

## The Arab Revolts and the Dialectics of the Global Redistribution Question: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa

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### Abstract

The victories of the national liberation movements from the defeats of the French in Vietnam in 1954 to that of the 1962 in Algeria and many others were very informative of the way independence was to be granted to the former colonies. It is also the way the would-be 'freed' colonies were to be organised in the global division of labour. Knowing fully well that the realisation problem was the inner loasic of colonisation of the underdeveloped societies assisted by ideological colorations of a "civilising mission" especially in Africa the colonialists would not let go their grips. Apart from China, Vietnam, Cuba and Indonesia that struggled to free themselves to a certain degree through national colonial liberation, the rest of us remained tied to the apron string of the global material oppressive relations of imperialism. In Indonesia, the progress achieved under Surkano was upturned by Suharto coup reconnecting Indonesia fully into the global material oppressive relations. Thus the national liberation in all other countries where neo-colonialism or globalisation which kept fate with imperialism never progressed beyond paper independence but generated in purgatory revolutionary pressures of the uncompleted national colonial liberation struggles against neo-colonial globalisation which has been expressed in the Arab 'revolts'. This research work is, therefore, focused on the dialectics of the Arab Revolts resulting from the global surplus redistribution question. Our finding is that the Mohammed Bouazizi martyrdom is a product of structural violence of the global political economy in a struggle over Third World and indeed Arab surpluses. This finding has a very serious implication for sub-Saharan Africa based on the same rentier political economy.

**Keywords:** Dialectics, redistribution, imperialism, underdevelopment, disarticulation.

### INTRODUCTION

*History is important because if you don't know history it is as if you were born yesterday and if you were born yesterday anybody up there and in position of power can tell you anything. – Howard Zinn*

*Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor – Frantz Fanon.*

*I would want to sleep but the indolence of this generation would not allow me to sleep. – Cheik Anta Diop.*

Most of us have been insinuated not to regard the Social Sciences and also History as the quintessence of the development of humanity. However, these are the mirrors of man, economy and society, especially when we apply the dialectical logic. Dialectical logic tells us the stages of the development of man and society, his relationships with nature or science and technology summed up in economy and society. George Novack titled one of his works as the *Long view of History* which talks about the development of man from ape or the animal kingdom to an articulate man. What made the difference is his limbs he puts into use to attack and convert nature to his use. As man transforms nature to serve him through science and technology, so man was equally transformed. This dialectical struggle constantly reshapes man and nature discharging its dynamics in economy and society in endless motion which is the dialectics of nature and society. Here lies the relevance of the social sciences in historical dialectics or materialism.

We cannot properly grasp or comprehend the so-called Arab Spring without vielding into the dynamics of history. We cannot arrive at the inner kernel of the Revolts seeing Islam as the primary causal variable as the

West would want us to believe. After all, Mohammed Bouazizi, the 26 year old Tunisian who immolated himself in martyrdom was not practicing in the Mosque but in the field of survival when he sets himself ablaze. We cannot state that the immediate cause of the Arab Revolts epitome in Mohammed Bouazizi is the primary causal variable of the Middle East uprisings. Whether we examine its roots in Islam as the West would want us to believe which was captioned in *Economist* titled “Islam and the Arab Revolution” (*Economist*, April 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011:11), whether we place it on the immediate cause in Bouazizi, all are secondary causal variables, neglecting the primary causal variable which is imperialism in relation to the Middle East question. It is a problem of the *resolution* of the *National Arab Security Question*, or simply put the problem of the *resolution of the National Arab Question*.

It was Robert McNamara who observed that basing security on military hardwares alone is a clay-footed solution to the security question. He opined that security must be situated in development (McNamara 1968) or it is not security in its completeness. Thus the primacy of production and the real economy (not financial juggling, as the world is witnessing as the end results of Thatchernomics and Reaganomics) over which all other national policies depend cannot be downplayed on the altar of militarism in the name of national security. The goodness of the Social Sciences and History and even the Arts is to mirror the past in the present and to project society into the future. Science and technology cannot mirror themselves because they did not precede the social or society, because the object is always mirrored by the reflex of the mirror. It is not the other way round. This is the import of the Social Sciences and indeed History but it must be viewed dialectically. This is the way to view the Arab Revolts in World historical process or historical materialism. In one of such mirrors, despite the biases of Western Social Science, McNamara said:

*In a modernising society, security means development, security is not military force though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it, security is not military hardware though it may include it. Security is development and without development there can be no security (McNamara 1968).*

According to Rodney (1972:114 & 129) “Development is the capacity for self-sustaining growth, a matter of an increasing capacity to produce...tied up with patterns of...class relations,” in relationship to the prevailing means and mode of production. These relations at the beginning of any economic social formation or mode of production are always progressive. Such were the lots of the classical slave states of antiquity – the Greeks, the Romans, Egyptians, Zimbabweans, Aztec among others. It was the same with the feudal epoch and now the capitalist epoch. However, whenever these past epochs and the current globalised one had run to their tether, they turn retrogressive. Adam Smith and David Ricardo almost got to understanding this cyclical dynamics of world history when they fell victims of rabid nationalism of the *comparative advantage* mystic whereas advantages are never comparable in global politics of the struggle for power (Morgenthau 1964) of capitalist dictum of survival of the fittest. In these struggles in their reactionary stages, fetters are placed as road-blocs to make others not to move forward in order to maintain the status quo. Hence Marx (1984:21) said:

*At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms with the property relations within the framework of which they had operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole superstructure.*

It will amount to intellectual penury to paper over these fundamentals of the Arab Spring as the West calls it. The occupation of Wall Street by those who claimed to be representing the 99% of Americans against the 1% whom they claimed caused their economic woes, the demonstrations in major American cities, those of Europe and Australia on behalf of the 99% is the proof of Karl Marx’s oracular scholarship. The so-called Arab Spring is a reaction to the catastrophe of the global division of labour in which some are huers of wood and drawers of water and others are organisers which dichotomy was not ordained by God but by the prevailing global relations of production of capital. It gave birth to structural violence which are

the action and reaction dynamics of which are the struggles for the redistribution of the backward societies' surplus value to which we now turn.

### THE QUINTESSENCE OF THEORY

What has been ruling humanity is division of labour. Division of labour has been at both economic productive level at the national sphere and at the level of global power relations. At the productive level, it is between and among the producers. Adam Smith of *The Wealth of Nations* theorised that when hypothetical five persons produced pins from the start to finish separately, they could only produce five thousand pins but when there was division of labour leading to specialisation, they combined produced forty-eight thousand pins. Division of labour in the factory made it possible that more wealth was produced and the producers are only paid *necessary labour* and a part of their sweat is alienated from the worker in what Karl Marx calls *surplus value*. This is the sphere of internal economic productive relations and a higher level of the division of labour between the owners of the means of production (slave owners, land owners or feudal lords and now capitalists) on the one hand and on the other hand the working people (slaves, serfs and proletariat or factory workers). This division of labour backed by the force of social relations rested the principle of superordination and subordination which has been internationalised since the birth of capital in its axiom of "survival of the fittest."

The second dynamics of the division of labour is geostrategic in respect of international political economy or international economic relations. Political economy is the study of power relations based on economic relations. Lenin (1983:59) said, "The growth of internal exchange, and particularly, of international exchange, is a characteristic feature of capitalism. The uneven and spasmodic development of individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system." Marx (1956:113) asserted that, "It is the tendency of the capitalist mode of production to transform all production as much as possible into commodity production," when the dictates of profit have prevailed for their commodification. Transforming other pre-capitalist modes of production to serve the interests of advance capital has been the game of the internationalisation of capital since the industrial revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Marx (1956:113) stated the nature of capitalist penetration of the backward societies thus:

*Conquest may lead to either of three results. The conquering nation may impose its own mode of production upon the conquered people...or it may refrain from interfering in the old mode of production (pre-capitalist) and may be content with tribute...or interaction may take place between the two, giving rise to a new system as a synthesis... In any case, it is the mode of production – whether that of the conquering nation or of the conquered or the new system brought about by merging of the two – that determines the new mode of distribution employed.*

Marx (1970:202-3) in the case of Russia remarked, "In appropriating the positive results of the capitalist mode of production, (Russia) is capable of developing and transforming the archaic form of its village community, instead of destroying it." The same thing is happening today in the new industrializing countries. However, in most of the underdeveloped countries, capitalism penetrated, left the old structures intact but still converted them to serve the interests of the dominant or advance capital through the international political economy or global division of labour or production relations. This is where the 'dualist' theories of liberal social scientists are anchored. This is equally the anchor of the often over-exaggerated Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of World Order*. According to Shepera cited by Mellassoux (1980:198), dualism should be seen as a capitalist mode of integration of the non-capitalist or pre-capitalist modes of production. It is the unwillingness of capitalism to develop the backward countries and its willingness to underdevelop them that is the cause of dualism.

Lenin (1983:60) said, if capitalism should evolve conditions for even development, it would no longer be capitalism because both uneven-development and semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premises of this mode of production. As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists... Uneven-development, therefore, is an objective process of capitalist development without which capitalism

would no longer be capitalism. In this respect, therefore, underdevelopment of the Third World by metropolitan capital and the appendages of the metropolises they have been converted into, serve the objective interests of 'international' or metropolitan capital. Dependency and underdevelopment, therefore, result from the uneven-development between one part of capital and the other. The theory of uneven-development as a result of the struggle for the surpluses of the Third World by imperialism and its local collaborators explains Mohammed Bouazizi self-immolation martyrdom and the Arab Revolts.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

It is very important to know what resulted in the integration of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Oceania into the global political economy or what is known as globalisation today. Marx and Engels (1977:57) posited that "Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class." This advance changed the capitalist societies in Europe and gave further impetus to the transformation of their industrial development after the industrial revolution, changing it from national to a global phenomenon. Thus the entire Third World society to which the Arabs belong became caught up in the web of metropolitan imperialist globalising capital and their hegemonic role over the Arab World and indeed all colonised peoples. Thus globalisation is not a recent feature of capital as we are made to believe but its eternal feature from birth. Marx and Engels (1977:38) were therefore correct when they asserted that, with the world market at its grip the bourgeoisie of the capitalist countries that pioneered industrialisation destroyed all old national industries and drew all nations at the point of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production. This statement was made by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels over one hundred and fifty years ago.

As in the Arab world and many countries of colonial exploits, the penetration of capital brought about total destruction of their pre-capitalist productive processes through the disarticulation of their economies by colonialism which also stunted their productive forces. According to Frantz Fanon cited by Basil Davidson, "There is no new entity born of colonialism." Davidson (1971: ix) said that everything that has happened when Fanon wrote this back in 1958 seems to have confirmed this. Basil Davidson further stressed that:

*Many peoples today need a renewal of their civilisation, but none so obviously and urgently as the colonised peoples. Whatever colonialism, imperialism and capitalism may or may not have achieved, one thing is certain about them. They have utterly failed to raise those structures – whether social or moral, political or economic – upon which the deprived peoples, the abused peoples, the 'underdeveloped' peoples as they are sometimes if odiously called can carry themselves into a new civilisation capable of standing and evolving on its own foundation (Davidson 1971:ix).*

The bane of the Arab situation is that colonialism created a caricature and indeed still – born capitalism. Capitalism based on only commercial capitalism and merely on extractive oil industry. The Arab countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria and Morocco are not based on crude oil capitalism but indirectly profit from it as they provided labour for the oil rich Arab states. This mono-cultural political economy based on crude oil production and the interest it serves is the bane of the *Arab security question*. The Arab security question is a problem of the *resolution of the Arab national question* which goes beyond mere crude oil capitalism or political economy. The *resolution of the national question* is to resolve the issues of the *developmental question*. This cannot be properly comprehended without knowing what imperialism is and its place in the Arab security question.

With liberal scholars, imperialism is a thing of a past political economy of mercantilism which remnants are found in capitalism (Brown 1978:34). In the words of Schumpeter (1955:65 cited in Brown 1978:34) "...it is an atavism in the social structure." In their view, the bourgeoisie did not simply supplant the sovereign...it merely wrested a portion of his power from him and for the rest submitted to him." It is, therefore, the belief of the classical school that both militarism and nationalism of the absolute monarch survived into the era of capitalism not only in the institutions and personnel of the state but even in the

mental attitude of the bourgeoisie themselves, and particularly towards peoples still not incorporated within their boundaries (Brown 1978:34).

For the classical school to believe that imperialism is psychological and inherited from the past and that it is not a feature of capitalism at a certain stage of its development is to feign ignorance of the internal logic of capital which drives it on. The Keynesians unlike the classical school see things differently. In their view, the protection of home and colonial markets, colonisation and colonial rule and the terms of trade are all to be regarded as expressions of national policy of power, in which political, military and economic power reinforce each other (Knapp 1973:35 cited in Brown 1978:46). They, therefore, see political bargaining and the use of military power as important expressions of national economic interests...(Brown 1978). Thus the Keynesians knock off the earth upon which the pacifist theory of the classical school stood. With them, conflict is a part of imperialism; it is its logical process of expression of power, both economic and political power and not psychological or just mental rage. However, the Marxian School of thought traces imperialism to a particular socio-economic formation and to a particular stage of that socio-economic formation. In their view:

*...particular social formation based on particular economic and technological structures necessarily involve particular forms of economic expansion. Thus Marxians see capital accumulation necessarily driving capitalist societies to assimilate and transform non-capitalist societies, just as land grabbing was necessary to a feudal society and slave raids to a slave society (Brown 1978:47).*

As a result of the intellectual obscurantism and agnosticism of the classical school and the Keynesian school not linking imperialism to the inner logic of capital, we see both schools as highly distortive and grossly misrepresentation of the phenomenon of imperialism. They both do not meet the logic of our analysis as a result of the gross inadequacies of both schools; it becomes very necessary to take sides with the Marxian interpretation of imperialism (Tedheke 2007:27). This is the most appropriate model to explain Arab uprising or what the West calls “Arab Spring.” In the words of Lenin (1978:84), “Imperialism is capital in that stage of development in which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international thrust has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.” We have to go this far because of the intellectual penury of the cult of recencism. A more critical position expressed by Cabral (1980:127) which suits the Arab situation and the rest of the Third World states thus:

*...imperialism may be defined as the worldwide expression of profit motive and ever increasing accumulation of surplus value by monopoly financial capital in two regions of the world: first in Europe and later in North America. ...if we wish to place this fact of imperialism within the general direction of the evolution of the epoch-making factor that has changed the face of the world, capital and the process of its accumulation – we might say that imperialism is piracy transplanted from the seas to dry land, piracy reorganised, consolidated and adapted to the aim of plundering the material and human resources of our peoples.*

This piracy transplanted from the sea to dry land has been a product of the murderous terms of trade against Africa, the Arab World and indeed the entire Third World. It is what has made the Third World a junior partner in the international division of labour from the inception of capitalist imperialism. According to Camilleri (1978:9), “The most advanced industrial nations of the world have tended to dominate trade flow patterns in underdeveloped countries, to monopolise their manufacturing outlets, to channel the great bulk of both public and private investment and until recently, to determine the prices of their main export.” Perhaps the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) seizure of pricing power is what Joseph A. Camilleri is referring to, a price power which is neither here nor there as taxes on crude oil imports by the advance industrial countries take more than half of the proceeds from crude oil trades. While the industrialised countries of Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) earned from taxes alone \$4,393 billion on the one hand, OPEC countries on the other hand received

\$3,668 billion over the same period – which is approximately \$724 billion less than what OECD governments earned from oil taxes (OPEC 2011). Despite the meager success of OPEC price victory, if it was victory at all, evidence in other areas of primary export commodities shows the contrary. According to Museveni (2009:13);

*Another strategic bottleneck that has kept African countries in a Third World status has been the export of raw materials such as unprocessed coffee or unrefined crude oil. I have many times, pointed out that when you export a kilo of unprocessed bean coffee, you get one US\$1. When somebody like Nestle processes this kilo of coffee in London, he gets US\$20. Therefore, Uganda donates US\$19 in every kilogramme of coffee to United Kingdom. The coffee business in the whole world is worth US\$99 billion. However, the coffee growing countries only get US\$5 billion out of all of this money. We do not only lose money but we also lose jobs because the coffee is roasted, ground and packaged outside.*

The foregoing violence of raw material or primary export dependence political economy imposed, as it were, by powerful interests of capitalism of uneven-development is the bane of the Arab uprising or what the West calls “Arab Spring.” If the massive Arab oil or wealth which flows into the pockets of Western Europe and North America and that of their few Arab collaborators instead of into the stomachs of the impoverished Arabs thus causing massive unemployment is properly explained, the primary source of the Arab Spring should therefore, be known. This is the primary causal variable or the independent variable of the Arab Revolt. All other variables such as religion and cultural which provided the spark plug as intervening variables are relevant and indeed ideological roots of the Arab Revolt but not the independent variable. The Arab uprising is, therefore, the dependent variable that has the state of the economy as the independent variable. If larger Arab wealth has flowed into the stomachs of the Arabs there would have been little or no revolts to be styled “Arab Spring.” Claude Ake once said that “it is the foolishness of the ruling class that leads to revolution.” The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Annual World Employment Report, 2004 – 2005 cited by El Gawady and El Din (n.d.3) said, “Unemployment is one of the biggest threats which faces the Middle East. The unemployment rate was estimated 15% to 20% in the year 2004. The President of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab also “...warned that unemployment in the Middle East was a ‘time bomb’ that would require the creation of 100 million new jobs in the next 10 years to defuse it (cited by El Gawady & El Din n.d.3).

The International Labour Organisation mentioned that the average unemployment rate in the world reached 6.2% but in the Arab region it was 12.2%; and it increases every year by 3%. The report predicted that the number of unemployed people in the Arab region will reach 25 million in the year 2010. The report finds that, the number of unemployed people worldwide climbed to new heights in 2005 despite a robust economic growth in 2005. According to the report, the total number of jobless workers stood at 191.8 million people at the end of 2005 (cited by El Gawady & El Din n.d. 3). The International Labour Organisation describes the unemployment in the Middle East as being the worst in the world, stating that the Arab Economists must supply at least 70 billion dollars, and increase GDP from 3% to 7% and to create the availability of at least 5 million job opportunities each year. Unemployment, the bleak job picture is one of the region’s most urgent destabilising problems, fueling social tensions, encouraging migration, and making job creation a top priority (El Gawady & El Din p.3).

The foregoing hinges on the problems of *the resolution of the Arab national question* or the developmental question. The Arab revolt is a response to both local and international structures preventing *the resolution of the Arab national question*. The resolution of the national question is to remove the fetters or obstacles that impede the development processes of any nation (Tedheke 2005). In the words of Camilleri (1978:9):

*In spite of the powerful military component underpinning the pyramidal structure of the world economy, it has not been possible thus far – and undoubtedly it will become increasingly difficult in the future – for existing economic disparities to be maintained without violent resistance. The widespread recourse to urban fighting, the increasing incidence of aerial piracy and the armed attack against civilians are but*

*the most visible signs of anger and frustration in the face of poverty and exploitation. However, the forces of the existing order, far from acceding to the increasingly militant demands of distributive justice, appear more determined than ever to defend present institutions and power structures and where necessary, to do so by force.*

Distributive justice is the very issue at stake in the global political economy of imperialism. A world system defined by Amilcar Cabral as *piracy* which its masterminds do at all cost without scruples. This has been revealed by Perkins (2006) in his book titled the *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Both at home and abroad, the problem of redistributive justice has become the greatest threat to the survival of humanity. Stieglitz (2011) said unsustainable income inequality is leading to other big problems. This was his pre-Wall Street Revolt assessment of the United States' political economy or economic power relations. He said 1% Americans control 40% of the American economy the basis of the protest and occupation of Wall Street, a protest claimed to have been done on behalf of the remaining 99%. The global problem of the redistributive justice, a problem that was a projection from the internal logical of capital that led to colonisation, neo-colonialism and its new baby of globalisation, we now turn. It is a product of the struggle for the Third World surpluses, a struggle between the advance capitalist bourgeoisie and the rentier bourgeoisie of the Third World and indeed the Middle East and Africa.

#### **THE DIALECTICAL STRUGGLES IN THE REDISTRIBUTION QUESTION**

Since decolonisation, there have been very serious struggles between the dominant arm of capitalism and its baby, the comprador or rentier classes in the Third World. This struggle for the redistribution of the surpluses of the Third World between the international capitalism and their local supporters in the developing countries is a product of the rentier nature of these former colonial territories. The struggles for the redistribution of surpluses by increasing the value of groundrents have made these peripheral social formations to be seen as rentier states (Tedheke 1992:64). Such states that depend principally on collection of rents, taxes and royalties without much organised productive activities is a major phenomenon of the Third World countries, especially oil producing states which are referred to as rentier states (First 1980). Rentier states are allocation states and not production states. The oil producing countries have been fighting over the redistribution of the surpluses from their groundrent but this battle has been between the bourgeoisie of the advance countries and those of the Third World and in this case the Arab states.

We referred earlier to Joseph Camilleri's assertion that prices of primary export commodity products are beginning to change in favour of the exporters of these products. In other words, the primary export commodity producers are getting more from the capitalist global market which is however not supported by evidence. The tragedy of the deteriorating or falling terms of trade has been confronting the primary export commodity producers for long not because of the fault of these states but because we have accepted *hook-line-and-sinker* imperialist enslavement theory of *comparative advantage*. The ills of our surrender to these theories or what Codier (2008:X) calls single-factor theories with unquestioning satisfaction have resulted in a very great loses to Africa south of the Sahara which can be extrapolated to the Arab world. According to Walshe (1993:29):

*Roughly speaking from '86 to '90 Africa lost about \$60 billion simply by the fall in the prices of exports. Now, that's more than \$12 billion a year lost simply because the price of cocoa, coffee, cotton and the rest including copper, is coming down. It is not that Africa is producing less. Rather the terms of trade were shifting against the continent.*

Even in the oil industry where the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) pulled some weight in crude pricing, the dependence of most Arab countries on crude oil economy directly and indirectly did not help matters. The seizure of the power of oil sales and pricing from the multinational oil corporations did not result from a struggle against metropolitan capitalism or imperialism as such but it resulted from the dialectical changes within world or global capitalism. It has been a product of the struggle between the landed property owners (Third World bourgeoisie) on the one hand, and the dominant faction of world capital (the metropolitan capitalist classes or bourgeoisie) on the other. The difference is

that while the landed propertied faction depends on the land (such as groundrent – in the form of raw materials production for sales, taxes and royalties, among others, to accumulate capital), their masters, the metropolitan capitalists depend on the actual use of modern means of production (capital – objects of labour which include land, tools, machines or dead labour, among others, and living labour or labour power) which is more advance than those of the landed propertied faction (Tedheke 1992:65).

The struggles for the Third World surpluses in the global political economy between the landed or rentier classes and the real organisers of industrial production, the industrial capitalist bourgeoisie epitomises the struggles for the redistribution of surpluses of the Third World. The struggle is always won by the forces of the more advance industrial societies. Even in the periods of the crises of metropolitan capital, the peripheral landed/rentier bourgeoisie and their societies equally lose out. According to Chiang (2009) and Reinert (2009) when England was exporting raw materials to the industrial cities of Florence, Genoa and the Dutch Republic, she became poorer and poorer. But when England stopped her export of raw materials, especially wool, and processed it, she became richer and richer and the industrial economies of Florence, Genoa and the Dutch Republic waned. Raw material export was known in Europe at the time as *bad trade* while import of industrial materials was known as *good trade*. Thus it can be rightly stated without contradictions that the Arab economy based on crude oil is bad trade because it swings surplus redistribution in favour of the industrial economies.

In such struggles for the redistribution of surpluses which are always in favour of advance capital, job creation becomes a problem. This situation is not only peculiar to the Middle East but also very ravaging in Africa. It always leads to a situation in which any slightest cough in the economies of advance capital, peripheral capitalism catches cold. The ravaging unemployment and the underemployment situation in the Arab World with the same characteristics in Africa as the ILO would say is a *time bomb*. It is a product of the inter-linkages of the global maldistribution of resources. It has been a feature of capitalism from its inception of nascent capital. According to Marx and Engels (1977:289):

*While, therefore, the crises first produce revolutions on the continent (mainland Europe) the foundation for this, nevertheless was always laid in England. Violent outbreaks must naturally occur rather in the extremities of the bourgeois body than in its heart, since the possibility of adjustment is greater here than there.*

Since Karl Marx and Frederick Engels made the foregoing scientific proof of fissiparous dynamics of capital's generation of crises at the periphery of capital instead of at the core where it originates, any analysis of global crises lacking the political economy approach becomes sterile. Our intellectuals tend to see such crises as product of extra-human origin. Despite an enduring scientific proof and evidence, one is always confounded when even the so-called erudite scholars cannot grasp this logic of capital that generates crises in the periphery of capital which is now the Third World. One is not exonerating the landed or rentier bourgeoisie of the Arab World and Africa from blame. They are a part of this political economy of the drain of imperialism on our economy and society. If the Arabs and African ruling classes can see the issue from the point of view of the Asians, the 'Arab Spring' and perhaps 'African Summer' would migrate from purgatory to a firebrand revolution. In this dynamics, let us hear from Mabhubani (1996) who said that Europe and North America would not understand the psychological revolution taking place in East Asian minds because they were not wrapped in the cellophane of colonialism which they see as the greatest threat to their security.

## **A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ARAB REVOLTS AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

We have to ask ourselves the question: Is the Arab situation anything different from Africa south of the Sahara? The dialectical linkage is that we operate the same transfer regime in which our wealth flows into the pockets of Europe and North America instead of into the stomachs of the Arabs and Africans. In this matter, it is the political economy methodology that can expose to us the inner logic of the Arab Revolts with its interlinkages to the class structure of the Arab World and its linkage with imperialism and the Arab question resulting in the recent revolts. Political economy as we know studies and explains the relations of production, distribution, consumption and exchange between classes and also in geostrategic terms. In this

respect, we ask, in the production relations of the Arab political economy who are those benefiting? It is the class character of the Arab nation that will give us the clue to understanding the situation concretely.

The situation in the Third World, Africa and the Middle East is that the ruling classes in these states are dependent bourgeoisie and landed aristocrats or rentier classes. In this respect, therefore, Massarrat (1980:45-46) said, "...the national capitalist classes of the countries of the 'Third World' are, on the one hand, as the land owning classes of their countries in a position to utilise their landed property for the appropriation of groundrent. Therefore, they can redistribute surplus value in favour of their national accumulation fund. But on the other hand, as a component of the international bourgeoisie, they are forced, in view of the associated dangers for capitalism, to recognise and take into account, the limits of their power. Similarly, the developed capitalist states are forced to recognise the sovereignty of the nascent bourgeois classes in the countries of the 'Third World'; which they themselves have brought into being; they are forced to make concessions to them given their mutual interests and structural interdependence."

The foregoing analysis captures the class character of the Middle East and explains the main kernel of the changing relationship between the landed/rentier classes of the Middle East or the Arabs and their dominant imperialist classes resident in the metropolises of capital. In some cases, the dialectical changes transform the pliant dependent bourgeoisie into a "radical progressive" reformist bourgeoisie. Such were the cases of Saddam Hussain and Maumar Ghadaffi hence they struggled for the redistribution of surplus value from crude oil and were able to maintain themselves without imperialist backings as long as their regime lasted. Other Arab kinglets survived by the massive backing of imperialism such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, where the Arab Revolt has been prominent, especially in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Syria where the revolutionary pressures boiled over.

We have stated earlier Claude Ake's statement that "It is the foolishness of the leadership that leads to revolutions." Kabir (2011) said that the happenings starting from Tunisia, spreading to Egypt and other parts of the Arab World was a groundbreaking movement peacefully led by the young people. Of course, the peaceful protest and the courage of the individuals should be commended. It was also impressive to see how social media (Facebook) managed to unite these young Egyptians, even though protesters knew they would face resistance, 'rubber bullets and organised barricades' from the ruling authority. According to White (2011), the *International Business Times* stated that the primary reason for the protests that succeeded in toppling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (and Tunisian President Zine el Abidine-Ben Ali) was economic. Popular frustration was directed against the corrupt politicians in the government and rising unemployment. It should be noted that the young Egyptians were inspired by the act of the Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 in protest at inequality and high unemployment.

Economic condition caused the Arab Revolts, economic adverse conditions that have resulted into deepening immiserisation of Arab youth and the rest of the down trodden society. Neo-liberalism has aggravated this economic degradation despite the enormous earnings from crude oil. The conservative Arab ruling classes have not equally helped matters that have spiraled inequality to new heights. The same situation prevails in Africa south of the Sahara. In the Arab World, we have been told that the unemployment is about 25 million rising at 3% every year. In Nigeria, *Daily Trust* sometimes ago told us that the one of Nigeria is about 40 million unemployed. While the situation in the Arab World has transited in consciousness from a youth in itself (a youth that is not conscious of its socio-economic and political disadvantages) to youth for itself (a youth that is conscious of its socio-economic and political disadvantages), that of Africa however remains the contrary to a certain degree. This does not mean that African corrupt politicians and leadership will get away with it for long.

The development question or the issue of the resolution of the national question is what must be at the front burner in the Arab World and Africa south of the Sahara. Galeano (1973:11-12) quoted President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 who observed: "You hear of 'concessions' to foreign capitalists in Latin America. You do not hear of concessions to foreign capitalists in the United States. They are not granted concessions." He was confident to further stress that, "states that are obliged...to grant concessions are in this condition, that foreign interests are apt to dominate their domestic affairs..." and he was right. One of the problems of the Arabs and also Africa south of the Sahara is that the ruling classes have no confidence in their own people. The Asians have changed all that and hence they are moving forward among the comity

of nations. The Arab and the African ruling classes through their relationship with imperialism have devalued the life of their people and that informs the rage of the Arab youth. Who says the same will not be the case of the African youth in the near future, if pockets of such rages are not with us already!

We have noted earlier how taxes alone by OECD countries swallow the lion share of crude oil export. Even the pittance called OPEC earnings from crude is wasted in what Perkins (2006) referred to as promoting US foreign policy and corporate greed driven by greed rather than by desire to make life better for the downtrodden of OPEC countries. This was in symphony with Galeano (1973: 13-14) who cited in the early 1970s United Nations report that, "...The amount shared by 6 million Latin Americans at the top of the social pyramid is the same as the amount shared by 140 million at the bottom. There are 60 million *compesinos* whose fortune amounts to \$.25 a day. At the other extreme, the pimps of misery accumulate \$5 billion in their private Swiss or U.S. bank accounts. Adding insult to injury, they squander this on sterile ostentation and luxury, and in unproductive investments constituting no less than half the total investment, the capital that Latin America could devote to the replacement, extension, and generation of job-creating means of production. History they say repeats itself according to Karl Marx, the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. The fact that the Latin America situation has repeated itself in the Arab World and most probably in the very near future in Africa should be taken seriously in Africa south of the Sahara. We should heed the warning of Eduardo Galeano who said:

*Harnessed as they have always been to the constellation of imperialist powers, our ruling classes have no interest whatsoever in determining whether patriotism might not prove more profitable than treason and whether begging is really the only formula for international politics. Sovereignty is mortgaged because "there's no other way". The oligarchies' cynical alibis confuse the impotence of a social class with the presumed destinies of their countries.*

## CONCLUSION

Mahathir bin Muhammad once warned saying, "I believe that we must not be blinkered. Nothing, no theory, no principle, no formula should be regarded so sacred that they cannot be critically examined, modified, changed or even discarded. We must be pragmatic. What counts is the result. We should not believe in proudly announcing that the operation is successful but the patient died" (bin Muhammad 2002:4). In Morocco, according to Stiglitz (2004) the neo-liberal policies killed most of the small scale industries. In Tunisia, Government of Ben-Alli was successful in its neo-liberal policies, the same was the case of Egypt of Hosni Mubarak but the patient died. The historical dynamics of operation being successful and the patient having died is a product of uneven and spasmodic development. It is hindering *the resolution of the Arab national question* resulting in heavy unemployment which is catalyst of the Arab Spring. Africa south of the Sahara must be careful to avoid this situation because the same contradictions in the Arab World abide.

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