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What does Egypt's Uprising Mean for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

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The images of the assassination of former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat are still fresh in my mind. I remember how the assassin had shouted at Hosni Mubarak to step aside as he had come to kill the Pharaoh.

He could never have imagined that Mubarak would soon become the next Pharaoh who would rule for three decades and with an iron fist!

As a Pakistani I have always been used to the luxury of being critical.

People here have said all kinds of things about their own tyrants and very few have been diplomatic. But no one was ever picked up by the secret police or jailed for insulting the president or the prime minister.

Despite all the problems, Pakistan's culture has provided a safety valve to let off steam and even dictators have not survived more than a decade at the most.

The problem with dictatorship is the fact that it leads to a massive political vacuum and that can be dangerous when the people are angry and have no one to lead them.

I am sure there are many who would argue that it is history that makes a man, not the other way round, and that leadership comes out of a crisis and sometimes after periods of anarchy and uncertainty.

But why on earth has it come to this?

Who has supported these despotic leaders and who have made their strategic priorities above justice for ordinary people?

These regimes have been propped up on crutches of foreign aid and military hardware. T

he key word coming from the Americans was 'we pay for the Egyptian Army!' Had the same amount been spent on the people the US would have made countless friends. Now it seems it has made more enemies.

They may boast of what many allege are paid friends in high places but how many friends did they have amongst the Muslim masses.

If regimes were allowed to evolve locally they would have had a hotline to the people, shared their concerns and shown that the rulers and the masses are one and that the rulers come only from the masses if there were to be genuine governments.

The notion of democracy as being a solution to the people's problems is now seen in a different context. Democracy is now divided into two categories, The democracy of the West and what is dubbed as democracy for the rest.

The question is would the US and the rest of Europe trade its democracy for an Iraqi or Afghan style of government?

Mubarak was after all considered to be an elected president by many even though ironically in an election with only one candidate and one party. Did the people have a choice?

No wonder he bagged 99 per cent of the vote.

As a Pakistani citizen, I too had seen how elections and referendums were handled as government servants cast bogus votes to ensure the result was guaranteed.

Even if you did not go to vote someone took care of it. Even the dead cast their votes!

What was happening in the Arab world was bound to have its ramifications for Pakistan and perhaps many of its leaders who have already amassed a large wealth overseas would

act with timely prudence to take the flight out on time and well before the cloud of the mobs that would come out to seek Justice for all.

The trouble in the Middle East would take the heat off Pakistan and perhaps hasten a US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Many Arab fighters who were coming for Jihad would now find a suitable battleground on their own turf.

Something they had been waiting for all along.