

Democratic Transition in the Arab World: A Study of Internal and External Causes

التحول الديمقراطي في العالم العربي: دراسة في الأسباب الداخلية والخارجية



Guettat Temam Asma ^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Mohamed kheider University, Biskra, Algeria.
asma.guettaftemam@univ-biskra.dz

Date of transmission: 13/09/2024 date of acceptance: 18/11/2024 date of publication: 01/12/2024

Abstract:

This research paper explores the nuanced distinctions between democratic transition and related terms, aiming to identify the most pivotal internal and external factors that have influenced the processes of democratic transition observed in Arab nations.

The study posits that the impetus for democratic change in these countries has predominantly originated from external pressures and demands, thereby complicating the transition in numerous Arab states. This complexity arises from the introduction of reforms across political, economic, social, and cultural domains, enhancements such as improving human rights records, fostering citizen involvement in civil society organizations, and other measures motivated by a desire to engage with the global system and to achieve political and economic objectives that enhance the efficiency of these systems. This is particularly relevant in the context of increasing social mobility within many Arab regimes.

Keywords: Democratic Transition, Arab World Countries, Authoritarian Regimes, Causes of Democratic Transition.

الملخص :

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية لدراسة مفهوم التحول الديمقراطي وتمييزه عن غيره من المصطلحات المتشابهة، و كذلك نحاول رصد أهم الأسباب الداخلية والخارجية التي كانت وراء عمليات التحول الديمقراطي التي شهدتها الدول العربية، لتلخص الدراسة بأن دوافع وأسباب التحول الديمقراطي في الدول العربية كانت أسبابا في أغلبها خارجية و استجابة لمطالب أجنبية الأمر الذي تسبب في تعثر مسارهذه العملية في كثير من الدول العربية، وذلك إدخال إصلاحات على بنيتها السياسية، الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية مثل تحسين سجل الدولة في مجال حقوق الإنسان وإشراك المواطنين في تنظيمات المجتمع المدني وغيرها بدافع المشاركة في المنظومة العالمية من جهة، وتحقيق أهداف سياسية، واقتصادية من شأنها ترشيد أداء تلك النظم من جهة ثانية خاصة في ظل تنامي الحراك الاجتماعي في العديد من النظم العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحول الديمقراطي، دول العالم العربي، الأنظمة الاستبدادية، أسباب التحول الديمقراطي.

Introduction:

Numerous political systems have embarked on paths toward democratic reform, driven by a blend of internal and external motivations. Economic decline and ensuing crises, particularly social ones, have prompted many regimes to implement structural reforms within their political and economic institutions. Additionally, the pursuit of loans and financial aid from entities like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Western European nations, and the United States has played a crucial role in fostering democratic reforms.

In this vein, some Arab monarchies have undertaken constitutional and legal changes that have permitted the establishment of political parties. The global landscape of the twentieth century also underwent significant transitions, casting a long shadow over the general state of affairs. The Arab region was not immune to these global influences, which have notably accelerated the democratic reform process, particularly as they coincided with heightened political and social movements across many regimes.

This period was marked by various events and popular uprisings in several Arab countries, collectively referred to as the Arab Spring, including nations such as Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain.

Problematic :

What are the internal and external factors have catalyzed the ongoing democratic transitions observed across Arab nations?

Research Objectives:

This study aims to fulfill several objectives, including:

- _ Exploring the nuanced distinctions between democratic transition and related terms.
- _ Identify the most pivotal internal and external factors that have influenced the processes of democratic transition observed in Arab nations.

Research Methodology:

In this study, we employed a descriptive approach to clarify facts, concepts, and the dynamics of democratic transition, focusing on both internal and external influences within Arab nations. Additionally, we utilized a case study methodology, selecting the Arab world as a specific example for detailed examination.

Research Strategy:

The analysis is structured as follows:

First: The concept of democratic transition and distinguishing it from some of the terms associated with it

Second: Internal Reasons for Democratic Transition in the Arab World:

Third : External Causes of Democratic Transition in the Arab World

First: The concept of democratic transition and distinguishing it from some of the terms associated with it

1_ The Concept of Democratic Transition

_ Transition meaning:

The term "transition" linguistically denotes change or transfer. It describes the act of altering something, moving it from one place to another, or transitioning it from one state to another. In common usage, one might say an object was transformed from one form to another, or a person was transformed through advice or admonition.¹

The word "transition" in English corresponds to moving or passing from one state, stage, or place to another.² A regime transition is the “interval between one political regime and another”³

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) offer a useful definition in their excellent succinct work. “The ‘transition’ is the interval between one political regime and another... Transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative”⁴

The study on democratic transitions began to take shape as a distinct field when researchers sought to make sense of the numerous cases of democratization that, from 1974 on, led to fundamental political change in all corners of the world.⁵

When we talk about democratic transition, we refer to the intermediate phase between a non-democratic and a democratic regime. A political system undergoing this change is in the midst of moving from an undemocratic state towards becoming a democratic regime.⁶

¹ Osama Maaqafi, “The Ruling Elite and the Path of Democratic Transition: A Case Study of Tunisia (1987-2010)” Master’s Thesis ,University of Algiers 03, Faculty of Political Science and Media, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Academic Year 2010, 2011, p 32.

² Ahmed Menisi, Democratic Transformation in the Maghreb Countries, Center of Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 2004, p 295.

³ Sujian Guo and Gary A. Stradiotto, Democratic Transitions Modes and outcomes , First published, Routledge , New York, 2014, p 09.

⁴ Scott Mainwaring ,Transitions To Democracy And Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical And Comparative Issues , Working Paper,the Helen Kellogg institute for international studies, November 1989,P04 .

⁵ Gerardo L Munck , Democratic Transitions, Second Edition ,International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2015, p 97 .

⁶ _ Samuel Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratic Transformation in the Late Twentieth Century, (translated by: Abdel Wahab Al-Aloub), First Edition, Dar Suad Al-Sabah, Cairo, 1993, p73

“Huntington” emphasized the critical link between legitimacy and waves of democratic transition in his analysis, underscoring that all political systems grapple with issues of legitimacy. Echoing Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he noted, “One who holds power can only sustain it if he transforms this power into a rightful claim to govern and an obligation for the populace to comply.”¹

“Charles Andrian” described it as a transition from one system to another, signifying a change in the existing system and the policymaking methods it employs. He refers to this as a change between systems, meaning profound shifts across the system’s cultural, structural, and policy dimensions. These shifts often arise from contradictions within these dimensions, leading to the old system's inability to manage under its previous framework and methods.

The overall change from an authoritarian to a democratic regime contains, as Guillermo O’Donnell notes, not one but two transitions: the first leads to the “installation of a democratic government,” and the second to the “consolidation of democracy,” or to “the effective functioning of a democratic regime.”²

Therefore, democratic transition can be viewed as a series of distinct stages starting with the dismantling of authoritarian regimes, followed by the rise of nascent democracies that strive to solidify their systems. This transition involves a redistribution of power, diminishing the state’s dominance in favor of civil society institutions and fostering a balance between state and society. This process entails the emergence of multiple power centers and the acceptance of political discourse.³

Democratic transition is seen quite as the movement from a non-democratic system to the introduction of a democratic system, with substantial consensus in the literature for defining a democratic regime as a set of institutions (rather than as a type of popular sovereignty, sovereignty or rule by the people) and on democratic transitions as the adoption of a set of ‘minimum’ institutional components, referring to provisions for fair and free elections, civil rights and legislative governing authority.⁴

Samuel Huntington notably began the study of democratic transition by introducing the concept of "waves of democratic transition." He identified three main

¹ Abdul Ghaffar Rashad Al-Qasabi, *Public Opinion and Democratic Transition in the Information Age*, Literature Library, Cairo, 2004, p19

² _J.Samuel Valenzuela, *Democratic Consolidation In Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, And Facilitating Conditions*, Working Paper, The Helen Kellogg Institute For International Studies, December 1990, P 03 .

³ _Muhammad Nasr Mahna, *In Constitutional and Political Systems: An Applied Study*, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 2005, p 442.

⁴ Paul Barry Clarke and Joe Foweraker ,*Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought* , Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p 263.

waves: from 1828 to 1926, 1943 to 1962, and 1974 to the present.¹ These waves highlight the phenomenon's dependence on certain foundational conditions, including the renunciation of coup ideologies, economic stability, religious reform, and the absence of external threats.²

Its narrative encompasses the implementation of competitive, free, and fair elections and extends, ultimately, to fostering societal development and elevating nations to higher levels of progress and prosperity. This development aims to achieve greater stability and balance across social, political, and economic dimensions.³

2_ Distinguishing Democratic Transition From Some of The Terms Associated With It

A/ Democratic Transition and Good Democracy:

The concept of "good democracy" refers to a democratic system that upholds freedom and equality for all citizens, sustained through legitimate and stable institutions and mechanisms that are both effective and efficient. In essence, under the framework of "good democracy," a democratic system is appraised through various facets, procedures, content, and outcomes.

Key evaluative indicators include the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness of the elected government to the needs of its citizens, assurance of political rights and civil liberties for all, and the reduction of economic and social disparities.⁴

B / Democratic Transition and Democratic Reform:

Democratic reform involves a series of changes within the structural and functional dimensions of institutions. These changes encompass modifications to working methods and objectives, which are facilitated through legal tools inherent within the political system, guided by the principle of gradualism. The goal is to enhance the political system's capacity and effectiveness in responding to new challenges and variables.

Reform represents a transformative process initiated from within the system itself, leveraging mechanisms that are derived internally. This reformative process

¹ _ Mark Bevir, *Encyclopedia Of Governance*, Sage Publications, The United States Of America, 2007, p 114

² _ Rezig Nafisa "The process of democratic consolidation in Algeria and the problem of the state system, problems and prospects" Master's thesis ,University of Hadj Lakhdar - Batna - Faculty of Law, Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2009-2008,p19.

³ Sonia Al-Aidi, "Political participation and democratic transition in Algeria, the presidential elections of April 8, 2004 as a model - field study in the city of Biskra" Master's thesis, Faculty of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, 2004 - 2005, p 105.

¹⁰ _Mustafa Balouar, "Democratic Transition in Arab Political Systems: A Case Study of the Algerian Political System 1988-2008," Master's Thesis ,University of Algiers, Faculty of Political Science and Media, Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2008-2009, p 27.

⁴ Hassanein Tawfiq Ibrahim, *Op.cit* .

aims to bolster the efficiency and effectiveness of the political system, affecting both its internal environment and its external regional and international interactions.¹

Second: Internal Reasons for Democratic Transition in the Arab World:

An observer of the phenomenon of democratic transition will notice a variety of contributing factors that stimulate the process, recognizable in any global context. Democratic transition is not the result of a singular factor but rather from a complex interplay of multiple interconnected elements.²

These elements include essential and secondary factors, both internal and external. They also span objective structural factors such as economic, social, cultural, historical, and religious conditions that constitute the transition environment. Political actors also influence the transition through their identities, choices, and strategic approaches. The causes of democratic transition are bifurcated into internal and external categories, acknowledging that the dynamics of democratic transition often reflect a complex overlap of these internal and external elements:

1_ Political Leadership:

Numerous studies examining the causes of democratic transition have highlighted the critical role of political leadership in facilitating this process.

When political leaders are committed, believe in change, and are capable of confronting conservative forces, the likelihood of successful democratic transition increases significantly. Such transition necessitates adept leadership skilled in managing opposition and extremism, and capable of broadening participation in both decision-making processes and the distribution of economic resources.

“Samuel Huntington” posits that effective political leadership is instrumental in advancing social, civilizational, and economic reforms and accommodating the participation demands of emerging groups in political activities.

According to “Huntington”, political leaders may adopt one of three strategic approaches: reducing the current authority’s role, ending its role to pave the way for a modern constitutional monarchy where power is vested in the people (including parties and parliaments), or proactively working to merge royal and popular authorities within a single political system.

“Huntington” asserts that leaders in totalitarian regimes are capable of dismantling existing regimes to initiate democratic transitions, motivated by the intrinsic value of democracy, its instrumental benefits, or as a consequence of achieving specific objectives.

¹ Osama Maqafi, Op.cit, p 39.

² Hassanein Tawfiq Ibrahim “Democratic Transition: A Theoretical Framework” Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 01/24/2013, from the site: "http://studies.aljazeera.net/sites/default/files/articles/files/fb391429abce4da0b52931eb9c36f09f_18.jpg" />, Day: 06_13_2023, Time: 14:30.

“Juan Linz” argues that political leadership is largely responsible for fostering democratic cohesion. It plays a pivotal role in instilling new democratic values among individuals, ensuring their freedom and security from state arbitrariness, and providing the necessary economic and social conditions for effective participation in the democratic transition process.

The influence of political leadership can either stimulate or hinder the democratic transition process. For instance, while some political leaders may attain power through fair and free elections, they might subsequently employ various strategies to retain power, thereby undermining the principles of democratic transition.

“Diamond”, “Linz”, and “Martin Lipset” further emphasize the importance of a competent and democracy-committed leadership in initiating political reforms within authoritarian regimes. They highlight the growing awareness among such leaders that their prolonged rule could weaken the structures essential for transitioning to democracy, and recognize that the authoritarian regime itself is susceptible to erosion.¹

For the reasons that make leaders of authoritarian regimes tend to support the democratic option, they include:

- (1) The erosion of political legitimacy within authoritarian regimes often compels leaders to seek alternative governance structures, with democracy providing a potential solution.
- (2) Recognizing the unsustainable expenses associated with maintaining authoritarian control, both in terms of political capital and resources, leaders may opt to initiate democratic transitions. This decision is frequently influenced by the fracturing of coalitions that support their continued rule.
- (3) As authoritarian regimes exhaust their rationales for existence and struggle to meet societal demands or manage internal and external pressures, leaders might view democracy as a strategic alternative.
- (4) Leaders might believe that transitioning to democracy will afford their country numerous advantages, such as enhanced international legitimacy, the easing of sanctions, access to economic and military aid, the opportunity to secure loans from international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, and membership in major international consortia.
- (5) In some contexts, leaders may find that democracy represents the ideal form of governance, particularly when the government and the country have evolved to a stage where they are ready to embrace democratic structures.²

¹ Iman Ahmed "Theoretical Readings: Factors of Democratic Transformation Part 2" The Egyptian Institute for Studies, March 5, 2016, from the site: <https://gmpg.org/xfn/11>", Day: 06_01_2024, Time: 10:50.

² Iman Ahmed, previous reference.

2_The collapse of the legitimacy of the existing system:

Legitimacy is a crucial pillar for the continuation of any political system. When a system loses its legitimacy due to dissatisfaction or non-acceptance by political institutions or those occupying them, or because it fails to represent the values and interests of various societal segments¹ and fails to solve society's problems, meet the needs of citizens, and confront external dangers, this leads to the loss of legitimacy, public acceptance, and popular satisfaction.

A_Causes of the legitimacy crisis:

(a) If a regime was established through a revolution or a military coup with specific goals, such as economic and social development, and these goals are either achieved or deemed unachievable, the regime may face a decline in its legitimacy. This results from having exhausted the original purposes of its establishment. Conversely, failure to achieve these goals also results in a loss of legitimacy. The military intervention is defined as a coercive tactic used to manipulate a country into taking a certain path that would not otherwise have been chosen. In strict terms, it consists of military involvement or the encouragement of the use of force by an outside power in a domestic conflict.²

The process of democratization is particularly difficult when a country is emerging from a conflict. The transition to democracy, in combination with other factors, can often contribute to violent conflict, especially in societies that do not have the capacity to cope with conflict through non-violent means.³

(b) Over time, societal values that underpin the legitimacy of a regime may evolve. When these foundational values shift significantly, the regime's legitimacy may diminish as it no longer aligns with the prevailing social values.

(c) The political system may fail to adapt to new societal variables, particularly the emergence of new social groups during times of economic or social transition. This inability to provide opportunities for these groups to participate in the political process can lead to a legitimacy crisis.⁴

(d) The weakness of the role and position of parliament in the political system contributes to this crisis. Parliament is meant to embody the general populace, and its failure creates a gap between the system and society. This gap directly impacts the legitimacy of the system.

¹ Firas Al-Bayati, *Democratic Transformation in Iraq after April 9, 2003*, Al-Aref Publications, Beirut, 2013, pp. 24, 25.

² Karin von Hippel “ Democracy by Force US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World” Cambridge university press, United Kingdom , 2004 , p 04.

³ Transition To Democracy , United States Institute of Peace , Washington,P05.

⁴ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

(e) If the political system does not represent the varied values and interests of society, discrimination against specific groups can occur. This discrimination reduces the acceptance of the system by these groups, increasing the risk of instability, especially if these groups are influential or large. At times, the basis of the system's illegitimacy may expand due to its separation from the general society, indicating a lack of supporters.

(f) The international image of the system also affects its legitimacy. A system that is isolated internationally for various reasons may face skepticism from its citizens about its capability and right to govern. This aspect has become increasingly important in today's globalized world, especially with advances in communication technologies. The likelihood of legitimacy issues increases if the system is also suffering from a significant crisis, such as a fundamental lack of legitimacy.

Legitimacy problems vary depending on the nature of the regime, but the common denominator for democratic governments is that their legitimacy depends on successful performance, as rulers evaluate their legitimacy based on their performance and not on what their voters expect of them. In contrast, under an authoritarian regime, there is no distinction between the legitimacy of the rulers and the legitimacy of the regime, as the failure of the regime to perform means the downfall of both the rulers and the regime. Thus, shortcomings in the economic performance of dictatorial regimes have had an impact on the emergence of a legitimacy crisis for these regimes.¹

B - Factors of Political Stability:

Legitimacy issues within a regime may not directly lead to its downfall, but they often signal to the leadership that there are numerous institutional challenges to address. While legitimacy is crucial for the regime's survival, it alone does not determine whether a regime will continue or collapse. A regime can maintain control over governance even with diminishing legitimacy, particularly in the absence of a viable and accepted alternative.

“AlMond” highlights several fundamental elements and capabilities essential for any regime to ensure its continuity and survival. The strength of each element, however, varies from one regime to another. These elements include:

1- Extractive Capacity:

This refers to the ability of the political system to mobilize and harness both material and human resources at local and international levels. Extractive capacity can often be quantified in terms of the political system's effectiveness in extracting resources from both the local and international environments.

This includes the capability to motivate society's members to fully deploy their efforts, activities, and abilities in exploiting local resources. Additionally, it

¹ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

encompasses the system's proficiency in securing support, both economic and political, from international entities and institutions.

2- Organizational Capacity:

This capacity is indicative of how successfully the political system organizes and controls the behaviours of individuals and groups within the society and to what extent it can extend its influence internationally. Organizational capacity largely relies on the legitimate use, or threat of use, of material coercion. This capacity is fundamental to the political system and distinguishes it from other social systems.

3- Distributive Capacity:

This involves the role of the political system in distributing benefits and values. It highlights the efforts made in allocating and distributing goods, services, honors, social statuses, and opportunities among individuals and groups within the society. The distributive capacity can be assessed by examining the quantity and significance of distributed items, the life areas impacted by the distribution process, and the sectors of the population that benefit from these distributions.

4- Symbolic Capacity:

Symbolic capacity relates to the adept use of symbols such as speeches, discussions, and declarations in a manner that secures the support of citizens. The ruling elite also uses this capacity to reinforce the values associated with symbolism.¹ For example in the case of Tunisia The weakness of pro-democracy political parties ,and also the weakness of the media in this regard the total absence of a free press under Ben Ali has left a negative legacy.²

5- Responsiveness:

Responsiveness refers to the political system's ability to react to environmental demands and pressures. This includes how the system addresses these demands and pressures through its decisions and actions.

Responsiveness delineates the relationship between the system's inputs, sourced both locally and internationally, and its outputs. It measures the extent to which the political system can adapt to new inputs prompted by changing circumstances that necessitate tailored policies, decisions, and procedures.³

¹ Naji Abdel Nour, *The Algerian Political System from Unipolarity to Political Pluralism*, Publications of the University of May 8, 1945, Guelma, 2006, pp 18, 19.

² Álvaro DeVasconcelos “ Democratic Transition In Tunisia:What Role For The Eu?” ISS analysis ,February 2011,p 02.

³ Naji Abdel Nour, *Op.cit*, p 20

For example here Islamist parties are on the way to having an important role and a voice in the future political landscape of many countries in the region, once the political process becomes open to all political groups.¹

These capabilities not only represent the functional necessities upon which the system relies, but they also serve as metrics for classifying and comparing political systems. Furthermore, these factors enable the prediction and interpretation of potential political changes. Almond posits that the legitimacy of a system, along with its capacity to endure and thrive, hinges on these capabilities. The robustness of these capabilities enhances the system's prospects for continuity and survival, whereas their deficiency heightens the likelihood of transformative change.

3_ The Role of the Economic Factor:

Economic factors often provide a critical gateway for propelling non-democratic systems towards democratic reform.² The influence of economic dimensions on the process of democratic transition is twofold; not only does economic failure drive the push for change, but successful economic development also expands the opportunities for and facilitates the process of transition. The impacts are as follows:

Economic progress leads to a change in the values of the population. An increase in the percentage of educated individuals, spurred by economic development, enhances their receptiveness to ideas of tolerance, moderation, and rationality. This shift in educational attainment fosters a political culture conducive to democracy.

Economic advancements result in higher levels of income and economic security for the majority of the population. This improvement helps to mitigate class conflicts and reduces discrimination based on socioeconomic status. Additionally, economic growth expands the middle class, which plays a crucial role in fostering balance and moderation within societal conflicts.

Economic development stimulates the proliferation of charitable and non-governmental social organizations. These entities do not merely serve as watchdogs holding governments accountable; they also bolster political participation, enhance political skills, and facilitate the creation and dissemination of new opinions and viewpoints.³

This enhanced version aims to maintain the richness of the original content while improving readability and academic tone, ensuring a detailed and expanded exposition of each point as requested.

¹ Salman Shaikh " Gulf states: The challenge of Reform" in : the Arab Spring Implications for British Policy ,Middle East Council, 2011 , p 28 .

² Firas Al-Bayati, Op.cit, p 25.

³ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

This relationship between economic development and the strengthening of the democratic bond was confirmed by Samuel Huntington, who emphasized the essential role of economic development in the possibility of achieving democracy. Huntington noted that substantial economic growth often precedes and facilitates the emergence of the third wave of democracy, making it clear that transitioning to democracy is generally unfeasible in impoverished nations without a minimum level of economic growth.

However, Huntington also highlighted that wealth alone is insufficient for democratization, which led him to add the criterion of "broad-based economic growth" as a characteristic of systems likely to transition to democracy. This perspective is intertwined with his emphasis on the crucial role of the middle class in these processes.

4_ The Increasing Power of Civil Society:

In contemporary times, marked by a communications revolution, the role of civil society has become a formidable force not only in opposing authoritarian regimes but also on regional and international levels. Civil society institutions play a significant role in elevating cultural growth rates within societies, which helps to create suitable conditions and environments for educating the populace about their rights and responsibilities.

This educational role enhances citizen awareness and fosters a democratic culture that supports both the transition to democracy and its sustainability. Additionally, the majority of civil society institutions do not aim to attain power, which typically renders their propositions and critiques beneficial to the ruling regime.

Hence, the importance of the role of civil society in the democratic transition process becomes clear, as well as the effectiveness of its forces and organizations in exerting pressure for democratic transitions.¹ Civil society is an essential means of mobilizing individuals and for the ideals it presents to society, which serve as a radical critique of the existing conditions with the aim of achieving the lofty goals sought by a free society.

5_ The Growth of a Democratic Political Culture:

It is noteworthy that the expansion of education and the enhancement of educational programs, along with the spread of the written press and audio-visual media, as well as increased contact with the outside world, have helped raise the rates of cultural growth in closed societies.

This increase in cultural development has enhanced people's awareness of their political rights. As a result, these societies now possess a reservoir of modern political ideas that speak to the beginnings of the formation and expansion of a democratic

¹ Hassanin Tawfiq Ibrahim, Op.cit.

culture in Third World societies, providing a new factor to facilitate the process of democratic transition.¹

Third / External Causes of Democratic Transition in the Arab World

In addition to the internal causes of democratic transition, there are external influences that contribute positively towards initiating democratic transitions in systems that have not yet embraced democracy.

External factors consist of a set of political, economic, and ideological variables emanating from the international community that advocate for a shift towards democracy. It is generally observed that developing countries in the Third World are particularly susceptible to these external influences, especially from Western nations. These external factors can be categorized as follows:

1_ Pressures from External Powers:

Historically, ruling elites in these countries could overlook internal demands for democracy and commit various violations of civil and political rights without fear of international repercussions. However, in contemporary times, they are compelled to address issues related to democracy and human rights. External powers, including countries, organizations, and international institutions, play a significant role in propelling the democratic process:

Pressures from Donor Countries: Towards the end of the 1980s, it became widely recognized that the lack of democracy and accountability of rulers was a principal factor contributing to the crises and economic deterioration in Third World countries. Consequently, donor countries began to condition their financial aid on political reforms. This linkage underscores the importance of accelerating democratic transitions in recipient countries.

Pressures from International Institutions: Financial institutions and other organizations actively promote political reforms in various countries with the goal of fostering independent organizations separate from the state, thus cultivating an effective civil society. This advocacy is based on the premise that democracy is fundamental to development, a prevailing notion within these international bodies. Democracy or political reform is not merely on par with economic reform in terms of importance but is a prerequisite for it.

Desire for Integration into International Community: Often, the impetus for democratic transition also stems from a regime's aspiration to integrate into the international community and its economic and financial organizations. This integration is frequently motivated by the desire to secure external aid and grants. Notably, donor countries consider the extent of democratic progress and the human rights record of the recipient country when providing aid. The role of external powers extends beyond

¹ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

merely influencing the transition; they also play a crucial part in activating this transition by monitoring electoral processes and other democratic procedures. This is evident in the actions of the European Union, which supports democracy in Southern European countries and demands that aspiring member countries undertake comprehensive political, constitutional, and economic reforms and enhance their human rights situations, thereby bolstering the democratic process.¹

2_ Domino Theory:

“Samuel Huntington” described this phenomenon as “snowballs” that increase in size from top to bottom. He noted that a successful democratic transition in one country often serves to encourage similar transitions in neighboring countries, akin to a snowball increasing in size as it rolls downhill. The influence of such successful democratic models became apparent in 1990, with significant transitions observed in Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania. The propagation of democracy in these instances can be attributed to one or all of the following reasons:

All these countries faced similar systemic problems, and democracy was perceived as an effective remedy for these issues.

The state that has transitioned into a democracy might possess considerable influence or serve as a political and cultural exemplar worth emulating. Geographical proximity played a crucial role in the cascading effect of democratic transitions, as witnessed in the Eastern European nations following the collapse of the Soviet Union. These nations embarked on a concerted drive towards democracy, aiming to dismantle long-standing totalitarian regimes.

The rapid advancements in media and communication technologies significantly contributed to this phenomenon of emulation or contagion. These developments have effectively shrunk the world into a global village, where events in one country can quickly influence or impact another. For instance, if a serious human rights violation occurs in one country, others are quick to denounce it and may threaten sanctions or even hint at intervention for humanitarian purposes.

It is important to note that the process of emulation will not succeed in any country unless there are conducive local factors that support this transition. This underscores the intricate interplay between local and external factors in the democratic transition process.

3_ The Global Trend Towards Democracy:

As the world increasingly moves towards the globalization of political and economic life, the failure of totalitarian regimes, the success of democratic systems, and the growing interdependence among nations, it has become increasingly difficult for any country to remain insulated from global shifts towards democracy. Political

¹ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

societies today are not isolated entities but are part of a complex network of relationships with other global powers.¹

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the influence of external factors on the democratic transition varies significantly from one case to another. This variation is dependent on the strategies of international actors and the specific circumstances and internal dynamics within the targeted countries.

Numerous studies have underscored that external influences alone are insufficient for fostering democratic transitions without the presence of strong internal forces and factors. These findings highlight that the genesis of the transition process is fundamentally rooted in internal conditions, with external factors playing a supporting role.

Secondly, some external factors have notably supported and consolidated authoritarian regimes, rather than facilitating democratic transitions. A prime example of this is the role of the United States of America in backing authoritarian regimes in the Arab region over the past decades. This support continued as long as these regimes aligned with American interests.

Consequently, the policies of successive American administrations toward the Arab region have often involved sacrificing democracy and human rights principles for strategic interests. Thus, Washington's efforts to promote democracy in the region post-September 11 have been plagued by a 'lack of credibility'.²

Conclusion

From what has been discussed, it can be concluded that many Arab political systems have initiated reforms to their political, economic, social, and cultural frameworks, such as improving their human rights records and engaging citizens in civil society organizations. These reforms are motivated by the desire to participate in the global system and to achieve political and economic objectives that enhance the efficiency of these systems, especially in the context of the growing social movements within many Arab nations.

Recommendations :

In general, the critical outcomes of studies in this area can be outlined as following recommendations :

_ There is no universal blueprint for the successful transition to democracy; however, there are numerous lessons that can be gleaned from successful global experiences. The most important conditions and components of success include preserving and strengthening national unity, which prevents internal divisions and conflicts during the transition phase, and the effective design and management of the transition phase

¹ Iman Ahmed, Op.cit.

² Hassanin Tawfiq Ibrahim, Op.cit .

through consensus among the main political actors. This involves reaching an agreement on the envisioned political system, the stages of transition, and the institutional and procedural arrangements that best suit the specific circumstances and characteristics of the state and society.

_ If the supreme values and principles of democracy, including freedom, justice, equality, the rule of law, political and intellectual tolerance, and respect for human dignity, are universal and absolute, then the formulas and forms of democratic systems in Arab countries are diverse. These systems vary from one country to another in terms of institutions or procedures. Each country in the transitional phase to democracy can thus develop institutional and procedural frameworks for a democratic system that not only upholds these supreme values but also aligns with its unique social, civilizational, and cultural contexts.

_ The democratic transition process is indeed a long-term journey that involves several crucial steps and foundational elements. It begins with dismantling the authoritarian regime and progresses towards strengthening and solidifying the democratic transition. This journey is underpinned by key pillars such as political and partisan pluralism, the integrity and regularity of elections, ensuring a peaceful transfer of power, and the establishment of effective political institutions.

List of sources and references:

1_ Dictionaries and Encyclopedies

- _ Bevir Mark, Encyclopedia Of Governance, Sage Publications, The United States Of America, 2007.
- _ Clarke Paul Barry and Joe Foweraker ,Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought , Routledge, London and New York,2005.

2_ Books:

- _ Ahmed Menisi, Democratic Transformation in the Maghreb Countries, Center of Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 2004.
- _ DeVasconcelos Álvaro , Democratic Transition In Tunisia:What Role For The Eu?, ISS analysis ,February 2011 .
- _ Guo Sujian and Gary A. Stradiotto, Democratic Transitions Modes and outcomes , First published, Routledge , New York, 2014.
- _ Gerardo L Munck , Democratic Transitions, Second Edition ,International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2015 .
- _ Hippel Karin von , Democracy by Force US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World” Campridge university press, United Kingdom , 2004 .
- _ Shaikh Salman , Gulf states: The challenge of Reform, in : the Arab Spring Implications for British Policy ,Middle East Council, 2011 .

Democratic Transition in the Arab World: A Study of Internal and External Causes

- Firas Al-Bayati, Democratic Transformation in Iraq after April 9, 2003, Al-Aref Publications, Beirut, 2013 .

_ J.Samuel Valenzuela, Democratic Consolidation In Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, And Facilitating Conditions, Working Paper, The Helen Kellogg Institute For International Studies, December 1990 .

_ Transition To Democracy , United States Institute of Peace , Washington, P05.

_ Naji Abdel Nour, The Algerian Political System from Unipolarity to Political Pluralism, Publications of the University of May 8, 1945, Guelma, 2006 .

_ Muhammad Nasr Mahna, In Constitutional and Political Systems: An Applied Study, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 2005.

_ Mainwaring Scott , Transitions To Democracy And Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical And Comparative Issues , Working Paper, the Helen Kellogg institute for international studies, November 1989 .

_ Samuel Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratic Transformation in the Late Twentieth Century, (translated by: Abdel Wahab Al-Aloub), First Edition, Dar Suad Al-Sabah, Cairo, 1993.

Abdul Ghaffar Rashad Al-Qasabi, Public Opinion and Democratic Transition in the Information Age, Literature Library, Cairo, 2004.

3_ Theses:

_ Al-Aidi Sonia, "Political participation and democratic transition in Algeria, the presidential elections of April 8, 2004 as a model - Field study in the city of Biskra" Master's thesis, Faculty of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, 2004 - 2005.

_ Balouar Mustafa, "Democratic Transition in Arab Political Systems: A Case Study of the Algerian Political System 1988-2008," Master's Thesis , University of Algiers, Faculty of Political Science and Media, Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2008-2009.

_ Maaqafi Osama, "The Ruling Elite and the Path of Democratic Transition: A Case Study of Tunisia (1987-2010)" Master's Thesis , University of Algiers 03, Faculty of Political Science and Media, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Academic Year 2010, 2011.

_ Nafisa Rezig "The process of democratic consolidation in Algeria and the problem of the state system, problems and prospects" Master's thesis , University of Hadj Lakhdar - Batna - Faculty of Law, Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2009-2008.

4_ Internet :

- Hassanein Tawfiq Ibrahim "Democratic Transition: A Theoretical Framework" Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 01/24/2013, from the site: "http://studies.aljazeera.net/sites/default/files/articles/files/fb391429abce4da0b52931eb9c36f09f_18.jpg" />, Day: 06_13_2023, Time: 14:30.

- Iman Ahmed "Theoretical Readings: Factors of Democratic Transformation Part 2" The Egyptian Institute for Studies, March 5, 2016, from the site: <https://gmpg.org/xfn/11>", Day: 06_01_2024, Time: 10:50.