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The Influence of Political Culture on Democratic Transformation in Transitional Societies: An Analytical Perspective

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Abstract:

The paper examines the relationship between political culture and democratic transition in transitional societies by classifying the theoretical analysis of that relationship within three basic approaches: the political sociology approach, the political economy approach, and the political legitimacy approach.

This paper aims to identify solutions for transitional societies suffering from social chaos arising from the transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy, which has led either to a return to authoritarianism or to the spread of societal chaos. This is what happened in Iraq after 2003 in an attempt to change the one-party system towards democratic pluralism, where the realities on the ground produced more internal divisions and security crises.

The article's methodology is based on collecting theoretical and quantitative information from previous studies and research published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and international organizations.

The democratic transition, accompanied by reduced anarchy in democratic societies, is based, according to global experiences, on changing the existing rules in those societies.

The article includes the dynamics of transferring from negative norms based on weak governance, corruption, and limited political participation to higher ethical standards based on political participation, good governance, and innovation, which are the same indicators that the political culture of the state seeks to promote. The study presents a set of recommendations, some of which concern political institutions in transitional societies, while others are addressed to researchers in political science, specifically political systems and

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public policy. The first group of recommendations is ensuring that political institutions implement constitutional principles that maintain political stability in transitional societies, and that they embed democratic principles in practical application, starting from the smallest social unit in society, the family, up to the state's governing institutions. As for the second group of recommendations, they propose important and effective variables for research and study, like: institutional stability, satisfaction with government performance, and electronic oversight systems for political institutions.

Keywords: *Democratic transformation; political culture; institutional reform; anarchy; political participation.*

1- Introduction:

The world has witnessed various models of democratic transformations, the oldest of which are the results of the French Revolution and the accompanying changes in governance. Despite the numerous experiences Western countries and the United States have undergone in their transitions towards greater democracy, this process remains one of the most significant political challenges in the modern era.

The political culture, reflecting the levels of education, social values, religious beliefs, and behavioural orientations toward political events, influences democratic transition that includes citizens' participation, the legitimacy of institutions, and the acceptance of democratic norms with a low level of anarchy. Understanding this relationship clarifies why some transitional societies achieve stable democracy without anarchy while others cannot achieve the same aim and return to authoritarianism.

The main problem of this study can be expressed in the following questions:

1- What are the reflections of the weak political culture on society?

2- What is the link between weak political culture and societal chaos?

3- What is the role of political institutions and civil society organizations in developing the elements of political culture?

The main objective of the article is to develop strategic solutions for societies that have undergone various stages of democratic transition and experienced periods of societal chaos. When analysing the causes of chaos, it became clear that the main reason lies in the weakness of societal culture in general and political culture in particular. Perhaps what the world has witnessed in government system transformations demonstrates this. Therefore, the weakness of cultures of all kinds and the ignorance of many societal groups of the consequences of chaos and its impact on the stability of the country push towards a further exacerbation of the cycle of violence.

According to the reflections of the article problem the study aims to demonstrate that there is an influence of political culture in transition to the democratic system, with minimalism in anarchy and to provide a specific method for increasing the norms of political culture in the transitioning society, this includes proposing practical stages for democratic transition in countries that have attempted this process, which often resulted in chaos and a misinterpretation of freedoms, Also, the article aims to examine the relationships among essential indicators of political culture, measure and develop them, and their impact on the democratic transition.

The main hypothesis of the study is that a positive relationship exists between political culture and the success of democratic transition, as strengthening political culture reduces levels of social disorder associated with the transition process.

To test the article's hypothesis, the research methodology relied on theoretical analysis, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from previous studies and peer-reviewed scientific journals. It is based on studying each research variable within the scope of the political theories that explain it. The means of collecting quantitative data depend on the periodic reports of the countries under study, as well as on tables issued by international organizations.

The study contributes, through analysis and extrapolation, to proving the possibility of democratic transformation in transitional societies without the actual stages of transformation being associated with a state of chaos and political instability. This is based on plans and strategies for developing the political culture of citizens. Therefore, the study is presented to bridge the gap in theories of democratic

transformation, which have focused a lot on cases of conflict and competition between elites in the transitional period between changing the authoritarian regime and establishing the democratic system.

2- Literature Review

Political researchers and social scientists discussed the relationship between political culture and democratic transition using different approaches. The study classified these approaches according to the interests of researchers. Some used the social sciences' approach, while others employed an economic approach, and others utilized administrative law to explain the same relations from a legal perspective.

2-1 The approach of political sociology: scholars in political sociology focused on studying the direct relationship between democratic transition and political culture using the indicators of the manners of society.[1]

(Almond & Verba, 1963) associated the concept of culture with the rules of operation of the democratic political system, which are intelligible through the methods of interplay between citizens and the institutions of the political system.[2]. (Winkler, 2025) acknowledged Almond and Verba's ability to link their scientific findings with what actually happened, where citizens in Britain and the United States had the power to influence the government.[3] Accordingly, this proposition aligns with the research hypothesis, particularly regarding adherence to all decisions issued by democratic political systems. Practically there is a research gap in this proposition because the practical application environment was limited to Britain and the United States, while these countries, along with other Western European nations, have made significant progress in democratization, allowing for comparisons with Middle Eastern countries where democratic applications are still in their early stages. Even with some level of political culture, the chaos that

[1] Voinea, Camelia F. "Political Culture Research." *Quality & Quantity* 54 (2020): pp.361–382.
[2] Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963.p.570 Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183pnr
[3] Tanja Winkler, "Democracy Otherwise: Learning From the South," Urban Planning 10 (2025), https://doi.org/10.17645/up.8909.

befalls society during the transition remains a major obstacle to a complete transition, which this research attempts to address.

(Welzel & Inglehart, 2018) investigated the role of public beliefs and values modification in democratic transition processes. Their hypotheses were based on building a central theory of political culture especially after the World War II with the development of studies at the Universities of Michigan and Ohio in behavioural theory, which explains and analyses trends in political culture based on the behaviour of leaders and individuals. [1] This study supports the interpretation of my current research problem, as the outputs of behavioural theory apply in many cases to the reasons for the weakness of political culture in Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq. The political heritage of these countries is a legacy stemming from the general civic culture of society. Interpretations of general human behaviour give strong indications of the weakness of both the terms "culture" and "democracy." The concept of culture in the countries of the East is still linked to the level of education, general knowledge, and books read, rather than to the way public behaviour is conducted. The term "democracy" is linked to the freedom of expression of various scientific and non-scientific opinions, acceptable and unacceptable, as well as the phenomena of violence during this expression, which is practically known as the phenomenon of "chaos." This is what Wells and Inglehart's research was unable to point out, and my research attempts to find a scientific explanation for it.

(Voinea, 2020) In hir study, she was absorbed with approving purely scientific methodologies based on data from public opinion polls, as well as integrating several social science approaches to arrive at logical conclusions. The study demonstrated the possibility of measuring various attitudes and trends within political entities, thus enabling the study to establish a correlation between political culture and the democratic behaviour of political actors, and the impact of this on the overall political structures and actors within the state.[2] The research highlighted the importance of the quantitative approach. However, the researcher did not adopt any of the actual measurement tools, and the research remained limited to presenting other researchers' applications in

[1] Welzel, Christian, and Ronald Inglehart. "Political Culture, Mass Beliefs, and Value Change." In *Democratization*, 134–149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/hepl/9780198732280.003.0009.
[2] Voinea, C.F. (2020) 'op cit, p. 36.

the field of quantitative measurement, which the researcher justified by the difficulty of applying the scale to the sub-variables across different cultures. Although my research is theoretical and inductive, I agree with the researcher about the importance of quantitative measurement and disagree with her about the difficulty of applying it, because it has been applied in many quantitative studies, and the results were closer to reality.

A study by (Bishara, 2023) addresses the importance of "civil culture" in maintaining democratic stability and belief in liberal democratic values. He concluded that the current political culture consists of social norms regarding public issues, as well as people's knowledge.[1] The study argues that the emergence of theories linking the nature of a political system to the prevailing culture in a country is a result of the alliance between Western democracies and allied dictatorships during the Cold War. It contends that the claim that a society's political culture must be democratic in order to establish a democratic political system is invalid. On the contrary, this assumption obscures the true prerequisite for democracy: the political culture of the elites and their commitment to the democratic option, particularly during periods of democratic transition.

(Nguyen 2024) concluded that interdisciplinary perspectives can approach the concept of political culture through cultural studies," political sciences, political philosophy, political sociology, and political anthropology"[2]. Many scholars consider behaviourism, structural functionalism, and constructivism to be useful for explaining the concept of political culture. Concepts and methods all illustrate that the suggestion of political culture encompasses the whole system of people's manners, inherited beliefs, rules, and behaviours.[3]

2-2 The approach of political economy: The scholars within the domain of political economics have argued the topic of democracy in transitional societies from the perspective of the economic benefits for

[1] Bishara, Azmi. "Political Culture and Democratic Transition." *Al-Muntaqa* 6, no. 3 (2023): 8–29.
[2] Minh Giang Nguyen, "Political Culture: A Literature Review," Thu Dau Mot University Journal of Science 6, no. 2 (2024): 168–178, https://doi.org/10.37550/tdmu.EJS/2024.02.542.
[3] Nguyen, "Political Culture," 170

individuals in a democratic society where governance systems and the fight against corruption prevail in its institutions. (Lipset, 1959) Examined the association between economic progress and political legitimacy through the lens of democratic values, utilizing economic data obtained from governmental institutions to substantiate this relationship.[1](Merkel, Kollmorgen, and Wagener,2019) argued that the research moves outside the generally recognized province of political sociology. This growing field has dealt largely with the internal analysis of organizations with political objectives, "or with the determinants of action within various political institutions, such as parties, government agencies, or the electoral process. It has in the main left to the political philosopher the larger concern with the relations of the total political system to society as a whole".[2] The study by (Birch, 2001) examined the relationship between democracy and capitalist economics. It provides an overview of the origins of capitalist democracy, then discusses the relationship between democracy and capitalism, highlighting the key areas where the two systems influence each other. Furthermore, it explores the details of combining major political and economic reforms. The study concludes that economic well-being is one of the general outcomes of institutionalized democratic processes.[3]In the study by (Bonker, 2019), the transition towards democracy is discussed through the interaction of the economy with political culture, assuming that rational actors adopt a political culture based on public policy reforms and extensive economic reforms. He reached two inevitable conclusions: the interconnected relationship between economic foundations and democracy leads to increased state welfare, The financial underpinnings of dictatorship engender conflict between the affluent and the impoverished, as well as among the governing class and the average citizen.[4] The Study of (Wang, 2024) explained the relationship between democratic governance and economic outcomes through a comparative

[1] Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–105.
[2] Merkel, Wolfgang, Raj Kollmorgen, and Hans-Jürgen Wagener, eds. The Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.p65
[3] Birch, Anthony H. Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy. London: Routledge, 2001.p14.
[4] Bonker, Frank. "Political Economy Approaches." In *The Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, edited by Wolfgang Merkel, 124–131. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 124-131. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198829911.003.0012

historical analysis of " post-war Japan, modern India, and the British Iron Revolution"[1], finding that democracy promotes economic development but is mediated by historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors relating with the general political culture of the societies He also considered that the societies under study are transitional societies that, within their transitional phases, can adopt democratic cultural systems that suit the political and economic conditions.

2-3 The legal approach: Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society"[2].

Many thinkers, like Montesquieu and Alexis de Tocqueville, contributed to laying the theoretical principles of political culture theory. Montesquieu, in his famous work "The Spirit of the Laws," published in 1748, explained the importance of cultural and social characteristics in shaping political systems. When Tocqueville, in his book "Democracy in America" (1835), provided a detailed analysis of American political culture, he highlighted the role of civic and individual participation in organizing a democratic society.[3] (Robinson, 1994) This study indicated that comparative studies have contributed to analysing the proportions of democratic transitions worldwide, including the 1989 African study. Adopting a real-world case study methodology, this study involved with these societies and concluded that weak institutional organization and limited capacity to enforce constitutional rules prevented institutions from exercising sufficient authority to maintain order during democratic transitions. Despite the importance of the binding authority of the law, the researcher was unable to define legal compliance as a product of civic culture. The current research asserts that, in the context of a weak political culture, this compliance is interpreted as a constraint and a form of authoritarianism that contradicts democratic governance. This leads us to attempt to deconstruct the relationship between the concept of freedom and the states of anarchy resulting from the weakness of the rule of law.[4] while (Stoychev, 2025) presented an extensive analysis of the impact of

[1] Wang, X. “Democracy and Prosperity.” *International Journal of Asian Social Science Research* 1, no. 1 (2024): 29–35.
[2] Lipset, op.cit,p33
[3] Ibid
[4] Robinson, P. T. “Democratization and Political Culture.” *African Studies Review* (1994): 39–67.

elections and electoral systems on democratic participation, leadership, and legitimacy. This empirical research of voter participation patterns and electoral system performance across many settings elucidates enduring arguments in electoral studies about populism, political polarization, and the transformational effects of electronic innovations.[1]

3 - Theoretical Framework

The rapid expansion of democracy internationally, beginning in the mid-20th century, fundamentally altered the worldwide political landscape from a scenario where democracies were uncommon to a scenario where they were the norm. The heightened interest in democratization among scholars, politicians, and activists is largely attributable to the reinforcement of international standards linking democracy to several significant good consequences, such as the respect for human rights, economic success, and security.[2]

The political culture literature explains the theoretical perspectives between citizens culture and the stability of the society with the term congruence: for political institutions to be stable and legitimate, they need to be acceptable with citizens culture, where mass attitudes correspond to a given country's level of democracy or autocracy, the regime is stable.

Almond & Verba pointed to different types of political culture, varying according to levels of awareness and the nature of the state's values and educational system. They acknowledged that some citizens may have the cognitive and cultural capacity to directly participate in political work, whether by voting in elections or expressing their opinions on governmental decisions. Meanwhile, other types of citizens only obey decisions without actively contributing their opinions[3]. Additionally, some citizens lack political vision and effective participation, especially when governmental procedures and political decisions do not directly affect their core interests and daily lives. In light of this, both Almond and Verba support a gradual transition towards democracy backed by political awareness and culture, as civil society is

[1] S. Stoychev, Elections and Electoral Systems Around the World (2025), 13.
[2] Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), https://doi.org/10.1093/0199253285.001.000
[3] Almond, G.A. and Verba, S. op cit, p. 740.

capable of producing individuals who can influence by expressing their opinions and even reforming what is unsuitable for implementation within the state.

Inas Mahdi In her thesis, she ensured that the transition towards a knowledge society significantly impacts political behavior and political culture by reshaping governance structures, influencing political consciousness, and altering power dynamics. This transformation is driven by the integration of information and communication technologies, which facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and democratise access to information. Consequently, political behavior becomes more informed and participatory, while political culture evolves to accommodate new values and attitudes. The following sections explore these impacts in detail.

Within developing or transitional democracies, such as Iraq, these global theories take on specific relevance.

(Mahdi,2011) She analysed the indicators of political behaviours that are approved by behavioural theory, and through this analysis, she was able to justify the various patterns of political culture based on the indicators she examined. Therefore, she considered that the existence of political culture in itself is not a call for the application of the rules of democratic governance unless it is measured as a behavioural indicator. The thesis was written in 2006 in Iraq, and the writer was influenced by the outputs of the democratic transition and the behavioural chaos it produced within state institutions. She considered that the restructuring of the system of government must be preceded by long stages of cultural preparation translated into political behaviour. This argument may be central to the analysis of the current research, which can be seen as a confirmation of the previously presented ideas. Moreover, the decline in political culture levels in Iraq over the decades supports the hypothesis of the current research, particularly given the ongoing weakness of the democratic transition in Iraq, despite twenty years having passed since that study.[1]

[1] *Inas Diyaa Mahdi, The Impact of Strategies for Transitioning towards a Knowledge Society on Political Behaviour and Political Culture (PhD diss., Al-Nahrain University, Iraq, 2006), 7*

3-1 Political Culture: concepts and improving theory

(Chiteyi, 2023) in his thesis clarified that the political culture theory is one of the theories that has gained the attention of political science researchers, and theorizing in this framework has witnessed a large number of updates that accompanied societal changes.[1]

Political culture represents a working intellectual framework through which the form of power exercise within the political system can be determined, especially since political culture expresses the beliefs of the ruling elite, which can be measured directly through the general political behaviour of the ruling elite, elected or appointed public officials, those aspiring to political positions, leaders of political parties, interest groups, and others who seek to influence public policy, as well as through their statements and words and the extent to which they are translated into actual behaviour.[2]

Despite the long history of political research on political culture and the established theories, the term "political culture," and the emphasis on its transformation from a mere intellectual and theoretical framework into a measurable scientific theory based on observable indicators within civil society remain a subject of considerable debate among researchers. This is due to extensive theoretical discussions across various academic fields that have addressed the issue of political culture as an established theory, including researchers in political science, political sociology, public policy theorists, and other disciplines that draw upon the foundations and approaches of behavioural theory, which witnessed significant development in the early 1950s with the emergence of applied research at the Universities of Michigan and Ohio[3]. Political scientists and sociologists reformulated the concept in the late 1980s and 1990s with the decline of the Soviet bloc, which was characterized as

[1] *Lawrence I. Chiteyi, Situating Bullfighting Culture and Its Influence on the Development of the Abakakamega of Western Kenya since 1850 (MA thesis, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, 2023,p.45*

[2] Stephen Welch, The Concept of Political Culture (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 77.

[3] Inas D. Mahdi, "The Impact of Political Thinking on the Decision Maker in Analyzing the Strategic Environment of the State (Applied Study in the Iraqi Ministry of Finance)," Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences 17, no. 63 (2011): 151–165, https://doi.org/10.33095/jeas.v17i63.1008.

totalitarian, and the rise of democratic societies, exemplified by the United States.[1]

It is a mistake to focus on the weakness of theorizing about political culture due to the overlap and differing indicators of the social sciences. This is because these sciences view the term in terms of its temporal and spatial context. While political culture received considerable attention in democratic societies and was closely linked to increased awareness, community education, and an emphasis on individual freedoms and rights to equality and education, other societies considered support for authority and its decisions, and working to implement those decisions, to be the most important indicators of the success of state institutions. They viewed the rule of law as the ideal state, indicating the presence of a political culture in a state. Consequently, they considered it a way of life and societal behaviours more than it was linked to the democratic approach. Habermas's Marxist-Weberian account of the rise and fall of the liberal democratic public sphere shares more similarities than it differs from the original concept of political culture. His research aims to understand the sources of these profound similarities and their restrictive consequences.[2]

Emile Durkheim emphasized the importance of social cohesion and its direct impact on general culture, and specifically on political culture. He asserted that societies create diverse identities and beliefs through social construction, a phenomenon observable in all human societies that adopt a particular culture capable of significantly influencing the functioning of the political system. Max Weber, in his research, emphasized the possibility of integrating a focus on ideas and culture with greater attention to the material context. He argued that ideas often "determine the effects driven by interests," and asserted that the theory of political culture applies to Protestant religious ideas, considering them an indirect cause of the emergence of capitalism.

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[1] Inas D. Mahdi, "The Impact of the Characteristics of Human Resources Information Systems in the Implementation of the Strategic Decision of the State: Applied Research in the Iraqi Ministry of Oil," Kufa Journal of Legal and Political Sciences 9, no. 30 (2017): 233–255.

[2] Michael Ryan, Interpreting Judicial Behavior: How Content Analysis of Language Reveals the Values, Philosophy, and Judicial Decision-Making Style of William H. Rehnquist (2012), 46.

The influence of culture was first emphasized in political science by Talcott Parsons in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Parsons' theory of social action, social action is the product of activities directed toward intersecting social objects, as he explained in his book "The Structure of Social Action". He posited that every action is understood as the product of the interaction of motivating and organizing forces. This fundamental premise of his theory was further developed through the construction of an "action space." The complete development of Parsons' theoretical landscape can be seen as directly related to the tools available for analysing these intersecting processes. This development is illustrated through several distinct stages, from a different theoretical position in "The Structure of Social Action" (1937), through "Social Order" (1951), to "Form Theory and the Human Condition" (1978).[1]

The term "political culture" has undergone significant evolutionary changes, varying according to researchers' perspectives and intellectual orientations. However, the overall evolution has led to the understanding that political culture explains the totality of political values and actions. In response to what was perceived as the failure of deconstructionist theory in international relations to predict the end of the Cold War, a movement known as "constructivism" emerged. From a constructivist perspective, political culture is defined as the system of beliefs and ideology of a people, which determines a state's self-perception, its understanding of its national interests, and the specific policies it pursues. At the same time, because political culture has deep experiential roots in a people's history, it is difficult to change and does not adhere to any general guiding principles.[2]

3-2 Democracy: concepts and improving theory

A universally agreed-upon definition of democracy remains a subject of ongoing debate. This situation arises because past and present thinkers have been familiar with different models of democracy, particularly those who have explored democracy within a political environment where citizens can express themselves in a non-violent setting.

[1] Münch, Richard. "Talcott Parsons and the Theory of Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 87, no. 4 (1982): 771–826.
[2] Giang, op.cit, p.170.

(Schmitt,2007) points out that democracy is a comprehensive social system, not just a political system; it is an organic state that allows for the practice of essential politics, even though it does not wish to deal with violence.[1] Similarly, Bernstein (1993) describes it as "government of the people", while democracy often leads to the absence of class-based governance. This definition refers to a social state in which no class enjoys political privileges. Since this definition contradicts public traditions, it clarifies why monopolies are considered undemocratic. Moreover, this negative definition differs from the phrase "government of the people" in that it reduces the likelihood that the majority will oppress the individual, which is completely unacceptable. The idea that the majority can oppress an individual is completely rejected in modern thought. Currently, democracy is considered synonymous with justice, based on the principle of equality of rights for all members of society.[2]

Here are three main controversial issues among current democratic theorists, revolving around the failure of contemporary policies to achieve political equality despite democratic constitutional forms, due to the existence of counter-power structures located outside the institutional political sphere.[3]
The first issue involves documenting the disappearance of significant counterforces outside government institutions, where the primary controllers of the process of democracy are the same individuals who dominate the capitalist labour system, specifically capital owners of certain European ethnic origins. This directly contradicts the principles of democratic theory and turns it into a form of domination for a specific group and class.
The second issue concerns the mechanisms used to exercise this purported countervailing power.[4]The third issue concerns the various ways in which power inequality may be inconsistent with democracy. When political theorists refer to democracy, they usually do so in the context of state public policy, which is cantered on the recognized

[1] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 56.
[2] Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 53
[3] James L. Hyland, *Democratic Theory: The Philosophical Foundations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 12-14.
[4] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 116

formulation of binding, authoritative decisions applicable to society, whether national or local. [1]

4-Analysis the process of Democracy transition

The concept of "transition," the interval between political regimes, is itself a point of contention.

(Huntington,1991) described the transition to democracy as a specific point in the country's democracy or a particular political system that was established after the long-standing authoritarian regime was dismantled. Elected leaders replace authoritarian rulers through free, open, and fair elections, a process known as democracy[2]. However, the transition remains linked to stages and time periods, each of which results in the organization of the state's affairs and the consolidation of the democratic system.[3]

(Przeworski,1991) This research discusses democratic transition according to the forms and factors of changing the existing political system, explaining that changing the political system is done not by killing the rulers by those who possess weapons or means of production but through coups and revolutions, often supported by external parties and forces, which will force the ruling system to respond to the change, as it will be framed as a popular demand, so the rulers give up power voluntarily without resorting to violence[4]. Otherwise, the collapse of the authoritarian regime may be reversed either by the return of dictatorial authoritarian power, as happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Brazil in 1974, and in Poland in 1981, or it may lead to a new dictatorship, as in Iran and Romania[5]. Or it can lead to the emergence of unprecedented societal chaos, as happened in Iraq in 2003. Although the outcome may

[1] Scott Mainwaring, Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 99

[2] Huntington, Samuel P. The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991,p16

[3] G. A. Cohen, "Self-Ownership, Communism, and Equality: Against the Marxist Technological Fix," in *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 116–143

[4] Adam Przeworski, "Transitions to Democracy," in *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51–99.

[5] Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart, "Political Culture, Mass Beliefs, and Value Change," in *Democratization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 134

not be a return to a new dictatorship, transitions can stumble along the way in systems that suppress opposition or face the threat of military intervention, often resulting in a lack of democratic progress and the continued repression of political opposition.

Political institutions have witnessed remarkable progress from authoritarianism to democracy over the past two centuries. Figure 1 illustrates this democratic transition by graphing a commonly used indicator of democracy (the Polity Fourth Democracy Index, reset between 0 and 1) over a period of time, using a calculated average of data from 14 balanced countries since 1800. The figure clarifies some fluctuations and faltering beginnings—for example, a pause in the democratization process during the interwar period—along with an overall upward trend. As with population shifts, economic improvement, and the globalization of human activities, democracy appears to have followed a steady and irreversible path.[1]

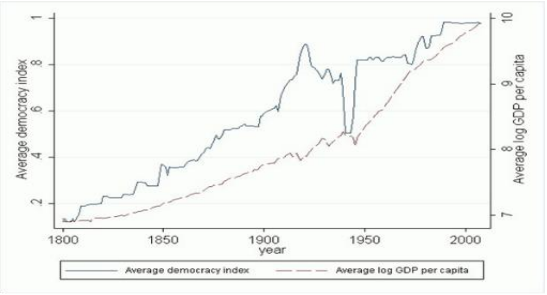


Figure 01: The democratic and economic transitions. The balanced sample is composed of Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States over the 1800–2000 period. Log GDP per capita is taken from Maddison (2006) and democracy is the Polity index. Missing observations are interpolated[2].

[1] Fabrice Murtin and Romain Wacziarg, "The Democratic Transition," Journal of Economic Growth 19, no. 2 (2014): 150, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-013-9100-6* Note: (Composed model of Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, and the US over 1800-2000).

[2] Fabrice Murtin and Romain Wacziarg, "The Democratic Transition," *Journal of Economic Growth* 19, no. 2 (2014): 141–181, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-013-9100-6.

The transition from authoritarian rule to democracy depends on two phases: the end of the old authoritarian regime and the establishment of a new democratic system. The change should include three sub-phases to ensure systemic change between the authoritarian regime and stable democracy: (1) the end of the authoritarian regime, (2) the institutionalization of democracy, and (3) the consolidation of democracy.[1]

Various scholars have suggested stages of the democratic transition, stressing that this transition is influenced by a number of societal variables and influences, for example economic conditions and security factors, as well as the most significant influence of the prevailing societal culture. These stages can be explained as follows:[2]

4-1The constitutional consolidation of the foundations of democracy: The constitution ensures radical decision-making actions and hence binds all political actors in their strategic arrangements to a fundamental agreement on the obviousness and solidity of political behaviour. [3]

4-2 Representative Consolidation: This stage of societal transformation towards democracy refers to the possibility of parties and interest groups representing the ideological positions arising from citizens' different political cultures. Just as political parties do, interest groups work to represent their political orientations and advance them in the political arena, recognizing that this is essential to shaping government decisions that help them achieve their goals and interests. Therefore, interest groups are influential and provide support, both materially and politically, for the process of creating public policies and legitimate laws that ensure citizens voluntarily implement their goals, starting from the agenda-setting stage to the decision-making stage. Thus, interest groups may play a fundamental role in representing ideologies

[1] Lea,Heyne and Wolfgang Merkel. "Phases of Transformation." In *The Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.p.16. doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198829911.003.0064
[2] Ibid.
[3] Elster, J. (2009) Reason and Rationality. Princeton: Princeton University Press.p.66

that citizens believe are their own, even though these ideologies have been shaped by the groups themselves.[1]

It is important to note that the effects of interest groups on policymaking regarding representation are not always positive, especially when their interests conflict with those of other groups. Therefore, there is a sub-phase, albeit important, in the transformation that involves conflicting interests, which may lead to political and societal chaos, as happened in Iraq after 2003, when ideologies clashed, resulting in a struggle over political power. [2]

4-3 Behavioural consolidation of informal political actors: Regulating the Role of Official Actors: Informal actors within the state can undermine institutional performance by exerting influence within state institutions and shaping decision-making processes to their advantage. This makes the democratic transition contingent on this group's perspective, thereby determining its success or failure according to their vision and the service it provides to their interests. However, writers and opinion leaders represent a type of informal actor. The less trust these individuals have in official political institutions, parties, and associations, the greater the risk that they will resort to actions outside the constitutional and democratic framework to defend their interests. As a result, the stronger the democratic framework becomes, the fewer incentives informal political actors will have to use their veto power, and the fewer threats they will pose to the consolidation of democracy.[3]

4-4 Consolidating democracy in civil society: After democracy is established and the constitutional rules supporting it are implemented, it cannot be considered firmly established without the consent of the citizens, because it, like any system, needs renewal and support. The stability of renewal cannot develop except in the context of a supportive political culture, which includes active citizen engagement, respect for

[1] Boräng, F., Naurin, D. and Polk, J. (2024) 'Making space: citizens, parties and interest groups', Journal of European Public Policy, 31(7), pp. 1799–1830.
[2] Mahdi, Inas. "3rd International Conference of Cihan University-Erbil on Law, International Relations and Media (CIC-LIRAM'17) 12-13 April 2017, 1 (3), 487-499, ISSN: 2519-6979, 2017." *The Theory of Power in International Relations: A Study in Theoretical Foundations and Dimensions of Real-World Influence* (2025).
[3] Ibid.

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democratic values, and institutions that promote participation and accountability.

5 -Discussion and Findings

The most important findings of the study can be presented, including answers to the questions that expressed the research problem and were raised in the introduction, along with proofs of the scientific study hypothesis, through the following results:

5-1 The weakness and gaps of experience of political establishments in transitional societies lead to different crises, most notably societal chaos and differing interpretations of democracy rooted in inherited authoritarian cultures. Groups that consider themselves marginalized under the authoritarian regime emerge and believe they must assume a role in governance, regardless of their capabilities, resources, or lack of political experience. This represents a direct return to autocracy and a reversal in democratic transition. Examples of this abound globally, the most recent being the change of political system in Iraq in 2003.[1]From this perspective, analysing the weaknesses of political party systems becomes an essential approach to diagnosing these obstacles, instead of stable channels for representing and aggregating interests, parties often suffer instability, leaving the political landscape in a state of constant flux. The main characteristics of this weakness can be summarised in high electoral volatility and fragmentation that Some of the active parties in parliaments are often higher than in established democracies, complicating the formation of stable governments and leading to policy instability [2] . This result confirms the research hypothesis, as the weakness of the ruling class's methods and the dominance of slogans, personal interests, and fanatical tendencies are an inevitable result of the weakness of the elements of political and institutional culture, which leads to a decline in democratic transition and even to the dominance of chaos and security breakdown.

[1] Kadhim, Abbas. "A decade of democratic transition in Iraq." Foreign Policy, March 25, 2013. https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/25/a-decade-of-democratic-transition-in-iraq/

[2] Alan, Ware. “Development in Fragile States and Situations: Theory and Critique.” In *Development in Difficult Sociopolitical Contexts*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. are, op.cit., p15

5-2 The weakness of state authority and its practical governance tools, the weakness of local governance significantly impacts development paths and democratic transformation, and India is a clear example of this challenge.[1] Political culture is part of a larger societal culture, ingrained in individuals through all forms of social heritage, both positive and negative. The patriarchal, authoritarian system within the family is mirrored by the authoritarian system of tribal and clan leaders, which in turn corresponds to the command authority of the armed forces, ultimately mirroring the authority of the head of state.[2] Therefore, dealing with this system creates a legacy that reinforces autocratic tendencies, especially since the rules governing interaction with it are interpreted as requiring respect and obedience to the supreme leadership, regardless of its political or functional titles. Despite societal and technological advancements, the rules of respecting authority still impose themselves as a form of respect for the individual at the chief of power, rather than for the positive principles of civil society. This complicates the relationship between obedience to an authority figure in the family, an institution, the armed forces, or a head of state, and respect for the positive principles that represent the core of societal culture. There is a significant difference between obeying the head of an institution and implementing the indicators of political culture. Transparency, integrity, and the application of governance principles are tools of political culture, and their practice is not tied to the person of the leader but rather to the development of the work mechanisms and the political system within the state. To recognize between the two cultures, we need to develop dynamics for work and study that align with the practical application of governance principles among the younger generation.

5-3 Civil society drives democratic change through various mechanisms. Based on analyses derived from global experiences, the strategic functions it performs can be identified as follows:

- Transforming Norms: When civil society movements succeed, they not only change policies but also transform societal values and evaluation standards. [3]

[1] Boräng, F., Naurin, D. and Polk, J., op.cit., p.1805
[2] Mahdi, Inas., op.cit, 2025, p. 490
[3] Welzel, C. and Inglehart, R. op.cit. p.140

- Social Unification :Social division is a corrosive force that redefines political opponents as existential enemies, making democratic compromise impossible. In this process, multiple societal differences (social, economic, and cultural) align along a dominant "us versus them" dimension, eroding social cohesion and posing a direct threat to democratic norms and institutions. Therefore, redefining national belonging serves as the transitional basis for democracy in a transitional society. Perhaps the Malaysian experience is a living example of this belonging. Despite the multiplicity of ethnic and religious roots, the emphasis is on individuals being Malaysians and on belonging to the state of Malaysia as a prevailing societal culture.[1] This supports the research hypothesis, as national belonging to the state is one of the most important forms of political culture emanating from civil society, and its existence is one of the most important factors for democratic transformation, far removed from potential chaos during the transition.

5-4 Accelerators of the Digital Age :The modern information environment plays a crucial role in accelerating and deepening polarisation. Digital spaces, especially social media, have become fertile ground for disinformation campaigns, whether locally sourced or supported by foreign entities, in addition to the spread of hate speech targeting other groups. Thus, the digital space is transforming from a public arena into a battleground, a critical distinction for policy

it may increase the political awareness of populations with strong cultural foundations by providing information about candidates in changing systems; however, these same digital changes may play a negative role in societies where divisions are already increasing. The number of circles opposed to democratic transition, which benefit from chaos and divisions, cannot be ignored. These circles now utilize digital technology as a readily available and easy tool to amplify division and

[1] Muhamad, Ahmad Faisal. *The struggle for recognition in foreign policy: Malaysia under Mahathir 1981-2003*. London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom), 2008. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Speech+by+Dr.+Mahathir+Mohammad+at+the+UMNO+General+Assembly%2C+Putra+World+Trade+Centre%2C+Kuala+Lumpur%2C+20+June+2002&btnG=

[2] Stoychev, S. (2025) Elections and Electoral Systems Around the World, p.13

fragmentation. This supports the hypothesis that increased political culture, represented by societal awareness, prevents societal chaos during democratic transitions.

6- Conclusions

The research reached a key conclusion: that democratic transition, accompanied by reduced chaos in democratic societies, is based, according to global experiences, on changing the existing norms in those societies. This involves shifting from negative norms based on weak governance, widespread corruption, and limited political participation to higher ethical standards based on political participation, good governance, and innovation—the very indicators that the political culture of the state seeks to promote.

Despite the difficulties a state faces in transitioning from an autocratic to a democratic system of government, due to the accompanying societal chaos and divisions that may not have been apparent in previous periods of rule, the state's ability to overcome this transition depends on the nature of its political culture. This research paper discusses political culture through its various definitions within specific academic frameworks. The researcher divided these frameworks into three main approaches: the political sociology approach, where the researcher reviewed the discussions of political sociologists and the most important writings of thinkers in this field, examining the extent to which these definitions relate to societal change from one system to a more developed one; and the discussions of economic thinkers on the subject of political culture, who directly link economic growth and increased trust to democratic transition and the peaceful transfer of power, and Legal studies linking political culture and the application of constitutional principles to democratic transition were also discussed.

In the theoretical framework, the theoretical development of each of the two research variables was explained, along with a statement of the scientific orientations of the researchers at the different stages of these two variables. A series of interrelated stages for democratic transition was identified, and the problems and challenges that lead to societal chaos were discussed, along with methods for using and developing political culture through both government elites and political actors

outside the government, utilizing modern technological means to ensure democratic transition and avoid societal chaos.

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