

## فشل الديمقراطية التداولية في العالم العربي: منهج تحليلي

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## ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل ومناقشة الديمقراطية التداولية، وبيان واقع الديمقراطية في الوطن العربي ومحدداتها التي تحول دون تفعيلها، تتبع أهمية هذه الدراسة من مجموعة واسعة من حالات الفشل في تطبيق الديمقراطية التي شهدتها العالم العربي. واستعرض الباحث مفهوم الديمقراطية التداولية وأبنيتها الأساسية، وارتباطها بالممارسة السياسية وتوسيع الديمقراطية، وحددت الفروض بما يتوافق مع أهداف البحث. وخلص البحث إلى أن الديمقراطية التداولية في الوطن العربي، هي مقارنة بعيدة عن الواقع، وهذا البعد يتموضع في عجز واضح عن تطبيق الديمقراطية الحقيقية كقاعدة للانطلاق نحو الديمقراطية التداولية، الأمر الذي يتطلب تغييرات في المنظومة الفكرية والممارساتية وفي الأبنية والمؤسسات، بما تشمل إيجاد إطار دستوري قانوني، وبمأسسة حقيقية للمشاركة السياسية وتوسيعها، ونشر للنهج التداولي بين المواطنين على المستوى المحلي على الأقل، وصولاً إلى الديمقراطية التداولية تجسيدا للمصلحة العامة على اعتبار أن الديمقراطية التداولية لا تبرز إلا في إطار حكم ديمقراطي يحترم حقوق الإنسان.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الديمقراطية، الديمقراطية التداولية، الوطن العربي.

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ميكانيكية، إلا بإذن خطي من الناشر  
نفسه

**The Failure of Deliberative Democracy in the Arab World: An Analytical Approach Dr,****Tareq Zyad Abu Hazeem**

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**Abstract**

This research aims to analyze the failure of deliberative democracy and clarify the reality of democracy in the Arab World and the determinants which hinder its realization. The importance of this study stems from the wide range of cases of failure to implement democracy that the Arab World has witnessed. The researcher reviews the concept of deliberative democracy, its basic structures, and its link to political practice and the expansion of democracy. Hypotheses were formed in line with the research objectives. The research concludes that deliberative democracy in the Arab World is far from reality. This situation stems from the inability to implement real democracy in the region to launch deliberative democracy. Revising this situation would require changes in intellectual and practice systems, structures, and institutions. Also, it requires creating a constitutional and legal framework, an actual institutional vehicle for political participation, an expansion of citizen participation, and dissemination of the deliberative approach among citizens, at least at the local level. These changes would lead to the rise of deliberative democracy for the public because deliberative democracy does not emerge except within the framework of a democratic government that respects human rights.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Deliberative democracy, Arab World

### Introduction:

Political thinkers strive to find solutions to improve government conditions and their legitimacy in enshrining the people's will and serving the public's interest. Some political thinkers have developed new concepts in democracy through a practice that improves the quality of real democracy and makes it expressive of the citizens' general will. As a result, Western political thinkers have created the term "deliberative democracy." This term refers to a phenomenon that simulates, even remotely, 'direct' democracy, which is difficult to achieve because of many obstacles, one of which is the continuously increasing population size. Thus, deliberative democracy is a practical measure to activate the role of informal agents (citizens and civil society organizations) concerned with the public interest.

Ironically, despite the attempts to create democracy in some countries, including the Arab countries, most of the studies on democracy in the Arab World indicate a deficit in the democratic situation prevailing in the region (Miller & Martini, 2013). The region has not yet become democratic (Elhousseini, 2016). The democratic situation has not exceeded superficial acts (Sawani, 2014) (Al-Zubaidi, 2009). The political situation and structures prevailing in the Arab World reflect its lack of the requirements for and values of democracy; these values include equality, freedom, diversity, justice, and others. This lack results from political crises mainly related to the absence of the will to practice democracy. Matter that has caused failure in the political reform process because of the lack of political stability, the absence of a rotation of power through elections, the legal enshrinement of power based on individualism, the ineffectiveness of intermediary structures such as parties and civil community organizations, failure to allocate resources, and many others. This reflects a democracy deficit resulting from the absence of a concept of public interest and the dominance of the interests of authority and its survival despite the public demands for democracy in the Arab World.

Increasing interest in applying the theory and practice of deliberative democracy to new and diverse political contexts leads us to ask whether the discussion is a universal political practice. While deliberation is obviously a universal capability, its character differs significantly across time and space, a somewhat reasonable cultural variation. We organize an intersubjective conception of culture to explore these differences. Culture meets deliberation, where publicly accessible meanings, symbols, and norms shape the way political actors engage one another in discourse. A maximum understanding of political deliberation needs comparative and historical studies of contexts. We briefly look at one case from Egypt and provide shorter illustrations from Europe, India, Japan, Madagascar, the United States, Yemen, and elsewhere. Cross-cultural learning can enrich the theory of deliberative democracy and give the democratic theory a universal reach.

This research investigates the reality of deliberative democracy in the Arab World after reviewing the reality of democracy in the region. It also highlights the determinants that prevent the implementation of deliberative democracy. This paper is in six parts. The first part introduces the research methodology. The second reviews related studies in the literature. The third highlights the theoretical concept of deliberative democracy. The fourth identifies the reality of democracy in the Arab World. The fifth analyzes deliberative democracy in the Arab World and the extent to which it is realistic to think the region might become more democratic. Finally, the sixth outlines the findings of the research and provides recommendations.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Research Problem:**

Deliberative democracy is a practical exercise of the theory of democracy that considers it an advanced stage that reflects a state of general satisfaction with the performance of the political system. Given the status of the Arab World in terms of the reality of democracy in it, it suffers from a deficit that prevents democracy from being established as an approach or as a course of action to its political system. Therefore, the problem examined by this study lies in the investigation and analysis of a fundamental problem, which is the following:

What determinants have led to failure in consolidating democracy and deliberative democracy in the Arab World?

### **Research Hypotheses:**

- A- The absence of democracy in the first place necessarily leads to the absence of deliberative democracy in the Arab world.
- B- The reality of deliberative democracy in the Arab region is that there are obstacles and limitations to applying democracy. Therefore, “the opportunity for Arab political systems to embody these concepts depends on their ability to achieve democracy.”

### **Research Objectives:**

- A- Identifying the content of deliberative democracy as an advanced approach in political thinking.
- B- Revealing the causes of the democracy deficit in the Arab region, its limitations, and the region’s failure to achieve deliberative democracy.

### **Research Methodology:**

This research project base its methodology on a descriptive and analytical method. It describes the theoretical frameworks that illuminate the reality of the determinants or limitations of democracy in the Arab World. The analysis is then related to deliberative democracy as a sought-after goal.

### **Literature Review:**

Several studies have dealt with the concept of democracy, its application, methodology, and deliberative democracy. (Cohen, 2009) aims at framing democratic theory in terms of two models: participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. The study emphasized the importance of the two models in activating the role of public participation in decision-making. This is done through efforts that bring together the public’s values and present a promising form of democracy. The study concluded that democracy is a political arrangement that links the society’s practice of power to rationality.

(Kanara, 2004) aims at studying the theories of deliberative democracy that deal with deliberation as a process of decision-making. It also investigated the failure to estimate the benefits of such deliberations because of the commentators’ choice to ignore the crucial role of social learning in settling differences by deliberations. This was done by analyzing Turkish public discourse related to Islam. The methodology of the questionnaire implemented in the study revealed the areas of convergence and divergence between speakers and addressees.

(Eriksen & Fossum, 2011) investigate the central pattern of European democratization that emerged parallel to the European Union's organizational formations as a pluralistic system of representative parliamentary government and not as a system of proposed deliberative government intolerant of ethnic nationalities. The study concluded that the European Union founded an incomplete system of representative democracy that was saturated and interrelated with deliberative democracy.

(Elhousseini, 2016) investigates the course of the Arab revolutions considering the continuous calls for democracy after the overthrow of several dictators and after holding seemingly fair elections. The study drew some conclusions related to the future course of events in the region considering the Arab Spring. It concluded that democracy is a practice and form of participation which cannot be limited to the ballot box. Achieving democracy requires overcoming the challenges of authoritarianism and fostering development.

(Al-Zubaidi, 2009) investigates the issue of democracy in the Arab region and the use of authoritarian means to get power and achieve one-party control. His study concluded that a democratic transition would require the gradual implementation of practical solutions for the Arab world's problems. It would be necessary to gradually implement these solutions because of the instability of democratic culture and behavior in the Arab political and social consciousness.

### **Deliberative Democracy:**

Deliberative democracy theory is a normative theory that proposes how democracy can be enhanced. At the same time, it criticizes the institutions that cannot coexist with nor adapt to normative standards in which deliberative democracy is a specific form of participation (Champers, 2003, p. 30) deliberative democracy entails informal discussion between individuals, which leads to consensus and a collective decision on matters that concern them. Reaching a collective decision is based on a change in the participants' minds because of such deliberations. These preferences are not collective but instead are reviewed through a process of ongoing discussion.

The term 'deliberative democracy' can be divided into the deliberative and democratic components. In the deliberative component, it is suggested that decision-making should occur through a presentation held by the participants and for them. This presentation must adhere to the values of rationalism and integrity. In contrast, the democratic component is based on the idea that whoever will be affected by the decision must have the chance to discuss the matter or at least be represented by someone to discuss the matter on their behalf.

The essence of deliberative democracy lies in the idea that citizens not only give their impressions but also talk about their preferences (Wright & Street, 2007, pp. 850-851). Some believe that deliberative democracy indicates a system of government where citizens are free and equal. They are involved in a collective process of discussion and argument within the framework of a participatory constitution. What distinguishes deliberative standards from other interpretations of democracy is that decisions are made not based on collective preferences or strategic concessions between competing interests. Still, they are instead based on public and overt reasons. The notion of 'public reasoning' is the distinctive feature that differentiates deliberative democracy from other forms of democracy.

### **Democracy in the Arab World:**

The historical experience of Arab democracy indicates a decline in the realization of democracy, moving from Shura and elections at the beginning of the Arab Islamic state in the Rashidun era to the inheritance stage in the Umayyad state. This decline has continued despite the Renaissance thinkers' view that there are implications in this experience that entrench the values of democracy through Shura as a theoretical and practical alternative (Alkhazraji,2021). In the post-independence stage and during military coups, traditions of democracy were not established; rather, tyranny prevailed in modern Arab states, as did a failure to address political crises due to non-democratic practices. The Arab Spring was an experience in which the Arab people could not build a viable and sustainable democratic system. Therefore, this democratic deficit and deadlock have factors and determinants that impose themselves on the Arab experience. Accordingly, the determinants that led to the current situation will be investigated. In this regard, the democratic deficit in the Arab region can be attributed to three determinants: the external, economic, and legitimacy determinants.

The Arab state was established with the formation of the Islamic state. Since its inception, it has witnessed inconsistency in the rotation of power. Initially, it adopted the principle of Shura and elections and then changed to one of inheritance. Western theories were then introduced in the context of the Arab practice of politics. The beginning of the Islamic state was an optional model for the rotation of power, particularly during the Al Rashidun era. After 30 years of the era of the four Rashidun Caliphs, the Islamic state with the Umayyads entered a stage of hereditary rule, which continues into the present.

In contrast, some European countries developed government systems via elections within specific institutions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rest of the European countries, which preferred to continue with a monarchical regime, distinguished between the king as a person and ruling as an institution. According to (Hilal & Mossaad, 2010, pp. 14-55), the king heads the authorities and supervises them while the people choose the government through an election process in which political parties compete (Al-Hadhrani, 2006, pp. 468-471).

Discussing democracy in the modern Arab World starts by pointing out that the Arab-Islamic experience in the field of politics started before the region began to clash with the West in the modern era. The practice of democracy in the Arab World has been different from the form and practice of Western liberalism. Although many Arab and Muslim thinkers, especially those calling for reform since the Renaissance, have argued that the Arab-Islamic experience includes sufficient content to confirm the establishment of democratic values and that Shura was presented as a theoretical and practical counterpart to Western liberalism. After its confrontation with the West in the nineteenth century, Arab thinkers discovered liberal democratic ideals and institutions after its direct conflict with the West. (Sawani, 2014, p. 10).

The vulnerability of the modern Arab states and the lack of traditions with democratic dimensions have led to the prevalence of despotism, especially in the absence of transparency. They have also led to administrative and financial corruption in the state's sectors. The process of building the Arab state could not match the independence or revolution of a state and the authoritarian and dictatorial tendencies to run the affairs of the state. It has failed to resolve the political development crises the newly independent states have confronted. These crises have doubled due to non-democratic practices, lack of awareness in developing plans, and problems managing the state (Kadi, 2008, pp. 174-175).



On the eve of the Arab Spring, the Arab World remained the only region untouched by global democratic trends. There were various governing systems in the area, including hybrid regimes (in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Iraq), monarchies, and authoritarian republics which were not entrenched and solid. Scholars, researchers, and political practitioners have developed different theories in addition to statistical and comparative analyses to explain the lack of democracy in the region, with no consensus on which explanation is the most convincing. One of the theories suggests that the Arab World lacks the basic requirements for democracy, like harmony between government, participation, and individual rights. Other theories suggest that Islam or the tribal origins of Arab society have promoted a culture of submission to authority. Another group of theories views the Arab World as unique about its location and as an oil-producing region. Oil revenues go to the state, which has enhanced authoritarianism through aid distribution, bribing potential opponents, and building a repressive security apparatus. Other theories focus on the efforts of foreign forces, especially the United States of America, in sustaining regional stability and protecting Israel. Some other theories suggest that Arab regimes have become brilliant at undermining pressures demanding change, for example, by manipulating secularists and Islamists and inciting them against each other or using the threat of foreign enemies – real or imagined – to distract citizens from their rulers' fragile legitimacy (Levitski and Ziblat, 2018; (Miller & Martini, 2013, p. 9).

Nonetheless, some Arab and Western thinkers challenge the theory that views Islam as reinforcing a culture of submission. They believe that the lack of democracy in the Arab World does not stem from Arabic culture or Islam, but it instead stems from the patriarchal authority seeking legitimacy (Tibi, 2005, p. 93). It is not realistic to think that ethnic differences and lack of appreciation for democracy, religion, or culture are the only obstacles to democracy in the Arab World and not in other countries as well (Diamond, 2010, p. 95).

The new wave of protests, starting with the Arab Spring, has criticized the continuing contradictions of representative democracies. In 2011 and 2012, the movements criticized the corruption of the political elite and political parties and the corruption of democracy itself, which could not manage the economic crises. The slogan "They do not represent us" is linked to the deep criticism of the degradation of representative democracy and the failure of elected politicians in 'the political work' (Porta, 2012, p. 275).

In conclusion, the Arab political systems have experienced several crises, the most important of which has been the crisis of identity or belonging in the sense of cultural fragmentation, the inability to achieve national integration within one single framework, and the participation crisis of a lack of engagement in political and economic decision-making amongst many citizens (Hilal & Mossaad, 2010, p. 21). These are the outcomes of the Arab democratic deficit, with determinants and factors leading to them. The following section discusses these determinants.

### **The Determinant of External Nature:**

The Arab – Israeli conflict and oil wealth are the two main determinants affecting democracy in the Arab World. The Arab regimes use the first determinant as a justification to delay the process of political reform and the implementation of democracy through a national authority that derives its legitimacy from the will of the society to achieve public interest. The second issue represents Western interests because the Arab region enjoys a strategic energy source, which makes supporting the Arab countries a priority for Western powers regardless of the nature of the Arab nations' regimes.

The continuation of the Arab – Israeli conflict justified some Arab political regimes to delay the issues of democracy and political participation. It also provided a rationale for falling short in economic and social development and failing to satisfy the citizens' basic needs. These regimes raised the slogan of confrontation with Israel as a source of political legitimacy. This has led to enforcing authoritarianism and tyranny in the Arab region (Marzuki, 2006, p. 179). The Arab region has become less responsive to the process of democratization because of the interaction between oil wealth, the Arab – Israeli conflict, civil wars, and external intervention related to the geopolitical and economic interests of external powers, especially Western powers (Al Badwi & Makdisi, 2011, p. 89); (Hussain, et al., 2021).

Ironically, after Israel had become a partner in a comprehensive peace process that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations and normalization in different fields, democracies and public freedoms remained pending in some Arab regimes, which continued to use security methods to rule instead of political participation or the fostering of dialogue between citizens of opposing views. Some of these regimes had low levels of pluralism, diversity, and elections that could not meet the expectations of those calling for genuine political participation. This is due to a cultural, political, and social deterioration that has led to a state of cultural degeneration. In such a case, even the prevailing types of democracy, whether with the ruling or the opposition parties, do not express or represent the concept of democracy. On the contrary, those types have become the embodiment of sectarianism or tribalism, or at best marginal groupings that owe their existence to the ruler (Bshara, 2020, pp. 220-300). Such groups have become the majority (Al-Hadhrami, 2006, p. 473).

The political situation of the geography of the Arab region emphasizes the importance of democracy, especially in the presence of oil. Oil attracts the interest of the World's most important countries to the area. The former Soviet Union, the USA, and Europe have granted economic support, security assistance, and political legitimacy to such Arab regimes (Diamond, 2010, p. 101).

Many of the approaches taken towards the Arab democracy deficit result from the semi-mechanical link between the lack of democracy and its low indicators on the one hand and the role of external factors on the other. Although recent studies have given these factors particular importance at the level of the global structure, the justifications given for colonialism, external conspiracies, and foreign intervention, as seen by many Arab analysts, have gone beyond the reasons behind the Arab dictatorship and authoritarianism not to mention the external support the Arab regimes receive if they protect the West's interests (Sawani, 2014, p. 19).

Hence, there was political exploitation of the two issues: the Arab regimes exploited the Palestinian-Israeli issue pretending that their primary mission was to liberate Palestine and confront the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. However, this pretext is a way of throwing dust in the eyes of observers because there has been a radical shift in the attitudes of some Arab regimes that have concluded peace treaties with Israel for many years. Yet, there has still been no change in their stance on achieving democracy. Furthermore, the West has exploited oil for its interest, supporting its allied Arab-producing regimes, even if they do not adopt democracy.



### **The Economic Determinant**

Development and democracy are linked, and the absence of democracy makes it impossible to achieve real development, whose aim is human. Without growth, democracy remains a mere slogan with no content. Since there is a clear connection between development and democracy, the reality of the Arab countries indicates that the Arab governments have not proposed any long-term economic procedures to tackle the causes of the economic and social crises. These crises have led to social revolutions and protests (Arab Organization for Human Rights, 2013, pp. 45-46).

Oil wealth influences the exchange between economic welfare and political freedom. The Rentier State Theory emphasizes this fact. The forces that led to the establishment of autocratic regimes before the oil era did not disappear after the discovery of oil. Undoubtedly, oil wealth is the cornerstone of an authoritarian deal that gave the ruling families extra support to maintain their autocratic rule (Al Badwi & Makdisi, 2011, p. 87). There is a trade-off or exchange process between the authority and the people. The authority provides economic tranquility to discourage citizens from pursuing change in the political system.

Consequently, the economic determinant significantly affects democracy as a pressing factor. This is because the Arab countries do not adopt long-term economic policies that address the fundamental problems which have caused the economic and social crises. This situation has led to the outbreak of revolutions and social protests, which result from the absence of a path for dialogue between the governments and their societies. Furthermore, oil-producing countries have adopted a policy of exchange between economic welfare and political freedom to maintain their autocratic regimes.

### **Political Legitimacy Determinant**

The crisis of legitimacy in the Arab political systems has the following characteristics: the centralization of political power expressed in the concentration of the political, military, and security forces that the head of the state enjoys and the absence of the principle of the separation of powers. These countries are characterized by extreme centralization and authoritarianism. Such countries need to use violence and threat to perform their responsibilities. As a result, the legitimacy of such regimes is based on the use of violence and force rather than the traditional sources of legitimacy. The economic and political failure of the regimes also contributed to weakening the legitimacy of the ruling elites. The Arab political systems do not have clear rules for democratic political actions, eliminating the possibility of power rotation. They do not have a stable ideology; instead, the political work is dominated by personal considerations, which makes the public lose the opportunity for legitimate opposition and the benefits of public employment (Wali, 2005, p. 73).

**The standards of the application of political legitimacy in the Arab World can be summarized as follows:**

#### **A- Legal Standard**

The Arab regimes have provided constitutional and legal frameworks to achieve political openness. Nonetheless, reviewing these frameworks revealed that most are not based on solid ground that will enhance transparency. There needs to be a balance between the legislative and executive authorities. The fact that the administrative authority dominates the legislative

authority neglects the principle of the separation of powers. It emphasizes the weakness and fragility of legislative authority, which is considered the primary active factor in the democratic transition (Kadi, 2008, p. 181).

The unbalanced constitutional structure permitted Arab rulers to gain the power to possess the key to legislative work in addition to presiding over the ministerial councils and directly supervising their work. As a result, executive authorities in Arab countries can control the enactment of legislation and laws related to freedom and fundamental rights, such as election laws, parties' laws, the establishment of associations, organizing gatherings, press and media laws, etc. This is because the executive authority enjoys a high constitutional and political status, allowing it to steer the legislative authority. Remarkably, the elected parliament itself comprises the elected majority loyal to the executive authority (Malki, 2011, p. 9).

### **B- Participation Political Standard**

The autonomous Arab political systems depend on selective repression combined with representation mechanisms such as limited consultation, practicing controlled and divergent elections, and narrowing the arena of political work. This guarantees the survival of such regimes (Diamond, 2010, pp. 99-100).

Arab parliaments suffer, although to different degrees, from modest powers and weak capabilities. They also suffer from the fragility of electoral legitimacy. All Arab parliamentary elections lack integrity, impartiality, and the extensive and responsible participation of the citizens (Malki, 2011, pp. 8-9).

The Arab citizens negatively evaluate the representative councils, whether at the policymaking level or in their communication with the citizens. These councils do not perform their constitutional duties due to losing their genuine concern, whether that concern is about the structure of the political system or the representation of the citizens, or their participation in the government. This has led to weak involvement in the parliamentary elections on the part of the citizens. This, in turn, indicates that the elections are insignificant and unfair (Sawani, 2014, p. 18).

The resulting outcome of weak political participation is that representative councils do not represent Arab citizens. Even though the elections are the only path to legitimacy, they do not produce political elites who voice citizens' aspirations. This has led citizens to refrain from participating in the elections, which results in the election of non-representative councils that do not meet citizens' expectations.

### **C- Political Party Efficacy Standard**

The problem lies in the ineffectiveness of parties and their loss of independence to confront the authorities that dominate all fields of social life. The issue also lies in the unbalanced relationship between the Arab state and different intermediary bodies, such as parties and civil society organizations (BoSadyah, 2005, p. 507). Some obstacles prevent the effectiveness of the intermediary bodies, especially the political parties, from developing a relationship with the public. These obstacles include limited funding for most Arab parties, ineffective and unprofessional media performance because of the political systems' monopoly on the media, restrictions on gatherings and demonstrations, strict legal procedures since the application thereof is complicated, poor political knowledge amongst the masses, which leads provincially

and political isolation, lack of coordination, cooperation, and consultation between the organizations themselves at the national and regional levels, and the impact of deteriorating economic and security conditions on most politically divergent systems in the Arab region (Nouna, 2006, p. 150).

Authority parties in the Arab World want to bring about a transition to a one-party government in their countries. They start by confiscating or restricting other parties to canceling or merging them with competitive parties. Therefore, the party becomes like a ruling family but of different political and social specifications with dictatorial and repressive aspects. Most Arab ruling parties have ensured that they adapt the political work in their countries according to criteria that guarantee the continuation of their authority. As a result, it has become the norm for the ruler to be a member of that party, to be within the inner circles close to the leadership of that party, or even to be a leader in that party (Al-Hadhrami, 2006, p. 472).

Opposition parties pay a high cost whether they boycott or participate in the elections. If they participate in the election or the parliament, they will be criticized by disgruntled voters for participating in a political game that they cannot influence. On the other hand, if they boycott the political game, the elections, or the parliament, they cannot affect politics and will lose their power (Diamond, 2010, p. 100).

Political parties are classified as ineffective due to the slow pace of reform, the decline in confidence in democracy, the absence of parties whose primary concerns are the citizens' interests, and the weakness of the Arab political parties.

### **D- The Effectiveness of Civil Society Standard**

The essence of the problem of Arab civil society lies in the dominance of the state authority over all aspects of social life. This authority monitors and impedes individuals' freedom and social institutions' independence. The Arab state dominates all aspects of social life in a comprehensive framework (Belaïour, 2006, p. 128).

The state seeks to dominate civil society institutions through various mechanisms, the most important of which is using the legislation mechanism to dominate civil society institutions and put them under government control; further, the governments also aim to stall matters that limit their growth, their required roles, or their contribution to democratic development in their society. This is done by amending the existing laws when such laws need to be revised for the state to control civil society institutions. Restrictions on the establishment and activities of civil society institutions are imposed. This is also done by monopolizing the media and restricting the freedom of the press by tightly controlling the mass media, such as the televisions and radios, inasmuch they voice the regime. They also limit public liberties and fundamental rights. Such acts on the part of the state frustrate the possibilities of civil society progress (Shukr & Moro, 2004, pp. 83-86).

Despite many organizations in the Arab World, and even though they may be able to lobby or communicate with the existing political systems, some Arab civil societies cannot cause effective reform. This results from a lack of reconciliation between Arab political systems and their societies. Another cause is that such organizations have recently been formed and are preoccupied with internal power struggles. These causes limit such organizations' contribution to achieving desired reform (Al-najar, 2004, p. 65); Hisham, 2018, p.335).

**In general, the determinants or the limitations discussed above have led to the reality that the Arab World lacks democracy.**

#### Deliberative Democracy in the Arab World: An Approach far from Reality

The Arab World lacks democracy for the reasons discussed above. Perhaps the most important of these reasons is the survival of the regime of a person controlling all sorts of power despite the public desire for democracy as an alternative to the rule of the individual. Therefore, there is a kind of democracy deficit in the Arab region. This democracy deficit returns us to the hypothesis this project aspires to test. The region lacks democracy, and democracy is the basis for the realization of deliberative democracy; we find that the lack of the former leads to the lack of the latter. This is because deliberative democracy is an innovative concept in political thought and is the effectiveness of democratic practice. Deliberative democracy has yielded significant changes in the decision-making process and the institutions where it is applied together with constructive dialogue. This form of application results in rationality and inclusiveness; however, this does not exist in the Arab World.

The concept of deliberative democracy falls within the frame of modern political thinking as a means of disciplining authority within interaction and as a justification for democratic practice. It lifts political action, embodies the public will, and provides a space for the citizens' political effectiveness to meet the public interests. Thus, the determinants discussed above have shown that the Arab region's lack of democracy in the first-place results in the exclusion of deliberative democracy from the political process.

Consequently, the assumption that deliberative democracy first requires the presence of real democracy to take hold is accurate. This democracy does not exist in the Arab region. The non-existence of democracy results from determinants that impose drawbacks and difficulties in achieving real democracy. Deliberative democracy is an expansion of representative democracy, as it requires the involvement of the most significant number of citizens in the political process. In deliberative democracy, the focus is on the interaction between the citizens' opinions, viewpoints, and preferences. The participation could be at a total or partial level, looking closely at different alternatives and visions of the citizens' concerns about social issues. This reduces equality; equality does not exist in the Arab World. Practices based on concepts like legitimacy, equality, public participation expansion, individual right in decision-making, and freedom of expression do not exist in the Arab World. Deliberative democracy presumes the involvement of the people in prominent public issues that concern them within the framework of discussions and communicative dialogues between formal institutions and those affected by the decisions thereof. This does not exist in the Arab region either.

Deliberative democracy is not limited to voting but also includes the following:

- Careful deliberations facilitate the identification of interests.
- The identification of routes.
- The recognition of choices through a broad-based dialogue before calling for votes.

The actual democratic practice is not only a process of achieving the democratic form without its real content. It cannot be achieved by voting or preparing targeted referendums to gain fake democratic legitimacy. It is more beneficial to have careful deliberations before calling for voting so that everything can be clear for the citizens (Alkuwari, 2001, p. 24).

There are no arrangements in the Arab World that link democratic practice with rationalism to produce practical results. There is also a lack of equality in citizens' involvement in deliberative communication based on logic and rationalism. Hence, access to the formation of individuals' preferences through decisions targeting the public interest is not available. Since deliberative democracy relates to the citizens' questioning of the public decision-makers, discussing general issues with them, and monitoring their performance, one can be assured that it is not practiced in the Arab World. Deliberative democracy goes beyond voting as a tool of democracy. It is reflected through the deeper involvement of the citizens in discussions about public policies.

Furthermore, the final decisions are illegitimate, and thus there is no justice. This means that the legitimacy given by the citizens to the public policies is not leading to public confidence in the authority. Therefore, this does not reinforce the citizens' general autonomy through participating in the government.

### **Conclusion and Findings**

This study investigated the reality of democracy in the Arab World. It presented some determinants that prevent the realization of democracy in the Arab World. It showed that political work in the Arab World lacks deliberative democracy because this requires involvement in the transition process and the movement toward democracy.

**After discussing the reality of democracy in the Arab World and the approach of deliberative democracy, the most important findings of the study are:**

- The poor historical experience of democracy in the Arab World failed to establish real democratic traditions, except for the experience of AL Rashidun Islamic State. After the Al-Rashidun State, the Arab World created a political legacy based on monopolizing authority and inheritance. It didn't develop across history; instead, it was a reaction to internal and external changes that led to democratic deficiency and an ineffective general political situation in the Arab region.

Arab political systems are always associated with the crisis of legitimacy represented in the following issues:

- The need to accept or satisfy those governed by the existing political systems.
- The effectiveness of the democratic, political, and economic achievements.
- Democratic rotation of power is a significant factor in the regime's stability.
- Meeting the citizens' needs.

Citizens' dissatisfaction has led to instability, a continuation of conflict, and political competition over the legitimacy and survival of the regime.

- Persistence of the determinant of external nature represented in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the oil wealth has resulted in excluding democracy from the political practice because the political systems exploit this determinant.
- The failure of Arab political regimes to face the economic crises has prevented achieving social justice and the fair distribution of resources. This has threatened the legitimacy of

these regimes because the economy is a compelling factor in the regime's political performance.

- There is a loss of confidence between state institutions and intermediary structures such as political parties and civil society organizations. This has resulted from several factors, some of which are a lack of dialogue between civil organizations and the state, political and security unrest, and the failure of the Arab regimes to comprehend the system of the political parties and the notion of civil society and hence not involving them in decision-making. This has resulted in policies that put democracy within a framework to serve the regime and its survival.
- The democratic deficit of the Arab political regimes has a structural nature. The constitutions have become a tool to justify the political systems' irregularities through authoritarian actions that contradict the rights of their citizens.

### **Recommendations**

The achievement of real democracy, which could eventually lead to deliberative democracy in the Arab World or in any other place, depends on genuine reform in the following areas:

1. It provides a constitutional and legal framework that lends a democratic nature to the ruling institutions, positioning the deliberative approach as a lever within the institutional political system and making the citizens a major part of the authority and real participants.
2. We are institutionalizing political participation to include the most significant number of citizens by canceling the restrictions imposed on political parties and involving all civil society parties in the political process and discussions about public policy.

The dissemination and institutionalization of the deliberative democratic approach can be achieved by involving the citizens in discussions of public policies at all levels, especially at the local level in villages and rural areas. This lays a foundation for establishing deliberative democracy on the local level in a standardized way that guarantees the involvement of the largest number of citizens in deliberations to endorse public policies.



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