The Indicators and Measurements of Arab Democracy

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ABSTRACT

This discourse addresses one of the most important issues that face world communities, especially the Arab ones. It is the issue of democracy, which has become the only and true indicator through which the integrity and rationality of political systems are measured. In order to the researcher to approach the question of the indicators and the measurements of Arab democracy, this study has setup a hypothesis that is based on the fact that the methods of accountability and control are totally tied with the realization of the existence of a political will. And in order to test this assumption, the researcher adopted the methodologies of the systems analyses, the decision-making, and the political elites. This is viewed within a historical reading of the democratic experience through the study. The study falls within three discourses. The first addressed the democratic components in the Arab political thought. The second spoke about the level of accountability and transparency in the Arab democratic experiment. The third discourse surveyed the measurement indicators in the Arab homeland. The researcher concluded by calling on the Arab political systems to pay attention to the measurement indicators of democracy that have been established in the advanced political systems.

Keywords: Measurements, Arab Democracy.

INTRODUCTION

The modern Arab political thought lives these days through a substantial transformation period, that carries a deep change that started in the year 2003, when the United States of America and its allies brought down the Iraqi political system. The Arab political system was penetrated by a group of values and principles that reject totalitarianism and the security guarding of the political system. The Arab scene began to witness the rise of a revolt and challenges that are led by categories which were outside the political game, and were denied the right of political participation. These classes and categories were able to impose their will by force, not heeding the violence or the repression that the Arab political systems have resorted to in this respect. It seems like; the main reason for this lies in the expanding margins of familiarity and communication with the experiences of the western societies that has attained advanced achievements in the application of democracy and political development. This is in addition to the increasing intensity of the pressure and marginalization that has been used by the Arab political systems to practice against the citizen.

Despite the appearances of chaos that has accompanied the recent Arab political street stirrings, yet this has laid down a new basis for the concept of change. What we have witnessed in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and the scenes we are witnessing in Yemen and Syria, demonstrates that new measurement indicators in questioning, accountability and democracy began to be entrenched. The Arab political systems began to re-read their relations with the citizens… especially those who felt that they were deprived of their rights, especially the right to effective questioning and political participation as the conditions of their acceptance of the governance which they presumed its rightness and maturity.

Accordingly, several questions were raised regarding the limits at which the Arab political systems must stop, taking their starting point the principles of the idea of the social contract that were unleashed in Europe during the period of the rise of the national state during the seventeenth century.

Thus, the research theme will be based on approaching the intricacy of democracy and political participation in the Arab political systems from different...
angles that are founded in their totality on modernity, development and change... whether on the level of protection, or the level of examining the measurement indicators of democracy.

Objective of the Research

This discourse seeks to shed light on the necessity of activating the reform so as to confront the accelerating challenges that the region faces, and the dangers that are inherent in these challenges so as to arrive at an alternative mechanism instead of the one that was prevailing... that ignore even the minimum limits of the levels of questioning, control and accountability. It even disregarded all indicators and models that determine the nature of the political system, and the attending destruction and weakening of the concept of the “state”.

Assumption of the Research

The assumption of this discourse is based on the fact that the accountability mechanisms are totally connected with the existence of a political will that the political systems adopts after being convinced of it. It is also tied with the ability of the civil society organizations to prove themselves, and the extent of their steadfastness in front of the drawback forces that view the status quo as being the most important source to preserve its achievements.

Limits of the Research

- Geographical limits: the Arab states in the region, especially those that ventured into the experiment of change.
- Time limits: the contemporary era that started with the onset of the twenty-first century. The researcher may resort to an earlier time in order to connect the present political stirrings with the reasons and the coordinates that were prevailing before the current century.

Definition of Terminology

- Accountability: it is the manner that enables the people to subject the ruling body to control on the basis that “the people are the source of authorities”. This cannot be attained except through popular pressure that aims to stop deviation, and the mutual commitment between exercising authority and responsibility before the people within the rule of law, and between equality and ensuring the foundations of the legitimacy of ruling, transparency and political participation.
- Indicators of the measurement of democracy: the study of the measurement indicators of democracy in any political system is based on the foundations that make up democracy. Among these are: the existence of the respected laws, good practicing, the self-maintenance of the political systems, parliaments that are the result of free elections, independent judiciary, guarantees of the basic freedoms of the individuals, the empowerment of the civil society organizations to be formed and act without restraints, enabling political parties to be established which are capable of leading the political action, and releasing the freedoms of opinion and the respect for the other opinion.

The Concept of Sovereignty

The concept of sovereignty appeared with the rise of the modern national state. It is derived from the latin word “superanus”, meaning “the higher”. The French scholar, Baudin, defined sovereignty in his book, “The Republic” to mean (that is sovereignty) the right of the state to exercise its internal jurisdictions and manage its international relations with the other states in complete freedom and without being subject to any foreign authority. The internal sovereignty means the right of the state in affecting the measures, procedures, deciding and implementation within its territorial borders. Consequently, sovereignty becomes the capable force that realizes the political unity of the state. Externally, it means the non-submission of the state to any pressing authority or pressures from the other states, except those imposed by the principles and rules of the international law.

Methodology of Research

In order to verify the hypothesis, the researcher found himself facing several research methodologies that has to be followed. Among these are the methodology of the systems and the concept of the state, the restrictives of political participations, the decision-making methodology, and the methodology of the political elites.

Literature Review

A number of political thinkers have addressed the technicality of accountability and questioning to measure the levels of democracy in many states. Among these were the following:

- The symposium of “corruption and good governance in the Arab countries “that was held in the year 2004 by the Arab Unity Studies Centre (Beirut) in cooperation
with the Swedish Centre (Alexandria). The participants discussed several concepts of the corruption issue, and, consequently, the weakness or absence of control and accountability and the meanings of transparency; democracy and the role of the institutions of the local community in the administration of the state.

- The symposium of “questioning and accountability: their legislations and mechanisms in the Arab countries”. It was held by the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization during the period 7-8 February 2007. The participants in this panel surveyed a number of issues like questioning as the foundation for realizing good governance, the role of the administrative and financial control systems in the Arab states, the independence of the judiciary, the activation of the systems of accountability, the role of the media in activating the process of holding to account.

- The workshop of “the indicators of the measurement of democracy in the Arab countries” that was organized in November 2009 by the Arab Unity Studies Centre, in cooperation with the Arab Foundation for Democracy. The participants addressed the experience of “the Arab Reform Observatory” at the Alexandria library, the measurement indicators of democracy in some Arab countries, the role of the quantitative indicators in the process of democratic transformation.

- The symposium of “the sources of democracy: the culture of the whole or the role of the elites”. It was prepared by Larry Diamond and was published in Beirut in the year 1994 by Al-Saqi house. The participants addressed the meanings of the democratic political culture, the political elites and culture.

- A symposium about “a decade of democracy in Jordan - 1989-1999”. It was held by the New Centre of Jordan for Studies, in cooperation with the Conrad Foundation. The participants surveyed the democratic experiments in Jordan and the contribution of education, culture, economy, law, civil society institutions, the media and the parties in the democratic transformation in Jordan.

- The symposium of “the Arab Gulf and democracy” that was held in Beirut in August 2002, by the Arab Unity Studies Centre. The lecturers talked about the concept of democracy, the democratic transformation process, the results of the political experiences, the place of democracy among the grand national goals.

- The symposium of “democracy and the current movements of the Arab street “that was prepared in Beirut in December 2007, by the Arab Unity Studies Centre. It revolved around the democratic reform in the Arab homeland, the movements of the Arab street and their national all-inclusive dimensions, its particularity of pre-comprehensiveness of the available means of expression.

- The symposium of “the crisis of democracy in the Arab homeland” that was organized in Beirut in the year 1987, by the Arab Unity Studies Centre. The discussions revolved around the crisis of the concept and the practice of democracy in the Arab homeland. The participants addressed several topics like defining the concept, the Arab thought and democracy from a national dimension, the problems that face the Arab societies. The panel dedicated a part of its studies towards surveying the cases and practices of democracy in some Arab countries.

An addition that this research will make towards the afore-mentioned will be represented in exploring the extent of the success of the experiment of the Arab citizen in extracting his rights, and whether the Arab political system was capable of preserving itself in the face of the transformations that are sweeping the Arab street… based on the recent events that began in Tunisia, and crossed Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Jordan and Oman. Thus the dilemma that this discourse will address and focus on, will be the ability of the Arab peoples to hold to account the political systems… and whether those peoples were able to possess new indicators in measuring democracy in their lands.

Structure of the Research

- First discourse: the constituents of democracy in the Arab political thought.
- Second discourse: holding to account and transparency in the Arab democratic experience.
- Third discourse: the measurement indicators of democracy in the Arab homeland.

First Discourse
The constituents of democracy in the Arab political thought

Introduction

Despite the vast volume of studies regarding the concept of democracy, yet these did not arrive at a comprehensive, all-inclusive and accurate definition of democracy. All human efforts has failed in creating an exemplary applied model that fits everywhere at every time, when studying any political system. The reason lies
in the different cultural points of reference and ideological heritages, the determinants of social history, the variety of the experiments, the non-conformity between the values and the practices. This is particularly so due to the disputes, the conflicts of interests, and the multiplicity of the competing powers that the world had seen, which reached in many cases the points of struggles, wars, occupation and fighting over natural resources and riches… till we have reached the point of contradiction unto the same thinker from one time to another.

Despite this, it cannot be said that the concept of democracy is devoid of constants or attributes or determinants. There is a near consensus on the existence of principles, institutions, mechanisms and guarantees for all quarters and the citizens, the most important of which are: the existence of democratic constitutions, adoption of pillars like freedom, equality, justice, tolerance, community conciliation, legitimacy, acceptance of the other, expanding the circles of political participation after completing the phases of political education and development, adoption of political harmony and reconciliations among the political powers and the civil society organizations. This is based on the consideration that the system of governance is a peaceful participatory approach in which all differences in the points of view are those of thought and not conflicts of interests. Here the higher interest must be maximized and the private interest that leads to conflict must be fought. This is concentrated in guaranteeing the right of the political participation of the majority, without excluding the minority, in the process of major decisions that are taken and commit the political groupings… including the unconditioned acceptance of the peaceful rotation of power, according to a democratic constitutional legitimacy, through adopting laws for periodic, free and fair elections that produce legislative authorities that defend the principle of the nation being the source of all authorities… provided that an executive authority be set alongside it that recognizes its role as being one of running the affairs of the state in a manner that realizes the interests of the peoples and responds to their demands. All this must be anchored in the legal awareness of the concept of the “state”.

First Requirement

The concept of democracy in the Arab political thought

It has to be recognized, first of all, that democracy in the political and the Arab thought represents a complicated intricacy. This is so since the Arabs and the Muslims need urgently to face several despotic political systems that are based on the rule of the majority that prevailed during the Arab political history, which has placed them in lagging positions in the face of more advanced ones of the rest of peoples and nations. This is so, though the Islamic political thought is essentially based on the principle that authority (mandate) is for the nation, and not for the individual or a group, and that citizenship and faith is the source of the rights and the duties. This thought is also based on the fact that justice is the foundation of governance and equality among all the citizens of the state who are required to do good deeds and avoid abominations… and the adoption of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) and the Madeenah Document as good examples.(1)

Thus, the concept of democracy in the Arab political thought has neglected, in many of its decisive points, the process of the disentanglement of the traditional structures, and the establishment of new values that take into their consideration the liberal experiment that the modern European “state” has established… like considering the political system of governance as being the way of managing the diversity and differences of opinions and interpretations, on the basis that democracy has landmarks that distinguish it from other deliberations in its search for establishing its roots in the cultural life of the societies… without being contingent on the process of importation from the others. This means establishing and tuning it according to the measurements of the legitimate values and interests. As a result of this Arab straying from the requirements of justice, equality, participation and the respect for the other opinion, the Arab political systems failed in realizing the democracy that means the attainment of the national, popular and social goals that the peoples want. And in attempt to overcome this, these systems resorted to the periphery of form without the content… enacting constitutions to which they do not commit, and laws which they do not observe.

The Arab political thought did not benefit from the atmospheres that were made available by the world experiences… that re-discovered the principles of citizenship, political participation and the rule of law.(2) (this Arab political thought) did not depart from the rule of dominance, the rule of the individual and the minority, and tutelage, so as to move towards democracy. This
ignorance highlighted the inability of Arab regime to continue ruling with the former methods, and the increasing possibilities of change which we are seeing in the Arab street, that are calling for upheaval against the traditional authority... an upheaval that allows the growth of a democratic movement that works towards establishing a rule that harmonizes between the citizen and the ruler on the bases of political partnership according to a democratic constitutional legitimacy. This is subject to complex values that are governed by struggles of wills, conflict of interests and the necessity of interests and the necessity of re-structuring the social setup. It also calls for a constitutional transition so as to help the peoples possess the sources of the effective political participation.

This makes it incumbent on us to study the dilemma of the state and the democracy in the Arab homeland, being a part of the states of that which was known as the third world. There are here three main issues. The first deals with the fact that the modern state, and its legal and political institutions, was imposed on the societies from above at the hands of the colonial powers. It is to be noted that even after the struggle of these societies for independence and liberation, the hegemony of the "state" and its institutions remained as they were. Even some of these institutions continued to exercise their existence through violence. Based on this, the approach to the second issue relates to the doubtful legitimacy of the state, after the failure of the state in realizing the political or the economic development. It also was unable to deal with the realities of the social and the cultural pluralism. The third issue lies in the contradiction between the challenge of internal development and the foreign penetration in all aspects. Thus the intricacy of democracy in the Arab homeland can be formulated within a group of challenges. Among these is the question of how to achieve democracy in a satellite state and economy... and consequently the realization of the principle of the rotation of power in a political system whose thought is based on the identification of democracy with liberalism, provided that social justice does not replace democracy which is based on the meaning of freedom. This is so, since the idea of democracy in the Arab political thought has been tied with its preoccupation of the question of Shura during the previous eras which has stressed that Islam stipulates that the nation is the source of authorities. Despite this, the Arab countries did not so far go beyond the transitional period between abandoning Shura and taking in the democracy according to the modernity measurements. 

The Second Requirement

The concept of democracy in the Arab political thought

There is general agreement that the content of the concept of democracy changes with the change of the society. In general, it is considered as a reflection of the feelings of the individuals. Thus they seek to define it irrespective of their intellectual or cultural beliefs or attitudes. Nonetheless, those engaged in political thought believe that there are two concepts, and applications of democracy.

First

The Western system that ties democracy with the concept of individual freedom within the framework of the capitalist society that calls for the necessity of commitment to legal equality for all individuals, on one side, and on the other side, the non-intervention of the official authority in the respect of the personal opinion and life, and its stoppage at known and exact limits. This has been achieved by adopting a mechanisms that guarantees fair and transparent elections, the freedom of forming political parties and unions, giving freedom of expression to the press, guaranteeing the independence of the judicial system, so as to establish what is called the democratic political system.

Second

The Marxist socialist system that transcended the Western bourgeois concept through uncovering the tie between the democratic political system and the mode of the capitalist production. This means connecting these two social elements... which has been neglected by the western concept.

The Marxists did not consider democracy a fake idea, but it is real and true despite its shortcomings. This is due to its rejection of the despotic regimes, and that democracy means liberation from the authority of the economic laws in absolute meaning. Marks called for replacing private ownership with collective ownership by the producers which guarantees liberation from commodity plundering, which the westerners called for when they made the economic laws substantive ones as if they are natural laws.

The Arab political thought has been devoid, in many
cases, of the components of the bourgeois democracy and the means of exercising it. Legal equality was not a feature of the Arab systems that tried to remove the concept of “the docile who follows a sect”, and replace it with the concept of the “Arab citizen”. They sought this more than their endeavors to complete the components of democracy, since the Arab political system was preoccupied with the adoption of the principle of “Arab nationalism” instead of the “Islamic nation”. This did not materialize due to the special historical circumstances, contrary to the historical experiment that formed democracy in the West which was weaved by economical, social, political and ideological conflicts... in which the feudalist class and the absolute monarchy clashed with the bourgeois, backed by the whole people and the organized working classes. The circumstances in the Arab world were completely different. Capitalism arose at the sidelines of he world economic system to which this world belongs.\(^{6}\) The Arab capitalism was forced as a result of a class coalition between the ruling Arab class and the foreign capital which stood as a barrier in the way of the maturity of the democratic awareness, and prevented the flourishing of the economic, social and political battles that lead to democracy.

The political analysts attribute this to the fact that the Arab bourgeoisie was not born out of the popular quarters that are distant from the authority, as was the case in Europe.\(^{7}\) And if we look at the phenomenon of the protests across the various Arab political systems, we find that these exist in all the democratic and the non-democratic systems. It usually seeks in the first to call the attention of the systems to the negatives and the social injustices which leads to the improvement of its performance, and maybe renewal of the elites. In the second, it often leads to the deepening of the crisis of the political systems which causes them towards resistance due to their inability to respond to the demands of the protesters. These systems consider the protesters as challengers and threatners. Accordingly, they work often to respond to the social demands of the individuals as a tricky maneuver in an effort to carry on some changes in the structure of the relationship between the two parties. This does not lead to the democratic development or the political openness.\(^{8}\) The western democracies are built on the pillars of political participation, accompanied by the establishment of a national fully-integrated self-centered capitalistic economic edifice. The Arab societies ventured into the dilemma of the bourgeoisie and the socialist concepts of democracy, on one side, and the dilemma of the Salafiah (Heritage) and alienation, on the other hand. This is in addition to the disconcerted relationship between the problem of democracy and the problem of nationalism. Add to this the hegemony of the Arab political systems and their problem in defining the term of the sovereignty of the nation and the sovereignty of the people, with their attending legal consequences. They have ignored this and looked to themselves as being the sole giver. Thus it began to talk about the personal interest of the governance, ignoring that its very existence is to serve the people and running its public affairs. It has to realize that democracy requires two correlative matters: the independence of the individuals vis-à-vis the authority, and their possession of their freedom to determine themselves the system of their common life.\(^{9}\) They also ignored the recognition of democracy as is established in the international political mind. These systems ignored the attending impacts of the people, and were mistaken in realizing the meaning of the obligatory representation that arose from the contractual relationship between the mandatory and the authorized representative. They began to dispense with the affairs of the first to the benefit of the second. They ignored that the representative or the agent must be connected with the elector or the mandatory, and that going outside this framework is subject to accountability that may reach the point of dismissal.\(^{10}\) These systems tampered with the rule of delegation that states that the delegator keeps his right as an original owner. These systems kept silent regarding the separation of authorities, and allowed the hegemony of the executive authority over the legislative authority (the authority of the people). It even made the first as the master of the second, not by the power of the first, but also the feebleness of the second that exchanged the total interests of the mandators for few Dirhams, in which it sold the public interest so as to attain private interests. Mohammad Abid Al-Jabiri attributed the absence of democracy from the political scene on the political (governance and its bases) and the ideological (in the Arab national project) levels, to the fact that the national thought which the authority adopted has postponed democracy under the pretext of the struggle for independence and the alleged and aggravated unity.\(^{11}\) This was followed by the presentation of the idea of socialism.

Thus the national agenda (thought and practice) became confined to the issues of liberation and getting rid
of subordination, which rendered this thought devoid of the treatment that the questions of democracy, human rights and citizenship deserve. Accordingly, a terrible retreat affected the decisive political issues to the point that many “nationalists” have supported totalitarian systems that claimed “progressiveness”\(^{(12)}\).

These systems stood against the Marxist and communist currents under the pretext that these are means that the bourgeoisie class uses to maintain their control over the toiling classes. Thus it was able to collide with the Arab liberalism on the basis that it adopts European modernity. Accordingly, it concluded by calling for the postponement of democracy. This was correlative with the call of the Salafists who say that the western democracy assigns power to the people, whereas governance should be to Allah\(^{(13)}\).

Within another context, the Arab political systems has agreed to postpone democracy under several pretexts, like:

- **First**
  
  The popular political non-maturity.

- **Second**
  
  Protection of the national unity since, in its view, political pluralism represents a danger to this unity.

- **Third**
  
  The necessity of paying attention to the economic development.

- **Fourth**
  
  The pride that results from feeling that the Arab political systems contain in their structure special mechanisms that make them needless of democracy, since that Arab societies have a particularity that must be respected, which means keeping away from the proper standards of democracy\(^{(14)}\).

The Second Discourse

**Accountability and transparency in the Arab democratic experiment**

The political literature is in agreement that holding to account, accountability and transparency are the first and basic foundations of democracy at all political, economic, administrative and judicial levels. In recognition of the importance of accountability, all political systems, even the autocratic and despotic ones, profess to subscribe to it. The sole ruler is keen on holding to account those officials who follow him or are tied to him. The democratic systems comprise a wide range of the control institutions, which alone are charged with the political accountability and its means.

In addition, the legislative authority therein limit the authority of the ruler and the executive authority and curtail its pervasiveness through questioning it and holding it to account.

And in order to fathom the question in the Arab experiment, we have to approach it according to the following requirements:

**The First requirement: the imported, the inherited, and the authoritarian innate in the Arab system\(^{(15)}\)**

The Arab state has adopted the system of the constitutional importation, as is the case of importing the economic, administrative, and legal systems from the outside. Yet it did not produce the product that was made by the western political system. Thus an idea was proposed to double between the imported and the inherited which resulted in an abnormal political thought. The reason lies in not taking the concept of democracy according to its proper measurement. This is so despite the similarity of the models which were expressed by the constitutional text, and the presence of the designated authorities and the existence of the political participation, control and accountability. In reality, the Arab societies has lived, and still live, in a state of fear from the authority that governs them… contrary to the western societies in which the people and the authority are both subject to the principle of the rule of law, which has been applied in the Arab system on the individuals only. The Arab authority has possessed all means of power after it legitimized this possession, and exploiting the fact that the Arab society is haunted by the fear of the past and the present under the cloak of “a rational person does not antagonize the ruler and do not encroach on his authorities since his punishment is merciless”. The reason lies in the fact that the imported Arab constitutions-despite their contents of signs of rights and freedoms-have entrenched the authorities of the ruler, on the basis of the heritage of his absolute power that emanate from the past. He began to silence people from demanding their freedoms and rights which has become at his beck and call.

Thus, any reading of the Arab constitution will reveal that it is far away from the content of the western state in drawing the shape and nature of the state. thus the Arab state became confused after it deserted the system that came from the past-since it did not adopt its good aspects- and did not adopt from the present that which
should be.\(^{(16)}\)

We have even distorted our understanding of authority in Islam away from its proper content. Since the onset of the Ommayid Caliphate, we began to interpret Al-Sharia (Islamic law) to suit the inclination of the ruler. We have strayed from the core of the Islamic call that went strongly and clearly towards leaving it to the people to choose their ruler. In affirmation of this, the Islamic texts were silent regarding the details of the relationship between the individual and the ruling political authority, nor his role in its selection. But it laid down a general framework that is capable of general comprehension… that is the principle of the Shura (consultation). Even with this, the modern Arab state was unable to co-exist with this idea of Shura. On the contrary, it opened the dialogue around the meaning of democracy and accepted some presentations that charged it with infidelity on the basis that it is an industry that came from the infidel west.

Even the process of selection did not completely endure. Despite the dedication of the Orthodox Caliphs for this process, yet we have abandoned it during the Ommayid state and after that which followed. As for the modern state, we did not benefit from this process of selection to the point that it became difficult, if not impossible, to talk about free, fair or transparent elections, or a sound and successful parliamentary life. The Arab “State” put obstacles in front of the process of establishing political parties. These were either prevented, or were marginalized or weak, or were summarized in the party of the ruler who drew all policies according to his interests or his goals in survival and the continuation of acquiring more gains.

What calls for questioning is that many circumstances through which the Arab societies have passed and assigned them the crisis of fear, have been endured by the western societies. Yet the latter were able, in not a long time, to get rid of this fear. We have living examples of this in Italy and Germany, for instance.\(^{(17)}\) We have seen that the western state has accomplished all the requirements of democracy, whereas the Arab state became engaged in building itself within the framework of the “security-curacy” the political security mentality. This was done when the virtues of the political and economic modernity among the members of the society were ignored.

This constituted a huge impediment to the process of transition, change and development in the Arab situations. Within this framework, which many of its components came as a natural result to the tenth revolutionary conditionality, the ruler became drowned in the term “the disease of authority” after he caused his “people” to understand that they owe him obedience and following, since he is their savoir. And in order to preserve his gains, the Arab political system maximized the role of the security apparatus and made them the substitute of the party, the government and the civil society. And in order to tighten their grip, these apparatus began to practice violence which caused the Arab state to drift further away from democracy and more towards despotism. Here a number of legitimate questions are posed:

1- Is there a relationship between tyranny and the unscientic mode of the Arab thinking?

2- Has “Authority” been isolated from the “people” in the Arab homeland?

3- Has the “Arab state” become unfulfilled to accommodate the term “state” legally? This means that for a state to become a “state” - according to the legal concept of democracy- there must exist a region, people, governing authority that is elected by the people, and be sovereign.

4- Does the ruler or the “ruling elites” have a direct interest in despotism and keeping away from democracy, so as to maintain tyranny?

Any attempt to answer these questions necessitates conducting dialogues regarding the cultural, religious and political dimensions in the Arab sphere. It must, by necessity, seeks to get rid of the burden of the “past” and heading towards the “present” that pushes forwards towards the future. This means removing the “holiness” from the heritage and subjecting it to scientific discussion. This lifts off the monopoly of the truth by the temporal interpretations that led to ascribing legitimacy to those who have owned the right of decision-making instead of the legitimate ones.\(^{(18)}\) They have resorted to one aspect of the metaphysical to assign this legitimacy to the authority. Some of them have even enlisted religion to allow their tyranny, while others exploited the need of the people to security, and thus based their absolute authority on this.

The second requirement: the holding to account of the Arab “Authority”

The question of accountability at all its levels in the Arab world raises several questions that form the general framework of this issue. Among these are:

1- Is there a real accountability to the Arab authority?
This is the practice that is followed by the modern democratic “state”, which at the same time has been neglected by the Arab “state”. And in order to facilitate the hegemony of the executive branch over the legislative branch, the first began to formulate its constitutions in a way that legitimizes her haughtiness, which represents a clear violation of all aspects of democracy. In order to overcome this state of affairs, and surmount the impediments of the political development, so as to enter the circle of democratic transformation in the Arab homeland, the actions of the executive authority in the Arab “state” must be subjected to accountability through enacting strict and precise legislations and laws, submitting a group of periodic compulsory reports, and compelling it to answer the questions and inquiries regarding the performance of its workings. Accordingly, the existence of a parliament that is elected in a free, fair, direct and transparent way, coupled with the existence of an effective and independent judicial authority, will lead towards the rise of a proper democratic transformation, based on the principle of the separation of powers. This will render the Arab “state” capable” of facing the obstacles that stand in front of the process of accountability, like:

1. The absence of a strategic, clear, scientific and precise vision for accountability and combating corruption due to Mis-administration and mishandling, which prevents the achievement of a perfect process of calling to account.

2. Allowing the control of the executive authority over the legislative authority, which means the absence or weakness of the control system, through promulgation of legislations that allow the executive authority to supersede all authorities, including the legislative authority. Thus it (the executive authority) becomes the commanding, legislating and implementing one at the same time. This weakens the legislative authority which is the rightful authority to conduct the accountability and which has accepted this marginalization on its part.\(^{(19)}\)

3. The weakness of producing the data relating to corruption and deviation, and the inability of the official establishments to exercise the skill of uncovering corruption.

4. The weakness of the qualified cadres that lead the process of control and calling to account.

5. The absence of the political will to activate the process of control and accountability, as well as the

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2- What are the reasons of the absence of accountability?
3- Is this because of the absence of a comprehensive vision for control and accountability?
4- Or is it due to the absence of the culture of accountability?
5- Or is it the a result of the feebleness of the accountability-regulating institutions?
6- Or that corruption has been transformed to institutions that are above one word?
7- Or the non-existence of the desire, intent and will to accountability?

These and other questions constitute a good introduction for the study of the dilemma of the holding of the authority to account in the Arab homeland, the activation of the higher control bodies over public finances, in the beginning, and then over the rest of the activities and practices of the state. The International Organization of the higher systems of control over Public Funds (intosai) has defined - in the second article of its statute-general control as being “any high body, irrespective of its name, the means of its formation and organization, that exercises under the law the high supervision over the public finances of the state… in an independent manner… and exercises also judicial or non-judicial tasks”.

Within this context, transparency, which is the basis of questioning, control and accountability, is generally considered as being the most important pillar for any democratic system. Should this pillar disappear?, the political system must have strayed off the right path, and veered into corruption, chaos, illegitimate gain and non-accountability, and consequently the fall of the state. In order to avoid all this, there must exist complimentary relationship that is founded on mutual supervision among the three branches of governance. Each branch must be subjected to control and accountability, whether at the levels of the institution or the individuals. This applies particularly to the executive branch which is tasked-through its various organs - with the running of the facilities of the state, caring for the citizens, supervising public funds and overseeing the implementation of the laws. Thus subjecting it to control and accountability becomes very important so as to assure good performance and implementation or what is known as good governance. Assigning the legislative branch the task of supervising the executive branch emanates from the fact that the legislative branch represents the nation, which is the source of powers.
inability of the prevailing atmosphere of the Arab political system to develop standards, and consequently, higher systems for control and accountability.

6- The keenness of the Arab political system on narrowing the range of the jurisdictions of its control system, so as to be limited to deal with the small corruption, and refrainment from dealing with the large corruption that is clutching the higher authorities in the state organs. This is done through establishing false entities to refer the transitions of the official organs to them... thus the holders of the higher positions are distanced from accountability.

7- Equivocation (double entendre) and secrecy of the reports of the control systems under the pretext of marinating security and non divulgence of secrets.

8- Despite the repeated cases of abusing and harming democracy and transparency, the Arab accountability comes often after the occurrence of these offenses without taking into consideration measures to affect fortification.

9- The Arab political systems did not follow the track that was traversed by the western democratic systems regarding the rise of the control systems. It arose in the second through the legislative councils, whereas the Arab systems distanced themselves from this foundation which is based on the popular will. In addition, the Arab constitutions assigned the tasks of the legislative authority to specific persons (in most cases) by the executive authority, directly or indirectly. Thus the supervision systems arose out of an authority that is not the authority of the people, which is represented (supposedly) by the legislative authority.

10- The “constitutional” intricacy in the Arab political system is one of the strong self-imposing crises, as one of the impediments of political development, and consequently the realization of the mature and sound democracy. This means that it is necessary to consider the constitution as the basis of the relationship between the governed and the governor, which is the opposite of what is going on in the Arab “state”. The ruling elites, upon reaching authority, refused the constitutional restraints on their authority. Thus, they refused the accountability of the people to them or their governments.

Here we fall in the sin of the violation of the institutions of the national governance, the weakening of the sources of the legitimacy of the state that will inevitably leads to its collapse. Here, we have to note that the Western “state” has also suffered from a shortage in the levels of the sought democracy, but it has agreed to abide by the rules of the political game that established roots at its communities since the end of the second world war, despite being exposed to some Shakeups (Reaganism and Thatcherism). Accordingly, this state advanced in its democratic movement until it arrived at advanced formulas of marinating civil rights and protecting the basic freedoms of the individuals. And in order to approach the vision, we refer ourselves to some ideas regarding the paradox of the constitution in the Arab system. Among this are:

1- The non-existence of a single Arab constitution that guarantees “the right to life”, even in a general way or out of principle. These constitutions remained silent about the details of this right and dealt with if from the angle of public pardon and private pardon.

2- Only four Arab constitutions provide guarantees for the unrestrained freedom of thought or opinion. The rest subjects this right to terms of regulation according to the law.

3- Though the Arab constitutions, in total, guarantee the freedom of forming associations and unions in their social or professional concept, yet they place restraints that increase in severity as soon as these associations come close to the political boundaries.

4- A number of the Arab constitutions are silent regarding torture or other forms of cruel or degrading treatment. Thus the technique of the accountability of the authority in the Arab homeland remains scattered, not only at the level of understanding, but also at the level of the restraints of the laws, constitutions, systems and legislations.

As a result of the afore-mentioned, those engaged in evaluating the Arab democracy and laying down indicators for measuring it, find themselves facing a special case of democracy. Some of it may have been associated with the concept of Shura, some others were tied with concepts that are based on non-isolation ascribing the attribute of sacredness on it. This will be the subject of the third discourse.

The Third Discourse
The measurement indicators of democracy in the Arab homeland

In the discussion of any measurement indicators for
any social component in the states, the tendency goes often towards stating the challenges. As for the measurement indicators of democracy, the greatest challenge lies in asking whether there exists a typical model for the proceeding of the society towards the democratic system, the nature of the indicators and the state so as to affect this transition, whether these conditions are just historical accident only, and do these indicators measure the economic, social and political components collectively or individually? And in order to approach the indicator in the Arab world, the researchers\textsuperscript{(23)} are of the view that the measurement indicators of democracy must be determined according to the following classifications:

1- The political indicators which comprise the questions of the constitution, the elections, the position of the judicial bodies, the rule of law, the parties, the civil society organizations, freedom of the media, public rights and public freedoms, the right to citizenship and equality, transparency, control, accountability.

2- The economic indicators that include all the legislations, policies and measures that contribute towards liberating the Arab national economy and allowing it to function efficiently according to the market mechanisms. This facilitates the process of the prosperity of this economy, which makes the process of integration into the world economy an easy matter.\textsuperscript{(24)} The indicators regarding the performance of the Arab economy found that it revolves around oil basically. They also relied on the production average in the world economy.

3- The social indicators (the pointers of social reform). These include, for example, the indicator of social marginalization, the quality of life, social stability, the situations of the social categories, the empowerment of women.

4- The measurement indicators of the cultural reform. It includes a study for the cultural cohesion, the rationalism and cohesion of culture, the state of the society of knowledge, the media performance.

5- The indicators of the transformations of the Arab civil society.

Among these are the indicators of institutionalism regarding the ability of adaptation, independence, contracting and cohesion as well as the legal and the political indicators.\textsuperscript{(25)}

The report was issued by the Arab Reform Observatory for measuring democratic transformation in the Arab homeland, at the conclusion of the conference that was held in the library of Alexandria (1-3, March 2006) as the first theoretical framework for the first integrated Arab study of the Arab reality and the democratic transformations therein. This is because it was based on a complimentary group of the political, economic, social and cultural indicators that is founded on the fact that the formulation of the indicators is the best way to measure the changing situations.\textsuperscript{(26)}

According to the conclusions that were arrived at by the Arab researchers, there exists a strenuous effort to draw indicators, determinants and foundations to measure the progress of political reform in the Arab states. The researchers (led by Dr. Mohammad Al-Saeed Idrees) stated that these foundations are represented in the theories of challenge and response, in addition to the methodology of constructing the scenarios of the future. As for the challenges, the researchers (in the sessions of the third conference of Arab reform in the library of Alexandria during the period 1-3, March 2006) agreed that there are internal challenges that are concentrated in two main challenges. These are the challenge of reform, and the challenge of security and stability. They must reach the point of reaction among them so as to achieve the desired goal. There are also external challenges that are represented in the repercussions of the international interventions in the Arab region that took the form of occupation or the claim of supplying democracy. The outputs for these inputs are based on the following indicators.

- The constitutional reform. This deals with issuing new constitutions or amending others.

- Legislative reform. It is represented in establishing parliamentary or legislative councils, or giving the existing ones, authorities and abilities to function. And before this, the improvement of the election laws and the guaranteeing of transparency and integrity therein. Since it is rightful to take into consideration the prevailing social, cultural, intellectual particularities in each Arab state, it becomes impossible to draw one measurement indicator. To approach this, the methodology of typology must be embarked upon. This calls for dividing the Arab states into homogeneous groups, citing as an example the states that have witnessed major developments in the activity of the legislative authority, like Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt. Thus the standard that democracy must be measured within this group must be high. There is a group of states that has tried to develop the concept of the
legislative authority like Oman, Tunisia, Qatar, Bahrain and the Emirates that adopted the method of election instead of appointment, totally or partially. With these states the measure must be less high than the first group. The legislative experiment in Palestine, Lebanon and Yemen was a quiet one. (27) Thus they did not encounter a difficulty in maintaining the jurisdictions of the legislative authority, as much as the political demands that they were confronted with, which impacted on the legislative authority… which came, to be to some extent, a follower of the governing authority more than its being a representative of the people. In order to approach the measurement indicators of democracy in the Arab homeland, especially that which deals with the political reform, it has to be realized at the outset that these indicators are numerous, since they relate to the full re-formulation of the structure of the political system… beginning with the constitution, and proceeding to public freedoms, elections, parties, civil society organizations, independence of the judiciary. We should not ignore the fact that the real democracies differ in their forms and features, while remaining constant in their essence, among these the right to accountability, decentralizations, peaceful rotation of authority, humane dealing of the authority with the citizens. The international foundations have worked on laying down the measurement indicators of democracy in the world. Among these foundations are the German Bertelsmann Foundation that drew standards regarding democracy and efficiency in local government.

The Freedom House Foundation laid down a checklist to monitor the development of democracy worldwide. Its standards included the pluralism of parties, protection of competitiveness, freedom of public balloting to the adults, regular elections, secret balloting, guaranteeing the access of all political parties to the electoral process. The Economic Intelligence Unit adopted the indicator of freedom as an important constituent to democracy, despite its insufficiency. It adopted several standards for the measurement, like the existence of free competitive elections, guaranteeing civil liberties, the level of the rationality of the governmental decisions, the recognition that the acquisition of the political system of its legitimacy is based on following a democratic political culture, the necessity of the political participation. (28) John Gerring (from the section of political sciences in the university of Boston) presented an historical and multi-dimensional formulation to measure democracy. It is based on a basic question. Can democracy be measured and compared across states and across time? In answering this he simplified his theory by basing it on eleven elements, like national sovereignty, public freedoms, independence of the elected officials, participation in elections and political parties. (29) In studying the indicators of the measurement of democracy in the Arab homeland, we find ourselves confronted with several standards among which are the election of the head of the state and the house of representatives, the political parties, balloting, freedom of the press, religious freedoms, human rights, political development. Saliba Sarsar has found that the political system in the Middle East region still tends to lean towards despotic rule that has obstructed the process of democratic transformation and has veered far away from the pointers of political participation. (30) Based on these measurement indicators, democracy in the Arab homeland has been taken according to:

1- The electoral process. The existence of free, fair and transparent elections is almost non-existent, and, at best, rare in many, if not all, Arab states. This applies to all levels.

2- Civil liberties. These are the basic pillar and the vital component of democracy. These liberties comprise the protection of the basic human rights. Can we find these exercised in the Arab political system? Despite the existence of many constitutional, legal and legislative provisions that glorify these freedoms and call for protecting them, yet the Arab political system has completely failed in applying these provisions or adopting them.

3- Human rights. These have become the subject of every humanitarian dialogue nowadays. The Arab “state” has failed in securing these rights, though all the Arab political systems have claimed to be committed to the international documents, treaties, conventions and regimes that call for the preservation of human rights. Several of these systems have even established local organizations for human rights. The popular motions that sweep the Arab street since the beginning of the twentieth century indicate the failure of the Arab “state” to apply the principles of human rights.

4- Political participation. This is considered a necessity and a central matter in the democratic empowerment of the human societies. As for the Arab world, there exists a clear rupture between the authority and the citizen. The executive authority in the Arab political system has assumed hegemony over the rest of the authorities, especially the legislative authority, the
legitimate representative of the people.

5- Press freedoms. Studies and reports \(^{(31)}\) have demonstrated that all Arab states have exercised prior censorship on the newspapers and the information media, in one form or another. Most, if not all of them, have enacted freedom-depriving laws (imprisonment) against the journalists, in addition to the existence of the penalty of precautionary detention. Third of the Arab states have no code of honor for the press profession. In addition, governments possessed numerous newspapers and used them as official media means for them. Despite all of this, the political movement that pushes towards the democratic transformation began to occupy a wide area in the Arab homeland. Among this is the strive of several Arab states to establish political projects that seek reform, in addition to the establishment of centers to measure democracy, like that in Egypt (the Arab Reform Observatory) or Jordan (the Amman centre for the studies of human rights), and Palestine (the Palestinian centre for political and surveying research), or in a group of the Arab states (the Arab network for the study of democracy), or Lebanon (the observatory of democracy, the observatory of the societal peace, and the information observatory.

**CONCLUSION**

Despite the availability of large group of the measurements indicators of democracy in the world, the Arab democracy was unable so far to crystallize constant standards that can be relied upon to measure the Arab democratic level. Thus the researchers opted to crystallize measurable indicators in the wake of their inability to measure the basic preludes, like the existence of strong and public establishments, the respect for the rights and freedoms, the rule of law, equality, social justice. And in order to solve this dilemma, measurement indicators were used that depend on the degree of the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, elections, parties, freedom of the media, and other standards that can be relied upon as a basis for an advanced reading in the future for the Arab democracy.

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(16) Ibid, same page.

(19) For example, and not exclusively, the deputies in the Jordanian eleventh house of representatives (1989-1993) submitted (650) questions to the government, which answered less than (300) of them. Only (18) interpellations were submitted, and (18) orders only for a general debate. During the twelfth house of representatives (1993-1997) around (900) questions were submitted, and the government answered around (400) only. Only one interpellation and (17) requests for general debate were submitted. The thirteenth house (1997-2001) submitted around (550) question, and the government answered less than (350). (8) interpellations and (8) requests for general debate were submitted. During the fourteenth house (2003-2007) (800) questions were submitted, and the government answered less than (470) one. One interpellation only and (11) requests for general debate were submitted. Mustafa Abdul Karim Al-Adwan, (2008) “the competitive ability of the parliament and its role in reform and development”, Amman, page178.

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المؤشرات والمقايس التي تقاس بها الديمقراطية العربية

عمر حمدان حضروسي

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث قضية من أهم القضايا التي تواجه المجتمعات العالمية، خاصة العربية منها، ألا وهي قضية الديمقراطية، لأنها أصبحت هي المؤشر الحقيقي الوحيد الذي يقياس بها الأنظمة السياسية من حيث صلاحيتها وشرعتها.

وحتى يمكن البحث عن مقاير مسألة مؤشرات الديمقراطية العربية وقياساتها فقد أنشأ فرضية تقوم على أساس أن آليات المحاسبة والمرقبة مرتبطتا ارتباطاً كلما تحقق وحدة إرادة سياسية، وللتحقق من هذه الفرضية فقد رأى البحث أن عليه أن يأخذ بنهج النظم ومنهج صناعة القرار ومنهج النخب السياسية، وذلك في سياق قراءة تاريخية للتجربة الديمقراطية في فترة الدراسة.

فقد جاءت الدراسة في ثلاثة مباحث أولها مقومات الديمقراطية في الفكر السياسي العربي، وثاني تحدث عن مستوى المساواة والشفافية في التجربة الديمقراطية العربية. أما المبحث الثالث فقد عرض لمؤشرات قياس الديمقراطية في الوطن العربي، أما في الخاتمة فقد دعا البحث إلى ضرورة الالتفاف على الأنظمة السياسية العربية إلى مؤشرات قياس الديمقراطية التي استقرت عليها الأنظمة السياسية المقدمة.

الكلمات الدالة: المؤشر الحقيقي، الديمقراطية العربية.

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