ARTICLE

Political Change in the Middle East: First Consolidated Reflections and Challenges Ahead

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Abstract

Years after the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa and the democratic reform in Indonesia, the Middle East and North Africa are beginning to change politically. The current popular uprisings sweeping across the region began in Tunisia in December 2010 and in Egypt on 25 January 2011. These uprisings are not the product of foreign interventions or a side-effect of non-domestic agendas. Rather, they are concerned with young men and women who are determined to take their future into their own hands. The younger generation wants their freedom, human rights, and dignity back, and they want to be politically represented in the governance of their countries. As they call for and usher in change and reform, they have brought a renewed vitality and insistence on democracy in many states across the region. They have also raised valuable lessons to be learned, both positively and negatively. These lessons need to be underlined and access to that knowledge should be available for the new emerging actors on the political stage in the region.
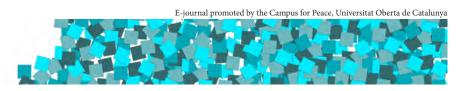
INTRODUCTION

The democratic political changes in Tunisia and Egypt took the world by surprise. Even more perplexed were the members of the ruling authoritarian regimes, who neither expected nor wanted the defiance of their youth. Yet it is with this younger generation that imminent democratic changes will materialise. A new wave of democratisation in the Middle East and North Africa has been brought about by a technological revolution.

In this technological revolution there is not only a battle being waged by young people calling for democratic change, but also between traditional and new technological information channels. In the past, people relied on traditional media and other forms to access information regarding events in their country, region and internationally. Though many events made the front page in the traditional media outlets, many others were neglected.

The growing capacity of modern media to spread information, increasing awareness and activating political action, has certainly exceeded that of totalitarian regimes. From non-state actors to individuals around the world, governments can no longer shut off internet connections or block access to other individuals sitting on their living room couch anywhere in the continent. Together they are able to spread the news on events and what is taking place on the ground. They are able to do so instantaneously. There is a new reality for citizens living in the Middle East and North Africa and those that have been ruling for decades. None are impervious to the regional and international trends sweeping the world today.

Consolidated reflections from a regional perspective are necessary on the causal factors of the uprisings and on the way forward for the Middle East and North Africa. This research examines the regional context of the popular uprising using reliable and credible information. It examines the rationale for the changes and the causes behind the uprisings. The importance of democracy building and its applicability in the Middle East and North Africa in the wake of the uprising is identified. Attention is drawn to the uprising as a challenge to the United States policy in the region and the reaction of the US as a unipolar political player. Finally, the political implications of the uprisings, their collision with Western interests, and the future relationship between the United States and the emerging leaders in the region are examined.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT OF THE UPRISING

After a long period of deep frustration, the young, unemployed Tunisian, Mohammed Bou-Azizi, set himself on fire. This resulted in an instability that continues to reverberate throughout North Africa and the Middle East. On 17 December 2010, municipal inspectors prohibited Mohammed Bou-Azizi selling vegetables to make a living. He set himself on fire to demonstrate his desperation and was severely burnt and died two weeks later. Reports of his death were available on the Internet causing a series of demonstrations, and catching nearly everybody outside Tunisia by surprise (Rogers, Jan. 2011). The government's irresponsiveness and harsh posture against the demonstrators caused events to snowball. This uprising is a result of decades of oppression in which President Zain Al-Abidine Ben Ali's authoritarian policy stripped Tunisians of their dignity by banning opposition and rejecting religious freedom. Sustained inactivity on economic policies led to catastrophic unemployment rates, and corruption and nepotism resulted in instability (Tatari, 2011).

The powerful public protests culminated in the capital, Tunis, over the weekend of 8-9 January and led to the fall of the Ben Ali government, a repressive regime that had been in power for 23 years. The regime was ousted as a result of the widespread uprising that saw thousands of Tunisians take to the streets. A provisional administration in Tunisia, supported by the army, pledged to hold elections within six months. In the beginning, the administration had several members from the former regime and while some of them afterward stood down, opposition to the inclusion of any previous government ministers continued. Important decisions by the interim government included the discharge of many political prisoners, some of whom had been im-

prisoned for many years, and a readiness to guarantee some key exiled political leaders a safe return to Tunisia, particularly Mr Rashid Al-Ghannouchi, the leader of the banned Islamist party, Al-Nahda (Rogers, Jan. 2011).

From the beginning of the uprising in Tunisia, in mid-December 2010, it was clear that its roots were in profound social and economic trends along with more pressing political circumstances (Rogers, 2011). It functioned as the trigger for the successive uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, igniting the fire which turned deep feelings into action (Zohar, 2011).

Following the extraordinarily rapid change in Tunisia, demonstrations and self-immolations spread to several cities in Egypt, predominantly Cairo (Rogers, Jan. 2011). The brutal actions of the local police trying to crack down on the demonstrators, using excessive force, produced contradictory results. President Mubarak's address to the people on 29 January 2011, largely repeating slogans from the past, was not likely to be as an assurance for real change, and only triggered more protests in Egypt. Moreover, the reality of an army refraining from effectively imposing the curfew and not acting to suppress the protest encouraged the protestors to carry on and increase their activities (Zohar, 2011).

The Egyptian regime's late and half-hearted response to the protesters was further discredited by its forces violence against peaceful demonstrations. Its reaction to the demands intensified the protests, and ensured that activities would continue to have varying overflow effects across the region (Helgesen, 2011). A remarkable feature is the crossover effect, whereby protests in one country inspire those of another. As a result, ruling elites across North Africa and the Middle East were watching the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt with concern and apprehension. There were already some indications that the uprising in Tunisia emboldened opposition elsewhere in the region (Rogers, 2011).

From Tunisia, to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain, the revolution that was triggered by the self-immolation and desperation of a street seller in Tunisia has erupted across the region. This is in fact a regional revolution of the Arab people (The Socialist, 2011). Turkish Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu, said "What we are facing is a political tsunami and we should react to it as such. The sense of common destiny is everywhere, and no one can ignore it" (Alibeyoglu, 2011).

The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt stem from unprecedented generational change unfolding simultaneously with the current media revolution (Alibeyoglu, 2011). Arab dictatorial regimes are now being traumatised and are anticipating their decline. They have been giving Western society misleading notions of the peoples of the Arab world. For decades, these regimes have used the risk of Islamist fundamentalism to manipulate their Western allies to sup-

port them against those extremists. Under this concept, the West decided to back such evil Arab regimes against the protests of their people. The long-marginalised Arab citizens have now exposed the insincerity of this claim, and in ways that have surprised almost everybody (Hroub, 2011).

The wider impact of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings on other regimes throughout the region has particularly worried leaders because of the intense media coverage on regional news channels, especially Al Jazeera. Yet, in a number of states there is a concern that a replication of the Tunisian changes is far from certain. The leaders of wealthy western Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Emirates, have significant concerns, but their economies are largely buoyant, supported by the recent high prices for oil and gas. "In the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is the exception with a large and economically marginalised population, declining oil revenues and deep internal divisions" (Rogers, Jan. 2011). At the ends of the region are Jordan and Morocco, which are regarded as states with social environments that could develop into strongholds for opposition, similar to Tunisia. Rogers (Jan. 2011) said: "Both, though, are monarchies in which a significant part of the population holds the monarch in high regard. Morocco, in particular, is a state in which the King embraces the values of Islam in a very marked and public manner. In both cases, there is scope for rapid change, but in the context of the restraining influence of monarchist support."

The country with the highest potential, by far, for rapid change was Egypt, where a dictatorial regime backed by meticulous public order control was supported by several million citizens and police officers, while approximately 70 million people were marginalised, many of them impoverished. With such a majority of citizens on the margins, more well-off citizens were inclined to support the regime not least because of fear of disorder and violence. The protests which started on 25 January were the biggest for several years. The authorities began to clamp down by cutting off the Internet and arresting hundreds of demonstrators, with violent clashes extensively covered by the media. For the first time in many years, the Egyptian political elites have opposition figures of some significance, such as the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr Mohammed Elbaradei who returned to Cairo on 27 January to join the young people in their protests (Rogers, Jan. 2011).

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

The transformation is a political and social necessity, and no one should try to oppose the changes sweeping the region. The triggers of the uprisings include social tension and mass unemployment among young people, although the actual causes are more profound, and political. This ultimately meant that the types of top-down measures presented by President Mubarak at the peak of the protests, i.e. a cabinet reshuffle, concessions on food prices and public-sector salaries, the appointment of a vice-president, did not reduce power of the uprising (Helgesen, 2011). As Mikail (2011) said "these protests have two main causes: one political, the other socioeconomic. If the demonstrators had been in a better economic position, they would not have protested against their authoritarian leaders. When populations are hungry, unemployed, and can see nothing on the political horizon that gives them hope that change is possible, there is going to be some kind of eruption, and that is exactly what is happening in the Middle East."

The harsh realities of hunger, unemployment and oppression created the ideal conditions for revolution in the region, galvanising the antagonism of millions, inducing uprisings and demonstrations in the region and bringing down long-standing repressive regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The instability continues to grow as events underway in other countries call for greater representation and democratic reform.

Arabs have finally had enough of their dictators. It took decades to get to this point. In this regard, Hroub (2011) identifies six factors underlying the rationale for the Arab revolutions:

First, most Arab states have been transformed into corrupt family businesses, encompassed by small opportunist elites, all protected by relentless security apparatuses supported by indifferent Western governments. The corruption and malfunctioning extend to all aspects of social, political and economic life. The people are no longer willing to put up with humiliation. They have declared an uprising against their rulers to create viable political and economic systems.

Second, the uprisings expose the rulers' frequent claim that the only possible alternative to them is an Islamist takeover. There is a lot of evidence that the young leaders of the uprisings are a third option and the way forward. In Tunisia and Egypt, the leading force of the uprisings is a generation of well-informed young citizens whose courageous activities have had an impact on all levels of society in a process that avoided the traditional and unsuccessful opposition parties. They have succeeded in mobilising many of the silent majority, emphasising the fact that most Arabs have had enough of the status quo.

Third, the change brought about by these uprisings is not the work of influential leaders, a military coup d'état or foreign intervention. It is stimulated and directed by the young people as legitimate players for change and by Arab people whose destiny is ultimately in their own hands. The new age will be influenced by the young people.

Fourth, this extensive Arab protest is essentially political. The demands for jobs or improved living condi-

tions may be the triggers, but while they are significant, political ambitions have quickly taken the lead. In Tunisia, the principal slogan was: "We live with only water and bread, but without Ben Ali". People were not hiding behind unpretentious and temporary demands, but wanted to change the entire political system, dramatically and uncompromisingly.

Fifth, the ruling influential figures, and their foreign backers, relying on armed security forces for their stability, is no longer an option. This situation may have endured for a long time, but current uprisings demonstrate that it does not work in the long run. The inconsiderate Western strategy of buying stability while turning a blind eye to authoritarianism exposes the emptiness of its democratic principles.

Sixth, the waves of protest throughout the Arab states reached social media such as Facebook and Twitter and so became evident on the street and subsequently broadcast by satellite and international TV channels This made it difficult for security and intelligence services to suppress such 'electronic civil-resistance movements'. "In face of massive unarmed determination, and under the world's vigilant scrutiny, these security apparatuses and the regimes they protect are unmasked as paper tigers" (Hroub, 2011).

The change in Tunisia has highlighted the fact that the opposition to Ben Ali's regime came not from a strong religious foundation, but rather from a broad opposition, encouraged partly by unemployment, inflation in general and high food prices in particular. Moreover, there was support throughout the country for an Islamic point of reference in politics. This is relevant to the development of the al-Nahda party, which was founded in 1981 by Rashid Al-Ghannouchi and achieved considerable recognition in the 1980s. In 1989, al-Nahda party won about 20% of the vote, but the election was substantially fixed in favour of President Ben Ali, so it is likely that the real support for al-Nahda was considerably higher. From 1990 onwards, the Ben Ali regime started a forceful campaign to destroy the party, imprisoning many thousands of its members. Mr Al-Ghannouchi went into exile and was sentenced in his absence (Rogers, Jan. 2011).

However, al-Nahda's perspective and willingness to work in a pluralist international atmosphere is not the same as accepting what is seen across the region as foreign military occupation and foreign pressure over ruling elites. Rogers (Jan. 2011) said "such external control is widely opposed with vigour, but that does not equate with opposition to ongoing political, economic and cultural contact. This may be the view within many elements of a party such as al-Nahda, but it is not shared in more conservative circles in Washington or some Western European capitals, and certainly not in Israel."

In contrast, in Egypt, the US foreign aid and its policy has been claimed as an investment in regional stability, based largely on long-running military cooperation to sustain the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Consecutive US Administrations have viewed the regime in Egypt as a moderate power in the region. At the same time, there have been increasing US demands for Egypt to adopt democracy. Recently, congressional views of US-Egyptian relations have varied. Many officials have viewed Egypt as a stabilising regional power, but some have argued for the United States to demand that Egypt's government apply political reforms, improve human rights, and take a more dynamic role in reducing Arab-Israeli tensions. These concerns, adding to economic disappointment, led to the public instability in Egypt. The US Administration called on the Egyptian government to respect basic human rights of protestors and expressed concerns about violence, while calling for a transition toward democratic governance to begin directly (Sharp, 2011). Nonetheless, the complex social structure causes feelings of aggravation and disaffection. In Egypt, there is an enormous gap between the rich minority and the poor majority. Yet, there is a general awareness that there was no anticipation for change with the previous social institutions in Egypt (Zohar, 2011).

Prior to this uprising, Egyptian politicians were prepared to consider the possibility of a leadership transition in the foreseeable future, as political and economic anxiety rose throughout 2010. In late 2010, the ruling National Democratic Party won over 90% of all seats in the parliamentary elections (slightly less than 80% in the previous mandate). The US Administration was criticised for restraining its public criticism of the Egyptian regime before and after the election. In addition to its democracy assistance funding, which was largely ineffective, US aid should have sought to improve the lives of common Egyptians. At least, the aid should have been conditioned on reforms for human rights and religious freedom (Sharp, 2011).

The popular protests in Egypt are a typical case of collective behaviour, a concept from political sociology: many people acting spontaneously, challenging the social order. Such collective behaviour brings various phenomena with it, some of which were apparent in Egypt: demonstrations, looting, clashes, etc. Protestors were essentially encouraged by an urgent and defined principle, which was to make the President step down, make the regime more democratic and improve the country's economic conditions. Given that, the crowd was influenced by a profound sense of marginalisation caused by the regime, and was extremely emotional. Thus, violence, looting and riots, took place. The oppression of the regime and the widespread corruption in Egypt formed the narrative that brought the protesters together. Egypt had been under a corrupt and dictatorial ruler for 29 years. The intention was to end Mubarak's regime and form a new political system that would be more accountable and receptive to people's aspirations (Zohar, 2011).

THE UPRISING AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE US

The protests in Egypt were particularly painful for the United States, a key ally. The US administration's early reaction was expressed by secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, who requested President Hosni Mubarak, a "friend of the US", to step down. Thus, the solid networks of arms sales, military-training agreements and diplomatic complicity that linked the US to Mubarak's regime, and the Egyptian army, were brought to an end (Hodgson, 2011). On 11 February 2011, President Mubarak resigned after 29 years in power. For 18 days, a popular peaceful uprising spread throughout Egypt and eventually forced Mubarak to concede power to the military (Sharp, 2011).

Egypt's transition to a democratic system in the months ahead will have foremost implications for US foreign policy in the Middle East and for other states in the region ruled by monarchs and dictators. US policy makers are currently struggling with the complex matter of future US-Egypt relations, and these deliberations are expected to sway consideration of authorisation legislation in the 112th Congress. The United States has provided Egypt with an annual standard of $2 billion in economic and military foreign aid since 1979 (Sharp, 2011). Nevertheless, the excitement and relative swiftness of the self-generated achievement in Egypt protected the United States from considerable embarrassment. However, the first stage of the North African uprisings, in Tunisia and Egypt, left the United States marginalised. The peaceful mass demonstrations in these countries, which led to the resignation of their presidents, have highlighted a gap between US theoretical aspiration to uphold democracy everywhere and the truth of its realistic commitment to dictators, just so long as they supported the US interests and refrained from explicitly opposing Israel (Hodgson, 2011).

In general, the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and other places in the region are motivated by an intense desire for democracy. This represents a test for international democracy actors. Tony Blair, the Quartet representative to the Middle East, confirmed the rather hesitant response of the international community to the democratic uprising in Egypt by saying: "You cannot be sure what type of change will be produced there". Helgesen stated that "If democracy is allowed to run its course, you cannot be sure. This is the beauty of democracy, of allowing citizens to freely elect their leaders" (Helgesen, 2011).

Currently, the third North African outbreak of violence confronts the US with a more realistic problem: Libya's serious internal conflict leaves the US without a clear policy towards the region. The crisis in Libya is confronting the United States with a fresh awareness of its military and political constraints. The US administra-tion's public position has been cautious, despite a steady rise in strong rhetoric since the first outbreak of protest in Benghazi in mid-February 2011 gave way to armed conflict between Libyan insurgents and forces of Muammar Al-Gaddafi, the Libyan President. The certainty of change and willingness of the US Administration materialised in March 2011 by taking strong action against Al-Gaddafi's forces. International military forces led by the US army launched hundreds of long-range missiles against the Al-Gaddafi military apparatus. A no-fly zone was also imposed by the international forces to prevent Al-Gaddafi air forces from attacking civilians and insurgents. Nonetheless, these events raise the question about the future of the coalition intervention in Libya at a time when the Iraqi and Afghan precedents make United States intervention in a Muslim-majority country less attractive than ever (Hodgson, 2011).

The historic protests in the Arab region, and especially Libya, present the United States administration with a serious foreign-policy test. The conflict in this area is the first main challenge abroad since Obama took office in January 2009. The way he deals with this situation will have crucial consequences for his political future and for the US geopolitical position (Hodgson, 2011).

BUILDING DEMOCRACY

The citizens of the Arab countries are entitled to empathy, support and motivation to share knowledge and experience with the international community. The international readiness to support particular leaders has been tested and failed, and should therefore be abandoned. In Helgesen's (2011) opinion, requests made to external actors to uphold democracy should be met with admiration. But allowing democratic political change to take place will be more successful than repeating past efforts at producing societal change from a distance.

The average age of an Arab state in the post-colonial era is about sixty years. For most of this period, the new ruling elites were given adequate time and space to achieve state and nation building. In the early post-independence years, the major task was to support the new entities in acquiring national identities with the inherited colonial boundaries. The leading officials stressed that these strategic needs justified putting development ahead of democracy, maintaining that democracy did not suit the Arabs. The outcome was political models with well-established security and authoritarian control (Hroub, 2011).

The swift political changes in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, after decades of oppression may possibly lead to stable and accountable governments. If Tunisia and Egypt make successful transitions, then other regimes may rec-

ognise the need to endorse freedom and democracy, and there may just be peaceful transitions elsewhere. That is the most optimistic assessment according to Rogers (Jan. 2011). However, if Tunisia and Egypt do make the transitions and other states do not follow suit, then it is very likely that there will be disturbances elsewhere, even if they takes years to evolve. What is certain is that the combination of the profound socio-economic divisions across North Africa and the Middle East, and the increasing impact of environmental constraints denote the lack political reform geared toward human security, leading to great instability (Rogers, Jan. 2011). For Helgesen (2011), democracy is not the definite result of such an environment, even after the resignation of the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt and assurance to pave the way towards elections within the next few months. Nevertheless, the need for democracy is definitely the driving force for the peoples of Tunisia and Egypt.

Democracy-building is practically the starting point for addressing political and constitutional change, electoral reform, and political dialogue. Building democracy in the region will take time. Democracy leads to stability in the long run, while the process of democratisation is often destabilising. It is about changing power relations in society. By now, people should have realised the danger of instability and conflict in the region. The citizens of Tunisia, Egypt and other countries in the region have a long way to go. Popular uprisings can remove dictators from power, but cannot build democracy. Extensive and profound changes are needed in constitutions, electoral systems, laws and regulations related to political parties, the media, and the judiciary (Helgesen, 2011).
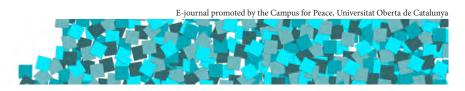
Alibeyoglu (2011) thinks that the more people feel empowered to challenge the status quo, through grassroots uprisings aimed at overthrowing dictatorships in the region, the more their objectives will be met, achieving democracy, freedom, and the change they have yearned for. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu said in this regard, "everybody deserves democracy. People's demand should be respected. We are witnessing a natural flow of history because there was a need for change. Now, more than ever, the time has come to take a definitive and unified stance. We are already divided enough. We need more unification and more unity. There should be regional ownership. No foreign intervention. This is our region" (Alibeyoglu, 2011). In democracy, responsibility rests with the public. The people should use these efforts correctly in the years to come. Arab citizens must learn from history and not let their democratically earned power be seized by future dictators. Expressed resentment should be channelled to achieve better socio-political and economic conditions rather than hollowness and destructive disorder (Tatari, 2011).

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The political change in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and other states in the region has raised significant questions concerning stability, security and the political state of affairs. The developments have produced innovative democracy across the Arab world, the degree of which is still unknown.

Rogers (January 2011) has observed a combination of considerable economic marginalisation, a young and aggravated population and demographic trends throughout the region, where the birth rates have not declined as in most parts of the world over the past three decades. This has resulted in large groups of young people with few employment opportunities. "Their predicament is made worse by low economic growth rates leading to limited job creation, but because of welcome improvements in education, they are particularly aware of their own marginalisation. These circumstances transcend political parties and even religious beliefs, but may lead to radicalisation rooted in a political ideology or, more commonly, an austere religious outlook" (Rogers, Jan. 2011). This means there is a fundamental state of affairs that may well lead to an unprompted outbreak of widespread revolution in the region or that may develop gradually into a fundamental social movement. For Rogers (Jan, 2011), it is very difficult to envisage when and how this may occur, as in Tunisia and Egypt, even though these circumstances strengthen the current towards change.

For some analysts, despite the nature of the opposition, and the speed of its emergence, it is incorrect to presume that events in Tunisia and Egypt mark the beginning of a region-wide revolution. They were based on the issue of speed of change first in relatively low-income countries with fairly well-educated populations, in which Internet and telephone communications are prevalent. A natural eruption was translated quickly into a very considerable movement, and this was aided by extensive and independent media coverage from regional networks, which were not controlled by a government (Rogers, Jan. 2011). In some ways Tunisia and Egypt are more advanced in this respect than other countries in the region. This, however, is changing, as communication and media technology is becoming more common across the region, including Libya and Yemen. However, Mikail (2011) believes that revolutionary enthusiasm could soon spread to other states and regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Few regimes will escape this revolution. He discards the notion that this revolution could sweep away every single Arab regime in 2011: "while this process can be controlled to some extent in closed societies with repressive regimes, it will ultimately engulf almost every country in the Middle East, from Morocco on the one hand to Saudi Arabia on the other" (Mikail, 2011).

It is largely recognised that any sweeping change in Egypt will have serious strategic implications for North Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Similar regimes in the region, predominantly those that are close to the United States, could face the same fate (Zohar, 2011). The increase of anarchy in the region, where popular uprisings take place, has aggravated retaliation by the elite in Libya, offering a view of the potential development of political change in 2011. This unexpected turmoil raises the question of the potential fundamental change across the region. However, doubts have accumulated as the revolutions in Libya, Yemen and Bahrain stall and become obstacles to the process that started in Tunisia and Egypt. Libya is the most dramatic challenge, but there may be other implications for other states in the long term (Rogers, 2011).

The speed and power of this political and social change make the regional power-shift possible. The Arab World has entered an era of political change that will have regional political implications and influence the Arab-Israeli conflict. Naumkin (2011) said, "the Middle East is now demonstrating the incredible potential and energy of the peoples living there. Once it tackles all the problems it currently faces, the region will ascend to a new level of development and become a full-fledged actor in global affairs." The regional revolution still astonishes and encourages others elsewhere. According to The Socialist (2011), the mighty movement of US workers in Wisconsin has been encouraged by the Egyptian and other revolutions. "We must do everything in our power to support the heroic struggling workers and farmers of the Middle East to complete the big changes in society that they yearn for. We must do the same here in Britain, Europe and the rest of the world until all aspects of the brutal, greedy capitalist society, that can offer nothing but unrelieved misery in the future, is abolished" (The Socialist, 2011).

The overthrow of dictatorships is just the first phase. No leader should think that they can rule forever. The achievement of democracy represents a great move forward, even though remnants of the old regimes stay be-hind as evident in the continuing influence of the police and army in Egypt and Tunisia. The revolution will totally accomplish its mission if it goes further than the framework of capitalism, and if it creates the social order for the eradication of unemployment, the destruction of all elements of corruption, and achieves democratic rights. This might be recognised through a confederation of the Middle East through efforts toward a peaceful transformation in the region (The Socialist, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The popular uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East are shaking the region's totalitarian regimes and the misleading notions adopted by these governments for many decades. Though the uprisings may have significant outcomes, they may not cover the general expectations of the peoples in the region. Nonetheless, the recent upheaval has led to an essential political change at least in Tunisia and Egypt, where massive crowds of people took to the streets to ascertain their rights against the local regimes' power. Such large-scale inspiration is extraordinary and has long-term implications.

Some have argued that the uprising across the region was provoked by outside forces and social and political instability that run much deeper. They have pointed out that people are calling on their governments to become more receptive and more accountable. Nevertheless, the foundation of the protests is legal, political and economic, driven principally by the fight against corruption, high unemployment, and low income. Young people are also calling for free elections, freedom of speech, and people's self-empowerment.

The leaders of these revolutions are now directing the process of political and social change in their countries. These young influential leaders are contributing to the emergence of a new world order.

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