

Righteous indignation should not be underestimated

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Folha de S. Paulo, February 13, 2011

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Since their beginning, the revolutions that are now successful in Tunisia and in Egypt placed the United States and France in an “embarrassing situation”, whereas their intellectuals “became confused”. It is not difficult to understand the major countries' embarrassment. Although they advocate democracy, indignantly accuse nationalist leaders of countries that would not be democratic but that meet the minimal conditions for the definition of democracy, and do not hesitate in lending support to right-wing movements that try to overthrow them by force, despite all that they fully and openly support dictatorial and corrupt governments that, however, have a "friendly" attitude towards their short-term interests.

As for the “bewilderment” of their intellectuals, it was an article in the newspaper *Le Monde* (Feb. 6, 2011) that stressed it, referring to French right-wing intellectuals such as Bernard-Henri Lévy, for whom “the situation would be very complex”, or Olivier Mongin, who declares that “it is better to have a Ben Ali than a Bin Laden”. Basically, says the newspaper, “the Iranian revolution preys on everyone's mind”. And, therefore, in order to avoid the possibility of an Islamic and, thus, nationalist dictatorship, they support a corrupt and dependent dictatorship.

In the first place, there is no democratic or moral reason for this option. Why a corrupt and dependent dictatorship would be better for its people than an Islamic dictatorship? Second, there is no reason to address the problem of Tunisia or Egypt in those terms. The risk of an Islamic nationalist revolution will always exist, but this risk will only increase and become real if the rich countries insist on thinking in terms of those two radical alternatives, and, from then on, continue to opt for a corrupt and dependent dictatorship.

Egypt and Tunisia are no longer strictly poor countries, but, unlike countries such as Brazil or India, they have not yet achieved their capitalist revolution, they do not have a large entrepreneurial class, a diversified middle class, and a State that could defend national interests. This is what those countries need, this is what demand the young people who lead those two revolutions with the help of the Internet. They had access to education, but the dependent and ineffective administration of their economies does not promote the necessary economic development for them to have decent jobs and wages or to have an opportunity of becoming entrepreneurs.

Those goals conflict with the imperialist logic, which has always consisted in allying itself with the dependent elites and the corrupt governments of the colonies. But is this the best strategy? As for poor countries, I believe it still produces good outcomes. But the age of empires is coming to an end. Eastern European countries showed it in 1989; Middle East countries are expressing it in 2011. The present revolution is not as decisive as the former, because Middle East countries are less developed, and because Western empires are not as debilitated as the Soviet empire was. But it is a mistake to underestimate the righteous indignation and the determination of those populations to achieve national autonomy and democracy.