

# THE ARAB SPRING : POPULAR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OR WESTERN HEGEMONIC RECONSTRUCTION?

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## Abstract

Analyses dealing with recent crises in North Africa, the Near and Mideast put forward endogenous factors without highlighting relevant issues. Those conflicts, said to be the expression of popular aspirations and thirst for democracy and freedom, are more the outcomes a construction by the Center confronted with internal contradictions that they try to export in order to adapt the worldwide societal dynamism. Indeed, the advent of new actors, Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa, ( BRICS), exert a strong pressure on economically advanced countries. This dynamism limits, if not, causes to crumble the hegemony of the Center in southern states. This article attempts to uncover the real grounds of those social movements in the Arab world by using a different approach of the issue.

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**Keywords:** Arab Spring, Periphery, Center, emerging countries, hegemony

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## Résumé

Dans l'analyse des récentes crises en Afrique du Nord, au proche et au Moyen-Orient, les facteurs endogènes sont mis avant, occultant ainsi des problématiques pourtant pertinentes. Ces conflits présentés comme la traduction d'aspirations populaires et une soif de démocratie et de liberté résultent davantage d'une construction du centre confronté à des contradictions internes qu'il tente d'exporter pour s'adapter aux dynamiques sociétales à l'échelle mondiale. En effet, l'avènement de nouveaux acteurs, notamment le Brésil, la Russie, l'Inde, la Chine et l'Afrique du sud (BRICS) exercent de forte pression dans les pays économiquement avancés. Cette dynamique limite, sinon effrite par la même occasion l'hégémonie du centre dans les États du Sud. L'article tente de mettre au jour les causes réelles de ces mouvements sociaux dans le monde arabe en recourant à une autre lecture du printemps arabe.

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**Mots-clés :** Printemps arabes, périphérie, centre, pays émergents, hégémonie

## Introduction

The recent crises in North Africa, Near East and Middle East are analyzed from a domestic view, thus emphasizing the long oppressed peoples by dictatorships, and which decide to escape decades of militarism to finally meet freedom and democracy. Yet, this approach obscures the relevant issues. Historically, these breaks on the periphery are rooted in much deeper changes in the center. From an economic point of view, they are linked to capital and/or raw materials. In this perspective, Lenin ([1916] 1979) describes imperialism as a structural failure of capitalism leading to the sharing of the non-Western world in Berlin in 1885. The consequences are now known and well-documented: World War One and World War Two.

After these two major conflicts, the winners decide not to resort to violence as a means of accessing to the resources of the periphery. The Third World then became the privileged ground of the internal contradictions of the Center Nations, who are striving for various reasons (ideological, economic, democratic, etc.) to transform those from the South into a permanent battlefield. Civil wars, coups, social movements, etc. are the terms. From a geographical standpoint, much more expressive conflicts occur in areas where raw materials are considerable.

Conflicts are relocated from the center to the periphery. This is what Perkins (2005) pointed when he reveals the activities of American structures to destabilize countries to exploit their resources and alienate them while highlighting Western values. This is a complex and subtle set of mechanisms such as debt, coups, financing armed groups, popular uprisings, etc. to submit and/or replace foreign governments considered more or less hostile to the United States. Going along with Perkins viewpoint, Klein (2008) highlights the neoliberal policies which violence serves to ferment. Violence can impose unpopular policies which ordinarily would be rejected. This is what the author referred to as "*capitalism of disaster*." Thus, this is how one must necessary account for the recent conflicts in the world.

From the above mentioned observations, I make the assumption that the Arabic Spring is fundamentally linked to socio-economic crises in industrialized countries trying to readjust the global architecture for their benefit and maintain the *status quo* established since World War Two. Indeed, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 symbolized "*the death of ideologies*", the triumph of capitalism and thus, the end of the conflicts between blocs. However, it is accompanied by a reorganization of another order whose most significant fact is the emergence of new actors. These new actors include emerging countries such as China that today has become a major actor with the same appetites and almost the same abilities as the Center countries. The capture of the periphery resources becomes

more than in the past, a central issue in a triangular relationship: West, Third World and emerging countries.

And if the present crisis in Africa and the Middle East were the expression of contradictions between emerging countries and those of the Centre for the capture of resources from the periphery? If these conflicts are mere popular social movements, why do Western countries militarily operate, in some cases, as a last resort? How do these social movements differ from orange revolutions presented as popular protests, but steered from outside? In sum, what explains this wave of protest, the earthquake whose epicenter is located in Tunisia and which was difficult, *a priori*, to predict as all the leaders (sometimes allies of Center) of the Arabic world seem to have been surprised?

This paper attempts to answer this question. From a scientific and multidisciplinary literature, and adopting historical materialism as a grid of analysis, I show that the world is through these crises, in a restructuring stage. The article focuses on three axes. The first focuses on the illusions of the post-Cold War. The second deals with crises and center adjustment procedures. And finally, the third proposes an alternative reading of the Arabic Spring. For reasons of convenience, we invariably use on the one hand, Northern country, economically developed countries, industrialized countries to talk of Center Nations, and poor countries, developing countries, to refer to the countries of the periphery on the other hand.

### **The illusions of the post-Cold War**

#### ***The theory of the clash of civilizations: a missed opportunity***

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Huntington (1997) reveals to the world the nature of next international relations. The end of the Cold War did not mark, he said, a complete halt to fighting. This is a simple slip of the motor of the conflict: from the ideology to culture, race, in a nutshell, civilization. Now, instead of ideological crises, conflicts will be supported by a foundation of identity, including civilization. This is the *clash of civilizations*, title of his famous book in which he makes a typology of different civilizations supposed to face in the coming years<sup>4</sup>.

On the one hand, there is the gathering of Western countries whose interests would be threatened and attacked. On the other hand, there are eight other countries more or less hostile to Western civilization including Muslims, fundamentalist early equated with civilization, which are an entity against which one must conduct a "*crusade*". But this theory was very early

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<sup>4</sup>Among them are: Western civilization, orthodox civilization, Latino-American civilization, African civilization, Islamic civilization, Hindu civilization, Chinese civilization, Buddhist civilization and Japanese civilization.

limited due to the facts highlighting the impossibility to define a set of states in a given civilization. This approach to post-Cold War was a great success and serves as a basis for analysis in the scientific, political and strategic circles, especially in the United States. The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the emergence of social groups whose claims are supposed to be based on religion deeply backed up the theory of the *clash of civilizations*

From an empirical point of view, different civilizations have no sealed borders and intermingle based on history, economic and political interests. Moreover, the events presented as Huntington's theory validation elements rather contribute to invalidate it. On the occasion of the wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) for example, largely Islamized countries, and not the least side with "*Western civilization*" with which they were supposed to be in conflict. This is the case of Saudi Arabia. Arabic nations support the West in Libya. Moreover, the geography of the expression of what might be called terrorism in the Near East and Middle East highlights the link between living standards and terrorism. Indeed, the more the living standard is significant in a state, the less this State is subject to the emergence of radical social groups and attacks. Besides, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, whose GDP *per capita* are high and are respectively \$ 91,379 and \$ 23,480 (UNDP 2011, p. 180-182) appear to be safe from terrorism. In contrast, other countries with weaker GDP *per capita* are more subject to terrorism. This example of Afghanistan (GDP *per capita* = \$ 1321) and Pakistan (GDP *per capita* = \$ 2,609) (UNDP, *ibid*).

From a scientific point of view, the theory of the "*clash of civilizations*" is difficult to check and presents many inconsistencies. Authors charge Huntington with presenting Western civilization besieged by others who want to destroy it. More recently, Hansen, and Kardas Mesoy (2009) emphasize the impossibility of defining the boundaries of Islamic civilization for example. More, they reveal that some conflicts are based more on nationalism (Israel-Palestine), ethnicity (Afghanistan) or Islam trends (Iraq) rather than on civilizations matters. Moreover, these authors note that this theory do not resist to current changes. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) development and the emergence of virtual communities in different groups developed by Huntington further push the "*boundaries of Islam*" to sometimes install it in the West. This subsumes that if there are conflicts, they are yet limited, not general and not specifically religious. Similarly, it is possible to conclude that they are not intrinsically linked to civilization.

Obviously, there is no way to confrontation, although some residual crises and acts tend to show it. The reconstruction of the world after the Cold War do not then occur on the basis of civilizations. What is then its nature? Who are the actors and what are the grounds for conflicts?

### ***Decomposition and reconstruction of the world of post-Cold War***

The end of the Cold War heralded the triumph of the West and its values, including democracy at the political level, human rights and freedom of expression at the social level, liberalism regarding the economy, etc. One of the major consequences of this change remains globalization which tends to standardize behavior globally. It is accompanied by the development of technology, transport, significant transfers of capital, knowledge, data, learnings, etc. reconfiguring the world to such an extent that it challenges the hegemony of the "*Western civilization*". Indeed, some countries are able to take advantage of these changes and this brings about a structural reorganization of the global superstructure. Among them are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa which form the institutional framework known as the BRICS.

There is in fact, a decomposition and a recomposition of the world: the center and the periphery, now adds a middle entity, including emerging markets. Under a neo-Marxist angle, it appears therefore three types of Nations:

1. the center: it is the west; it is industrialized and economically advanced states similar to "*Western civilization*", the GDP and GDP *per capita* remains very high. The United States of America (USA) are the leader of this category;
2. emerging countries whose growth and development are spectacular and sometimes historical. Such is the case of BRICS. Here, China can be seen as the leader;
3. the periphery grouping underdeveloped countries, which supply the center with raw materials and consuming ordinary goods, ideas, etc. from West.

This reorganization brings about many economic, military, political and even strategic consequences. Indeed, China's fame is climbing up to such an extent that the Nations of the Center are worried. His "exponential" growth, estimated at 10.8 per cent on average between 2000 and 2010 (World Bank, 2012), requires not only a surplus of raw materials, but also opportunities for its manufactured goods. Its high population and lower production costs make it be a recommended country for every capitalist country whose only goal remains unlimited capital accumulation. It also has the largest army in the world from a quantitative point of view; China developed an arsenal to protect its economic interests in the world (DOD<sup>5</sup>, 2011).

Russia has a formidable nuclear power and is a historical ally of China because of their common struggle for a "freer" world. Thus, it remains

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<sup>5</sup>Department of Defence

a regional power and still influences some states of the former Soviet Union. It also strengthened its presence in the countries of the periphery to definitely affirm the greatness lost at the East wind, and the new role it intends to play on the international scene.

Brazil also has considerable assets. It is large and has a significant population that constitutes a significant domestic market. It also attracts many foreign investments and its economic growth requires more raw materials available in other Latin American territories (usually backyard of the USA), but also in the Southern Nations. *"For many African countries, Brazil appears as another emerging leader, contributing to a diversification of partnerships beyond the traditional donors, or, more recently, China. If it does have a much lower weight than the latter, some qualitative characteristics of diplomacy, cooperation, and the activities of Brazilian companies attract the interest of many African countries who wish to deepen their relations with the South American country"* (Patriota, 2011, p. 33).

Similarly, India is a demographic giant and enjoys a significant domestic market. It is a nuclear power with significant economic growth. Its low production costs and human capital attract many investments in various fields, especially in the High Tech. Besides, *"Sarnoff is of many Western tech research outfits that have turned to India for its combination of low costs, big brains, and english speakers the likers of wich are avalaible nowhere else in the world. Notables including Microsoft, Google, and IBM face plenty of challenges, but they're convinced that their investtments in India research will pay off handsomely in the end"* (Engardo, 2007, p. 198).

South Africa is one of the first African economies and attracts significant investments. According to the World Bank (2012), it is ranked second in terms of facilities for the business climate. For historical and economic reasons, the Rainbow Nation is increasingly present in other African states. Like other countries in the new entity, South Africa presents itself as a regional, even continental power, causing crumble the hegemony of the Center in Africa. In the recent crises in Ivory Coast and Libya, it has taken a stand sometimes at odds with that of the center countries. What are the implications of this restructuring?

## **Crises and center adjustment procedures**

### ***Crisis at the center***

The current changes and especially the emerging countries' development needs exert a huge pressure on global commodities market. *"China in 2005 has become the second largest oil consumer after the United States but ahead of Japan. India for its part, the sixth biggest consumer of oil, is expected before the end of the decade to be ranked fourth in the world. With 9.4% of world oil reserves and 11.4% of world production, the African*

*continent attracts the interest of the United States, China and India* "(Lafargue, 2005, p. 43). The center's unlimited access to the resources of the South is now mitigated.

Over time and depending on the context, the economically advanced countries have always been able to develop mechanisms to effectively reduce the cost of natural resources from the periphery, while maximizing their profit (Conte 2004). From the slave trade to globalization through colonization and neo-colonialism, various strategies were used. Thus, the development assistance provided by the World Bank (Laidi, 1989) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Peyer, 1974), conflicts, etc. are sometimes used as Northern interface to recolonize (Mende, 1972) and restructure the Third World to perpetuate its hegemony. But the reconstruction of the world after the Cold War crumbled the center's capture of resources.

Moreover, emerging markets appear more attractive for the states of the periphery, not only because of their common past, but also for the alternative they offer. The Third World, often put forward in relations between the Southern Nations, ignores some concepts deemed "surly" (human rights, democracy, etc.). Indeed, investments and infrastructure costs in emerging countries are lower in comparison with those of the North. Contributions and grants are sometimes in kind, thus limiting the return of capital in donor banks and the constitution of oligarchy at the head of economically weak countries (Toussaint, 2006). This makes more visible the effects of the cooperation between emerging countries and those in the periphery.

Capital accumulation initiated by the center since slavery is facing difficulties of a new order. In fact, capitalism in the industrialized countries reached an even more complex monopoly. The combination of banking and insurance, mergers and takeovers eventually concentrate financial resources in the hands of few big and powerful groups (Toussaint, 2004). Such an accumulation threatens to implode capitalism whose historical solution is, in such circumstances, to export its excess production to other areas in order to avoid crises. This is how one should understand the meaning of offshoring towards emerging countries. This is one of the most important internal contradictions of capitalism.

Emerging countries don't content themselves with racing against raw materials. They receive capital from the industrialized Nations. These are increasing their abilities, while they considerably weaken the productive forces in the center. In fact, there are thousands of jobs lost in Europe and North America each time these financial resources are transferred to emerging countries, significantly limiting the consumption at the center and hence, economic growth. In fact, austerity measures are implemented to

address the out of proportion social and economic crises in the history of the center.

In short, capitalism is faced with two major problems. First, the restructuring of the world's after the Cold War promotes the appearance of new actors whose development needs are pressing the center for the demand for raw materials. The second problem is related to the first one and is linked to the export of surplus capital from the center to the emerging countries, which affects the prospects and center abilities. So, it is a challenge and even a current threat of the hegemony of North Nations. How is it perceived in the center and what are the arrangements for adapting?

### ***Social movements on the periphery as the center adjustment procedures***

Since World War II, the historically important conflicts, whether political, economic or social nature on the periphery, have their roots deeper in the center crises. Although there are the conflicting elements in the South, the fact remains that most of the ingredients are prepared in the center (Perkins, 2005; Klein 2008), including weapons, logistics, ideas, etc. Thus, decolonization movements (Burma, 1930 Algeria, 1954; Angola, 1961, etc.), the wave of independence of the Third World in the 1960's, the African spring in the 1990's, etc. are the terms. These attacks allow the center to adapt to the internal contradictions of capitalism and perpetuate alienation on the periphery to capture resources at very cheap prices. Sometimes the center would use it to ensure its security and strengthen its hegemony as was the case during some Cold War conflicts.

Can the popular activities in North Africa and the Middle East (the Arabic Spring) fall into this category? But first, what is called Arabic Spring? It is a popular protest wind whose focus is in Tunisia. The *modus operandi* is simple. Calls for protests against authoritarian regimes. People are demanding the resignation of the political and/or feudal bourgeoisie, which responds by promising reforms before resorting, if necessary, to sometimes violent repression. The results remain lukewarm and specific to each state.

In Tunisia and Egypt, people seem to achieve their objectives. In Libya, it is the center, under the banner of the UN and NATO, which replace the insurgents to finally chase the Libyan leader away. In Yemen, the President has gone after an attack followed by a recovering abroad. In Syria, protesters oppose the regime in Damascus before forming a cyst under a kind of rebellion that subsequently promotes the creation of a terrorist group. In Morocco, constitutional reforms allow the King Mohamed VI to save the monarchy. In Jordania, Bahrain and Oman reforms also help to find a *modus vivendi* between the regimes and their peoples.



How can these social movements that began in Tunisia and spread throughout the Arabic world? Several reasons are put forward to account for these social, political and historical phenomena, including the lack of democracy, living standards and autocratic regimes. To get a better view of the phenomena, let us analyze the following table:

Table 1: Sociopolitical data of the Arabic Spring

	Number of years in power in 2011 (leader)	HDI <sup>6</sup> (2011)	GDP <i>per capita</i> (2009) \$PPA	Democratic index(2010)
Bahrain	9	0.806 (42e)	-	3.49 (122e)
Egypt	30	0.644 (113e)	5673	3.07 (138e)
Jordania	12	0.698 (65e)	5597	3.74 (117e)
Libya	42	0.76 (64e)	16502	1.94 (158e)
Morocco	12	0.582 (130e)	4494	3.79 (116e)
Oman	41	0.705 (89e)	-	2.86 (143e)
Syria	11	0.632 (119e)	4730	2.31 (-152e)
Tunisia	24	0.698 (94e)	8273	2.79 (-144e)
Yemen	21	0.462 (154e)	2470	2.64 (-146e)

Sources: data compiled from UNDP, EIU<sup>7</sup> and Wikipédia

Regarding the longevity of political regimes, Table 1 indicates disparities. Some leaders have less than 10 years (Bahrain), while that of Libya, for example, totals 42 years. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Bahrain is still very high (0.806); that of Oman is also high (0.705) while that of Yemen is weaker (0.462). At the level of income, the GDP *per capita* of Libya (\$ 16,502) is higher than in some countries of Europe and Central Asia (\$ 14,244) (UNDP 2011; EIU 2010) . In terms of democracy and civil liberties, all these states marks are not brilliant.

Upon analysis, it is difficult to establish a relationship of cause and effect between these data and social phenomena observed in these Nations. Outside democratic index on which there seems to be a constant regardless of the country at issue, for the other indicators, there is a series of examples and counter-examples that do not allow to establish a law. Furthermore, as regards to the democratic index, in some parts of the world, states have similar or even more worrying scores without identical results. In Sub Saharien Africa, the bleak data did not lead to popular social movements and spring was there a long time ago. In sum, if these indicators may represent factors, they are not objective conditions. What can then actually explain the Arabic Spring?

<sup>6</sup> Human Development index

<sup>7</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit

## **Another reading of the Arabic Spring** ***Obama in Cairo: the beginnings of the Arabic Spring?***

After a tour in the Near East, the Middle East and North Africa, President Obama delivered a speech at Cairo University in Egypt June 4, 2009 in which he presented the Arabic world as perceived and/or desired by the Centre in general and specially by the US. The US chief executive come back to the stormy relations between the US and Arabic countries, he said, by a series of mutual misunderstandings. He therefore urged Arabs to indulge in a new partnership and to take on "*a new departure*".

The US President reviews the stumbling blocks between Western populations and those of the Arabic countries, including extremism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear power, democracy, religious freedom and development aid. Thus, he puts forward the elements that contributed to present their two communities as entirely opposed in the past. Based on his personal identity, Mr. Obama in his speech shows that these two groups have many values in common and can thereby move to the same direction, hence the title of the speech namely "*a new departure*".

Regarding democracy, he insisted that power must return to the people because it merely a matter of human rights. In this regard, he stressed: "*... it strongly believe that all people yearn for a number of things: the ability to express themselves and to have a voice in how they are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal implementation of justice; government that is transparent and does not rob people; the freedom to live as you choose. It is not simply a case of American ideals, these are human rights and that is why we will support them worldwide.*" (Obama, 2009, p. 11) To the Arabic leaders, he is more explicit: "*You must maintain your power through the consent of the people, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of the people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections do not favour true democracy alone*"(Obama, 2009, p. 11). These words are like a warning to leaders in their management of the power and an appeal to the people for their emancipation.

One of the key points of his presentation concerns development aid: in fact, he suggests a series of aid measures that the US would bring to States which would take the road to democracy. These areas are those of education, economic development and science and technology.

The last part of Mr. Obama's speech reveals the ambitions of his country: "*It will not be easy to solve the issues I have just mentioned. But we have a responsibility to join together to make the world we are yearning for, a world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops are back home, a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each*

*secure in a state of their own, and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes, a world where governments serve the interests of their citizens and the rights of all God's children are respected. Such is the world we seek, and we could only achieve it together "* (Obama, 2009, p. 13) This statement brings out the real motives of the US President: a democratic Arabic world, being no longer a threat and sharing the same values as the US, and therefore the center.

The question that arises is: why now? Indeed, these conflicts between the center and the periphery have been lasting for several years. Why has the center only now decided to normalize its relations with that part of the periphery? Can this "*new departure*" achieve the goals set out in his presentation? Obviously, the reasons lie elsewhere. Moreover, the center had always did so when in it got in trouble. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a similar speech gave almost identical results. Indeed, the Baule conference held on June 20, 1990 by President Mitterrand led to the spring in Africa (Bourgi & Casterans, 1991), characterized by many popular movements in the name of democracy and development.

Beyond the obvious ambitions of the speech of La Baule, underpinned by democracy, development, etc. a recomposition of the world after the Cold War was outlined. Indeed, the center of the country no longer needed to maintain dictatorial regimes to fight against the advance of communism. Democracy and development put forward were therefore a screen to hide the real objectives of the center (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991). In the case of the Cairo speech, what can be the motivations and what role do we assign to the Arabic Spring?

### ***The Arabic Spring: a hegemonic reconstruction of the center***

The advent of a new entity (the BRICS) threatens the hegemony long devoted to the center and the unlimited access to the periphery resources. China and other emerging countries intend to play on a global scale, a greater role, be it in the economic, diplomatic, military and social, etc. domains. Thus, « *China is steadily assuming new roles and responsibilities in the international community. In 2004, Chinese President Hu Jintao articulated new guidance for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including missions extending beyond China's immediate territorial interests. This catalyzed China's growing involvement in international peacekeeping efforts, counter-piracy operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and the evacuation of Chinese citizens from overseas trouble spots. China's 2010 Defense White Paper asserts that China's—future and destiny have never been more closely connected with those of the international community. Nonetheless, China's modernized military could be put to use in ways that increase China's ability to gain diplomatic advantage or resolve disputes in*

*its favor* » (DOD<sup>8</sup>, 2011, p. I). China, an important partner for the center, becoming a big competitor in many areas, especially in the spaces located the spheres of influence of the economically advanced states. This is what Roromme reveals "*In addition, since the end of the Cold War, the emergence of the Chinese 'Dragon' on the world scene, through increasing diplomatic and economic ties with all continents, places it in the path of the American eagle, especially in the Third World*" (Roromme 2009, p. 99). Emerging countries- with China as the leader-are threatening the international political order established since the Berlin Conference in 1885.

Besides, the BRICS are now the main places where the surplus of the center capital is exported. They also represent the main centers of production of goods and services of center Nations. It therefore follows a shift from the center of production and capital of the economically advanced states to the BRICS, leading to socio-economic failures, including industrialized countries (Stiglitz, 2001; Yunus, 2006). To maintain the standard of living of their people, the center countries employ a debt deemed excessive and sometimes threatening domestically, the very foundations of globalized capitalism in an unfavorable economic environment (IMF, 2011).

As a result, we are witnessing a challenge to security and to the hegemony of the center essentially based on capitalism which is trying to adapt (Boltanski & Chiapello 1999) and to reconfigure again the world to its advantage and to restore what it considers to be a "*natural balance*". According to Amin, "*Today, the United States needs to transfer the Africom (the military command of the United States for Africa, an important part of the system of military control of the planet, always located in Stuttgart!) to Africa. But the African Union refuses to accept and today no African state has dared to do. A lackey established in Tripoli (or Benghazi) obviously would subscribe to all the demands of Washington and its subordinate NATO allies*" (Amin 2011, p. 2). The crises in the Arabic world may be related to this dynamic.

Upon analysis, this is the meaning of Obama's "*new departure*". Thus, these popular movements presented as spontaneous do have a different meaning. Considering the issue, the demonstrations are probably engineered abroad. Indeed, "*One should not ignore the role of a group of bloggers taking part-consciously or not- to a real plot organized by the CIA. Its leaders are generally young people from the upper classes, extremely Americanized, who nevertheless protest against the current dictatorships. The theme of democracy, in the version handled by Washington dominates their interventions on the "net". They are part of the chain of counter-revolutions actors orchestrated by Washington, disguised as "democratic revolutions"*"

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upon the model of "colored revolutions" in Eastern Europe"(Amin 2011, p. 4). The exogenous factors of these sociopolitical upheavals are as important as people's aspirations.

In the same month when Obama delivered his Cairo speech, Harvard University researchers in the United States published a document on internet in the Arabic world. In this publication with the evocative title (*Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere :Politics, Culture, and Dissent*), Etling et al (2009) review Arabic youths behavior on social networking sites and analyze their interests on the web. After analysis, it is indeed an action research to get ready results. It is therefore not surprising that in the a few months later, the Arabic world flares up under popular pressure.

The NATO intervention in Libya, however, shows that these movements are not spontaneous. *"The revolutionaries"* were in fact combatants and not demonstrators. What would have happened if the Tunisian and Egyptian leaders had wanted to stick to power? Protesters would certainly have become armed groups and would have had the NATO support. What would happen today in Syria if the central states had obtained the UN *"license to protect civilians"*? How can we account for the center's desire to wage war against Iran? In May 2011 already, when nothing foreboded this, the G8 supported *"... vigorously the aspirations of the" Arabic Spring "as well as those of the Iranian people"* (G8, 2011).

Clearly, the Arabic Spring is built by the center to readjust the world and strengthen its hegemony due to the rise of emerging countries. The Libyan case strongly confirms our hypothesis and this idea is shared by other authors: *"Yet, even more here than elsewhere, the spontaneity of a popular revolution seems surprising. The reasons for Kadhafi's overthrow, hidden under the name of "Libyan spring" or "February 17<sup>th</sup> revolution" should be found elsewhere. They lie in the complex and degraded relationships between the Libyan leader and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf and Western states, anxious to ensure their energy supply "* (Boka 2012, p. 187). In addition, it is like the colored revolutions in the former Soviet Union countries, which aimed at controlling the resources in this part of the world and limit the influence of Russia.

In this dynamic, other Nations outside the Arabic world face serious crises caused by the center in the name of democracy, human rights, protection of civilians, etc. The real goal is to stop the influence of emerging countries on the periphery. Thus, states with significant raw materials and/or posing a hegemonic or security threat to the center, including North Korea, Venezuela and many others could be subject to identical facts as those endured by Libya or Egypt.

## Conclusion

Social phenomena in North Africa, the Near East and the Middle East, during what might be called the Arabic Spring, are presented as spontaneous actions reflecting the aspirations of the people long overwhelmed by dictatorial or monarchical regimes. At the confluence of globalization, they refuse any form of enslavement to finally taste the delights of democracy and civil liberties. This widespread approach yet hides the objective conditions of these social movements. The reality is quite different.

The world balance, established at the Berlin Congress and constantly readjusted by the center to better capture the resources of the Third World, once again experiencing disruptions. In fact, the post-Cold War era witnessed the emergence of a new entity, namely: the BRICS. This new entity is made of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. These countries, characterized by high growth rates and rapid development, compete with the northern states. But even more, some of them, such as China, enhances operational abilities in many areas to threaten the hegemony of the center. The motor of the conflict is not civilization as predicted by some intellectuals in the early 1990's. It rather focused on the productive forces, namely commodities. So it is a crisis resulting from the globalization of capitalism.

In order to deal with this global societal dynamics, the center is working to readjust the world. Thus, crises and conflicts are breaking out in some areas of the globe, particularly in the Arabic world. These popular social movements are actually the center's construction to adapt to the reconstruction of the world after the Cold War. Moreover, on the occasion of these events, social groups, organized or not, never question the hegemony of the center or the globalized capitalism that are the main causes of autocratic powers in this part of the world. In fact, it is quite possible to reproduce the African experience in the 1990s, whose results are lukewarm today, because since these socio-political changes, very few African regimes can claim to be democratic. So, they have become generally poor and even highly indebted.

In this perspective, a different reading of the Arabic Spring is still needed. In fact, these social unrests are not popular social movements for change in the economic and social development in the states of North Africa and Middle East. However, they aim at preserving the achievements of the center and thus, maintaining the *status quo*. According to Huntington approach of the "*clash of civilizations*", they are a crusade against the non-Western world. This reminds "*The Burden of the White Man*" by Rudyard

Kipling (1899)<sup>9</sup> urging his contemporaries to bring civilization to exotic societies. This civilizational contribution was hiding in fact the capture of raw materials, labor force and other resources of non-Western societies.

Today, it is almost clear that it is not easy to transpose Western culture to other societies (De Soto, 2005; Easterly, 2006). So, why are Western countries regularly trying to impose values that are difficult to transpose? And what are the reasons for exporting democracy and development into the Arabic world? This readjustment attempt results from a confrontation between the center and emerging countries to control the periphery and its raw materials. In this process, other parts of the world could experience such clashes.

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<sup>9</sup>This poem *The White Man's Burden* written in 1899 par Rudyard KIPLING, one of the "apostles" of colonization.

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