



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

Dismantling Western Hegemony and the Demystification of Globalization Myth in MENA

Aymane Edouihri
Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University,
Fes, Morocco
aymane5@hotmail.com

Abstract

In the twentieth first century, West and East dichotomy is still caught up in a long tradition of imperialism and subjugation. The East is under the mercy of Western master narrative and the repercussions of a greedy globalization. This geographical location, especially, MENA region, seems to find an outlet in the revival of nationalism and valorization of identity, collective consciousness and culture in a way to break the shackles of neocolonialism; perhaps the Arab Spring is the most resonating historical moment in which some of MENA nations have tried to fight not only Western hegemonic upper hand, but also pro-west regimes. Noticeably, this historical turning point has paved the path for the rise of religious movements and religious discourse as a defense shield against all what is Western. Yet, this flourishing of religiosity in the MENA region would not pass unnoticed by the West which is still controlling the scene through the creation, support and orientation of some of the Islamic movements to guarantee its superiority and interests in such a pivotal region.

Key words: master narrative; MENA; Arab Spring; hegemony; religiosity; superiority

Introduction

Widening discrepancy and growing animosity are looming above our world of the third millennium. Such contention sounds pessimistic and inauspicious; yet, news fraught of wars, economic deficiencies and retreat to democracies coming from many parts of the world cast a cloud of chronic insecurity and fearful doubt over our perception of nowadays world. Initially, globalization is believed to bridge the gap between the planet's nations; however, it seems to have been transformed to a battle ground between different conflictual nations and ideologies, hence,



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

calls for the revival of nationalism, identity protection and a continuation of decolonization have echoed worldwide.

Globalization and a New World Order

For some, had not the Berlin wall fallen and the USSR dissolved, the world would still have been torn into pieces under the polarity of East and West camps. This turning point in world history has given many countries a sigh of relief and may be a sizeable opportunity to join the so called “ new world order” with promising horizon of better understating and coexistence among the blue planet’s inhabitants. In fact, globalization, with the means available at its disposal (technology, transportation and policies), is claimed to bridge the gap between nations and turn the world into a melting pot rather than a salad bowl. It is, G. Cerny maintains:

Not just about changing relations between the ‘inside’ of the nation-state and the ‘outside’ of the international system. It cuts across received categories, creating myriad multilayered intersections, overlapping playing fields, and actors skilled at working across these boundaries. People are at once rooted and rootless, local producers and global consumers, threatened in their identities yet continually remaking those identities (Gerny, 24).

Nevertheless, after decades of its adoption, globalization proves to be nothing but another tool of casting western hegemony over the rest of the world. The illusion of a mutually inclusive globalization and a world of equally shared interests have been disillusioned by the greedy capitalism and a perpetuated traditional superiority of Westerncentrism/ Eurocentrism. Far too obvious in globalization studies is the systematic inclination of the West towards turning the world into a crucible and forging it into subordinate cantons to the Empire. Indeed, “center and periphery” Dichotomy is of paramount importance in understanding how globalization serves to make the magnetic West a pivotal center for the nonwestern peripheral Rest. This center is built to



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

remain a permanent source of exporting not only goods, but also the western “mission civilisatrice”, Neo-liberalism and globalization that are only few guises of the neo-colonial enterprise. Even so, this maybe said to find expression in W.B.Yeats in his *The Second Coming* crying out “things fall apart the centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”. It is indeed mere anarchy looming upon our world of the twentieth first century.

The West and MENA: Identity and Issues of Religion

With the unavailability of immigrant tidal waves arriving to the West, the centre is overpowered and policies of multiculturalism and assimilation prove futile and ineffective. The attempts to pacify and tame the "uncivilized" Other into hybridized easy-to- control nations are costly at financial, cultural and security levels. Obviously, the West has fallen prey to the uncontrollable repercussions of globalization and indirectly blames it for the overgrowing threats to its social, religious, political and national tissue represented in immigration and the so called “terrorism”. These threats have nurtured extremist right parties in France, Germany and Belgium, to name but a few, to present themselves as ferocious defenders of the western democracy, civilization and identity through calls to expulse immigrants and fortify their common collective identity from intruder tides of Islam/Islamism. Accordingly, demonstrations and unrest shaking the suburbs of Paris, streets of Germany and parliament dome of London are only few occasions for speaking for the oppressed Rest; a Rest which is no longer satisfied with a fake and unfair rules of the game and so called “intercultural understanding”. This understanding is in fact nothing but a waiver by the Rest for the West since it is governed by western superiority and power. It is high time the West reconstructed a new discourse on the Rest; colonial and travel discourses have brought nothing but exploitation of societies, destruction of civilizations and smash of identities.

In the light of this, the perpetuation of such hegemonic discourse, which tries to demolish the Rest’s identities and equal –footedness to the West, leaves the Rest in a defensive position in



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

an attempt to voice its being and force a new discourse that challenges the Empire's. Such discourse seeks to revive the sense of nationalism and fight a long western tradition of divide and rule through the valorization of collective consciousness, national culture and common identity. In this context and in the MENA region, the earthshaking upheavals sweeping the Arab world since the beginning of the second decade of the twenty first century known as the Arab Spring came as an endeavor to break the shackles of West supported/manipulated regimes towards salvation from ignorance, poverty, inferiority and tyranny. Ostensibly, it is a historical moment in the Arab world which creates unprecedented momentum for Arabs to revisit problematized issues as identity and nationalism. The inevitability of reviving nationalism and common identity is reinforced through the adoption of traditionally claimed Western notions of democracy, freedom, gender equality and justice. undeniably, echoing calls of "liberty, dignity, social justice" from Tahrir Square in Egypt or in front of the Tunisian ministry of interior have shaken western capitals which seemed astonished by the nature of the unexpected demands. At the first glance, the overriding "spontaneous" majority of protestors seem to pour into the reconstruction of a solid reconciled identity regardless of political affiliations and struggle over power. Yet, the overthrow of despotic regimes has opened the sky doors for long suffocated Islamic movements and parties to freely furniture the political scene and, for some, perhaps "hijack" the revolutions. Actually, the arrival of Islamic referenced parties, after worldly claimed democratic elections, as Al Nahda in Tunisia and Muslim brotherhood in Egypt is no surprise since most voters strongly cherish and venerate Islam as the backbone of their cultural identity and sense of belonging. It can also be claimed that, in these Muslim majority countries, voters find in Islam, and in the discourse of Islamic/Islamist parties and movements, their last resort within which they can shelter against Western greed and an anarchic world. The foreseen rise of religious and spiritual discourse and its gaining ground over liberal and secular ones was attributed to Andre Malraux who wonders that "the twenty first century will be spiritual or will not". Interestingly, had Malraux lived to the twenty-first century, he would have witnessed the invasion of the spiritual, mystic and religious occupying far corners



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

in the world. In reality, the most dominant movements are perhaps the Muslim brotherhoods in the MENA and the evangelists in the USA. It seems that God is not dead yet, as Nietzsche once claimed, and the return of faith in multitude formats dominates our ailing world of materialism, capitalism and a chronic feeling of hopelessness in an attempt to re-enchant the world.

The Arab Spring: The Rise of Islamic Movements

The re-enchantment of the Arab world during the Arab Spring is strengthened by an attempt to revive the Islamic identity. Worth to note is that religious discourse, heavily relying on populism and polemics, has apparently been able to attract large masses that have systematically been exposed to a long “tradition” of ignorance and illiteracy by despotic regimes. Thus, religious discourse’s ethos and pathos could fill in the gap and “hollowness” created by secular and liberal discourse and redirect people to serve its own agenda. However, it would be unwise to say that the West is not still in control pulling the strings behind the scenes and causing the whole “creative chaos” in the MENA region known as the Arab revolutions. A short glance at former US president G.W. Bush’s *The Greater Middle East Initiative* explains that what is happening in the MENA region is not a mere normal historical travail. In the surface, the initiative aims at spreading, education, “democracy” and economic prospects, hence eliminating “terrorism”; still, this goes hand in hand with a veiled process of unmaking the Middle East into easy to control cantons to guarantee Western interests and most importantly Israel’s security and upper hand. Within this context/atmosphere emerges the so called Arab Spring first “spontaneously”, but through the course of action traits of western manipulation unfolded. An example of Western interference in the making of the revolutions is discussed in Tariq Ramadan’s *Islam and the Arab Spring*. Ramadan maintains that western countries, especially US, have taken on their shoulder to proceed with a “democratizing” project of the Middle East. This is made possible through the training of social activists such as the Egyptian 6th April Movement in such areas as popular mobilization, planning and nonviolent discipline. Ramadan mentions that “a significant number of young



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

activists and bloggers were given training by three American government-financed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): the Albert Einstein Institute, Freedom House, and the International Republic Institute” (11). The writer is also aware that the complexity of the issue does not present the West as a mere democratizing driving force behind the uprisings, and he is against the naïve analysis which considers the West as a good doer; rather, he stresses that the West is a manipulative hand and that the uprisings are not mere spontaneous and arbitrary actions. The cyber corporations’ trainings in areas like nonviolent protests organized by Google, Twitter, face book military aid and NGOs role are just a case in point. Most worth to mention is the long historical tradition of undoing the MENA region ever since the dawn of the modern time. In his book, *Unmaking of the Middle East*, Jeremy Salt sketches Western interference from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the so called G.W Bush’s war on terror. The wars waged in Afghanistan and Iraq, the destabilizing of Lebanon and maintaining of Israel’s occupation of Palestine aim to, stresses Salt, explode the Middle East into small crumbs.

As have already been discussed, the process of unmaking the MENA region via sparking Arab revolutions has given rise to Islam referenced movements and parties. This rise was a call for the revival of Islamic roots and identity to be able to face a globally avid world for control and dominance. This momentum nurtured two types of Islamic movements; “moderate” and “radical”. Each trying to present their agenda to reform and protect the Islamic identity, the Arab world remains polarized and weakened once more. “Moderate” parties such as Nahda in Tunisia, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Justice and Development in Morocco see no harm in putting their hands with the West and lead Western- style or West guided reforms enlightened by “Islamic guidelines”. On the other hand, “radical” movements as Al Qaida, which saw light before the Arab revolutions, ISIS, and Jabhat Al Nusra, an off shoot of Al Qaida, believe real reform should be based on Al shariia laws and return to caliphates era taking arms against not only the West but also their Muslim brothers to achieve their goals. Obviously, this return of faith did not pass without a revival of



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

sectarian conflicts as between Muslim and Christian, Sunni and Shii along with ethnic clashes between Arab and Persian. These sectarian, ethnic and religious conflicts are thought of being triggered by the West from a conspiracy theory perspective. It is believed, by many, that the Western powers fuel these clashes to continue its process of unmaking the region. Conspiracy theory followers believe that the rise of Islamic/ Islamist discourse is guided and controlled, if not written, by the West to frame and forge it according to its own agendas. More than that, within conspiracy theory, the West is believed not only to finance “moderate” parties and movements, but also create and support “radical” ones as ISIS. This belief finds its justification in Hillary Clinton’s admission of having created ISIS in one of her press declarations. Indeed, the creation of ISIS is destined to unmake the MENA as AL Qaida was created to fight and stop Soviet Union expansion.

The Arab Spring in Western Media and the Perpetuation of colonial Clichés and Stereotypes:

Most importantly, the whole processes of unmaking the MENA region would not have been successful without the implementation of a strong manipulative media discourse. The West still guarantees the upper hand in media world through giant media corporations whose purpose is to direct, manipulate and shape people’s views towards events. Significantly, western media corporations have not only perpetuated the colonial clichés, stereotypes and representation of the Middle East, but also served western agenda of attacking the backbone of its identity, Islam. In this context, Said maintains:

The sense of Islam as a threatening Other- with Muslims depicted as a fanatical, violent, lustful, irrational,-develops during the colonial period in what I called Orientalism. The study of the Other has a lot to do with the control and dominance of Europe and the West generally in the Islamic world. And it has persisted because



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

it's based very, very deeply in religious roots, where Islam seen as a kind of competitor to Christianity. (2001/interview)

After having, directly or indirectly, created extremist groups and defining their discourse, the West uses its media's heavy artillery and propaganda to distort/mutilate the real essence of Islam, presenting it as a religion of violence and hatred. Despite frequent interference of some western officials and presidents to present a counter "official" image, western media discourse has succeeded in spreading Islamophobia all over the world. In effect, Muslims have suffered the harmful repercussions of xenophobia, as all other immigrants; yet, the growing looming dark cloud of Islamophobia is the straw that broke the camel's back turning their lives into a real inferno. Some would argue that social media has truly given these "subaltern", to borrow Spivak's term, an opportunity to voice their ills and provide a counter discourse to the empire's, however, this opportunity is kept under control since the West holds the keys of all media outlets and recourses.

Conclusion:

There is stark evidence that the MENA region shall remain the magnetic centre of the world's interests given its strategic, economic, religious and political attraction. Clearly enough, the current maniac rush happening in the Middle East reflects a worldly everlasting struggle for power and dominance which perpetuates polarization, exploitation, dominance and superiority of parts over others. Horrifically, all circumstances for a third world war are being provided and the end of the world seems approaching. Perhaps, Huntington would here say something like "hey! I told you *The Clash of Civilizations* is not a prophecy and conflicts about cultures, religions and identities would fuel doomsday". In fact, Huntington's hypothesis seems to have credibility nowadays more than his former student's Fukuyama's "the End of History". Apparently, we are witnessing "the advent of western liberal democracy" as an eventual form of human system of government; however, this advent could not spare the different civilizations/ nations ravaging



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296

January- March 2020

conflicts because of their cultural, religious and identity differences. Have we failed to manage our differences and, instead, provide offerings to fanaticism, discrimination and tyranny? Have we made of the world a one seat train which crashes anybody and everybody? Have we designed for ourselves and by our hands scarecrows and illusive enemies as hallstands for our wrong doings and greed? It is high time we made the center hold, we had enough of anarchy loosing upon the world.

Works Cited

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Perennial, 2002. Print.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone, 1997. Print.

Ramadan, Tarik. *Islam and the Arab Awakening*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012.

Said,Edward. Interview. *The Progressive*. 31 October 2001.

Saskia, Sassen. *Deciphering the Global: Its Spaces, Scales and Subjects*, 1st Edition. Routledge, 2007

William Butler Yeats "The Second Coming." *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*

Ed. Robert DiYanni. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008. 188-201