

## **Governance and People's Power Movement in Tunisia**

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### **Abstract**

Many years of political misrule in Africa, as exemplified by personalised regimes, unaccountable governance and ruthless dictatorship have left most African countries politically demobilised, economically incapacitated and socially disunited. Such intense political upheaval and economic deprivations have thus prompted citizens' mass agitation for socio-economic reforms or outright change of government in some African countries. This paper examined the nexus between governance and non-violence agitation for change of government through the formation of People's Power Movement in Tunisia. The paper, which relied on secondary data found that bad governance, as characterised by corruption, rising unemployment rate; political repression and lack of basic freedom for citizens, were the major factors that led to the citizens' revolution and the ousting of President Ben Ali from office in Tunisia. The study concluded that weak governance, which was primarily benchmarked by democratic deficits, rather than dividends, has remained the hallmark of governance system in Tunisia. It is recommended that there should be enthronement of good governance through mass employment opportunities and optimal respect for citizens' rights, among others, as antidotes to mass agitation for violent change of government in Tunisia.

### **Keywords**

Governance, people, power, movement

### **Introduction**

The demand for good and all inclusive governance, which is characterised by accountable representation and citizens' involvement in their countries' development process are two major hallmarks of democracy that are not new to

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Africa; a continent with vast experiences in anti-colonial struggle for popular participation in governance (Anderson, 2013). Although the urge for Good Governance is implicit in the process of democratic renewal in Africa, the concept originated from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a critical component of their Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Africa (Raji, 2014). This programme was designed as instrument of promoting sustainable development in the continent through the blockade of wastage in governance, improved infrastructure and privatisation policies to promote corporate economic governance in Africa. However, in spite of the concerted efforts of the African development partners to promote good governance in the continent through the instrumentality of SAP, many African countries are still largely characterised by bad governance as exemplified by unaccountable governance, personalised political regimes, corruption, public waste and ruthless dictatorships while many other countries have remained politically demobilised and economically incapacitated. These negative development trends made Africa's development index to be very debilitating when compared to other parts of the world (Human Development Index, 2018). According to the Index report, Africa is the only region where for some four decades; between 1980 and 2010, the combined average economic growth barely kept ahead of population growth, where the debt burden estimated at US\$300 billion in 2015 is greater than total economic output of the continent and equals about 300 percent of Africa's export of goods and services. More than 50 percent of Africans live below the poverty line. While illiteracy rate is about 60 percent in the continent, the infant mortality rate is 96 per 1000 birth, and life expectancy at birth is 52 years. Africa with a tenth of the world's population was estimated to have a quarter of its refugees.

The above indices are clear signs of bad governance in Africa while the debilitating poverty level amongst Africans as accentuated to by socio-economic crises in the continent has provided a basis and common platform for the citizens' demand for necessary reforms in governance and outright change of government in some instances in order to liberalise the political arena and ensure better living standards for the African people. In North Africa and beyond, there was the "Arab Spring" which represent a revolutionary wave of violent and non-violent demonstrations and protests, riots, and civil disobedience in the Arab world to change government policies or overthrow such government completely for lack of good governance. Such mass agitation began on December 18, 2010 in Tunisia and spread to other countries in the Arab League (Raji, 2016). Thus, by the end of February 2012, African rulers have been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya while civil uprisings against bad governance had erupted elsewhere beyond Africa in the Arab world, especially in Bahrain and Syria. Major protests had also broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; and minor protests had occurred in Mauritania, Oman, Djibouti, Western Sahara and Palestine (United Press International, 2016).

While the wave of initial revolutions and protests faded by mid-2012, some started to refer to the succeeding political unrest in North Africa and the Middle East as the “Arab Winter” because of the devastating effect of such mass agitation which has swiped-off some government from power. The protest design in all the countries concerned shared similarity in their strategic resistance techniques which featured civil resistance, strikes, demonstrations, marches and rallies. There was also the effective use of social media to organise, communicate and raise awareness in favour of the people’s revolution. A major slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world was *Ash-sha’byuridisqat an-nizam* (bring down the regime) (Park, 2011). Many Arab Spring demonstrations were met with violent responses from the state authorities and pro-government militias leading to the destruction of about 1,000 lives and property between 2010 and 2014 in Egypt alone (United Press International, 2016: 4).

In Tunisia, which is the focus of this paper, governance problems worsened during the last five years of the regime of former President Ben Ali as corruption and mass mismanagement of national resources became rife. The non-contestable character of the regime as weak, corrupt and draconian resulted in feeble transparency and accountability in governance and low standard of living for greater majority of Tunisians. For instance, the Global Economic Competitiveness Index (2014) earlier ranked Tunisia 1st in Africa and 32nd globally out of 139 countries as one of the most stable economy due to her sustained increase in GDP which grew above 9 percent in 1994. However, the above sustainable development ranking of Tunisia dropped to the 28th position in Africa in 2014 as a result of economic mismanagement and political instability (Global Competitiveness Report, 2014: 2). Since 2010, the standard of living of an average Tunisian has worsened as unemployment rate increased from 22 percent in 2002 to 56 percent in 2014 (Global Competitiveness Report, 2014: 3), the subsidy regime became unsustainable while prices of basic commodities increased beyond the purchasing capacity of many Tunisians.

Consequently, intense suffering increased among many citizens, especially within educated youths who could not get government job or loan to start their own businesses. Market reforms and privatization policies in Tunisia led to rising food prices and high consumer price inflation which eventually eroded living standards with economic difficulties most closely felt by young people who lack optimal future for economic prosperity. The effect of bad governance on the citizens was compounded by lack of respect for the freedom of the citizens by the government. On the average, the Tunisian regime under President Ben Ali, especially towards his last days in office was largely based on authoritarianism, which borders on forced loyalty to the regime in exchange for political appointment and the distribution of jobs and other benefits to the citizens. State apparatus such as the police, judiciary and tax administrations

were used to intimidate the population. The rent-seeking behaviour of the ruling elite which corresponded with the period of economic liberalisation in Tunisia led to concentration of economic power on the political elite through their interference in privatisation and public procurement policies for personal interest. Many of the key privatisations programmes were conducted without transparency. For instance, out of the 4,197 companies privatised by the Tunisian government between 2008 and 2012, over 4,000 were traced to high power government officials as outright owners who used some people as front to bid or were principal shareholders in the foreign direct investors that bought the enterprises (Global Competitiveness Index, 2014).

The challenges of governance in Tunisia led to popular uprising against the government of President Ben Ali leading to the eventual overthrow of the government by the people. The aim of this paper is to examine the causes and effects of People's Power Movement on governance in Tunisia. The study which is anchored on secondary data discusses the relationship between governance and deviant agitation in Tunisia and identifies the factors responsible for the formation of the People's Power Movement in the country. The paper also examines the effects of the People's Power Movement on governance in Tunisia and draws lessons from the Tunisian experience.

### ***Conceptual Discourse***

There are different concepts of governance and People's Power Movement as proposed by different scholars. According to Castells (2009), governance relates to the act of establishing and monitoring of policies for proper implementation by members of the governing council of an organisation. Godwin (2011) linked governance to all the processes of initiating and implementing policies by government and non-governmental institutions, including private individuals. The concept relates to the strategy of exercising government powers, authorities and control in order to raise the standard of living of the citizens. As posits by the author, governance is the system of rules and practice by which an institution is directed and controlled in order to achieve its goals. Huntington (2008) categorises governance as being good or bad relating the former to the minimum administrative standard of better performance while the latter refers to poor performance index and maximum standard of non-performance in governance. In the context of a political and institutional environment that upholds human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, the author defined good governance as the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme (2013) defined governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels optimally. The UNDP concept encompasses the mechanisms, processes and the institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their

differences while the World Bank (2014) concept of Good Governance entails sound public sector management leading to efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in governance.

Wani and Fayeye (2013) defined good governance as a process in which people are empowered and have sufficient freedom to set priorities for their development needs, which take into account their specific socio-economic and cultural circumstances. This paper aligned with Wani and Fayeye's concept of good governance because the definition captured the fact that good governance plays a crucial role in ensuring people oriented development in Africa having recognised the right of the citizens and groups to articulate their interests, needs and concerns which a performing government must meet. Good governance is thus an essential stage towards meeting the objectives of sustainable and people-centered development, prosperity and peace.

People's Power Movement (PPM) is a term within the confines of good governance denoting the populist driving force of any social movement which invokes the authority of grassroots opinion and will power, usually in opposition to that of conventionally organised corporate or political forces (Wani and Fayeye, 2013: 179). The Movement can manifest as a small-scale protest or a revolutionary action involving national demonstration. The primary focus of PPM is to force government to make political reform or to overthrow an existing government. PPM action may be violent as witnessed in Libya in 2011 or nonviolent as was the case in Philippines in 1986 during the revolution which overthrew the Marcos régime. The term was first used by members of the 1960s "flower power" movement which initially protested against the Vietnam War.

In his analysis of the weakness of democracy, Goldstone (2011) identified the character of PPM actions in which the people are able to give and withhold their consent to be governed and withdraws their consent on what the government asks of them. Within the confines of the above conceptual understanding, the people have the right to elect and remove the people in government and approve or disapprove its performances but they cannot administer the government.

## **Literature Review**

The genealogy and dimensions of lack of good governance and crises in Africa have been well analysed (Onimode, 1988; Mkandawire, 1991; Ravenhill, 1996). Suffice to point out that a recurring decimal in Africa's development dilemma according to the scholars is the issue of weak governance. The situation in Africa as Perala (2015) described it, is one in which governments simply do not govern well having lack the organisational capacity to manage society and promote economic change and social welfare optimally. Mannaseh (2018) portrays the governance dimension of the African crises as a deeper

trouble than the worst imposed during the colonial years due to several years of poor governance in the continent. However, Raji (2014: 3) opined that in spite of the dismal collective average performance of governments in Africa; it would be apposite to note that the performance and outcome of political regimes in Africa have varied among and within nations at different periods. The author noted that some immediate post-independent regimes like that of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania and Jomokenyatta in Kenya, though statist in character, did place some premium on the welfare of the people and constructed what could be described as minimally or fairly good government. On the contrary, African political megalomania such as Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Samuel Doe in Liberia and Siad Barre in Somalia created for themselves political fiefdom in their respective countries. They speculated national wealth, devalued the lives of the people and destroyed the fabric of the society.

Underlying the litany of Africa's development problems is a crisis of good governance (Perala, 2015). Because countervailing accounting power has been lacking, state officials in many countries have served their own interest without fear of being called to account. In self-defense, individuals have tried to build up personal networks of influence with the ruling power rather than hold the all-powerful state accountable for its systemic failure. In this way, politics has become personalised and political patronage becomes essential feature of African politics to maintain power. Within the confines of bad governance, political leadership in Africa have access to broad discretionary authorities for the distribution of political patronage while information concerning good governance is often manipulated or controlled by the government, and voluntary associations are co-opted or disbanded by such corrupt government. Such governance environment cannot readily support a vibrant and dynamic economy that can generate mega employment and promote sustainable development in the continent. What the above reviewed works clearly shows is that although the urge for good governance is implicit in the process of democratic renewal, bad governance has remained a recurrent political decimal in Africa, leading to mass agitation in some countries for violent change of policies or government.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The social – psychological theory is adopted for this paper. The theory focuses on social groups motivations for an action rather than individual's. The social-psychological theory seeks to answer such questions as: What inspires people to participate collectively in revolutionary activity? Why do some people sometimes feel so strongly about politics that they are willing to give time, energy and ultimately their lives to achieve change?

This theory which was popularised by Maxwell (2015) is of the view that relative deprivation breeds a sense of resentment which contributes to political discontent. The author argued that such relative deprivation is a critical key to

revolution. According to him, political instability only results from deprivation when combined with a belief that people's conditions are worse than they could and should be. In other words, when there is relative deprivation, instability can result, and this deprivation is certainly a background factor in many revolutions.

### ***Tunisia, Leadership and Governance Style***

Tunisia is one of the three Arab states in Africa which is located in the Maghreb region of the Muslim world, the other two being Algeria and Morocco. The country is bordered on the West by Algeria and by Libya in the South (Atlas Map of Africa, 2012). The Republic of Tunisia has 163,610 square kilometers, and a population of about ten million inhabitants; chiefly of Arab-Berber descent (Raji, 2014). The country's ethnic mix includes Sicilians and Greeks, Corsicans and French, Spanish and Germans, Egyptians and Jews, Circassia's, Iranians, Turks, and those whose ancestry trace southward across the desert to black Africa. Arabic became the primary language in Tunisia following the 7<sup>th</sup> century Muslim conquest. French is also widely spoken. Tunisia's first modern leader, President Habib Bourguiba brought to the office, his political experience gained from many decades of his activities as one of the leaders of the Movement for the Independence of Tunisia (MIT). On the 20th March 1956, Tunisia got her independence from France while In April 1956 Habib Bourguiba formed the first government of independent Tunisia in April 1956. From independence, the Tunisian economic policies had been primarily to promote light industry and tourism and to develop its phosphate deposits. Agriculture has remained the major sector of the Tunisian economy. Owing to the discovery of oil in the 1970s, the economy of Tunisia expanded at a very appreciable rate with oil becoming the main stay of the economy.

However, in the 1980s, the Tunisian economy began to show deficit indicators owing to the bust in the price of oil in the international market which sunk the foreign exchange earnings of the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural economic reforms bordering on the removal of product subsidies and devaluation of local currency forced the Tunisian government to raise the price of bread and semolina, two major staple foods in the country causing severe hardship and violent protest (Charles, 2014). In this situation, the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI), under Rashid al Ghannushi, which led the civil disturbances was repressed by government security forces. Political repression was the hallmark of events under Bourguiba in Tunisia. Bourguiba dismissed Prime Minister Mzah, who fled to Algeria and denounced the regime. In 1987, he broke relations with Teheran when he accused Iran of sponsoring terrorism and rounded up Islamic fundamentalists. On 27 September 1987, a state security court found 76 defendants guilty of plotting against the government. Seven (five in absentia) were sentenced to death. Ben

Ali was the Minister of Interior under Bouguiba. He was appointed Prime Minister in October 1987.

On the 7th November 1987, Ben Ali assumed the presidency in a bloodless coup that ousted President Habib Bourguiba. Ben Ali adopted pugilist policies, including political liberalisation and respect for individual's rights. Within his six months in office 2,500 political prisoners were released and the special state security courts which violate people's rights under Bouguiba were abolished. The following year, Tunisia's constitution was reviewed ending the presidency for life and permitting the Chief Executive five-year terms in office. President Ben Ali changed the name of the ruling Socialist Party to the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) where membership of the party was sourced from the grassroots. There was also a bottom-up approach to the decision making process in Tunisian in which members of the party at the local levels were allowed to vote before critical decisions were taking by the party.

Under Ben Ali, a referendum was held on 26 May 2002, in which voters overwhelmingly approved a series of constitutional amendments that marked a change in the country's political structure. The amended referendum included: additional guarantees regarding the pre-trial and preventive custody of defendants; the creation of a second legislative body, the elimination of presidential term limits, along with the setting of a maximum age ceiling of 75 years for a presidential candidate; and upholding human rights and political tolerance as values enshrined in the constitution. In addition, Ben Ali announced a series of electoral reform measures in November 2002, which in addition to the "Chamber of Councilors" approved by the May referendum, included provisions to further guarantee the fairness of voters registration and election process, and provisions to reduce the minimum requirement for campaign financing and reimbursement by the state. He also called on radio and television operators to provide wider coverage of opposition parties and non-governmental organisations, and introduced a bill that would guarantee Citizens' privacy and protection of personal data (Ghazali, 2016).

Quite obliviously, Ben Ali championed economic reforms that strengthened Tunisia's economy and increased foreign investment. Since Ali ascended to the office of president, Tunisia's per capita GDP has more than tripled from \$1,201 in 1986 to \$3,786 in 2008. Although, growth in 2002 slowed to a 15-year low of 1.9% due to drought and lackluster tourism, better conditions after 2003 have helped pushed growth to about 5% of GDP. For about 20 years after the 1987, the GDP annual growth averaged nearly 5% (Global Competitiveness Report, 2014). A report published in July 2010 listed Tunisia as one of the African "Economic lions" and indicated that the eight African lions account for 70 percent of the continent's gross domestic product. In 2010, Global Competitiveness Report ranked Tunisia first in Africa and 32nd globally out of 139 countries within the context of stable increase in GDP. Because of his popularity, the 1989 elections was overwhelmingly won

by Ali's party, RCD, which clinched every seat in the legislature, and Ben Ali was elected unopposed.

The subsequent years of President Ben Ali as from 2012 saw the beginning of authoritarian regime and the return of several Bourguiba-era restrictions owing to the government inability to sustain the development aspiration of many Tunisians. There were the amendments to the press code in which Ben Ali gave the Interior Ministry the power to review all newspaper magazine articles before publication. During the trial of the President's elder brother, Habib Ben Ali in absentia in France for money laundering in 1992, French television news was blocked in Tunisia.

As a result of corruption, many of the key industries, such as car retail distribution (Peugeot, Ford, Jaguar, Hyundai, Kia, Porsche) were bought by President Ben Ali's family (Raji, 2014: 3). Big public contract and foreign investments approval were strongly exposed to political interference in favour of those within the power equation or their political and economic cronies. However, very little of the vast wealth of Tunisia benefit the masses; who remained poor. The later part of the 23 year rule of Ben Ali was not only corrupt, but also authoritarian and repressive in nature. Ben Ali's dictatorial attitudes led to his political domination based on electoral fraud. His last five-year mandate in a stage managed election held on October 25, 2009, earned him 85 percent of the votes. His closest rival, Mohamed Boucihiba, got 5 percent. Under Ben Ali, Tunisia was probably the United States' strongest ally in the region in the war against terror. European tourists flocked to its shores, but behind the façade of a peaceful resort, torture, oppression, censorship and corruption were deeply ingrained in the system.

### ***Factors Responsible for People's Power Movement in Tunisia***

There were many factors which prompted the people's power movement in Tunisia, one of which is economic in nature. While Tunisia experienced a period of solid economic growth and have won many laurels for their market-friendly economic reforms in the early days of her independence, most people experienced a decline in living standards, especially amongst the lower and middle income groups under Ben Ali. Thus, a combination of falling real wages, high inflation and rising unemployment has wreaked economic havoc in the country. Job opportunity is mainly available within the low-skilled and low-wage sectors of the economy and has been unable to keep pace with demographic growth rates. Weak economy thus left scores of middle-class youth unemployed and disenchanted with a political and economic order in which personal relations trumped qualifications and where crony capitalism allowed those in a position of power to amass fabulous riches. It was those lower middle-class youth that formed the nucleus of the subsequent revolutions. Unemployment was also linked to the Tunisian revolution in 2010.

It is important to note that there are about 10 million people in Tunisia and over half of them under the age of 25 years (BBC Focus on Africa, 2014). Despite having one of the most developed educational systems in North Africa, unemployment rate where even university graduates struggle to find work was over 30 percent in 2013. This unemployment predicament led the Tunisian youth to engage in risky adventure in search of jobs in Europe. Every year, thousands of young people try to cross the Mediterranean to southern Europe in pursuit of better life. Even in the aftermath of the uprising, nearly 5,000 young Tunisians, among them secondary school students, arrived on the Italian Island, Lampedusa (BBC Focus on Africa, 2014).

Political repression and lack of basic freedoms was another important impetus for protesters to take to the streets. While Tunisians enjoyed little freedoms during Ben Ali's early days in office, the masses saw some of their freedoms taken away from them later as the regime clamped down on public protests and the independent media along manipulated elections. Police violence and the abuse of public authority became a routine part of daily life in the country and corruption has been endemic at every level of society, albeit most visible at the top. All of this contributed to a widespread feeling of powerlessness and alienation, which explains the central themes of "dignity" and "pride" that permeated the messages of the protesters.

State predation also contributed to the economic miseries of the people which were accentuated by endemic corruption of the regime. The ruling family, including the extended family of President Ali was involved in corruption. As revealed by Wiki leaks, 40 percents of core industrial businessmen in Tunisia were related to Ben Ali and his family. This network of business connection was popularly referred to as 'Family Tie' in Tunisia (Anderson, 2013). Tunisians was particularly weary of Ben Ali's second wife, Zaira Ben Ali and her family for her penchant for lavish spending. She and her siblings controlled a major chunk of business in Tunisia and owned as many as 180 companies in the country (BBC Africa, 2014). The predatory behaviour of Ben Ali and his clan which largely dominated public contacts and controlled security structure badly destroyed the economy and the traditional business class in Tunisia. The mismanagement of the privatisation scheme and general predation by Ben Ali clan in numerous sectors of the economy created popular resentment against the regime. The legitimacy factor also intensified the revolution crisis in Tunisia. This was generated by a number of factors – authoritarian regimes, repression, state predation and growing alienation of the people. The legitimacy of Ben Ali's regime in Tunisia was very low as it suffered from a pervasive legitimacy crisis owing to the regime penchant for stage managed elections in favour of the ruling RCD.

### ***Tunisia and the People's Power Movement Revolution***

The people's power movement in Tunisia started over high unemployment rate, food inflation, corruption, lack of freedom of speech and poor living

conditions. Essentially, the internet played a significant role in what was referred to as the *Jasmine (popular) revolution*. This is because the internet subverted the state-controlled communications channels and allowing ordinary citizens to organise themselves. Thus, expression and aspirations for social and economic justice, the end to corruption, freedom of expression and political participation were spread across the country via the internet. Even the media reported that Ben Ali's second wife, Leila Trabelsi engaged herself in ostentatious lifestyle. Through internet chart, Ben Ali and his family were portrayed as being corrupt having accumulated wealth at the people's expense. Though the Tunisian economy has fallen on hard times under Ben Ali, many citizens understood that their oil and tourism-dependent economy could not be insulated from the global recession of the past few years. However, their anger and pains were exacerbated by police brutality, first family corruption and indifference of the President to the suffering of the populace (*The Nation*, 2011: 72). In short, the failure of Ben Ali's government to redistribute the wealth of the country as well as the blocking of free speech laid the foundation for the people power movement in Tunisia. In 2008, Tunisia was ranked 143 out of 173 in terms of freedom of the press but the country was classified as an authoritarian regime ranking 144th out of 167 countries (Economist Democracy Index, 2018).

The popular protest started on December 17, 2010, after Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire over his unemployment status. Bouazizi graduated from high school in the small town of Sidi Bouzid in central Tunisia, and after several years of unsuccessful struggle to find a job, he had taken to the streets with a wheelbarrow to sell fruits. His grievance was that the police prevented him from selling vegetables without a permit; a means he thought could earn him a living in the absence of better employable jobs. But when the police trashed his wheelbarrow in December 2010 the humiliation proved too much for the young unemployed graduate. Bouazizi tried to see the mayor; but the mayor refused to meet him. In front of the mayor's office, he set himself on fire. It was an extraordinary personal act that represented the collective rage of the Tunisian population and would prove the catalyst for historic and wide sweeping changes (BBC Focus on Africa, 2014). Similarly, what happened to Bouazizi resonated with many young unemployed men and women. Thus, citizens' discontent spilled over into outrage at his death and the system that caused it. The unrest grew over several weeks as the protesters demanded a change in government for its inability to find solution to the increasing unemployment problems, rising food prices and corruption in the country.

While the Tunisians were demonstrating, Ben Ali tried to hang on, addressing the nation on state television and promising major reforms including 300,000 jobs. But these promises failed to quell the tide of protest. When support from the armed forces finally ebbed away, Ben Ali decided to leave the country. Thus, the young men and women behind the *Jasmine*

*revolution* succeeded in forcing Ben Ali into exile in Saudi Arabia on Friday, January 14, 2011 after 23 years in office. Before Ben Ali left the country with his family, he dissolved the existing government and parliament. The power vacuum created by the exit of Ben Ali did not last long. Mohammed Ghannouchi, former Prime Minister, took over as the head of an Interim National Government few hours after Ali left the country. In his attempt to convince the protesting masses that his administration was sincere about his promise to restore democracy in the country, Ghannouchi constituted a national unity government which included members of the opposition political party, the General Union of Tunisian Workers, UGTT and the ruling party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally.

### ***The Effects of the People's Power Movement on Good Governance in Tunisia***

The overthrow of the autocratic government in Tunisia under Ben Ali has radically changed the course of the North African politics. Emboldened by the peaceful mass protests that brought Ben Ali to his knees; young protesters took to the streets in many Arab capitals, demanding a better life and a more accountable government. The mass movements and protests against autocratic regimes in Africa sparked the interest of the African academia and the general public about the nature and dynamics of the People's Power movements. Movements against decades-old Tunisian autocracy in Africa started in the wake of, and alongside similar movements in the Middle-East. To the uninitiated, it was a pleasant surprise that such movements which started essentially, as nonviolent movement, could constitute major threats to the regimes they are in conflict with, let alone bring them down. Others wondered how and why a nonviolent movement could, as it were, suddenly turn violent and still achieve reasonable level of success. However, scholars in the emerging subfield of peace studies, having being acquainted with the history, nature, and dynamics of such movements had no such surprises. Many onlookers around the globe and especially Africa think of such movement as "spontaneous" or accidental event that can only succeed where they did and not anywhere else. However, studies on people power movements show that they have a pattern and strategic logic that makes them an attractive alternative to confronting and bringing down authoritative regimes in any part of the world. In other words, there is an internal structure, a pattern and strategic logic of nonviolent resistance that can be duplicated in other contexts to prosecute asymmetric conflict without recourse to violent force. The fall of Ben Ali and the associated political upheavals in Tunisia resulted in this small country sparking a wave of protests against authoritarian regimes throughout the Arab world. The Tunisian revolution showed that regimes that appeared to be strong and stable in fact had very shallow roots if they don't govern well.

In the context of the bloody conflicts in Libya along other Arab countries of Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, two characteristics of the Tunisian revolution

should be stressed. Firstly, Tunisia has up to now been the first country in the region that experienced the people's revolution and had a chance of bringing about real change. And this change took place in less than four weeks, between December 17 and January 14, 2011. Tunisia now has the opportunity to start a whole new chapter of its history. It is the only country in the region that elected a Constitutional Assembly after the fall of its previous ruler and thus leaves behind the era of this authoritarian presidential regime. In light of the country's experiences since independence, many voices are being raised in Tunisia calling for a parliamentary republic or at the very least a move away from a purely presidential system.

Another major effect of the people's revolution in Tunisia is its contagious effect all over the Middle East and the spilling effects of people demanding for democratic change in their government. On January 14, 2011 the Tunisians won a great victory. Within just four weeks the desire for freedom, democracy and dignity succeeded in toppling an apparently solid dictator from his office. This showed other countries that the region's regimes are not as stable as was previously thought. Many people in other countries have followed the events in Tunisia with interest, sympathy and even excitement. Without the fall of Ben Ali, Egypt's President Mubarak would probably still be in power and there would have been no revolts in Bahrain, Yemen, Libya and Syria. Other countries in the region have also reacted to the events in Tunisia by announcing reforms. Tunisia's revolution started a wave of change across the whole Arab world.

Less obviously, but equally important, is the impact that the Arab revolution have on the economic order of the Middle East. There is much evidence to suggest that at least in Tunisia and Egypt the uprisings were as much a reaction to decades of political repression as a revolt against the kind of crony capitalism that developed under the guise of market reforms and privatisation programmes that were sanctioned and rewarded by the international financial institutions. The continuity of labour unrests in post-revolutionary states seems to be an indication of this and represents a challenge to the future economic order. Any attempt at replacing current forms of crony capitalism with a fresh dose of neoliberal reforms is likely to evoke a strong public reaction and Arab revolution. An extended economic depression in Tunisia and North Africa might also pose a threat to the fragile flowering of Arab democracy. The people's movement also demonstrates a return to Arab nationalism given the revolution's underlying themes of national pride and dignity in favour of good governance.

## **Conclusion**

It is concluded in this paper that the people power movement in Tunisia, which was characterised by violent protest was caused by bad governance. The

people's protests in North Africa were neither propelled by ideologies nor religious affiliations but by bad governance. Myriad of economic, social, psychological, and political factors played key roles in triggering those protests and uprisings. The study recommended the creation of mass employment opportunities and optimal respect for basic freedoms of the citizens, among others, as antidotes to mass agitation for violent change of government in North Africa and Tunisia in particular. Sit-tight governments are common in Africa, mass corruption; mismanagement and misappropriation of resources are highly pronounced in the continent while graft and socio-economic inequalities are growing. African leaders should embark on anti-corruption scheme that engenders the citizen's confidence on their political leaders in order to reverse citizen revolution in Africa.

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