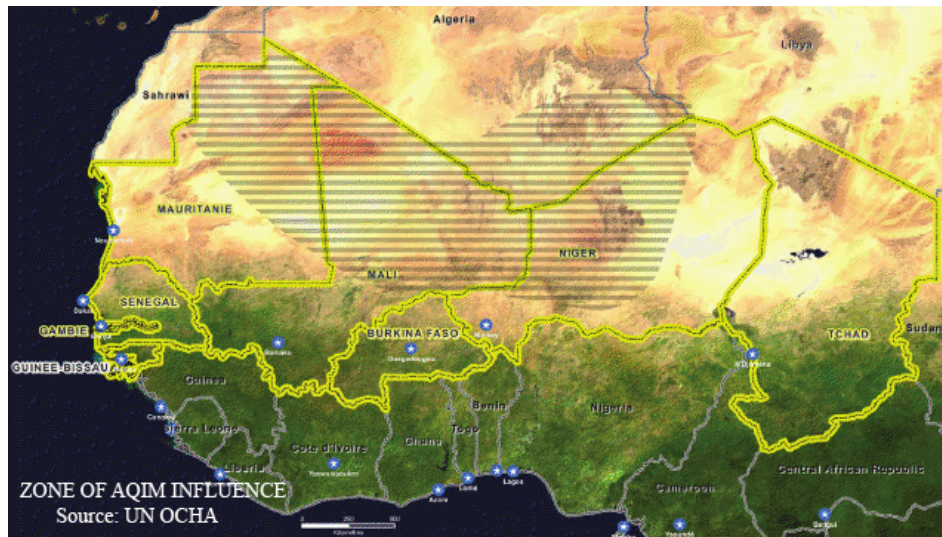


Conference Synopsis



Political Changes and Regional Security in North Africa and Sahel May 11th, 2011 Tokyo - Japan

Three outbreaks of threats: the opening of land borders between Algeria and Morocco, the control of illegal activities in the scope of Tindouf to avoid connections between some elements of the Polisario Front and the terrorist networks and cooperation in the fight against asymmetric threats in the Sahel-Saharan region

The International Conference on Political Changes and Regional Security in North Africa and Sahel was held on May 11, 2011 at Japan International House in Tokyo. It was organized by the International Research Group for Transregional & Emerging Area Studies (ITEAS), with the partnership of Japan Global Network, Sapporo Institute for International Solidarity, and The Afro-Asia Forum for Development and Human Security. Almost 100 people attended the conference among them experts, scholars, NGOs members, journalists, bureaucrats from high ranked levels, politicians, members of parliament, head of diplomatic missions and representative of several embassies in Tokyo, mainly from Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Bahrain, Jordan, Djibouti, Angola, Ethiopia, United States, France, and other countries.

The Chairman of this international seminar Professor Kataoka Sachihiko – president of GN21- has highlighted the importance of the topic of the Report released by ITEAS. He clearly stated that the changes that the world is experiencing request a new understanding, new political behavior, and new type of emotional interaction that may go along with the new world in born.

For Professor Kei Nakagawa - Dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences, specializing in political sociology of Maghreb at Haboromo university of International studies in Osaka and President of International Research Group study on transregional and emerging areas (ITEAS) - Tunisia's events were surprising by their sudden appearance as by their heavy hand on the overall politics. While the situations are not identical in the Arab world, the Egyptian and Tunisian scenarios do not necessarily recur in the same way, but the dynamics of protest wins the `whole Arab world, through specific modes of protest.

In this context and for the Algerian case, Prof. Nakagawa thinks that in such a country where all activists know that a slogan such as "the people want to overthrow the regime" will put them in direct confrontation with the army and its various bodies that control the political scene since the early 1990s. As for Yemen, the state endured a process of deconstruction since the beginning of the third millennium, making possible a reproduction scenario of Somalia. Therefore, any change initiative seems complicated and difficult as it necessarily involves the deconstruction of the state, not just the regime.

In Algeria, the center of decision making has not hesitated to give clear signals about its determination to carry out political reforms that might lead the country with a

one-party rule and a state of emergency to a more open and plural one so to avoid the kind of upheavals that have pulled down President Zine El Abidine and Hosni Mubarak. It is also a necessity imposed by the Geostrategic challenges of the new regional reality. The recent collapse of political regimes in Egypt and Tunisia have given impetus to the popular protest movements claiming the establishment of a liberal democratic system in Algeria, just as it was a strong signal to leaders in place to begin urgent reforms.

Despite this, the case of Algeria is experiencing barriers that block democratic change, namely the complex failure of the first genuine multiparty elections that led the access to power to be put in the hands of an ideologically hostile political force, prompting leaders of the FLN to oppose and to abort the experiment. This has transformed this project of openness to an upsurge of political violence which led to civil war.

In Jordan, the situation differs with the Hashemite monarchy, because monarchy played a vital role in the management of demographic balance between Jordanian citizens and citizens from Palestinian origins.

The same problem exists in Bahrain where the demographic balance between nationals and expatriates, between Shiites and Sunnis, and also the monarchical political system does not predispose the country revolution of the plan.

In the case of Morocco, the role of arbitration of the King seems crucial in restoring the consideration of the public opinion in case of uprising against the economic and social policies as well as government performance.

However, Prof. Nakagawa notes that despite these differences, we must not overlook the similarities between all Arab countries: the effects of economic globalization, the failure of development and poverty and unemployment, abandonment by the State of its responsibilities in the areas of health and education. Added to that the serious violations of human rights of citizens by security services in many countries under the pretext of fighting terrorism, and which has been the case for the past decade. Some countries have even entered a state of chronic emergency (Algeria, Libya and Syria).

In fact, it is necessary to think and reflect deeply concerning the serious impacts of the revolt on the future reconstruction of the state, as well as ways of avoiding its factors leading to its disintegration and prospects for reconstruction in cases of financial and administrative institutions, primarily those of the domestic and regional security, and finally the effects of this on the regional environment and opportunities for forecasting total or partial collapse in some countries

A review of developments that followed the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt indicates that the boiling of the Arab region will continue throughout the year, and that the second round of the political dynamics in the region will be deeper, starting this

summer season will be an anchor for political and constitutional achievements of the street.

The intervention of the international community through the imposition of a no-fly zone by the forces of the United States, France and Great Britain and the outbreak of raids on positions held by Qaddafi on March 19th, will have political and security related impacts on the whole region.

Professor Nakagawa considers that Morocco in the context of this momentum taking place today in the Arab world, as a country that was able to make more efforts than others in all areas and sectors, whether in political, economic or that of human rights. These achievements create a special immunity for this country, but yet it needs strong doses of reform to retain its effectiveness. Moroccan street has convictions that indicate a positive evaluation of reform efforts that the King of Morocco has made in the field of development and human rights.

However, protesters blame government in respect of policy performance in the country such as the slowing of reforms that is disproportionate to the social constraints, especially in terms of employment, health insurance, housing and education. Added to the above the negative evaluation of the institution of justice and demands for its reform.

In Morocco, a country where demonstrations and protests are usual - and this is a trait of countries with a democratic environment, people demand better living conditions, higher wages, the resolution of unemployment problem which was exacerbated by the consequences of the international economic crisis as well as the mishandling of this situation by the government in power. Thus, the motion of the movement of February 20th has found fertile ground to raise the bar of his claims and called for reforms that concern the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers, the strengthening of accountability and strengthening the role of the legislative institution. Barely a month after the birth of this movement, the Moroccan Sovereign Mohamed VI announced comprehensive reforms dated March 9, calling for the establishment of a new constitution that would reduce his powers to parliament, the dedication of individual freedoms and human rights, independence and total real justice against the executive, the selection of the first minister from the parliamentary majority elected, in addition to the delegation by Prime Minister his powers to his own government.

In addition to the establishment of mechanisms, the promotion of constitutional liberties, gender equality and recognition of Amazigh as a constitutional language alongside Arabic.

Among the most important proposed reforms in Morocco that will has it impact on a

regional scale, it is worth mentioning the regional system and the delegation of broad powers to the regions in managing state affairs.

Professor Nakagawa also stressed at the end of her presentation that the determining factors for political and security stability in North Africa are within these three below:

- Algerian-Moroccan relations (ie: the Moroccan-Algerian border and the dispute over Western Sahara)
- The future of the Libyan conflict (conflict over power and the Libyan border management)
- And the enlargement of the area of terrorist activity AQIM north and north-east of the Sahel, in particular after the death of Bin Laden.

The second speaker, Professor Rachid El Houdaigui— professor of international relations at the University of Tangier (Morocco) outlined the factors of human, border and regional insecurity that occur repeatedly in a broader geopolitical space from the Mediterranean to the Sahel through the Maghreb. The interaction between these factors, in this vast space, shows that the equation of economic integration and safety is facing three challenges: uncertainty, concern and conviction. Uncertainty is high when it comes to questioning the ability of states to ensure sustainable human security. Indeed, in the Maghreb, the lasting stability of states is impossible as far as human security is not guaranteed. The democratic deficit and the issue of human rights have always been a major obstacle to the emancipation of the Maghreb.

Professor Rachid El Houdaigui continued his development by expressing his concern about the rise of transnational threat and has identified four asymmetric threats as common factors of insecurity: terrorism, organized crime, irregular migration, restriction of freedom of movement. These threats are spatially localized through networks that flourish in three outbreaks: The Sahel-Saharan belt, the perimeter border Tindouf- Moroccan- Mauritania borders, the land border between Algeria and Morocco which is closed.

Finally, Mr. Rachid El Houdaigui has formulated the belief that confidence-building measures between Morocco and Algeria are to create favorable conditions for safe management overall. These two countries should engage in political dialogue to try to end their rivalry and release the Maghreb from the state of Strategic non-sense. The Sahara dispute is just a catalyst of this chronic rivalry. It is becoming an urgent step that these two countries should immediately initiate a number of confidence building measures focused at first stage towards the following three outbreaks of threats: the opening of land borders between Algeria and Morocco, the control of illegal activities in the scope of Tindouf to avoid connections between some elements of the Polisario

Front and the terrorist networks and cooperation in the fight against asymmetric threats in the Sahel-Sahara region.

Professor Shoji Matsumoto- International jurist and expert of African law at the faculty of law at the university of Sapporo Gakuin and president of the Sapporo Institute for International Solidarity- has focused in his presentation on the state of emergency and absolute human rights of personal liberty and non-discrimination provided in the ICCPR as criteria for analyzing changes and similarities in the political and security changing environment in the Area of North Africa.

Jasmine-type revolutions were launched under the state of emergency. Though even in a democratic State, natural or man-made catastrophic disasters may legitimize to restrict universal (rights of people) and relative human rights (property right, freedoms of expression, association, conscience etc.). Even in that case, personal liberty should not be invaded without fair and open trials.

However, several countries were experiencing state of emergency as a mode of governance, and among those countries, some have decided to lift state of emergency. But such a new act could be considered just only as an upturn to the standard state of the governance and not an add-value for people who fight for more freedom and rights. Examples could be found in the Algerian state of emergency that endured 19 years, while Syrian since 1963. Though the ICCPR admits to declare a state of emergency, it is premised on the existence of an emergent situation. When the situation is alleviated, it must be lifted, but in fact it was often continued. Any declaration of a state of emergency – stated the Japanese jurist- should incorporate a sunset clause, setting a time period. To existing declarations, time period should be added right now.

As for the commentator Dr. Rezrazi Elmostafa, a visiting professor of Strategic Studies and Crisis Management- at the faculty of law at Sapporo Gakuin university and president of the Afro-Asia forum for development & Human Security- , he has highlighted some epistemological aspects related to how academia and Media have reacted to the ongoing challenges in the Area of Middle East and the Sahel.

According to Rezrazi, Social Sciences have failed to admit that in this stage of changes, Social media and non-conventional communication tools (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, blogging) should be considered within the third generation of technological revolution. Young people have found in these new technological tools a psychological support to go beyond the conventional electronic tools of communication based on websites, newsgroups, and emails. And also, the new emerging aspect of connecting to cyber-space by wireless tools instead of cable's connection had made young people to feel that they do not depend to the terrestrial/ territorial control (i.e., the conventional

control of state over conventional / territorial scale). Similarly, the use of interactive communication (Facebook, twitter, blogging) instead of accessing to established websites give to the new cyber community the feeling that they are actors, a part of the story, since they contributed to the configuration and building of the information.

A second challenge facing social sciences is linked to the absence of a holistic view of what is happening around us in the world within a geostrategic mapping. There are several non-answered questions that have been limited to some skeptical thinking if not to conspiracy theories. Such questions might cover issues on the relationship between this political mobility and the current economic crisis, relationship between this mobility and the current leak Wiki leaks, relationship between mobility and the timing of the death of bin Laden which remains virtual, and finally the relationship between mobility and the current inability of nation-states, in the various areas of the world, to manage tensions that have created a climate of a third world war.

A third deficit remains in the conventional approach represented by sociology and political economy, which are unable to answer how the social category of “young people” could lead a revolution, despite of the fact that in Conventional political economy, “ Youth” are excluded from being an actor in the radical change. Active social actors who are able to produce a revolutionary change – in conventional theories of changes- are only those who are an integral part of the capital production channel (Bourgeoisie, Labor Forces, Peasants,,).).

In international relations and international law, deficit is also significant. Looking to some regional conflicts, such as the case of Western Sahara, disparities remain big between those who are still limited to the cold-war environment understanding, and those who have moved ahead for adapting international law principles to the new international, regional and local environment. The most significant items remain in the divergences between those who limited the meaning of self-determination to independence, even if such outcomes could contradict with the community concern, and between those who look at the self-determination as a large configuration equal to self-governing either in a frame of an autonomy, or independence, since independence is still a political engineered construction and not a legal one.

And finally, was what Dr Rezrazi mentioned alerting to be careful with the extent to which we can satisfy the emotions of the people in the streets on the expense of the state security. His theoretical arguments were based on setting the duty of the state to provide a secured environment for the safety of the people versus protecting people’s right. The state has the right to a legitimate violence within its competences to use enforcement law. And the people should have the whole guarantees to enjoy, defend,

and express these rights. But the obvious danger is when trying either to deprive the state to exercise its legitimate right to violence or when abusing such legitimate violence of the state to control or reduce the rights of people.