



**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**

Promoting and practising good governance entails implementing the elements that are widely considered to be essential to a truly democratic society. These include a solid legal framework of institutions and procedures (most commonly set forth in a well-drafted constitution), upholding the constitution, organizing free and fair elections and respecting their results and institutionalized consolidation of political power. Another fundamental principle of democracy is the existence of checks and balances. Further, it is argued that if good governance leads to the proper utilization of resources and the State institutions for the benefit of citizens, this would result in stability and, consequently, national security.

This paper looks at how good governance can be used as a means of advancing peace and security. This will be done by drawing lessons from the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa. In laying the groundwork for drawing valuable lessons from the recent events in this region, the paper first defines good governance and its elements and outlines what often leads to poor governance, with its offshoots of uprisings and instability.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE**

It is worth noting that 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) the 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) the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge functions.

Similarly, UNDP defines good governance as among other things, 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 over 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 Department for International Development (DFID) adopts the same approach to governance as that provided 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 hallmarks 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.

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, but also 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 suggested 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.

## **CAUSES OF THE UPRISING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

The series of protests and demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa have become known as the "Arab Spring", although not all the protesters identify themselves as Arabs. It was sparked by the first protests that occurred in Tunisia on 18 December 2010, following Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in protest of police corruption and ill-treatment. With the success of the protests in Tunisia, a wave of unrest spread to other countries such as Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

As of May 2011, demonstrations had resulted in two heads of State being overthrown: first Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who fled to Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who resigned on 11 February 2011, after 18 days of massive protests, thus ending his 30-year presidency. During this period of regional unrest, several leaders announced their intentions to step down at the end of their terms of office. For example, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir announced that he would not seek re-election in 2015, as did Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, whose term ends in 2014, although there have been increasing violent demonstrations demanding his immediate resignation. Protests in Jordan have also led to the resignation of the government, resulting in former prime minister and Ambassador to Israel Marouf al-Bakhit being appointed Prime Minister by King Abdullah and tasked with forming a new government. Another leader, President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, announced on 23 April that he would step down within 30 days in exchange for immunity, a deal the Yemeni opposition informally accepted on 26 April, 2011. However, Saleh later reneged on the deal, prolonging the Yemeni uprising. Libyan leader Muammar

Gaddafi has, on the other hand, refused to step down, causing a civil war between his loyalists and rebels.

## **CAUSES**

Numerous factors have led to the protests in question, including the 2009 Iranian protests. They include dictatorship or absolute monarchy, human rights violations, government corruption (demonstrated by Wikileaks diplomatic cables), economic decline, unemployment, corruption, extreme poverty, and a number of demographic structural factors, such as a large percentage of educated but disenfranchised youth. The catalysts for the revolts in the North African and Persian Gulf countries were: the concentration of wealth in the hands of autocrats in power for decades, lack of transparency of its redistribution, corruption, and in particular, the refusal of the youth to accept the status quo. Rising food prices and famine have also been significant factors, as they involve threats to food security worldwide. The tension between growing aspirations and lack of government reform may also have been a contributing factor to these protests. In addition, many of the Internet-savvy youth of these countries have studied in the West, where autocrats and absolute monarchies are considered anachronisms.

In view of the foregoing, the mixed messages concerning some conflicts make the future of the countries concerned uncertain. Civil war is how some commentators have already started to describe the conflict, which would imply a long, drawn-out conflict, and not the quick fix that the West had hoped for.

Some of the protests focus on historical divisions such as how Bahrain's Shiite majority has been ruled by a Sunni minority and royal family for decades. All these local, regional and global issues have combined in various and potent ways, particularly in the hands of the large population of unemployed but well-educated youth, to erupt into the protests that are being witnessed. Another cause is the fact that some of the Arab countries are artificial entities: boundaries created by colonial powers to divide and conquer the Arab people, thus pitting clashing sub-cultures against each other. For example, the Sunnis and Shiites held together or dominated by an authoritarian power find their forced umbilical cords unravelling in some nations.

## **LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

The ongoing revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East have provided important lessons for all countries on democracy and freedom. The major lessons that have been drawn from the Arab Spring are the need for democratic reform and for governments to provide basic employment opportunities to citizens.

The events have also shown that people everywhere need democratic government based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections. People need democracies that have their foundations in respect for human rights and the rule of law. This is because democracy is the best safeguard of freedom of expression, tolerance of all groups of society, and equal opportunity for all.

Furthermore, and based on the experiences of other regions, it is clear that building democracy in the Arab region will take time. The process of democratization is often a very long one since it is about changing power relations in society. Consequently, to attain democracy, the changes required are extensive and deep-rooted in constitutions, electoral systems, laws and regulations related to political parties, the media, the justice system, and not least, people's minds, including a paradigm shift regarding the place of women in the region's political life.

In this respect, continued investment in political reform is critical. In the Middle Eastern nations with little history of democratic politics, and where for decades political losers fled the country or ended up in jail, it is not hard to imagine that the first generation of elected leaders will use their electoral victories to crush all opposition to democratization. Nevertheless, if a populist leader such as Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, the former prime minister of Thailand, wins initial elections in a country such as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco or Jordan, where large under-classes or repressed ethnic or religious groups are gaining freedom, it could easily trigger a backlash from middle class and elite, which would turn to their traditional protectors: the army, the security forces, and the palace, to crush genuine democratic rule.

To prevent good governance from suffering a fate such as Thailand's, several critical steps should be taken in the region, including but not limited to independent government watchdogs, press freedom and critical trade unions. In addition, they must resist the tendency to personalize reform, i.e. focus all their hopes for change on one leader, as some Thais had put all their hope in the former prime minister. When the public places so much hope in one potential reformer, his or her failings become magnified, often leading to disillusionment with democracy itself. It follows therefore that in order to advance peace and security, it is necessary to ensure that the tenets of democracy are fully implemented.

Finally, new leaders in the Middle East will have to enact policies that help reduce economic inequality as democracy is not merely about fulfilling the theoretical conditions for freedom, but about freedom in everyday life. There is an urgent need to tackle everyday problems, such as poverty, lack of access to health services and corruption, as such problems only reinforce people's perception that democracy has not improved their livelihood. It is thus crucial for policymakers to tackle these challenges in order to restore faith in the institutions and in democracy. 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 socioeconomic problems.

## **THE ZAMBIAN SITUATION**

In Zambia, steps have been taken to contribute to building an effectively managed and accountable apparatus of government. The Government of the Republic of Zambia has developed a national long-term vision aimed at elevating the country's status to that of a middle-income country. The vision outlines development targets up to the year 2030, and serves as the basis of the Sixth National Development Plan, which will guide the budgeting process of the Government from 2011 to 2015. These development plans are aimed at tackling the high incidence of poverty among the citizens.

In the area of democratic governance, Zambia is implementing a wide-ranging governance programme, which aims to support and improve national policy-making and implementation. This is done through bringing government policies closer to local communities and supporting better policy formulation and practice in line with government priorities. With

the support of cooperating partners, the Government of the Republic of Zambia is implementing measures aimed at strengthening the electoral process in Zambia, by supporting capacity-development of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), national institutions and civil society organizations in organizing and managing the electoral process. Overall, improvements are foreseen in the following areas:

- (i) Institutional capacity development of the ECZ;
- (ii) Implementation of a continuous voter registration;
- (iii) The civil registry;
- (iv) Review of the legislative framework;
- (v) The participation of women in electoral processes;
- (vi) Effective media monitoring mechanisms;
- (vii) Civic, voter education and domestic observation programmes; and
- (viii) Inter-party dialogue.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Middle East and the North African uprisings have been characterized by authoritarian regimes ranging from absolute monarchies and dictatorships to religious republics. In this region, decades of authoritarian rule have managed to suppress thought and opinion, which have now come to the surface due to the various causes highlighted in this paper. It is clear from the events in this region that repression cannot be used indefinitely to advance and guarantee peace and security in any country. What can advance peace and security is the promotion and practice of good governance, while at the same time ensuring that poverty in all its forms is tackled.