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**PROMOTING AND PRACTISING GOOD GOVERNANCE AS A MEANS OF ADVANCING
PEACE AND SECURITY: DRAWING LESSONS FROM RECENT EVENTS
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

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Introduction

2011 has seen profound changes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic – generally referred to as the "Arab Spring" – signal a new beginning in the regional order; they appear to reinstate the self-esteem and to some degree the "sense of community" of the Arab nations. The uprisings denounced dictatorships, as former subjects became citizens by standing up against moral, religious and institutional oppression.

During the course of these developments, the States themselves had a chance to redefine themselves in the new order. By establishing a truly democratic society, these States can serve as examples for the MENA region and the Arab world and gain unquestionable esteem.

It is widely argued that the adoption and implementation of the essential components of a democratic society are prerequisites for promoting and practising good governance. The prerequisites of a constitutional State are generally: a widely accepted and agreed constitution, from which stems a legal framework of institutions, practices and procedures; the organization of transparent, free and fair elections where political parties compete for political representation of the people; and a system of checks and balances. Ideally, these pre-conditions lead to the institutionalized consolidation of political power. Furthermore, it is considered that in order to advance peace and security through good governance, the political, economic and social institutions established within the above-mentioned framework, as well as all national resources, should be utilized to benefit the people and serve the national interest.

This report first looks at how good governance can serve as a means of advancing peace and security in society from a theoretical perspective. By exploring the background and causes of the uprisings in the MENA region, the report will attempt to draw valuable lessons from these events.

Good governance defined

Good governance is a broad concept generally used in development documentation to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realization of human rights in society. The term "governance" has been applied to describe the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented in a wide range of areas, hence we speak of corporate, international, national, or local governance.

In the political context, the concept of good governance often emerges as a model to compare inefficient and viable economic or political institutions or environments. Considering that in recent decades the governments deemed most "successful" have been those following the liberal democratic model of the West, these countries' institutions have often set the standards against which other States' institutions can be compared. Consequently, the model of good governance might not take account of historical, social, and cultural differences, thus yielding a simplistic comparative analysis. Or, as generally governments across the world believe, or claim they apply the concepts of good governance, cultural differences result in conflict with the standards set by the international community. Today, as we experience a relative decline of the West in political, economic and social terms, manifested by powerful popular criticism of its

established values and standards¹, subjective criteria of good governance established by western institutions should be viewed critically. Thus, it is argued that the concept of good governance should be home-grown, less clichéd and based on the interest of nations taking into consideration historical, social and cultural differences.

A number of international institutions have given their own definitions of good governance. However, all the definitions reflect on the fact that it refers to the process of how power is exercised. The World Bank defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources, by identifying three distinct aspects of governance: (i) form of political regime; (ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development; and (iii) a government's capacity to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge its functions.

Similarly, UNDP defines good governance as inter alia participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable and promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making on the allocation of development resources.

Furthermore, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that the concept of governance denotes the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. On the other hand, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) adopts the same approach to governance as the one used by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which identifies three key elements of governance as follows:

- Legitimacy of government (political systems);
- Accountability of political and official elements of government (public administration and financial systems); and
- Competence of governments to formulate policies and deliver services (public administration and economic systems, and organizational strengthening).

In view of the foregoing, good governance can be understood as responsive governance. Its features are:

- (i) Accountability and transparency;
- (ii) Capacity to manage development;
- (iii) Easy access to information;
- (iv) Broad popular participation in political, social and economic processes;
- (v) Fair and efficient system of justice;
- (vi) Efficient delivery system of services and goods;
- (vii) Enforcement of the rule of law; and
- (viii) Free and fair elections.

¹ The "Occupy Wall Street" protests across the USA, which have spread to Europe, as well as Europe-wide demonstrations against economic mismanagement and the lack of political accountability, culminating in social crises, all point to a critical flaw in the economic, political and social institutions of the West.

Therefore, governance has to do with the manner in which responsibility is discharged. Such responsibility may be acquired through election, by appointment or delegation in the public domain or in the area of corporate governance. In the same vein, good governance is taken to mean a condition whereby such responsibility is discharged in an effective, transparent, and accountable manner while poor governance is associated with maladministration in the discharge of responsibility. It entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions, i.e. political, judicial, administrative, economic, corporate and entrenched rules that promote development, protect human rights, respect the rule of law, and ensure that citizens are free to participate in, and be considered in decisions that affect their lives.

Good governance as a means of advancing peace and security

The idea of good governance, in all its facets, has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with the achievement of peace and security. It is argued that security in a general sense is premised on three factors: traditional security emerging from the effectiveness of the State; security of the people that comes from economic progress and good governance; and the rule of law. It is also argued that it is these three principles, working together, that truly determine peace and security. In other words, lack of good governance poses a threat to a country's peace and security.

Furthermore, security and good governance are indissociable since good governance helps prevent conflict and ensure peace. Subsequently, people who feel secure and free, governed by the rule of law and not by men, are much less likely to go to war with each other, either within or across borders, than those who do not.

Thus, improvements in good governance are closely linked to security and stability. If the goals of good government are the consolidation of political structures and the establishment of legitimate democratic institutions such as the promotion of constitutionality, power-sharing and human rights, a clear legal instrument which enables development of the private sector and the fight against corruption, achieving governance would no doubt engender peace.

It follows therefore that insecurity or lack of peace is the result of violence stemming from social or political instability. If there is a causal link between instability and violence, which adversely affects good governance, then it could also be argued that there is a reverse causality insofar as a lack of good governance engenders violence and thereby foments instability and insecurity. Suffice it to say therefore that good governance leads to good government and ultimately to stability and security, and vice versa.

On an international level, global partnership is required to attain the objectives of security. Initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit by 189 UN Member States contribute to global peace and security by promoting good governance. The Millennium Declaration called for the promotion of peace, security, human rights, the elimination of hunger, poverty, and the importance of and right to education in the context of sustainable growth. The Declaration highlights that peace and security are essential and integral to good governance both locally and globally.

Background of the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa

The uprisings in the MENA region, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, were triggered by protests in Tunisia on 18 December 2010, a day after Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against the corruption, brutality and ill-treatment of the police. The Tunisian Jasmine Revolution resulted in the toppling of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January 2011.

Shortly after the fall of President Ben Ali, a series of protests broke out in Cairo, Egypt, with protesters demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. He was overthrown on 11 February, ending his 30-year reign. These events in Tunisia and Egypt played a major role in the wave of uprisings sweeping across the MENA region, resulting in a series of revolts in Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.

In the case of Libya, the uprising against Muammar al-Gaddafi resulted in an outright civil war, with fierce and protracted battles between Gaddafi's forces controlling the western part of the country and the rebels dominating the East. The rebels established the Transitional National Council (TNC) in Benghazi, the rebel stronghold in the north-eastern part of Libya on 5 March, 2011. Given the successful NATO intervention, as well as UN Security Council resolution 1973 (2011), authorizing a full air blockade over Libya aimed at protecting civilians, by 22 August the Libyan rebels had invaded Tripoli and ousted Gaddafi, ending his 41 years of rule.

Causes of the uprisings

When examining the numerous and complex causes underlying the uprisings, it must be highlighted that on 17 December 2010, the single event that triggered the wave of revolts sweeping across the region was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian fruit and vegetable merchant, whose mobile cart was confiscated by the police because he did not have a vending permit. In Tunisia and Egypt, the primary cause of the uprising was the economic and social disaffection of the population, in particular the youth. Protesters initially demanded economic reform, more jobs and an end to corruption. The high numbers of young people among the unemployed is noteworthy, particularly in North Africa, where they represent close to 70 per cent of the total population². If one considers that out of a population of 83 million in Egypt the vast majority of people live on less than US\$ 4 a day - with approximately 20 million living on less than \$ 2 and another 20 million earning about \$ 2 – the frustration caused by the economic reforms³ introduced in response to the 2008-2009 financial crisis can be easily understood. It should, however, be noted that reforms aimed at opening up the North African economies in 2003 had already caused a lot of social tensions, and that the financial crisis only exacerbated the problem. Rising food prices⁴ throughout the world only added to people's distress.

A unique feature of the uprisings was the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs). They played a considerable part in allowing the disillusioned and economically deprived youth and a suppressed civil society to organize protests and disseminate information quickly, widely and efficiently. ICTs played a significant role in addressing local and national issues, thus bypassing heavily censored conventional media. Furthermore, many of the internet-savvy youth of these countries have studied in the West, where autocrats and absolute

² For example, in Algeria, 90% of unemployed persons are under 35 years old, while in Egypt, 87% of unemployed persons are aged between 15 and 29.

³ Economic reforms included the reduction of State subsidies on essential supplies such as petrol, electricity and bread.

⁴ Based on data provided by the World Food Programme, between 2003 and 2011, the price of meat rose by 70%, the price of milk increased 2.3-fold, of grain 2.5-fold, of oil and grease 2.8-fold, and of sugar 4.2-fold.

monarchies are considered to be anachronisms. These western-educated students have experienced the benefits of a democratic system and society and can compare it with realities at home. Therefore, the desire of the youth for a change of the dictatorial regime and the establishment of a democratic system was manifest in the uprisings.

Some analysts point out that the countries in question – apart from Yemen – are not among the poorest in the world. Hence, the political elite would have been able to stop or at least slow down the impoverishment of the masses by distributing national wealth more equitably, even in spite of the population explosion in these countries. This point is demonstrated best by the steps taken by the more prosperous States in the region, triggered by the events in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. For instance, the Emir of Kuwait announced that each Kuwaiti citizen would be given US\$ 3,599 until March 2012 and free basic foodstuffs would be distributed. Similarly, the Saudi King announced that he would allocate US\$ 35 billion from the kingdom's reserves to welfare expenditure. Gaddafi, prior to his demise, also resorted to handouts.

Apart from social and economic demands, there were also political motives underlying the popular revolts and uprisings. Protesters demanded primarily an end to authoritarian regimes and the resignation of long-serving leaders. They also demanded free and fair elections and the elimination of censorship and barriers to the exercise of human rights. It must be noted that although elections had been held in Egypt in November 2010, the vast majority of people were already greatly dissatisfied with the results, in part due to allegedly rigged elections, and to the unjust electoral law. Hence, political demands were very pronounced from the very outset of the Egyptian uprising. In Libya, however, due to complex tribal relations, and a largely unstructured political system, the political demands of Gaddafi's opponents were more vague and less well-articulated. Bahrain constitutes a separate and very unique case. The protests there focus on historical divisions that beg the question of how Bahrain's Shiite majority has been ruled by a Sunni minority and royal family for decades.

Several countries in the MENA region tried to avert popular revolts through political manoeuvring. Following the events in Tunisia and Egypt, the President of Yemen – in power for 30 years – announced on 2 February that neither he nor his son would be running for re-election in 2013. On 22 February, the Algerian Government lifted the state of emergency introduced in 1992; in February, the King of Jordan introduced a number of reforms; and on 10 March, the King of Morocco introduced sweeping constitutional reforms. These are just a few of the pre-emptive political manoeuvres that were used in the region.

Another cause of the uprisings in the MENA region has to do with the geopolitical or geostrategic position of the countries involved. Although this is an indirect causality, it is important to note that a common characteristic of the uprisings was a degree of anti-western sentiment. Some analysts argue that the cause of this lies in the uncritical support of the West for authoritarian regimes of the region, which brutally suppressed their own people, while willingly serving western interests.

The Tunisian Jasmine Revolution took place in a country that played a strategic role from the perspective of the European Union (EU). Tunisia was considered by the EU as part of a buffer-zone at a time when radical Islam was spreading. This role, as well as economic cooperation, secured Ben Ali's position, and in return, the EU turned a blind eye on the lack of democracy in Tunisia. Apart from its oil reserves, Libya played a similar role, and helped the EU – in particular Italy – curb the influx of African immigrants. However, neither Tunisia nor Libya – unlike Egypt – has ever had a role of strategic importance from the perspective of the USA or the security of Israel.

For the past three decades, the international community has viewed Egypt under Mubarak as an ally of the USA, having signed the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. The strategic importance of Egypt can be demonstrated by the volume of foreign aid Egypt received from the USA. Between 2001 and 2010, the USA allocated more than one third of all its foreign aid to Egypt and Israel. In 2010 alone, Egypt received more than US\$ 1.5 billion in aid from Washington, \$ 1.3 billion of which was military aid.

The Mubarak regime cooperated with Israel for years, even sharing information gathered by its secret service to keep Hamas under control and preserve the peace between the two countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is crucial for both Washington and Tel Aviv to have a pro-western government in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era. The question is whether free and fair elections in Egypt later this year will uphold Egypt's pro-western and pro-Israeli stance. The strategic importance of the Sinai Peninsula, the issue of Palestine and the Palestinians, and the security of transport across the Suez Canal are all strategic issues on which the forthcoming Egyptian elections will deeply impact.

Apart from the above-mentioned causes of the popular revolts, many analysts point to the consequences of post-colonialism. It is argued that during the decolonization era, colonial powers established artificial entities by creating boundaries with little or no regard for ethnic, religious or tribal considerations, hence perpetuating the western system of divide and rule over the Arab people, and pitting clashing cultures against each other. As many of these countries are rich in natural resources, the creation and backing of servile, corrupt and "cooperative" dictatorial regimes served to extend the West's grip over Arab countries.

Lessons drawn from the events

The foregoing describes in detail how economic impoverishment, unemployment and corruption triggered a largely socio-economically motivated uprising in the region. Data and the reactions of rulers in the region give an indication of the enormous social inequalities that exist in these societies. The final outcome of the changes the MENA region is currently experiencing will greatly depend on whether the new governments can radically change the poor system of redistribution of wealth and opportunities within their societies, which have led to severe tensions in society that eventually exploded. A new system of distribution and higher employment are crucial in order to achieve a more equitable allocation of national wealth and resources. This should be the single most important move in tackling everyday problems of poverty, corruption, and access to health care and education, as such difficulties lead to scepticism and loss of faith democratic institutions and democracy itself. This, however, is a process that could last many years and therefore it is crucial to ensure a broad understanding of the very concept of democratization, even without a clear solution to several socio-economic problems.

There should be no doubt that this process of democratic nation- and institution-building will take time. The experience of Central and Eastern European countries – a region, which, like much of the Arab world, has had little or no previous democratic experience – has shown that the building of democracy is a time-consuming process, particularly considering that power relations in society are in flux. In this respect, continued investment in political reform is critical. Deep-rooted and extensive changes are required to constitutions, electoral systems, laws, regulations and processes related to political parties, the judicial system, the media, the involvement of civil society, the establishment of independent government watchdogs, trade unions, and last but not least, a change in mentality, including a paradigm shift regarding the place of women in the region's political life.

Consequently, the main lessons of the Arab Spring are the urgent need to improve economic conditions and living standards and the need to introduce democratic reforms that are inclusive, i.e. based on the will of the people, expressed through regular, free and fair elections. A democratic system should respect human rights and be premised on the rule of law. A democratic system is best suited to uphold freedom of expression, equal opportunities for all and equal treatment for all sectors of society.

An additional lesson of the popular uprisings is that regional peace and security cannot be sustained in the long run by regimes that do not serve their own peoples' and nations' interests, and which seek external assistance to retain power. In a resolution adopted unanimously by the 124th IPU Assembly in Panama on 20 April 2011, the IPU affirmed "the rights of people and countries to determine their own political future" and recalled "that democracies should reflect a diversity of histories and cultures". This should serve as a lesson for all proponents of democracy: that it is always the people who have the right to determine their own political future based on the indigenous, cultural and historical characteristics of the nation. Western powers should remember this when they attempt to influence the outcome of elections in the region.

Conclusion

For decades, the MENA region has been characterized by authoritarian regimes, which took the form of dictatorships, monarchies or religious republics. The protracted reign of these regimes deprived their people of political participation, and suppressed all opinion and thought that was deemed to be opposition to the incumbent ruler. Various causes explored in this paper have now given full rein to the opinions and thoughts of the suppressed people. This shows that authoritarian suppression cannot be used endlessly to provide peace and security for the people. It is only through good governance – defined locally and taking into account specific cultural, historical and social peculiarities and differences in societies – that peace and security can be achieved in society.