict cannot be resolved peacefully, the army is questioned what side it shall support. If the army quite rapidly transfers to the side of the mass protesting citizens, their opposition against the authorities at place is of a short term nature and change of power happens quite peacefully and without many victims. If the army command doesn't hurry to make decisions with growing intensity and large-scale of the protests, the opposition lingers, and a number of victims increases. But a social-political conflict has the most tragic consequences unresolved peacefully in that case, when the army command decides that the army should suppress mass protests or when the army prior to such decision, or in the course of execution thereof splits, and the army units appear at opposite sides of the conflict. In this situation, the state will either find itself on the edge of, or will directly transfer to the civil war, and with any outcome, oppositions will have numerous victims.

Tunisia is an example of the situation when the army which had already been called to the streets of the capital, but refused from participation in suppression of the protests, not to multiply number of victims of the opposition of the authorities and the protesters, and thus contributed to the promptest ending of the first stage of the power change – Ben Ali's, the President, refusal from the office [13].

Egypt is an example of how after some time of non-intervention, the army took responsibility and made the President Mubarak refuse from his office and assign his powers to the Supreme Council of Military Forces [14]. Libya is an example of how an actual split in the army brought the state to the civil war [15].

**5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can assume that such parameters of events in "rebellious" Arab states as political and economic corruption as a major incentive for mass protests, youth as a major wheel of social and political protests, the Internet and other post-industrial information and communication technologies as a basis for self-organization of the protesting social networks, and position of the army, which determines degree of "severity"  and duration of an opposition between the authorities at place and protesters will become dominant factors of crush for other still remaining and seemingly stable authoritarian regimes.

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