

# THE ICT IMPACT ON THE ARAB REVOLUTION UNDER THE PRISM OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE US-CHINA RELATIONS

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of the paper is to propose an enriched framework of analysis to assess and analyze complex social, political and economic phenomena, such as the developments that took place in the Arab countries. I call this framework of analysis Elaborated Realism and I present its main epistemological elements hereby. In this framework, individual variables such as the role and the impact of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are considered as being only a part of an overall set of variables, a Feedback Mechanism in which the state national interest is the main catalyst for the formation of state behavior. Such a Feedback Mechanism constitutes the framework out of which the main elements of the global political economy, meaning the network of global political and economic relations are formed. In my opinion, although ICT as well as other social, political and economic variables should be assessed, developments in the Arab countries should be considered under the prism of the global political economy, and more precisely the USA-China economic contest which is the core axis of this frame. ICT can be considered as an accelerating factor but not as the root neither the cause of the events that took place. I claim that such an enriched framework of analysis and approach can also be applied in other similar cases in which national interest is very much influenced by a hierarchical structure of power as it is captured by global political economy structure.*

**Keywords:** Global Political Economy, ICT, Arab revolution, USA-China Economic Rivalry

## **1. Introduction**

We have lately seen unprecedented events taking place in a series of countries of the Arab World. Long-standing regimes have been questioned, even overthrown by the people of the region. Political personalities and widely acknowledged historical figures with unlimited experience and unquestionable power have lost their places and roles within weeks. The people of the Arab states have demonstrated their power. They have reacted in such a way that the globe may have not seen before. This is even more impressive when the state-people framework of relations in the region was taken for granted, in social and political terms.

The aim of the paper is to enrich the current frameworks of analysis deployed to capture the roots and causes of the Arab Revolution from the point of view of global political economy and more precisely the US-China economic and political relations. I consider the 2011 Arab revolution as a peripheral asymmetrical shock whose roots and causes can well be identified in the framework of the rivalry relations between USA and China. These rival relations are the axis of the contemporary hierarchical GPE structure.

Kurlantzik states that [1] “with a better understanding of China’s soft power, Washington can more systematically set clear limits — for itself, for China, and for other nations — and establish where it believes China’s soft power possibly threatens American interests. As we have seen, these U.S. interests include other nations’ territorial integrity; support for the United States in case of a conflict in regions like Southeast Asia; control of sea lanes and waterways; access to resources; formal alliances with foreign nations; and, perhaps most important, the promotion of democratization and good governance”.

In order to achieve this goal I assess the following issues. Firstly, I provide the main principles of the approach I propose to assess and comprehend GPE, that is the Elaborated Realism. I then mention the main elements of the rivalry framework of the US-China relations and how this affects

global political and economic relations. I then capture the Chinese struggle for access to national resources which is their main concern in order to keep steady growth rates and consequently sustainable development in the interior. I then apply the framework of analysis in the case of the Arab Revolution and the ICT impact on the events. Finally, I proceed with conclusions and recommendations for further research ahead. I hope that the proposed framework of analysis can also be helpful for comprehending similar cases around the world.

## 2. The Framework of Analysis: Elaborated Realism

The current complex reality has provided us with new data and scientific questions to be answered. Above all, it has also repositioned the traditional boundaries among the sciences as well as the components of the Global Political Economy (GPE). Although the classic approaches of the GPE have been outreached by the facts, their undisputable temporal contribution is still acknowledged. Nevertheless, the enrichment of the methodological and scientific tools is necessary. To this direction, I hereby move on to the development of an analysis framework which I call Elaborated Realism and in parallel to a new Feedback Mechanism of the Global Political Economy. This Feedback Mechanism constitutes the logical starting point via which the Global Political Economy is being formed as a result of a consistent process and interaction. The target of this attempt is to enrich the current discussion on the role and the meaning of the International Political Economy (IPE) as well as the way that the GPE is being perceived and analyzed.

My goal is to highlight those key-elements that in my opinion are the cornerstone of an analytical frame that can contribute to the better understanding of the contemporary social, political and economic reality under the scope of the Realist School of the IPE. This is the analytical framework that I call Elaborated Realism and I will further explain its key elements and its basic parameters.

For the argument's development and the data analysis (so that conclusions can be derived), I have adopted a wide and notably receptive to further enrichment, sense of the IPE, as this is framed by its realistic perspective[2].

The three basic axes of the formation of these key- elements and by extension of the feedback mechanism that adopts the proposed Elaborated Realism analysis frame as the logical starting point are as follow:

- The consistent and dynamic feedback process of the system that formulates the state behavior towards the international environment and eventually the environment of the global political economy as such. Ensuring the national security and the national interest remains the dominant factor that ultimately determines the final decision and the state behavior. This fact finally results in an anarchic international system without the appropriate institutional regulatory mechanisms which mostly remain informal and in the logic of the states-groups such as G7 or G20. Eventually, the formation filter of the final decision is the reinforcement of the state in a global power pyramid structure and the global political economy.
- The integration into the analytical framework of variables and factors that traditionally had been ignored by the classic realists. It is not a coincidence that the economic nationalism is considered by some scholars to be the restrictive approach regarding the study of the IPE, since the relation between wealth- power is an exclusive tool for the analysis and understanding of the states' behavior in the international system [3]. However, restrictive approaches may lead to restricted analytical conclusions and to assumptions with limited scientific value. The integration of variables such as the universal issues, the historical conditions dependency path, the role of new technologies, the meaning and the contribution of non- governmental, non-state actors, the contribution of ideas, values and traditions as well as the unity of politics with economics, of domestic with international, enriches the tools of analysis, the scope of information, the scope and the content of the available variables. It also forms even more inclusive hypotheses. Moreover, it creates an analysis framework which without disrupting the initial scientific basis of realism and economic nationalism, creates the background and the conditions for a more integral study and analysis of the reality and the global political economy.

- The variables interact and create a network, reflecting the complex nature of the global political economy. The explanation and analysis of the variables cannot be done in isolation but in combination and complementary with each other. The relations' network "produced", after being filtered by the target of improving the state's status in the global power pyramid, is an integral mechanism that eventually forms state's behavior in the global economic and political environment and consequently in the Global Political Economy. As a result of this dynamic process, the new environment and the content of the variables is being repositioned and redefined. Variables' networking and interaction continues constantly and the system's feedback mechanism keeps working intensifying the complexity of the situation even further.

More analytically, the components of the Elaborated Realism are the following:

- The proposed framework of analysis of Elaborated Realism adopts the basic features of the State-centered Realism [4], mostly the formation of traditional nation-state behavior on the basis of increasing its power and improving its status in the global power pyramid within which the states satisfy their needs depending on the power acquired. As a result, national interest plays a significant role in the nation-state's foreign policy choices and international economic relations. The limited perception of the contemporary reality doesn't take into consideration the complexity of the international political and economic relations, that has appeared particularly through the emergence of new actors, the emergence of new complementary networking relations, the impact of new technology, the increasingly obscure finance products and services, the new themes of universal interest such as the environment and the human rights on other variables. Without neglecting the fundamental principles (meaning the pursuit of power and the need to ensure security as the main determinates of the states' behavior), I strongly believe that it is not feasible to interpret so many phenomena with a limited scope of meanings and variables. For this reason, I hereby enrich the analytical framework so that the contemporary reality can be explained and analyzed in a more efficient way.
- We cannot expect to have a general view of the social, economic and political development level of a country if we follow separable lines among politics, economics and society. While the Liberal Approach separates politics from economics and the Economic Nationalism/ Realism subjugates economy to politics, I believe that economy supplements the politics and reverse. I adopt an integrated approach where politics and economics are interrelated creating a new scene, this of political economy. Besides, it has not been that long times ago since the GDP or the exclusively economic indicators were considered as adequate to evaluate the growth trend and the overall progress of a country or even of an entire continent. It has been proved that this methodologically restricted and analytically incomplete approach of the IPE has resulted in incorrect conclusions and wrong analysis. We cannot realize the progress and development of a country outside of a frame of reference and analysis in which politics, economy and society is not built in a methodological tool and a common interpretive dimension [5]. For example, the success of privatizations in Bulgaria or in Poland cannot be judged by the revenues and the number of the privatizations of enterprises only. It has also to be evaluated taking into account the number of work places abolished, the increase of (un)employment rate, the environmental impact, etc.
- The same common, integrated approach is valid for the traditional separation between "domestic" and "international" issues as well. Globalization has brought forward the issue of the delineation of national borders. The National Political Economy System of a country must be assessed with regard to the global scene and the international environment instead of the narrow frame of its national borders. This is how specific policies and initiatives that affect the domestic actors of the social, economic and political development can be perceived. A country's international commitments, its participation in economic, military and other organizations and the acceptance of globalization values and principles are playing an important role in its domestic initiatives' planning and implementation. As a result, the "domestic" must be analyzed according to the "international" and in reverse in order to cover the "whole".

- I also embody in the IPE the role of the ideas, the norms, the values and the traditions, in planning and decision making. In the GPE, the actors' perceptions greatly contribute to the formation of relations and networks as well as to the result of their initiatives and reactions. In other words, the formation of the political and economic diplomacy, in the framework of the foreign policy can eventually be proved inefficient and incomplete if the framework of values and principles of the hosting country are not taken into account. Respectively, priorities can be defined according to the traditions and norms, affecting the institutional framework where the decisions are being taken.
- I take for granted the fact that the IPE actors now vary. I do not accept the classic realistic approach, which should be judged in line with the chronological period and the ideological and theoretical framework within which it was developed, in which the states were considered to be the exclusive actors. The actors have now been multiplied and they should be examined [6] and analyzed within the framework of the IPE. More specifically, the interest groups, the Non Governmental Organizations and the multinational enterprises have their own role and participation in the international political economy which recognizes not only the statehoods, legal entities and individual but also the overall relations' and contacts' network which connects the non- governmental organizations with other non-governmental organizations and the state. NGOs have acquired a legitimate basis regarding their action and their role. As a result, an IPE approach must take into consideration the NGO's importance and role. Respectively the same applies to the multinational enterprises. Their action in the country of origin as well as in the hosting country, is a basic object of study regarding the policies' planning and implementation in the domestic and international environment.
- The international political economy adopts a historical approach to the facts. Such an approach includes the historical dimension and the historical background while formatting and analyzing the parameters and conditions of the facts' analysis. The knowledge of dependency path is an important variable for justifying the states' behavior. Many of these (states) define their behavior and are being captured in policies as a result of specific historical facts or historical tradition. This exact path is a significant variable that must be taken into account. If not, we will not be able to embody specific values and principles.
- In a contemporary reality study, variables form fields of "universal" interest e.g. the environment, the human rights; the new technologies etc. which are being evaluated. This is how thematic and consequently variables and analysis tools that have traditionally been outside the scientific interest of the classic realists are becoming part of the analysis framework. Under this prism, we can better define, understand and analyze the state's behavior in the global system of economic and political power.

The above framework offers a wider approach to the realistic school of the IPE, which I call "Elaborated Realism". It is about an approach which gives us the chance of critical evaluation of the parameters that compose the global economic and political relations and reach conclusions.

The IPE now a day is a field of study of the international economic and political relations. From time to time, different theoretical approaches have attempted to create the appropriate scientific tools and analysis frameworks of the global political economy. The contribution of those efforts cannot be ignored since each of them has contributed to the enrichment of thinking, the perception of reality, the explanation of facts and to the formulation of future hypotheses. I believe that the proposed analysis framework of the Elaborated Realism as well as the Feedback Mechanism which can be used as a logical starting point, can create the appropriate scientific and methodological tool in order to analyze the contemporary complex reality and furthermore the complicated networks' framework that have been created in the global political economy.

Under this expanded prism of the realistic school, without the conceptual and methodological preconceptions and analytical limitations, I hope that the Elaborated Realism recommends a scientifically healthy proposition for a further evaluation from the scientific community of the international economic and political relations.

### 3. The USA – China Rivalry Framework as a dependent variable in contemporary GPE

I assume that the main elements that constitute the USA-China Rivalry Framework in contemporary GPE are the following:

- Conflicting geopolitical interests;
- China's need for export and trade routs;
- China's thirst for raw material resources;
- China's centrally planned extrovert economy;
- Competitiveness Race;
- China's regulatory role in USA's indebtedness;
- China's need to preserve high development rates internally;
- China's role as a Free rider in contemporary GPE;
- Indebted USA economy;
- Low level of USA's economic competitiveness;
- USA's need to keep its economic and political dominance.

In this framework, the national interest of a given state actor is very much affected by the way it is perceived by the main actors of this rival relationship, meaning USA and China. Parallel, to a Cold War situation, where peripheral conflicts have been accentuated and considerably increased, the USA-China rivalry leads to a series of asymmetrical shocks in the periphery. In my opinion, the Arab Revolution can be considered as being one of those peripheral asymmetries and should be considered as such.

The roots and causes of those asymmetries are the conflicting interests and the rival framework of the USA-China relation, being the main axis of contemporary GPE. On the one hand, one should consider the need of the USA to preserve existing GPE hierarchical balances. The preservation of existing balances is the main prerequisite for keeping USA's political dominance and the economic dominance, which is very much based on a weak internal economic structure and an even weaker dollar. On the other hand, China is more than eager to secure raw material resources and wealthy markets for its production. Continuously increased growth rates and their preservation in China is the main prerequisite for keeping peace and security in the interior.

Consequently, The USA-China rivalry relationship should be taken as a dependent variable when assessing contemporary GPE. Such a dependent variable consists of the following elements:

- Internal / external correlation.
- Interconnection between politics and economics.
- Formation of the dependency path.
- Influence on norms, principles and values.
- Emergence of new actors.
- Use of technology.

The competing relations among the two nations have also been revealed in the case of the Copenhagen Summit for Climate Change. One of the root causes of the failure of the Summit has been the undeclared economic war among China and the USA. This economic war is eloquently presented by Wayne Morrison [7] in the framework of the research activity undertaken by the Congress:

“U.S.-China economic ties have expanded substantially over the past three decades. Total U.S.- China trade rose from \$2 billion in 1979 to an estimated \$459 billion in 2010. China is currently the second-largest U.S. trading partner, its third-largest export market, and its biggest source of imports. Because U.S. imports from China have risen much more rapidly than U.S. exports to China, the U.S. merchandise trade deficit has surged, rising from \$10 billion in 1990 to an estimated \$273 billion in 2010.

The rapid pace of economic integration between China and the United States, while benefiting both sides overall, has made the trade relationship increasingly complex. On the one hand, China's large population and booming

economy have made it a large and growing market for U.S. exporters. Over the past decade, China has been the fastest-growing market for U.S. exports. U.S. imports of low-cost goods from China greatly benefit U.S. consumers by increasing their purchasing power. U.S. firms that use China as the final point of assembly for their products, or use Chinese-made inputs for production in the United States, are able to lower costs and become more globally competitive. China's purchases of U.S. Treasury securities (which stood at \$907 billion in October 2010) help keep U.S. interest rates relatively low. On the other hand, many analysts argue that growing economic ties with China have exposed U.S. manufacturing firms to greater, and what is often perceived to be, "unfair," competition from low-cost Chinese firms.

They argue that this has induced many U.S. production facilities to relocate to China, resulting in the loss of thousands of U.S. manufacturing jobs. Some policymakers have also raised concerns that China's large holdings of U.S. government debt may give it leverage over the United States.

China's incomplete transition to a free market economy and its use of distortive economic policies have contributed to growing trade friction with the United States over a number of issues, including China's refusal to allow its currency to appreciate to market levels, its mixed record on implementing its World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations, its relatively poor record on protecting intellectual property rights (IPR), and its extensive use of industrial policies and discriminatory government procurement policies to subsidize and protect domestic Chinese firms at the expense of foreign companies. The United States initiated three WTO trade dispute resolutions against China in 2010, dealing with such issues as China's use of subsidies to promote its wind power industries, its use of trade remedy laws to protect domestic industries, and restrictions on electronic payment services. Some members of Congress have argued that, given the slow rate of U.S. economic growth and the high rate of unemployment, China's distortive trade policies can no longer be tolerated and have called for tougher action to be taken against China to induce it to eliminate policies that hurt U.S. economic interests. These trade frictions may intensify in the future as China attempts to implement policies to increase the output of more advanced products.

Numerous bills were introduced in the 111th Congress to address various Chinese economic and trade policies. For example, one bill, which passed the House (but was not taken up by the Senate), would have made certain fundamentally undervalued currencies (such as China's) actionable under U.S. countervailing duty laws (which address government export subsidies).

U.S.-China commercial issues may continue to be a major focus in the 112th Congress. This report provides an overview of U.S.-China trade relations. It describes the trends in commercial ties, identifies major trade disputes, and surveys legislation that may affect economic relations."

One of the main characteristics of this undeclared economic war is the increasingly growing trade deficit among the two countries, which is also accentuated by the USA's lack of competitiveness in global economic environment (Table 1). USA's problem is further accentuated by the fact that China denies to proceed with the free fluctuation of its currency. Fixed exchange rates of Yuan is the main weapon in Chinese external economic policy and fulfillment of its national interest objectives.

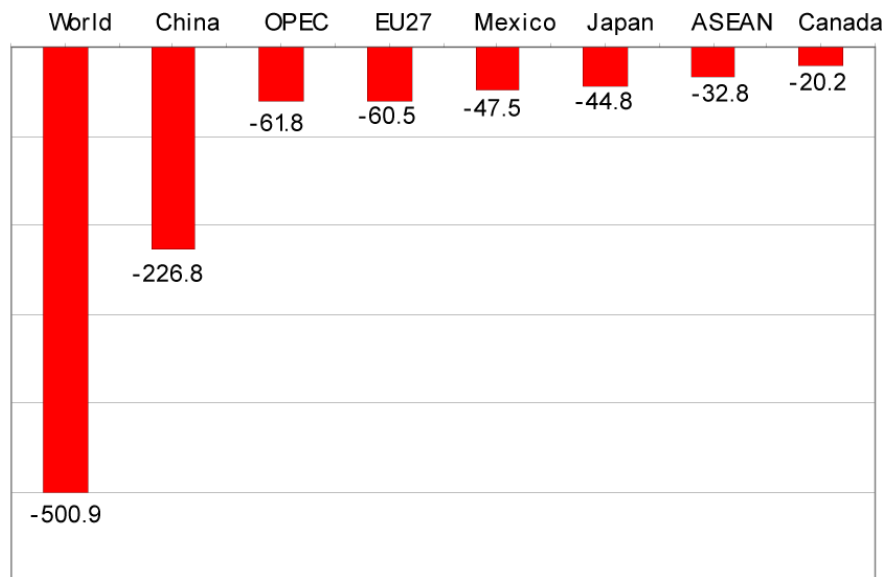
**Table 1**  
**The Increasingly USA-China Trade Deficit**

| Year | Exports  | Imports   | Balance    |
|------|----------|-----------|------------|
| 2010 | 91,878.3 | 364,943.8 | -273,065.5 |
| 2009 | 69,496.7 | 296,373.9 | -226,877.2 |
| 2008 | 69,732.8 | 337,772.6 | -268,039.8 |
| 2007 | 62,936.9 | 321,442.9 | -258,506.0 |
| 2006 | 53,673.0 | 287,774.4 | -234,101.3 |
| 2005 | 41,192.0 | 243,470.1 | -202,278.1 |
| 2004 | 34,427.8 | 196,682.0 | -162,254.3 |
| 2003 | 28,367.9 | 152,436.1 | -124,068.2 |
| 2002 | 22,127.7 | 125,192.6 | -103,064.9 |
| 2001 | 19,182.3 | 102,278.4 | -83,096.1  |
| 2000 | 16,185.2 | 100,018.2 | -83,833.0  |

Source: <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html>

The case is similar for almost all the main trade partners of the USA, which makes the problem for them even worse (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**USA Trade Deficit (2010)**



Source: U.S. International Trade Commission DataWeb, 2011.

The above reality very much influences USA's behavior in the global arena. This has also been the case of the Copenhagen Summit for Climate Change and its failure. USA have explicitly expressed their intention to have China abide by a legally binding document as a result of the Copenhagen Summit. The objective was to integrate China into a series of international obligations which were not restricted only to emissions reduction and its impact on growth rates in the interior of the country. In this framework we should not neglect the fact that China and the USA correspond to 41.8% of the global gas emissions. Eventually, a lot of researchers claimed that achieving a level of mutual rapprochement among USA and China means that we also reach a level of interdependence and understanding between the two countries on issues of global economic governance and, eventually, climate change affairs [8]. I should also add that this bilateral framework of relations has also been very much affected by the emerging new global environment of international relations which is influenced by the increasing role of newly emerging economies such as those of Brazil and India. However, it was very well comprehended that at the end the USA are pretty sure for the failure of their intention. They use it very much as an alibi for pursuing their own policy objectives rather than a genuine approach towards the accomplishment of the objectives of the Summit. Their main objective was to avoid any legal binding obligation for reducing emissions, in an era that economic crisis is still accentuating and growth rates are not satisfactory at all [9].

I also make clear that I consider the USA-China rivalry framework as a dependent variable in contemporary GPE, meaning that its existence and subsequently its impact, should be taken as a given element when assessing events that affect national political economy systems and formulate to a large extent the nature of national interests and the scope of the influence of a series of actors and stakeholders. This is also the case of the Arab Revolution which is addressed in this paper.

In the following part of the paper I assess the way that the analytical framework of Elaborated Realism and the USA-China rivalry framework in GPE relations as a dependent variable provide an enriched framework of analysis when attempting to comprehend the 2011 Arab revolution and the consequent events.

#### 4. The Chinese Struggle for Resources

A prominent figure in the Arab case is the increasing Chinese presence in the field of exploitation of natural resources. In my opinion, the developments in the region should be seen within the framework of the Chinese endeavors to guarantee adequate natural resources with the objective to keep the high growth rates, necessary for its sustainable development.

The data that follow present the framework of this explosive development, reflecting the overseas business initiatives undertaken by the three major Chinese National Oil Companies (NOCs) – China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) [10]. More precisely:

“The USD 18.2 billion spent on merger and acquisition (M&A) deals by Chinese companies in 2009 accounted for 13% of total global oil and gas acquisitions (USD 144 billion), and for 61% of all acquisitions by national oil companies (USD 30 billion; CNPC Research Institute of Economics & Technology, 2010). In 2010, Chinese companies spent USD 29.39 billion approximately again with more than half invested in Latin American (USD 15.74 billion). Such a level of activity should not be surprising; in 2009, when world oil demand fell 1.24 million barrels per day (mb/d), China’s rose by 0.7 mb/d.

Similarly, while world gas demand fell by 2%, China’s gas demand increased by 11%. As domestic production is at or near its peak, virtually every incremental barrel or cubic meter of oil or gas consumed must be imported. According to IEA data, successful acquisitions allowed China’s NOCs to expand their overseas equity shares from 1.1 mb/d in 2009 to 1.36 mb/d in the first quarter of 2010; for comparison, China’s domestic production in 2009 was 4.0 mb/d. Chinese oil companies are now operating in 31 countries and have equity production in 20 of these countries, though their equity shares are mostly located in four countries: Kazakhstan, Sudan, Venezuela and Angola. No evidence suggests that the Chinese government currently imposes a quota on the NOCs regarding the amount of their equity oil that they must ship to China. Decisions about the marketing of equity oil — where the Chinese company has control over the disposition of its share of production — are mainly based on commercial considerations, in some cases, carried out by marketing subsidiaries located outside the headquarters of the NOCs.”

The same report also states that “China has entered into a sequence of privileged relationship with its Arab counterparts and regimes which now belong to the past, as a result of the revolutionary process that has followed” [11].

It is characteristic and in my opinion should not be neglected that among the countries that have considerably increased their crude oil exports to China in only one year is Yemen (201,72%) and Libya (249,9%) (Table 3). This means that China has developed privileged relations with the regimes concerned. In an intensive trade war between China and USA this element should be taken into consideration when assessing the events that followed.



**Table 3: China's Crude Oil Imports Data for January 2010**

BEIJING(Chinaoilweb): Crude Oil imports in Jan.2010 totalled 17,105,839 tons, grow +33.39% on year.

| Countries    | Jan in Tons | Change on Year |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Angola       | 3,360,687   | +53.44%        |
| Saudi Arabia | 2,908,350   | -7.25%         |
| Russia       | 1,273,039   | +41.96%        |
| Sudan        | 1,149,869   | +130.25%       |
| Iran         | 1,085,752   | -48.76%        |
| Kuwait       | 749,234     | +31%           |
| Oman         | 685,001     | -35.77%        |
| Brazil       | 681,931     | +82.33%        |
| Kazakhstan   | 681,780     | +52.17%        |
| Iraq         | 655,897     | -              |
| Libya        | 622,209     | +249.9%        |
| UAE          | 541,576     | +117.76%       |
| Yemen        | 389,326     | +201.72%       |
| Congo(b)     | 388,409     | -1.46%         |
| Venezuela    | 363,371     | -              |
| Colombia     | 277,890     | -              |
| Indonesia    | 265,365     | +95.6%         |
| Malaysia     | 198,796     | +57.89%        |

Source: [www.chinaoilweb.com](http://www.chinaoilweb.com)

Pure social, political or economic perspectives and analysis are useful for offering insights as well as for introducing outsiders in the issues concerned. However, global political economy entails a series of variables to be taken into consideration when attempting to capture complex reality. Eventually, the Arab Revolution should be seen as part of an overall complex totality which is composed of a series of variables and dynamics. US-China relations are in the core of contemporary global political economy. Frameworks of analysis should take it into consideration. Eventually, the Arab Revolution should be considered within this context.

### 5. The Elaborated Realism framework of analysis for assessing the Arab Revolution and the ICT impact

The 2011 Arab revolution is considered from the following angles:

- Political (the authoritarian political elites/ shadow democracies).
- Social (the role of tribes, religions, social classes, nation groups).
- Economical (unequal distribution of income among social groups).
- Technology (the role of social networks and web technology).

Journalists, scholars, academics, researchers and various experts have extensively written on the developments and the events that take place in the framework of the 2011 Arab Revolution. They also attempt to explain the roots and causes of the events and recent developments. Such explanatory frameworks make use of a series of factors to try to comprehend what is going on in the region, why and what the future will be.

Characteristically, I can mention only some of them:

- In technological terms: the influence and role of technological development, market liberalization and capital and labour mobility, in other words the change in the formation of traditional productive forces has led to the emergence of new forms of social participation and consequently the inability of the traditional state structures to control information and its dissemination.
- In political terms: Decision – making mechanisms and political participation has been restricted to an almost exclusively certain political elite without any willingness from their part to disseminate political power to those who do not have the opportunity to participate, while institutional, participatory and democratic mechanisms have not been put in place or in function.
- In economic terms: huge inequalities in income distribution among the people have obliged the big part of the population to live under the poverty line. Economic elites have

- exploited in full natural and other resources without taking into consideration the majority of the populations.
- In social terms: political and economic elites have coincided with a specific ruling social class in the states concerned, thus marginalizing the rest of the people.

Analysis with emphasis on technology, economics, sociology and politics for sure provide certain explanatory frameworks in order to anticipate current events in the Arab world. What I argue in the paper is that the above mentioned explanatory frameworks are not adequate since they do not take into consideration the global political economy perspectives and dynamics, that is the network of political and economic relations that are currently formed in the global context.

I claim that we have to enrich the above frameworks and place them within the context of developments in global politics and economics. I argue that Arab revolutions should also be seen within the global context of the US-China relations, and the undeclared economic war among them, which might also involve other parts of the world such as Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Considering the analytical framework of Elaborated Realism as an appropriate approach to comprehend and assess developments in contemporary GPE, I will now see how this framework can be applied in the case of the Arab Revolution. Contemplating the Arab Revolution, as an outcome of a series of complexities in GPE I claim that the technological tools deployed cannot satisfactorily justify the spectrum and the dynamics of the series of events that took place.

Technological revolution has affected not only national states' economies but the nature of governance, social relations as well as the way war actions are realized. One of the purposes of the paper is to analyze and assess the way state policies and behavior in global political economy has been affected as a result of the use of information technologies and communications.

Technology may act as a variable and constructive element in a GPE feedback mechanism. However, national interest and security is a catalyst for the formation of National State behaviour.

More specifically, in the framework of the paper I assume the following:

- a) States use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a power factor and development variable to achieve and enhance political transparency, empowerment of people's democratic participation, more efficient provision of state services, reduction of the cost of state function and, ultimately, economic development.
- b) States use information technologies in the global context in order to merely achieve foreign policy objectives, that is to: enhance their role and presence in the global political economy (global e-marketing); be an active negotiations actor, participate in partnerships and cooperative schemes, achieve political and diplomatic objectives at local, regional and global level (e-diplomacy).

Finally, my main assumptions are as follows regarding the issue are the following:

- ICT should be seriously considered as a variable when assessing the spectrum and the dynamics of a series of developments, such as the ones that took place in the case of the Arab Revolution, but not overestimated.
- ICT should be considered as a tool to enhance existing social, economic and political dynamics via:
  - Transparency;
  - Diffusion of information;
  - Development of new Actors;
  - Mobilization of social, economic and political actors;
  - Sharing the message among the groups and the stakeholders.
- ICT should be considered as a means / tool to accomplice national state interests and further enhance GPE hierarchical power structure. Eventually, it should be considered as a dependent variable rather than an independent one, meaning that its role and impact should be considered for granted.

More precisely, the State National Interest (SNI) is the major catalyst in the interaction connection among a series of variables that form national state behavior, including ICT, Information, Innovation, Knowledge, Ideas, and the elements that constitute the global economics and politics. This interaction finally leads to the creation of a national system of political economy, within which national interest satisfaction is playing a major role. Eventually, although a series of variables hereby exist and should be taken into consideration when assessing actors' behavior, nevertheless, national security and national interest is the dominant figure in such an interaction.

In other words, in the case of the events of the 2011 Arab Revolution, the main elements of the framework of analysis as it is anticipated by the one of Elaborated Realism are the following:

- ICT is an important tool for enhancing the dynamics of the events in the field;
- ICT alone cannot justify the roots and causes of the events, neither can lead us to safe conclusions for similar developments in the future. ICT can be one among other tools deployed in order to achieve specific National State Interests at a given time and location.
- National State Interest is the main catalyst when addressing political, social and economic developments in the framework of a given National Political Economy system. ;
- National Political Economy system cannot be seen independently from the Global Political Economy framework as it is seen in the context of a GPE Feedback Mechanism. Such a Mechanism is anticipated within the context of an hierarchical GPE.

I will now proceed with certain conclusions, mainly reflecting the framework of analysis of Elaborated Realism and the related Feedback mechanism.

## 1. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to enrich existing analytical frameworks when assessing complex political social and political events, with similar to the 2011 Arab revolution. I conclude this paper by earmarking the following elements:

- Global Political Economy may provide the as a framework for the formation of national political economy systems and the dependant variable for major developments.
- Elaborated realism may offer us adequate analytical research tools in order to better comprehend today's reality as well as the roots and causes of a series of events taking place in contemporary GPE, including the 2011 Arab revolution.
- National Security and state interests remain the major catalyst of state behaviour formation.
- ICT is conceived as a tool to preserve and/or enhance hierarchical power structures in GPE, rather than the catalyst of events.
- US – China rivalry is the core axis in GPE and the framework to be applied when assessing developments in National Political Economy Systems. National State Interests are very much affected by the way the two main actors in GPE conceive their status in contemporary globalism politics and economics.

In the framework of the above I claim that the proposed framework of analysis of Elaborated Realism can be the appropriate tool for assessing thw global political and economic complexity. Fulfillment of state's national interest and sovereignty remain the main objectives of the nation state. In the meantime we cannot neglect a series of factors and variables which would otherwise be outside of a traditional realist approach. Among those the following are included:

- The growing importance of a series of the so-called "ecumenical" issues including the environment, the human rights, etc. Such issues are now seriously considered as being part of the global agenda and consultation for a as well as the decision making processes of the international community.
- The growing interdependence among economics and politics, the interior and the exterior. The Arab revolution cannot be assessed but only under the prim of this complex interdependence.
- The growing importance and impact of new technology, especially through the means of social networking such as facebook and twitter, on the formation of public opinion, public stances and perceptions. Message dissemination is now taking place faster, without obstacles in a globalised web. It is true that certain regimes try to put obstacles controlling electronic networks. The success of this attempt is questionable, as events have demonstrated.

The Feedback Mechanism of the Global Political economy is a new reality which cannot be neglected. National interest is the main catalyst for the formation of decisions and choices. Nevertheless, there is a plethora of parameters and variables which have been formulated in the new era of the global political economy. This plethora of new factors presupposes that the Feedback

Mechanism is not static and it presupposes its continuous supply with new data and the continuous redefinition of the content of those data. Otherwise, we face the danger of adopting one sided analytical approaches, thus making erroneous hypothesis and reaching erroneous conclusions.

I hope that the effort of attempting to enrich existing methodologies provide adequate room for further exploration and research work. I hope that scholars may find this approach interesting and will deepen its insights and analytical elements.

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