

BRIG GEN (RETD) JAHANGIR KABIR,
NDC, PSC

THE Renaissance has finally reached the southern shores of the

Mediterranean after a few centuries of wait in anguish. The rich blue water of the Nile and the gray pyramids, have given the final call to the people of the surrounding areas to rise. Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Algeria, Jordan - just about every people in that belt is on the street for democracy and human rights.

Nondescript Tunisia may have provided the spark but Egypt, has given the final call to wake up. It is now a tsunami lashing the despots of the Middle East, like rising sun chasing the darkness. The fundamental question has finally come from the quivering heart of the millions - the country belongs to whom: the kings, dictators or the people?

The shadow of darkness fell on the rulers and the ruled when they failed to cultivate religion with reason to walk into the modern era. European nations liberated themselves and conquered the world. Democratic aspirations of the awakened masses in many regions are still facing the brutality and regress of the cave age. The way Gaddafi is shooting his people in Libya even an occupation force would not dare to do that in 21st century. The human spirit will not surrender to the brutalities of Gaddafi. By the time this article goes into print, in all probability, he will be no more in power.

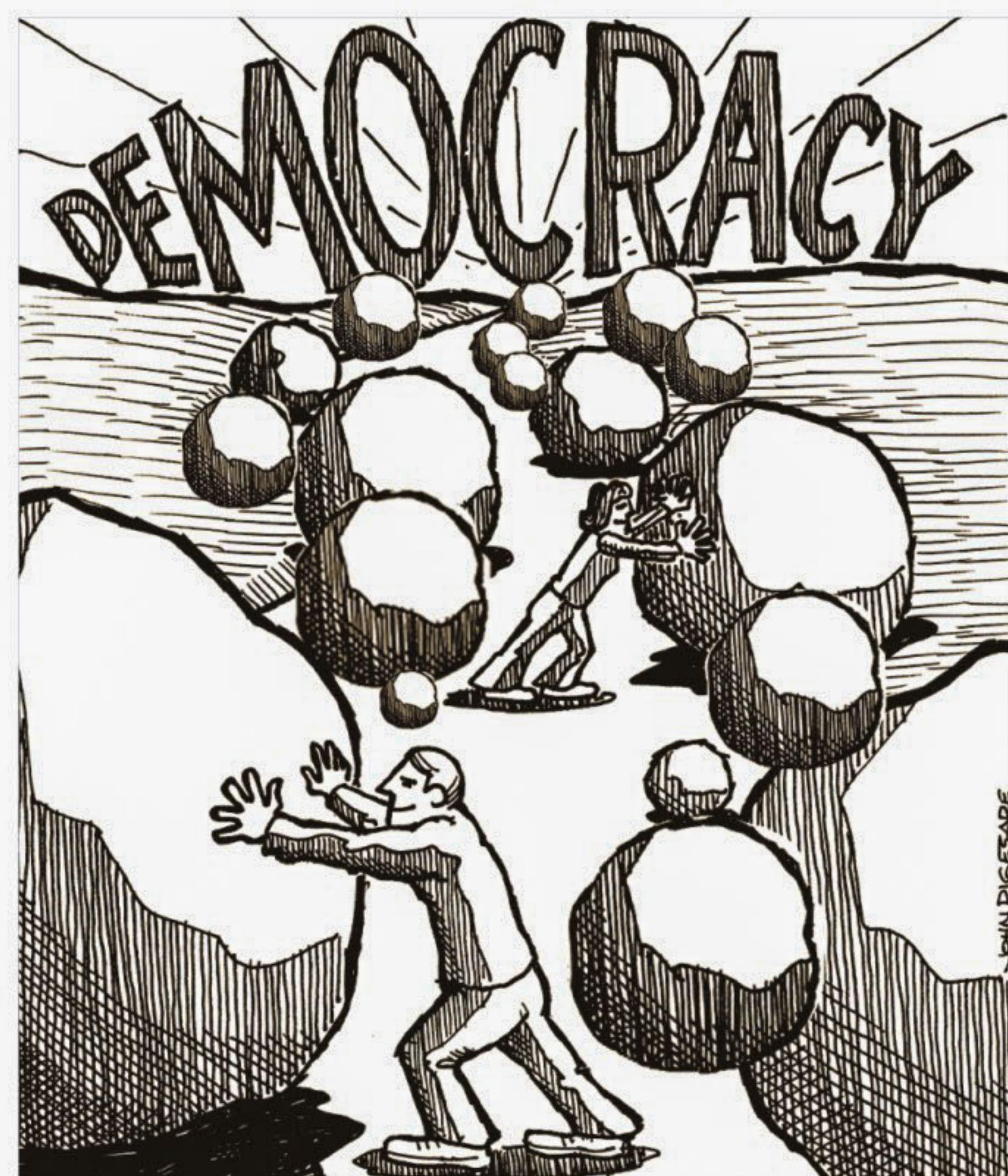
There cannot be a global village without universal culture of values and reasoning. It is time to allow the people to rule themselves. They

Renaissance reaches the Arab world

are ready to vote to elect their own government to ensure their welfare. The universe belong to the creator, but the state belongs to the people why else they should die on the streets of Cairo, Manama, Tripoli and many other places?

The right of the people to select their government is fundamental. If government by the people is in doubt, everything else has a tendency to default. 21st century has little capacity to tolerate the savagery of the despots. The disorder comes as the best brains in business have pushed the global economic integration far ahead of politics.

We hear the rumblings of the French Revolution in the Middle East now. It has to go ahead with the singleness of mind. There is no need for faultfinding with the past that may cause loss of momentum. Even recovery of the billions of stolen public money is not the top priority of the moment. If the countries in the struggle try to achieve



everything in one go, there is danger lurking in the woods. No matter weak and under performing, no matter on nursery bed, need of the time is the consolidation of democracy. The birth of democracy is inevitable either peacefully or coercively.

National boundaries are falling apart in Europe to accommodate the rights of individual. Every society will have to concede to the advancement of new dawn of reasoning over the state sovereignty. African American President Obama spoke boldly in Cairo for the first time to bridge the gap between West and the Muslims. An underdog by birth, he knows how a suppressed heart quivers for freedom. The Muslims have no choice but to hang on to the vision of the president for closer ties with the West to walk out of the morass of the past.

The stakeholders in the misrule of the Middle East are the greatest impediments to reforms long overdue. The Americans must

remain pledge bound in the birth pang of democracy among their friends and foes. We happily observe, they have taken a people friendly stand in the Middle East. If the West maintains this strategic aim in spite of temporary dislocation of interest, it would bring long-term benefits on both the shores of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The time has come to realize that revolts and revolutions will eventually sweep away the monarchs and dictators-who should better concede than be conquered. The West must fully perceive that only universal democracy can weed out threat to the open societies. Jihad will go if democracy becomes the sole game of politics in the Muslim belt. If rulers continue to resort to repression and force, the democracies should be ready to support the cause of the people in more ways than statements.

The Egyptian armed forces have a mixed history. They dislodged King Faruk only to produce series of dictators one after another in the last six decades. People never got their promised freedom. The power that has passed to the generals through blood and tears of the people of Egypt this time may appear tempting once more. However, denial of democracy will be betrayal by the generals; certainly it will renew the appetite of the people for democracy in more violent ways than hitherto witnessed. The generals in Egypt should handover power to the elected representatives of the people within six months as promised.

The writer is a freelancer.

SIFAT UDDIN

A wave of change is flowing from Persian Gulf to North African plains swaying their imperial palaces; age old despotic rulers and even touching bunches of date! Since the popular movement in Tunisia against kleptocracy, wide ranges of people including experts-public speakers have been widening their flurry of speculations about this change. People are emerging with numerous questions - Is democracy replacing constitutional monarchy in Middle East? or is it US propelled change or self motivated? Will it delegitimize Israel and revive Muslim solidarity on Palestine question? - and many more. But why do people care so much about Middle East? Modern international relations since 1917 (Balfour Declaration) has been Middle East centred. Global strategy to local dimension, changing from different point of views, is still intertwined with Middle East. Still it is a major remittance basket for many developing countries. That's why people around the world, irrespective of their religion, are so much involved with Middle East.

It always a tough job to write about Middle East because so versatile the people are there with their religion-belief system- culture and conflicts of interest that it requires special expertise. In this situation specificity helps anyone give an authentic impression on Middle East. To say in particular about the changes that are taking place is beyond the traditional Middle East; it includes greater Middle East where Maghreb states also involves. Tunisia is one of them and Algeria is another. So, it is obvious that the expansion of ongoing popular movement is great. But I shall specify my discussion following some questions. First of all one question arises, why did the revolution work as a domino-affect? Or why did it spread so fast and furious like wild-fire? Many say, lack of basic needs with worst youth unemployment situation made people furious against those regimes. It doesn't mean that before the year of 2011 these countries were "happy families" with abundant resources. But what is new is the abundance of youth forces. Demography has been a factor there. Swedish foreign minister termed it as demographic tsunami. Popular demand for change is spreading across the Middle East. Throughout the region a fault-line has opened up between young populations exposed to global modernizing forces through the internet and satellite television and oppressive regimes unable to provide opportunities or the reality of a better life. 65% of the population of the Middle

The Arab world's Berlin Wall moment

East is under the age of 30 and are increasingly technology-savvy and adept at using new forms of communication to bypass state controls and mobilize around common issues or grievances. That's why no more it is Tulip, Velvet or Orange revolution but Twitter, Facebook or YouTube revolution that's how media is meddling (!) into the popular issues across the globe. No more flowers or colors are inspiring-incorporating mass population for proclaiming economic-political freedom but social media networks replacing those instru-

present situation is beyond its control. When things do not happen in its (US) way then it goes in people's way. That's why US is now shouting for those people and for their freedom. Here I want to raise a question - does democratic Middle East help the US? No, it doesn't. Because those new governments can defy US dominance. They are not supposed to behave like puppet, which was done in the past. If democracy is in place then there will be a balance of power against US-Israel alliance. Still it is too early to say about democracy in

transformation of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania were sweeping, dramatic and unexpected like present Tunisia, Egypt (Libya, Yemen, Bahrain probably) of greater Middle East or Arab world. They constituted a revolutionary situation that decisively overturned seemingly immovable regimes in a matter of months. Like 80s' Eastern Europe the present Arab world has many resemblances with political and economic systems (autocratic government and centralized economy). European people struggled to transform their worn and decayed states into democratic ones. Evolving into a new system of government and economy will not be an easy task for those Arab states. Their industry and economy may not be ready and well-equipped to cope with global open market competitions. It was not easy for those Eastern European states. On the other hand, Arab states may have to seek advice and assistance from western government to takeoff for a democratic system. Democratizing their institutions may require involvement of western governments, which in result will pave the way for western states to



ments. Are these revolutions propelled by US? Against this question most people answered affirmatively. The invisible hand of US always works in people's mind more frequently than the reality; it's like something an imaginary witch. I can't say why. Personally, I think it's their psychic problem. I deem the US doesn't like such a great upheaval there. The

Middle East. Anything may happen. Situations are still volatile there. Many scholars on Middle East are comparing the present situation with Europe's 1980s, especially events happened till the fall of Berlin wall. While comparisons of events across time and place can be misleading the events of 1989 can provide some clues to the significance of current events. The political

come closer and interfere again. Religion will be ever influential as it continues. So the upcoming days won't be easy for those new democracy rookies. Experience from 1980s Eastern Europe may come to their way to rebuild their own respective states.

The author is a Masters in International Relations, University of Dhaka and a freelance writer.

Bangladesh submits claims on Bay to UN CLCS

BANGLADESH submitted claim on the extended continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal to the United Nations in New York Saturday (26-02-2011), joining an international legal battle for securing its right to entire territorial waters.

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni formally presented the historic submission to the Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea of the global body, according to a message received in Dhaka. This would be Bangladesh's most significant claim to the continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal since its independence. The claim of Bangladesh ranges from 400-460 nautical miles (NM) in the seabed of the Bay, which dismisses obtrusive bid by neighbors.

The submission completes the outstanding obligation of Bangladesh under the provisions of the Article 76 of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to provide scientific and technical information with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in support of Bangladesh's right to the

continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

Bangladesh held extensive consultations with Federal Institute of Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) of Germany, GRID Arendal of Norway, Centre for Coastal and Ocean Mapping of the University of New Hampshire, Scripps Institute of Oceanography and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, USA, for preparation of the submission.

Economic and Legal Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat provided legal and technical assistance in the final documentation of Bangladesh's submission. Bangladesh also received advisory assistance from Dr. Herald Brekke, a member of the Commission on the Limits of the Continentals Shelf. During the occasion, Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni said, "Seabed has become an important area of economic interests for all nations, and more so for a country like Bangladesh with limited resources and extensive development challenges."

Source: en.bdtodaynews.com

Italian report details arms sales to Libya

ROME - Italy has sold Libya explosives, gun targeting equipment and other military hardware worth tens of millions of euros (dollars) in the past two years, Italian daily Corriere della Sera reported on Feb. 26.

The newspaper quoted an official report from the Italian interior ministry that listed signed contracts as well as ongoing negotiations between Libya and several major Italian defense companies including industry giant Finmeccanica.

Missile systems maker Mbda Italia signed a deal worth 2.5 million euros in May 2009 to supply Libya with "material for bombs, torpedoes, rockets and missiles," the interior ministry report was quoted as saying.

Helicopter maker Augusta Westland signed two contracts with Libya in October 2010 worth 70 million euros. Also last year, Selex Sistemi Integrati signed a 13-million-euro deal to provide Libya with gun targeting equipment.

Italy and its former colony Libya signed a friendship treaty in 2008 that opened the way for major business deals. Italy is now Libya's top trade partner and Italian energy major ENI is the biggest foreign energy producer in Libya...

This year, military shipmaker Intermarine Spa started negotiations with Libya for contracts worth a total of 600 million euros...

Source: defencenews.com