



THE NEOPATRIMONIAL STATE AND THE ARAB SPRING

Adib Nehme



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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



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- ▶ *Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world*
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program

In collaboration with the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University, the Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program tries to further understand through research the many different meanings of the phrase “Social Justice” and its social and economic policy implications. The program looks at social justice in the realm of urbanism, labor unions, social policies, and protest movements. Each component has a dedicated project that aims at establishing a partnership, through research, between scholars, policy-makers, and activists in Lebanon and beyond. This program is co-funded by the Elmer and Mamdouha Bobst Foundation in New York, Princeton University, and the American University of Beirut.

Dedication

Waiting for Godot, “Axel – Noon” arrived.

To Hind of Yemen
Malik of Tunisia
Abdul Rahman of Egypt
And their comrades.

To Samir Qasir,

*An early herald of the Arab Spring:
This book includes thoughts that you imparted.*

THE NEOPATRIMONIAL STATE AND THE ARAB SPRING

Adib Nehme

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Western Asia*

Translation from Arabic to English by Samira Kawar

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INTRODUCTION

I must start by thanking the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, and my friend Ramī Khouri and his team for encouraging me to prepare an abridged version of my book on the neopatrimonial state and the Arab Spring for publication in English. I also thank the Arab NGO Network for Development, my friend Ziad Abdul Samad and members of the Network, who participated in the initial debates out of which the idea for the book was born, and who contributed to the publication of the Arabic edition, and the abridged English edition.

Thanks are not offered as a compliment, and their essence is what counts.

Publishing in English widens the circle of non-Arab readers, which is important, because the book argues with the ideas of international organizations and European political thought. Moreover, I am interested in communicating my thoughts to those directly involved. I will be pleased to receive reactions from new readers, which is my hope, and will derive much benefit from this.

Preparing the abridged English version held up a mirror to me, and I found myself reviewing what I had written, even though I had not written it long before. However, time is very condensed these days, and the months since the Arabic edition was published have been full of important developments.

Today, as I read what I have written, the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is growing and controls large parts of both Iraq and Syria; Libya is gripped by extremist fragmentation and the systematic destruction of Syria continues as the role of Syrians themselves shrinks and the role grows of outside parties intervening to support combat groups on both sides without supporting the Syrian people. Moreover, the situation in Yemen is dramatically changing following the control established by the Houthis over Sana'a and their occupation of some government institutions, pushing Yemen to the brink of destruction and rendering its fragmentation a realistic possibility. In addition, the two countries that began the protest movements – Tunisia

1. THE ARAB MOBILIZATION: HOPE FOR A NEW RENAISSANCE PROJECT?

From revolution to renaissance

The Arab mobilization is characterized by a clear and dominant political quality in that its dominant agenda is political and specifically internal (with demands such as “the people want to topple the regime” and demands for “a civil, democratic modern state”). This does not signify the absence of other (external) political agendas or internal economic, social and cultural agendas. However, political change was the issue around which all agendas converged, particularly with regard to its rejection of the existing situation. Moreover, political change was considered as the prelude to every other change, rendering it as a convergence point at which a breakthrough for change could be achieved. In other words, political change was both the starting point and the goal to be achieved.

However, as the protest movement goes beyond the confines of sit-ins at public squares and street demonstrations, moving beyond the actual revolutionary moment and following its path to its possible conclusions, other agendas return to the fore to take their natural place. The objective reason for this is that agendas are a genuine expression of actual dimensions that exist and play a role in shaping the current situation and the pathways and dynamics of mobilization. Another inherent reason relates to the fact that those actual dimensions are transformed into agendas of varying significance, content and orientation, and are specific to one social category or another, or to a particular political trend. On that basis, the overall result of the process that is gradually taking shape emerges as those dimensions become integrated and the parties concerned work to give the upper hand to one pathway or another, or to one result or another.

We put forward the following theory: The current protest mobilization is the beginning of a social transformation process in the Arab countries. It can be considered tantamount to a new historical phase that is as important as the Arab Renaissance Era (the last decades of

the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth Century) and the post-World War Two phase during which independent national states were built. This new phase can lay the foundations for a second Arab renaissance project that bears many resemblances to the first renaissance, while taking into consideration all the structural changes brought about by globalization in all societies (both economically and in every other way). This does not entail overlooking the complications and setbacks affecting the path of transformation and the possibility that developments could move backwards in terms of politics and civilization, leading to opposite results. That possibility exists, since it is both a historical and potential possibility. Similarly, the possibility that a new renaissance project may spring up also exists, and we must not discount it from our expectations and plans for the future, or from planning our immediate actions that aim to achieve it.

The pathway that leads to such an outcome underpins the logic of the text. It is the pathway that progresses from revolution (which refers to the current mobilization and push for change) to development to arrive at a comprehensive Arab renaissance. This can be achieved by continuous expansion of the agenda of change, expanding from a dominant internal political agenda to one that includes a national political dimension and external relations, further expanding it into an economic, social and cultural agenda. As these elements take shape, the main features of the potential social project (which is one of development, and renaissance) will be complete.¹

Civil society revolutions without intermediaries

The protest mobilization can be described as revolutions waged by civil society without intermediaries against despotic regimes, or more accurately, against the neopatrimonial state, which is the common structural and functional denominator shared by the Arab countries, however much of their other characteristics might differ. The reason is that when institutional forms of expression are unavailable to civil and democratic mobilizations, when

1 Both forms were mentioned in ESCWA, Arab Millennium Development Goals Report 2011: An inclusive approach to development in a time of transition.

the possibility of reform (or change) from within the regime's institutions and through its mechanisms do not exist and its margins of freedom are narrowed, civil society expresses itself directly without intermediaries as a wide popular mass movement. That movement transcends all action methods prevalent amongst non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the one hand, and the modes of operation of the decrepit political parties, which have lost their abilities to attract and lead people on the other hand. In that respect, there are resemblances between the Arab Spring and the manner in which the overthrow of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe occurred over two decades ago.

The success of the civil ideological reference where other references have failed

Previous attempts were made to launch a comprehensive movement in individual countries or throughout the Arab countries. During the past years and decades, such attempts were sometimes launched under a nationalist pan-Arab slogan based on solidarity with Palestine and what has befallen it. At other times, such attempts adopted an Islamic slogan, which constitutes a strong and well-established basis in the collective consciousness in individual countries and at the Arab level as well. Massive resources were used to create such comprehensive movements, starting with the media and including financing. Such efforts were based on legitimate anger and feelings that national and private dignity had been violated by the repression, despotism and external and internal aggression that the countries of the region were experiencing. The social slogan that had a leftist-socialist character was also inadequate. The Arab countries experienced wide social protests in the Seventies and Eighties of the Twentieth Century, which were sometimes called "bread revolutions," but they were unsuccessful at bringing about any actual change.

Pan-Arab, religious and socialist ideologies did not succeed in unifying various social categories within individual countries, nor did they succeed in generating an atmosphere of change across borders similar to the contagion for change that spread from Tunisia and Egypt to various Arab countries. The spread of that contagion

for change was epitomized by the fact that the slogan “the people want to topple the regime” became the slogan of protest movement in all Arab countries where they occurred. Whereas the religious, pan-Arab and social-class discourse failed, the discourse of the civil democratic state succeeded in transcending many divisions and differences in opinion and direction within individual countries. It also succeeded in constituting a common discourse in countries whose circumstances differed drastically from one another, be it in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and all the other Arab countries.

Three formative phases

In terms of major historical phases, the Arab region experienced two very important formative phases, and we believe it is currently experiencing a third formative phase.

The first was the phase of the Arab Renaissance at the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth Century. This phase ended as the First World War drew to a close.

The second was the phase of building the national state after the Arab countries had gained their political independence. For the majority of Arab countries, that phase stretched from the end of the Second World War until the 1960's.

The third phase was launched by the Arab Spring at the end of 2010, and we believe it includes the potential for a third formative phase.

The first phase: The Renaissance

During this phase, the Arab region comprised societies and regions mostly subject to the Ottoman Empire, which justified its rule on the grounds that it was a continuation of the Islamic Caliphate. The Arab countries had not formed themselves into national states in the modern sense of that term. Based on a relationship of hegemony – subordination, the Ottoman sultanate represented the (hegemonistic colonialist) north and the Arab societies were the (subordinate and dominated) south. Since the colonialist and the colonized shared the same religion, the Arabs identified themselves through the Arab liberation movement (the Renaissance) and its culture at the time as Arabs, using their pan-Arab and national identities, which transcended and unified

religious and tribal affiliations, blending them into a concept of nationalism and pan-Arabism in the modern sense. That was the only way that a movement aiming to gain independence from the sultanate and its colonialism could spring up, since both sides shared the same religion.

By contrast, the (neighboring) European side, which had established its own modern state, was defined as the opposite in terms of culture, institutional systems and state building, and in its capacity as a modern West compared to a traditional East. However, the relationship between the Arabs (at the time) and Europe was (mostly and in its general aspect) not one of colonialism and subordination. It was a relationship of differing degrees of cultural, institutional and organizational advancement. Hence, Europe was an attractive model for the pioneers of the Arab Renaissance at the time. They saw in the European system, and particularly its modern state system, an advanced model compared to the local model that was approaching breakdown. On that premise, the Arab Renaissance movement until the beginning of the Twentieth Century was based on complementary elements that stemmed from an Arab identity rather than on a religious, tribal identity. It considered the model of the democratic, constitutional liberal European state – particularly the alternation of power, the separation of powers, the modern make-up of state structure and laws – as the best model for the Arab countries that were seeking independence from Ottoman control and a path towards civilizational progress. The Renaissance movement had strong modern cultural aspects, particularly regarding the spread of education, the abandonment of customs and traditions that were unsuitable for the era, the liberation of women, religious reform and other aspects.

The second phase: Building the national state following independence

Although the form of government and the ways of attaining power differed from one Arab country to another, this phase has general features and characteristics, as well as common political and cultural elements. The general characteristic, however, was a retreat from some of the features of the Renaissance, particularly in the following respects:

- ▶ The liberal political component, the concept of legitimacy based on justice and on the rule of law and the system of the separation of powers all receded in favor of revolutionary legitimacies that were based on immediate popular legitimacy deriving from a pan-Arab liberation discourse (antagonism towards Israel and confrontation of neo-colonialism). Alternatively they receded in favor of traditional legitimacies (kingdoms or emirates) based on a combination of religious and tribal legitimacies.
- ▶ The state was considered as the main player in charge of identifying the priorities of social and economic growth, or of development choices.
- ▶ The importance of the cultural and social dimension receded, including the issue of dealing with social traditions, the liberation of women and other elements that had been important during the Renaissance era. Those issues, as separate elements in their own right requiring continuous attention and protection, were neglected.
- ▶ The importance of religious reform receded. In fact, the voices of key religious reformists who had played a decisive role during the Renaissance period in promoting the model of a modern liberal democratic state grew fainter.
- ▶ Lastly, on the political side, the populist, and revolutionary political ideologies did not perceive western liberalism, constitutional democracy and the alternation of power as the desired model, because they were laying the ground for strengthening a state model that was open to the possibilities of despotism and the ruler's ability to renew his term in office, culminating in the model of the current neopatrimonial state. As for the traditional regimes (monarchies and emirates), such matters were not on their agendas in the first place.

Are the current revolutions the beginning of a third formative era?

The essence of the decline experienced by Arab societies over the past 120 years stems from the suppression of constitutional democracy and political liberalism in favor of the state system, and from the suppression of a modernist discourse in the social and cultural fields, either in favor of pan-Arab and state-socialist ideologies, or in favor of religious Salafist or fundamentalist ideologies.

The change represented by the Arab Spring could be the starting point of a new historical period in the current era of globalization. Such a new historical period would be as significant as the two formative phases at the start of the Twentieth Century (the Renaissance) and in the second half of the Twentieth Century (building the independent national state).

What is occurring today constitutes a historical reaction of rejection of the suppression of constitutional democracy and political liberalism by the ideologies and political systems that ruled the Arab countries after the Second World War. In that sense, it is a potential beginning of a tendency towards a second Arab renaissance project in the era of globalization. However, if the possibility of the formation of a new path towards renaissance exists, the possibility of a civilizational retrograde path towards chaos and the Dark Ages also exists.

2. THE PATH TOWARDS THE ARAB SPRING

Deep-seated causes and direct stimulants

The Arab protest mobilization was not born in a vacuum. Historical events paved the way for it and immediate trigger factors caused it. This distinction is divided into three levels: Deeply rooted factors, causes, and direct triggers.

- ▶ **The deep transformations** witnessed by the Arab countries during the past three or four decades laid the ground and prepared the necessary setting for the revolution. The overall effects of those transformations (including global transformations, particularly accelerating and expanding globalization in all fields) can be summarized by saying that their interconnected and collective consequences caused a serious erosion in the historical and political legitimacy of the Arab regimes at the external and internal levels. They also caused a qualitative change in the internal socio-political alliances upon which regimes were based. They also led to a change in national economic and social policies that was an attempt to respond to the requirements of neoliberal economic globalization, as well as the political requirements of the global political system. This coincided with a growing sense of the failure of development (in the strategic and long-term sense) in most fields. It was accompanied by increased neopatrimonial behavior, corruption, violence in dealing with problems and the emergence of sub-identities and sub-cultures at the expense of a culture of citizenship and of national and pan-Arab identities.
- ▶ **Causes** (medium to short-term) that contributed more directly to revealing the impotence of regimes and increased public discontent, paving the way for the revolution: These relatively direct causes can be grouped into three categories: political, socio-economic, and psychological and psycho-social. These three categories interacted to produce different configurations in each case, and their importance varied from one country to

another. However, they existed in all Arab countries. All three categories combined into a configuration that was specific to each country, playing a direct role in triggering popular protests during the short period that preceded the outbreak of revolutionary protests.

Particular attention is devoted here to the psychological and psycho-social level - which is a very important factor that directly contributes to the possibility of change – because that dimension is usually neglected, despite its importance in transforming complaints and discontent into a condition of frank objection, followed by anger and rejection, which is translated into action to achieve change. The preparatory structural crisis factors were accumulating in the individual and collective public consciousness in the form of doubts and preliminary questioning of the historical legitimacy of regimes. People perceived the large gap between slogans and words on the one hand, and actions and consequences on the other hand. The factors of mistrust accumulated in the years directly preceding the revolution. The continuing deterioration in most aspects of the lives of many categories of people, from freedom to basic living requirements, was the very opposite of their dreams and aspirations. The moment in which future expectations seemed to have no prospects, and in which the actual formula seemed to be “tomorrow will not be better than today,” witnessed a transition to a different public mood. Such a rejectionist public mood might be characterized by a feeling of impotence, frustration or the inability to bring about change (and this could create retrograde or nihilistic tendencies). However, at the moment in which one of the weak circles breaks, making change seems possible, such a public mood is transformed from frustration into action on the street, or into other forms of action. That is what occurred in the Arab Revolutions (particularly after the Tunisia circle broke).

The clearest expression of this psychological and psychosocial dimension is encapsulated by the slogan dignity (or human dignity), which was the moral incentive that translated latent anger into positive action. Dignity is a concept that beautifully and successfully epitomizes all the expressions relating to political rights, freedom, the ability to make a decent living, appropriate work and longing for equality and the rule of law, etc. In that sense, the expression “dignity” is not obscure and rhetorical, but an accurate expression (that is, objective and scientific) of the unity binding the political, socio-economic and the psychological and psycho-social dimensions that inform transformational action.

Perhaps such transformational, radical action would be impossible if it were not for this moral (non-material) dimension, which considers the struggle for human dignity and its actual achievement as its clearest and most beautiful expression.

- Direct stimulants of revolution, in the sense of the spark (or sparks) that caused the outbreak of popular anger and protests. The reference is to a direct causative incident that launches the revolution.

The spark varied from one country to another. In Tunisia, it was Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation over a matter relating to a combination of unemployment and humiliation. In Egypt, it was the police killing of Khalid Said. In Libya, the spark was the arrest of the lawyer who was following up on the case of the victims at the Abu Salim prison, and so on. However, in other cases, there was no country-specific spark. At issue, rather, was a perhaps vague but certain feeling that the time for change had come.

Contagion and attempts to imitate what had occurred in Tunisia and Egypt were the main and basic factor. This occurred in Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. There was no specific case that provoked public opinion, prompting people to take to the streets. It was simply a case of a feeling that the status quo was common or similar to the situation in the other countries, and it was therefore possible to adopt the same slogans (the people want to topple the regime; a civil, democratic modern state; justice, dignity, work and freedom,

etc.). These became the slogans of protest movements in the countries in which those movements occurred. The spark, therefore, was the contagious hope for change. The reactions of regimes to the protest movements followed, pushing their paths towards more confrontation and crisis. In other countries that experienced less widespread protests (Morocco, Jordan, Oman, Algeria, etc.) the situation was similar: the contagious hope for change was linked to chronic internal problems. People were of the opinion that the time had come to resolve these problems, and believed, under the influence of what had happened in the initial experiences of the Arab Spring, particularly the events in Tunisia and Egypt that the time for change had come.

It became quickly apparent, however, that matters were more complicated, and that the paths of actual change would be determined in light of balances of power, the capabilities of the regimes and their opponents, and international plans and their intersection with internal situations.

3. THE UNIVERSAL CONTEXT OF THE EXTENDED RECESSION

Introduction

The development of the situation in the Arab countries during the last three decades was characterized by a near total erosion of the state's legitimacy and that of ruling regimes in the Arab countries, and by their loss of the social and political base upon which they had built their historic legitimacies. Moreover, in most cases and during certain phases, those states turned into a crude copy of a mafia-security type despotic state. This occurred within the context of the path towards neo-liberal globalization – which also has its own phases – and it was structurally affected by it to a greater extent than first impressions suggest. The influences of globalization contributed to promoting obligatory political, economic, social and cultural changes that were imposed on Arab societies. Their accumulation and interaction encouraged the formation of an environment ready to explode, and of demands for political and social change.

The decades of failure

The reference here is to three decades, covering the Eighties until the start of the current protest mobilization (at the end of 2010). They are:

1. The 1980's decade, which was one of debt crises (starting with Latin America and encompassing Africa), of “conformance with Washington” and of structural adaptation. During that decade, the dynamics of economic transformation were launched under the banner of reform and economic liberalization policies.
2. The 1990's decade, which witnessed the collapse of the bipolar order as the Berlin Wall and the Soviet bloc collapsed. It was the decade during which global neoliberalism in the political and cultural fields was strongly pushed to extreme limits. This also applied to economic globalization, which had preceded and enabled neoliberalism's global push. During that decade, the economic neoliberal doctrine turned into something akin to a pure ideology that approximated religion.

The Nineties decade also paved the way for the establishment of a new, unipolar world. It also led to an increase in pressure at various levels on developing countries (including the Arab countries). The concept of sovereignty and independence was eroded in favor of more complex, stronger and more cunning subordination links that infiltrated all fields and details, leaving very limited scope for sovereign decisions by any state or government. The universal dimension became an organic element of domestic policy in the social and cultural fields, and in economics in particular.

3. The first decade of the Twenty-First Century inherited all the characteristics of the two preceding decades. However, it also was a decade that witnessed serious economic crises, as well as the war on terror. There is no disconnect between it and the Nineties. On the contrary, it represents a continuation of the Nineties, but with increased negativities and problems.

The first decade of the Twenty-First Century ended with a series of extremely serious crises that began in 2007 and 2008, known as the triangular crisis:

- ▶ The crisis of high food prices;
- ▶ The crisis of high oil (and energy) prices;
- ▶ The global financial-economic crisis in the autumn of 2008, the ramifications of which still persist.

Economics merged with politics and military power in the global economy because of the latter's internal development in the first instance, rather than an external political reason. This merger was consecrated in globalized alliances that included the rulers of developing countries, who became party to a generalized relationship of subordination in politics, economics and culture. Those fields were no longer separate from one another in the countries that were the center of this movement in the first place. The rulers of the Third World (including the Arab rulers) welcomed this relationship because their political and economic systems were backward. It met with their strong acceptance because of their despotic tendencies, and because a separation of the various levels of social action in Arab societies had not been achieved in the first place.

As usual, when we import a prescription from the world order, we import it under the worst conditions, and implement it in its most backward format, creating many more problems. That is what the Arab world has suffered from during the past three decades.

However, this occurred within the context of globalization, rather than outside of it: the supposition that the Arab countries were extraneous to the stormy process of development that globalization launched stems from the erroneous impression that globalization is merely limited to the visible aspect of developments that occur in the central countries. Those developments are usually linked to appearances of modernization and the growth of the services sectors, particularly communications, finance, technology and so on.

However, globalization, like any other historic phenomenon in the modern era, has two faces: the central and the peripheral. Both comprise the phenomenon, and in that respect, they are two unified aspects, and one cannot exist without the other. As usual, the peripheral format of globalization exhibits all the “cons” of neoliberal globalization in an exaggerated manner, without most of its “pros”.

Developments and phenomena that occurred in the Arab countries are strongly linked to the path of globalization itself, and some of them fully correspond with its course, albeit in the shape of particular manifestations. Some of those manifestations constitute reactions to globalization, and appear to follow an opposite or contradictory trend, which in most cases is secondary and part of a wider overall course. As for courses that seek to escape the pathway of neoliberal globalization in the Arab region, their existence is not in doubt, but their effectiveness is very weak.

The rentier economy: from the center to the peripheries and vice versa

Rentier economies are not exclusive to Arab economies, and it is wrong to believe that the persistence of a rentier economy or its expansion contradicts the process of neoliberal globalization. The course of liberal economic globalization is an expansion in the role of rentier economies in the countries of the center. Hence, a wider reproduction of the rentier economy in the Arab countries is a positive response that is in step with the general tendency of neoliberal globalization itself.

The merging of the ruling power, the state and the economy

The bloating of the financial economy has led to an advanced state of separation between itself and the real economy, and the shifting of focus away from profit towards rent requires merging the economy with politics and its institutions. It also requires amending the role of those institutions to put them in the service of rent. That same phenomenon also occurs in the states of the periphery in exaggerated forms, because the requirements of such a merger from the perspective of fitting into the world economy from a peripheral position combine with the results of the socio-historical course of our Arab societies, and the shaping of national states in them. Such a course is characterized by a reproduction of patriarchal relations in a modernist shape, which includes borrowing the external appearance of the modern civil state and its institutions, but without its essence. Simply put, in our societies, the institutional and societal frameworks within which acceptable levels of autonomous social action and societal structures – political, economic and social – can exist remain incomplete. This includes an incomplete separation of functions between powers and the absence of a distinction between the public space and the private space, and between persons and institutions.

On that basis, the course of partial transformation to an institutionalized state enjoying comparative independence and historical, social and political legitimacy following independence was eroded at more than one level. Globalization, through a process of complete peripheral subordination of the Arab countries, played a basic role in encouraging ruling regimes to take such

a course, and to back away from every previously and partially achieved modernist transformation, pushing as strongly as possible to merge politics and economics into the structure of the regime and the state and into personal structures. This also caused a push to retrieve backward cultural and social elements from our inherited history, and to abandon some of the progress and partial modernization that had been accomplished during the national state-building phase in favor of more backward patterns – from the general civilizational perspective – at the cultural, social and institutional levels. Hence, the ruling regimes in our countries combined the worst of global neoliberalism with the worst in our heritage and history, manufacturing out of both a unique pattern of politics, governance and the state, the negativity of which exceeded all that had preceded it.

The people want to overthrow the neopatrimonial state

The slogan “The people want to overthrow the regime” chanted by the revolutionaries referred to that particular kind of regime and that particular kind of state. Descriptions of it as despotic, patriarchal, corrupt or rentier are insufficient. It is all that and more. We suggest describing it as the “neopatrimonial state”, because we believe that this term encompasses all the above-mentioned attributes, adding to it the concept of dealing with the state itself as though it were a spoil of war, or as though it were an entitlement mostly gained by force. This would permit whoever gained it to use it as he wishes, or to “distribute” it and its positions, apparatuses and resources amongst his followers to ensure loyalty and to limit authority.

In such regimes, the ruler is the state, and the state is money and business. Everyone is embodied by the person of the ruler, his family, and his coterie of beneficiaries. As for ministers and officials, they are sometimes businessmen, or their agents, their protective sponsors or their employees. Relationships based on kinship, marriage alliances, business partnerships, belonging to the security services and the military; partnerships with foreign investors; friendships with officials in foreign countries and with international financial organizations are also factors that are part of this pattern. The result is the establishment of a regime that resembles the Mafia (in some extreme cases).

Searching for a new legitimacy

Regimes have lost the social and political basis for their legitimacy, and have sought to compensate for this in the following ways:

- ▶ Through international alliances with the centers of the global capitalist system;
- ▶ Through class-based and social alliances with businessmen and uniting with them within the context of privatization and economic liberalization;
- ▶ By laying the ground for an ideological legitimacy that draws upon the culture of globalization and the metaphysical elements in our heritage;
- ▶ Spreading relationships of clientelism, benefits and allegiance on the basis of primary loyalties;
- ▶ Lastly, by resorting to additional repression, compulsion, violence, overstepping the law and violating human rights and citizens' rights, because all of the above means are not sufficient to guarantee the continued flow of rent, ensure stable governance, keep one person in power and render this hereditary.

In both the capitalist centers and the peripheries, war and politics were used in the interests of keeping rent flowing and protecting interests in the Arab countries. Therefore, it was necessary to use the state to serve the economic and political interests of a minority by concentrating power, money and the positions of the state in the person of the absolute ruler, surrounded by a family and a coterie. Such a transformation of the state into a mafia is the clearest manifestation of the neopatrimonial state. Preserving such a situation would not be possible without repression, subjugation and violence.

4. THE PEOPLE WANT TO OVERTHROW THE REGIME: WHICH REGIME?

Regime or regimes?

The literal adoption of the slogan “The people want to overthrow the regime” in all the Arab countries that witnessed one form or another of political and social mobilization creates the impression that those countries were ruled by a single regime. Alternatively, it creates that impression that Arab youth, the revolutionaries and those staging sit-ins in streets and squares view the Arab regimes as copies of one another, or national incarnations of a single prototype of authoritarian Arab regimes.

During the first weeks and months of the Arab Spring, the contagion of action and the speed with which protests spread from one country to another were the most salient common feature. This lent legitimacy to the idea of similarity amongst the regimes and amongst the movements revolting against them. It also lent legitimacy to the Arab concept itself – which had weakened – because the spread of the state of revolutionary protest and its slogans revived the idea that Arab societies were linked. It revived the concept of Arab nationalism itself in a manner that is similar in some of its aspects to the initial emergence of that concept during the Arab Renaissance, or to the message espoused by the traditional Arab nationalist movements in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Views of the Arab protest movement swung between two extremes. On the one hand, they emphasized that resemblance to the point of oversimplification, overlooking the significant differences in the circumstances that were unique to each country and each movement. On the other hand, they exaggerated the uniqueness of each country and movement to the extent of trying to obscure the similarities and common factors shared by countries, whether in relation to causes and origins, or objectives and end results, or the linkage, mutual support and integration of the processes of change currently, or in the near and medium terms.

This work adopts an approach that takes account of both the similarities and differences as two facets of a single process of historical change. Each of these two facets expresses one of the dimensions of the socio-historical reality, which is necessarily complex. The similarities are particularly apparent in the following respects:

- A. In the causes and origins that are similar to those of protest movements and revolutions in various countries.
- B. In the declared objectives and possible end-results.
- C. In the similarity of the political-ideological currents and the nature of the social groups participating in the protests.

The differences or distinctions are apparent at the following levels:

- A. The directions taken by national movements in each country.
- B. The political and social characteristics of those participating in the mobilizations.
- C. The characteristics of the main players at the internal, regional and international levels.
- D. The balance amongst the roles of all those parties.

It can be said that ultimately, the actual path and the final outcome of the protest mobilization in each country and at the level of the region are not predetermined by any of the main players. However, it appears as though some of the big players believe that they can control them in one country, or in the entire region, and are therefore behaving according to that belief. The future is manufactured every day by means of a process of interaction and conflict amongst all parties. That process cannot be controlled by any particular party, or guided to achieve predetermined objectives accurately. Therefore, historic inevitabilities are impossible. The reference here is not to historic inevitabilities of a Marxist nature. Rather, it is a reference to contemporary neo-liberal inevitabilities and to the various political and ideological inevitabilities currently prevailing in the Arab region.

A description of the regime and the state in the Arab countries

We begin with a question of methodology:

- ▶ What is the resemblance between the Tunisian republican presidential regime, which is open to and integrated with globalized capitalism, and the Egyptian republican regime, which has grown out of the Nasserist pan-Arab-socialist heritage and gone towards globalized neo-liberalism?
- ▶ What features are common to the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes on the one hand, and on the other hand the Libyan regime, which is difficult to describe and categorize, and was characterized by concentrating the state and power in the person of the inspired leader who came to power by means of a coup over four decades ago, establishing a regime that was personalized to such an extreme extent that it almost lacked institutions in the modern sense and adopted a populist, revolutionary anti-imperialist discourse?
- ▶ What are the similarities between all the above and Yemen, the two parts of which were unified after a series of wars, and which also has a presidential regime based on a traditional tribal structure that is well-established in society and within the power structure?
- ▶ What are the similarities of this or that country with a monarchy like Bahrain, or with Ba'athist Syria?

In our descriptions of Arab regimes, we have become accustomed to using a collection of terms that we believe express the nature of those regimes. Some of them belong to the political field (dictatorial, dominating, totalitarian, state-centered, military, security). Some of those terms are political – historical (despotic). Others derive from political economy (rentier), or focus on the dimensions relating to state management (individualistic, personalized, corrupt, and based on clientelism). All of these terms express genuine attributes of those regimes. However, they do not penetrate their structure and functions, nor do they capture their most important essences. Moreover, they do not reveal the similarities between the sub-categories of those regimes that can be described by using the above-mentioned terms.

Based on the operative quality of this text and its argumentative interaction with the prevalent discourse, these concepts and terms will be handled consecutively in accordance with the above-mentioned categories and in a condensed, abbreviated and pragmatic manner. Some differences will be suggested in the understanding and usage of terms that are in use, with the aim of achieving consistency amongst them and listing them within more comprehensive conceptual categories.

First: the political dimension

The first dimension relates to the absence of democracy and public freedoms, or to the fact that they are feeble and restricted. While Arab regimes are defined by the negative term of undemocratic, they are usually described by employing three categories of attributes/concepts. They are usually described as:

Dictatorial, despotic or authoritarian. Although the meanings of these phrases are similar, we suggest the following distinction: The term “dictatorship” should apply to regimes that are closest to the modern state model (whether they are military dictatorships, or civilian dictatorships; Tunisia under Ben Ali is an example). The term “despotic regime” refers to a traditional pattern that has a historical echo, whereas the term “authoritarian” is less precise and describes a situation in which authoritarianism is the means of exercising power over functions of representation and management of the state. From the perspective of the organization of the state and its apparatus, we distinguish between state-centered regimes (in which the apparatus of the state dominates all fields, going beyond its normally acknowledged roles); military regimes, in which the military establishment actually wields authority; and security regimes, in which the security apparatus is the decision-maker rather than the military establishment, although in reality, there is a great deal of overlap between the military and the security apparatuses in most cases, but they remain distinct from one another.

Another category is the totalitarian regime, which is a special and extreme case of the state-centered regime, and a methodological antithesis of the civil democratic state, because totalitarian regimes do not recognize civil society in the first place. The Arab region has experienced two types of totalitarian state. One had an ideological pan-Arab basis (Iraq, Syria and Nasserist Egypt), and the other took on a religious nature (Iran represents the clearest example in the region, although some powers within the state and outside it also adopt this model – for example ISIS and the fundamentalist organizations that control some areas within states and practice this type of religious totalitarianism). Totalitarianism differs from other forms of dictatorship in its heavy use of ideology, propaganda and popular mobilization to impose its authority from within society itself, rather than from outside of it.

Second: the economic dimension

The phrase most frequently used here is rentier economy. What is intended here is both the collecting and distributive aspects of the rentier economy. Forms of collection vary and include rent accruing from control of the positions of power within the state apparatus, to ways of taking possession of returns from protection money to outright plunder by force. The distributive aspect uses distribution to renew loyalty with the purpose of remaining in power. Rent is the favorite form of all neopatrimonial regimes. This has been further clarified in the section dealing with the concept of neopatrimonial capitalism.

Third: the social dimension

This includes three categories of attributes/sub-concepts:

The first category encompasses the concepts of paternalism and patriarchy. Although they share linguistic connotations, we suggest that they should be considered as distinct. The term “paternalism” is closer to the protective function of the father within the nuclear family, whereas the concept of patriarchy is more akin to the father’s authoritarian function within the extended family or the clan.

The second category encompasses the concepts of tribalism and family clannism, which refer to relationships within society and to the effect of primary social formations on the building of power. Most Arab Gulf countries fall into this category, and not into the category of the religious or sectarian state.

The third category is the description of the state as sectarian or confessional (Lebanon is the most salient example, and Iraq provides an example to a large extent). This also is a description of the nature of the political regime, and is not related to the religious state, which is closer to being a totalitarian state.

Fourth: the administrative institutional dimension

This encompasses the following sub-concepts:

- ▶ Individualism and personalization as opposed to institutionalism. The predominance of individualism and personalization is a sign of a political regime's backwardness and its avoidance of the modern democratic state.
- ▶ Corruption, clientelism and related characteristics: These characteristics accompany the neopatrimonial state, but are not exclusive to it. However, it is worth noting that corruption is the norm in the neopatrimonial state, rather than the exception. Moreover, it is more complex in the neopatrimonial state, because the concept of corruption itself becomes weak and takes on a technical and procedural character relative to the widespread system of distributing benefits that is used by most neopatrimonial states. That system is the mainstay of the regime and of reproducing it.

The need for a new concept: the neopatrimonial state

All the concepts and terms reviewed in the previous paragraphs express genuine characteristics of the Arab regimes. However, they only provide an incomplete picture. The concept for which we are searching belongs to an analytical dimension that is necessarily more abstract. We believe that such a concept exists, and using it to analyze the recent social mobilizations in the Arab countries will add a useful dimension to an analysis that transcends dealing with events and politics in the narrow and direct sense in order to understand what has occurred. It will also help to scope out the challenges of transformation and its possible and desired outcomes. We therefore suggest that in this respect, the neopatrimonial state as a concept and a term should be used, and that it should be used in the sense that is based on Max Weber's definition of the patrimonial state.

5. THE CONCEPT OF THE NEOPATRIMONIAL STATE

The origin of the concept

The concept originates with sociologist Max Weber, who distinguished between two forms of governance: the first is modern capitalist governance, which is based on “rational economic capitalism”² that derives its legitimacy from general elections and is run by a neutral state apparatus that is relatively autonomous from the ruler. It is built and operates based on written principles and regulations that apply to all. The second is a traditional system – not in the “western” capitalist sense. Its legitimacy is based on traditions in that the ruler’s power is hereditary. It is run by a state apparatus that is loyal to the ruler and that is chosen on the basis of individual - personal relations and interests. It does not operate in accordance with written constitutional regulations and general procedures.

Weber refers to the second system in the above paragraph as patrimonial. It is usually translated into Arabic as the hereditary system. In the most extreme forms of the patrimonial system, the individualism of the ruling regime becomes very excessive and is accompanied by an extreme use of force and domination over “citizens” that takes precedence over the power of traditions in establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of governance. When that happens, we are contemplating what Weber calls the sultanic regime (which draws on the despotic - sultanic regimes that were known to the East and the West). This is a particular kind of (hereditary) patrimonialism.

2 We will refrain from discussing the accuracy of the term “rational economic capitalism”, which is the basis of modern capitalism. However, objectivity requires acknowledging a measure of relative rationalism that distinguishes capitalism from previous systems and that springs from the relative margin of freedom of the economic sphere from the political sphere and the state in capitalist regimes, at least in principle when that regime is operating “normally”. In actually achieved capitalism, such “rationalism” produced Nazism and the Second World War, unlimited plunder of developing countries and eventual deep crises, including the 2008 crisis, which is not the last or least rational of its kind, and its aftermath. This discussion goes well beyond the limits of our subject.

One of the most salient attributes of this kind of (hereditary and sultanic) regimes/states is the blurring of limits between the public and the private spheres. The ruler treats the state and its apparatus as personal property that he can personally use as he wishes.

Neopatrimonialism

The concept of neopatrimonialism³ (of which the suggested translation into Arabic is the neo-hereditary system) preserves a basic aspect of the attributes already mentioned in Weber's definition of the hereditary system, but within a contemporary format that draws on the structure of the modern state.

Jean Francois Medard, based on S. N. Eisenstadt, distinguishes "between traditional patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism by adapting the concept of patrimonialism to the modern world. Hence, neopatrimonialism is a compound type (mixed, hybrid) of control, rather than an ideal type, and it is also based on the blurring of limits between the public and the private. However, unlike the traditional patrimonial model in which this blurring is linked to inherited traditions, such blurring in the neopatrimonial model is based on the opposite – that is on a system dominated by the legal – rational model. The neopatrimonial state is not based on an essential legitimacy that derives from traditions and that is strongly embedded within them, as is the case with the patrimonial state. It is based on a combination of the use of force and patronage/leadership – loyalty. This situation (currently found in African countries) is similar to what Weber calls the sultanic regimes, which are patrimonial regimes that do not derive their legitimacy from traditions, and where haphazard practices prevail that are not limited or regulated by a framework of traditions."⁴

According to most contemporary writers who used this idea, "the concept of the neopatrimonial state is based on blurring the limits separating the public and the private spheres, and it seems more appropriate than the concept of the rentier state (in understanding the state and regulations in the African countries)."⁵

³ *The use of the concept Neopatrimonialism is attributable of sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt's book Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism in 1973.*

⁴ *Jean Francois Medard, "Etat neo-patrimonial et Etat developpeur: le cas des pay africains." Beirut, 15-16 February 2002, working paper.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Lebanese researcher Albert Dagher⁶ holds that “preference for the concept of neopatrimonialism arises from its general nature, or from the fact that the term can have several different connotations. In other words, such preference is attributable to the fact that it can be used to describe several models of the neopatrimonial state, with each pattern presenting a specific structure of neopatrimonial frameworks and practices.” Dagher uses that concept to provide a detailed description of the Lebanese case. He believes that the dominant feature of the Lebanese neopatrimonialism pattern is the leadership – clientelism political model (parliamentary clientelism). Hence, he interprets sectarian practices and administrative problems from the perspective of that concept.

Alice Sindzingre adopts the same approach in analyzing the state and regime in the African countries:⁷ “. . . neopatrimonialism refers to the blurring distinctions between the public and private sectors witnessed in the regimes of modern African states, which are no longer traditional. In those regimes, public resources are privatized, in the sense that they are managed as private property. The concept of neopatrimonialism combines a number of features used to describe regimes, such as clientelism, nepotism, personalization of authority. But it also differs from those concepts as a result of the blurring of the distinctions between the private and public spaces and its expression. Neopatrimonialism is also more general than the concept of corruption, and has a stronger political content. It refers to a style of building the state, governments, and their functioning, and their understanding of economic development as the private accumulation of public rents. The neopatrimonial state is different than crony capitalism, which is a concept used to describe the phenomenon of combining (and merging) the economy with politics and the common interest of networks formed between senior officials and businessmen, who take turns in interfering and controlling the public and private sectors (as in East Asian countries).”

6 Albert Dagher “*L’administration Libanaise après 1990*”. Beirut 15-16 February 2002

7 Alice Sindzingre, “*Developmental state, patrimonial stage and economic development: are Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia comparable?*” CNRS, Paris – June 2003.

In neopatrimonialism, neither tradition nor inheritance is necessarily the source of legitimacy, nor are they always the way governance is established. The state takes shape according to the contemporary model. It has institutions, a constitution, laws, procedures and regulations. State bureaucracy and selection of employees are also carried out on this basis. However, that is merely the external shape of the state, and its institutions and relations, whereas things appear more complicated when it comes to content, reality and practise.

The main components of the (Weberian) patrimonial concepts remain present in neopatrimonialism, albeit in new forms. In particular, this means the intentional blurring of distinctions between the public and private spheres, and rulers' management of the state and its resources as though they were private property. The same applies to the blurring of distinctions between the relatively neutral administrative sphere and the political sphere in the management of the affairs of the state, thus attaching the state apparatus to the ruling political elite. As for the source of legitimacy, elections become an empty shell and their results can be controlled by the ruler, or they can be limited or completely dispensed with. Hence, neopatrimonial regimes cannot be described as genuinely civil and democratic, in the sense that "democratic" means political democracy based on recognizing citizenship, the ability to replace the ruling power through the ballot box and the peaceful alternation of power. "Democratic" also means that societal relations, culture and administration are based on the principles of citizenship, justice, the rule of law and the neutrality and relative independence of the state apparatus from politics.

Neopatrimonialism is not a continuation of the past. It is a "modern" and contemporary model in the sense that it is the product of the historical process of the transition of Arab and non-Arab societies, their states and their regimes from the traditional mode to the modern mode. It is also the product of contemporary developments, particularly existing globalization, which is actually neoliberal globalization.

To sum up, neopatrimonialism is a modern and contemporary product of social and political history and must be dealt with on that basis. The roles and functions performed by neopatrimonial regimes must be analyzed from this perspective, because the inherited elements upon which those regimes are based are part of a contemporary structure, and they fulfil current and future functions that lend them a new meaning that differs from their meaning when they were elements of a traditional social and political whole. This is a very important methodological point. We must not assume that the path leading to the development of the state and of political regimes in the Arab countries during the past three or four decades occurred without being influenced by the global order, or outside the context of globalization (neoliberalism) in particular.

“The phenomena associated with neopatrimonialism are new (neo), meaning that they do not emerge from traditional rules, but the manipulation thereof. It is a result of the transformation of institutions through the manipulation of their form and content, where new content is given to traditional institutions in their old forms, including religious beliefs. It can also make old meanings and legitimacies take new forms, in democratic elections, for example.”⁸ Another example is the strengthening role of religious ideology, which takes the form of claims of reinvigorating a prosperous past and returning to origins.

The neopatrimonialism of the decentralized state

The concept of the neopatrimonial state can be used as a general common denominator to express the Arabized content of the concept, in addition to the list of other previously mentioned subcategories (sub in relation to the concept of the neopatrimonial state as it occurs in this text). In this sense, the Libyan neopatrimonial regime (Gaddafi) and the Baathist regimes (Iraq and Syria) belong to the same sub-category of totalitarian states. They also belong to the same sub-category in terms of their political ideologies (a populist, pan-Arab, socialist and “anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist” discourse). Hence, they are “totalitarian

⁸ *Ibid.*

neopatrimonial” systems. While common features between those regimes and Egypt’s Nasserist regime can be found, this does not fully apply to the regime of Hosni Mubarak, which belongs to another sub-category that resembles the Tunisian regime under Ben Ali.⁹

Although most Arab regimes are characterized by concentration of power to a high degree, rendering their “sultanic” nature strong and clearly obvious, others do not exhibit this characteristic, such as Lebanon or post-2003 Iraq. These two countries are an example that goes further than the decentralization of state authority (decentralization in general being a good thing, because it expresses – theoretically – a higher degree of participation in a country that has a functioning central state.) In such cases, authority is split and fragmented and the state is weak compared to other players (as is the case in Lebanon), a total failure (Somalia), or divided as shares and spoils amongst centers of power in society and the state (Iraq and Lebanon). Nevertheless, the concept of neopatrimonialism remains valid, because the main traits are the same, and it either manifests itself as centralized neopatrimonialism (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Syria), or as decentralized neopatrimonialism (Lebanon, Iraq).

The situation could reach the point of total fragmentation of the state and society in what could be called post-patrimonial.¹⁰ The flexibility that is offered by the term neopatrimonialism is one of the reasons supporting its adoption, since the logic of plunder is not limited to the state. It also applies to political and social groups, as well as to society and its culture. It applies to the case of the ultra-centralized state as well as to the fragmented, split case, where the spoils are smaller. Perhaps the “state” that ISIS has set up in Syria and Iraq – Daesh – is of the extremist post-neopatrimonial type.

9 This is a preliminary categorization aimed at clarifying the link between the concept of neopatrimonialism and the other sub-categories as they appear in the context of the text. Arriving at a convincing and advanced categorization of Arab political systems that resembles a kind of typology requires more advanced experimental and theoretical research.

10 This concept will be explained in a subsequent paragraph.

This reading of the concept of neopatrimonialism is multi-layered and ranges from the political-institutional and the social-cultural to the relationship between text and practice, and between the general and the specific. It contributes to the strength and richness of the concept. It is also consistent with the ambiguous and complex nature of the historical phenomenon that it represents. In a neopatrimonial state, the limits are obscured between the individual and the institution, between the public and the private, between the administrative and the political functions of the state, between the republic and the kingdom and the emirate, and between the traditional and the modern among other such distinctions.

Therefore, the concept that is used must allow a multi-layered reading, rendering it into an instrument that facilitates understanding and analysis of both political and social literature.

Statefication of society

In a contemporary study of the role of armies in politics in countries of the Arab Maghreb, Jean-Francois Daguzan uses the term “neopatrimonialism” to describe the state in the Arab Maghreb based on four criteria:

- ▶ Statefication of society;
- ▶ “Privatization” of the state;
- ▶ “Clientelising” society;
- ▶ Drawing on a patrimonial mode in political relations.¹¹

In my opinion, the most important aspects of the state in neopatrimonial regimes are its role, functions and modes of operation. The importance of these exceeds the statist or non-statist aspect of the regime. In general, it is noteworthy that the statefication of society stands out more sharply in the totalitarian neopatrimonial state version, and in countries in which armies and armed forces have a previous or current key role in building authority and maintaining its continuity. In all cases, the statefication of society is more pronounced in countries that have

11 Jean-Francois Daguzan, “Maghreb –Les armées en politique: des trajectoires divergentes”. *Confluences Mediterranee*, N 29 Spring 1999.

a strong central state, and is less pronounced when authority is fragmented and the decision-making centers are divided amongst regions, sects, ethnicities or tribes. These are all variations of the “decentralization” of authority (in the sense that it is distributed or fragmented) that reduces the statefication of society by reducing the power of the state itself, in some cases when the state is not the strongest party in society (Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine). Perhaps wars and civil wars also play a role in weakening the central state.

Based on the above perspective, which gives precedence to the functions of the state and its modes of operation, even in non-statist countries, the state and its apparatus play an important role in the reproduction of authority and politics, and the replication of vertical loyalties and divisions in society and in other formations (sectarian, tribal or regional) that are considered to be important centers of power in the state and society.

Communalization of the state

As part of the neopatrimonial state, we may find cases of state hegemony over society that amount to “statefication of society.” However, we may also come across an inverted relationship in which society overpowers the state, amounting to “communalization of the state.” Under this scenario, political power centers exercise hegemony and control over the state, which becomes a public expression (civil in principle) of society, and over the state apparatus, in its capacity (in principle) as the public and common apparatus for administering the state and society. Each center of power controls a part of the state, or one of its components or main constitutional institutions. Alternatively, they collectively and jointly control the entire state. An example is the hegemony exercised by militias over the state, of which they have become a part, as Lebanon’s experience, which continues to this day, shows.

The expression “communalization” of the state has a compound meaning the most important elements of which are:

- A. Primary traditional forces of social formation, and the culture and practices based upon it, which usually have an ancient inherited form, overcome modern civil formations, including, in the first instance, weakening the concept of individual citizenship and the concept of citizenship, among others.
- B. The nature of traditional social formation undergoes an intrinsic change. It stops being a structured, inherited system functioning according to its own logic. Its traditional components are transformed into elements of a hybrid modern social framework that performs current and future functions in the service of current political - social powers as they struggle for power, adhere to it, and reproduce it.
- C. The traditional social, cultural and communal base is used to overpower the building of a modern civil democratic state, to consolidate the state’s neopatrimonial character and to overpower the building of links based on citizenship, its culture and values in society.

The “statefication of society” and the “communalization of the state” do not express a general contradiction between state and society that puts one of them in an absolute conflict with the other. What we are witnessing is the simultaneous victory of neopatrimonial choices over both the civil state and civil society. The strength of the neopatrimonial element within the state might allow it to overpower civil society and negate the possibility of the establishment of a civil state (as is the case in statefied regimes). Alternatively, such a position of strength may be inherent in the traditional social formation, its culture and practice, also allowing the neopatrimonial element to simultaneously overpower the civil state and civil society. The contradiction is between the neopatrimonial and the civil, not between the state and society, except in situations in which the state is directly taken as spoils and used as an over-reaching and direct instrument of repression against society. In such a case, the confrontation is between society and the state.

If we wish to summarize the characteristics of the neopatrimonial state, and to contrast it with another type of state, we can say that the neopatrimonial state is the negation of the modern civil democratic state, which was the common demand of the Arab mobilization from the Arab Maghreb to the Gulf. It is also a negation of modern society that is based on a culture of enlightenment, citizenship, and their related attributes.

Neopatrimonialism and the economy

According to the conventional approach, current neopatrimonial regimes are a continuation of previous traditional patrimonial systems. In other words, they are archaic systems that continue to control the present, particularly when it comes to economic activity, despite some superficial amendments. Hence, this approach views neopatrimonialism as a transitional phase towards true capitalism, or as transition from an archaic system to a modern system that occurs by means of freeing true capitalism from inherited patrimonial impurities that are alien to it. According to this approach, the Arab regimes that predated the “Arab Spring” did not adhere to the advice and guidance offered to them by the sages of the world economic order of the time. Instead, rulers preferred corruption, rent and quick and illegitimate profit to capitalist rationalism and the true free market. They also preferred domination and repression to transparency and good governance, according to this approach. Hence, the advocates of this approach believe that the Arab Spring will provide a good opportunity for peoples and elites to genuinely commit to such guidance and adopt a proper capitalist model. Once they do so, they will get rid of the inherited patrimonial impurities and enter the paradise of development, prosperity and democracy.

The pillars of the globalized neoliberal system – countries, institutions and theorists – are today pushing in that direction, attempting to formulate specific tracks for a so-called “transitional phase.” In reality, this phase is nothing but a package of quick measures aimed at re-establishing the major economic choices of the past and the same conditions that led to the failure of development and to the social and political eruption. They consider

that such measures will purify the economies of countries from patrimonial impurities, and teach their peoples and rulers the principles of good governance, elections and the drafting of constitutions. They almost reduce the entire reform process to combating corruption and achieving a superficial liberalism by means of general elections, as a prelude to a quick transition to the true capitalist model.

However, this approach is in total contradiction with the approach adopted in this text, as well as to the approach of many serious researchers, who do not share the opinions of the advocates of the neoliberal economic approach. In a university thesis on economic reform and the economic order in the Arab world (2004) that included a study of four Arab countries – Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and the UAE – Oliver Schlumberger employs the concept of “patrimonial capitalism” in his description of Arab societies and their economies (we will translate this into neopatrimonial capitalism). The benefit offered by his thesis is that it deals with the economic dimension in the Arab neopatrimonial regimes.

The researcher defines the nature of these neopatrimonial regimes as specifically capitalist, rather than pre-capitalist regimes in both the economic and civilizational sense. He adopts the same direction taken by the other aforementioned researchers. He considers “patrimonial capitalism” as “a sub-type of capitalist economy, shaped by the predominance of political power over economic efficiency and distinct to non-democratic political regimes in which informal patterns of social interaction dominate societal organization and thereby prevent the rule of law from taking hold. Contrary to what some may have thought, patrimonial capitalism has been found not to be determined or shaped by religion, culture, ethnicity or traditions. The opposite is true: it is a genuinely modern economic order, combining some traits of market economies with the socio-political features of patrimonialism based on patronage and informal, hierarchical networks; this type of economy does not yield the performance benefits of competition-based market economies. Therefore, patrimonial capitalism differs from market capitalism in terms of long-term performance

prospects, in terms of power-distribution and distributional coalitions, and it is fundamentally different from market economic orders in terms of its underlying functional logic and micro-economic rationality.” He adds, “It is wrong to consider this type of economy as inefficient. It is, in fact, very efficient politically.”

The elements of such an alternative understanding, based on the concept of capitalist neopatrimonialism, according to Oliver Schlumberger, are as follows:¹² Affirmation – from an economic perspective, this time – that the neopatrimonial system is a modern and authentic capitalist sub-system, and is not a system that predates capitalism, or that is inherited from the past. The basis of its formation does not derive from culture, religion or traditions. Rather, it derives from the structure of the contemporary globalized socio-economic order:

- A. In its capacity as a sub-capitalist (patrimonial) system, it is characterized by the control exerted by the political authority over economic activity, in the sense that the political takes precedence over the economic, with the latter at the service of the former (in that sense, it is a rentier system); whereas in centralized western capitalist systems, the opposite holds true (in a certain sense), with the economic dimension enjoying a margin of relative and tangible freedom from the political authority and the state apparatus;
- B. The capitalist neopatrimonial economy has been described as a capitalist market economy that includes social and political patrimonial characteristics (this approximates the aforementioned concept of a hybrid system). The result, from the economic perspective, is a difference in the long-term results of economic performance, rendering it less effective than centralized capitalist market economies (hence, it is difficult for the neopatrimonial state to achieve development, and that is why it is not a developmental state.) The capitalist neopatrimonial economy is also characterized at the level of micro-economic performance

12 Oliver Schlumberger, “Patrimonial Capitalism: economic reform and economic order in the Arab world”; Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen; Institut für Politikwissenschaft, 2004.

with its own particular pattern, which differs from the rationalism of capitalist projects in the economies of the center. In the neopatrimonial case, other elements that are extraneous to the sphere of economic rationalism interfere in micro-economic performance (which we express in the prevalent concept of corruption, nepotism and protection, which politicians impose in different forms on businessmen).

- C. In terms of political - institutional and social characteristics, the control exercised by the political authority over economic activity renders the standards for evaluating the overall performance of the state and the regime and their efficiency different from the equivalent standards in capitalist systems of the center. Since the political takes priority over the economic in the neopatrimonial system, it is natural that the efficiency of the regime should be evaluated according to its objectives, priorities and nature. The author emphasizes that it is wrong to consider the economic effectiveness of the neopatrimonial system as weak, although objectively, it is less efficient than the capitalist market in states of the center, because the political efficiency of the neopatrimonial system is very high. Evaluating the efficiency of economic performance in the neopatrimonial system must be understood in the light of the priority given to political efficiency in the functions of the state and the regime. This does not accord with the currently prevalent economic schools of thought.

The importance of this analysis is that it helps in anticipating the outcomes of the current societal Arab mobilization from an economic (and social) perspective, and in defining the nature of the “transitional phase” from the perspective of the poles of global neoliberalism and the extent to which those outcomes’ definitions are consistent with the “national - popular” perspective (to use Samir Amin’s terms), or with the developmental perspective (in the radical sense of the concept of development or human development).

The impossible catch-up with the model of the center

Every choice has tangible consequences with regard to movements seeking change and movements not seeking change in the Arab countries at present, in what has come to be known as “the transitional phase.” According to the neoliberal scenario, the focus will be on purifying the western capitalist model from the impurities arising from influences exerted by our traditional heritage. According to the alternative scenario, this approach entails a degree of naivety, because it overlooks the fact that neopatrimonial capitalism and the neopatrimonial state are the historical model of the capitalist state that has actually emerged in the Arab countries in their capacity as peripheral formations. Hence, there are important differences that require avoidance of duplicating sub-concepts and sub-analytical instruments and abandoning conclusions that overlook qualitative differences in time and place.

In actual fact, and from a realistic perspective, those Arab countries were not required to achieve capitalist expansion, saving and investment in accordance with economic mechanisms at all. What was asked of them and imposed on them was to take legislative, political and practical measures allowing the capital of the center to partner with the domestic capital that was quickly formed through privatization. Such privatization was, in fact, a corrupt acquisition by the statist bureaucracy, the mafias that were formed as the regime disintegrated, or the neopatrimonial elites that gained control of the regime and of public resources. Such elites or new bourgeoisies could not have taken shape without plundering the state, the public sector and the expanded workforce, and without corruption, deals and neopatrimonial acquisition of public funds. The same occurred in the Eastern European states and the former Soviet Union following the great collapse at the end of the 1980's.

These are the mechanisms for the initial, rapid stockpiling of capital in the developing countries during transitional phases. It is a process that occurs in full partnership with globalized capital and with its consent, irrespective of anything that is said to the contrary. Plundering the state and public funds through privatization and corruption is very far from being a moral deviation on the part

of those carrying it out: it is the necessary requirement for the formation of a category of businessmen and the private sector in transitional countries in a short time, so that they can become partners and interlocutors of multi-national companies, global capital and the state of the capitalist center, which glorify the private sector. This process (to a large extent) has been responsible for political and economic developments in the Arab countries, and it should be avoided in the current transitional phase. This includes refusing to consider it as a transitional phase.

Summary

The attempt to exit the neopatrimonial system by developing market capitalism and becoming integrated into global markets is more likely to fail than to succeed, because of the nature of globalized capitalism (at least in its current form). Actual experiences bear this out. Transformation into market economies over the past two decades was not accompanied by genuine democratic transformation. Rather the changes took the form of some superficial liberal measures within the same neopatrimonial and undemocratic system. Moreover, globalized capitalism has been, in most instances, a definite ally of dictatorships and corrupt and authoritarian leaders, both old and new.

On that basis, the current Arab revolutionary mobilizations, whose programs have been dominated by an agenda of direct political change, must complement that agenda with an economic and social agenda that includes alternatives to the economic (and social) choices imposed by the alliance of globalization with neopatrimonial regimes during previous decades. The previous neoliberal economic choices that still exist following the Arab Spring are an organic part of the neopatrimonial system. Failing to create developmental alternatives to those choices will reproduce the neopatrimonial systems under new names, propelling them towards a new cycle of crisis and explosion.

6. SPECIFIC NATIONAL TRACKS

Introduction

The contagion of popular mobilization, which quickly spread from one Arab country to another, rekindled the legitimacy of envisaging the existence of an Arab world with many commonalities. This had been ignored, even at the level of development. Perhaps the term “Arab Spring” itself is an expression of this idea. For example, it would have been meaningless to refer to it as “the Middle Eastern and North African Spring.” Moreover, considering events in Tunisia and Egypt as separate and lacking anything in common with the other Arab countries would not have been logical, given the spread of revolutionary Arab contagion, which took everyone by surprise.

Two types of over-simplification dominated the analysis of the Arab mobilization. They alternated in dominating press articles, public consciousness and the apologist political ideology employed to deal with the mobilization. During the first phase, when the mobilization and slogans spread quickly from Tunisia to Egypt, and from Morocco to Yemen, an opinion gained prominence within the mobilization movement that considered it to be a single mobilization, both in essence and in form. During that phase, the common and the similar were emphasized to the point that some parties, including some of the mobilization forces in the countries that followed the examples of Tunisia and Egypt, believed that the events in those two countries lent themselves to duplication in the other countries. This prompted several forces to rush towards adopting the forms of action and movement that had occurred in those two countries after finding a substantial resemblance in content and objectives. This may have contributed to the creation of illusions that the same experience could be duplicated, without taking into consideration the important differences in the circumstances and balances of power in each country.

Different questions emerged in the second phase, as events in Libya and Bahrain unfolded. The differences in each track became apparent as a reality that could not be overlooked. This was further confirmed in the cases of Yemen and Syria, and in the cases of other

countries, where mobilization was less strident. During this phase, the dissimilarities were given prominence over the similarities and common elements, and an opposite analysis emerged, holding that national frameworks are completely independent of the common Arab framework. That logic, usually adopted by the powers loyal to the regime concerned, was trying to say, “We are not Tunisia or Egypt. We are a completely different case.” Such individuation to the point of negating common elements was another exaggeration that was equal and opposite to the exaggeration about the existence of a common similar track to the point of negating the specificity of national tracks.

The exaggeration entailed by both approaches is erroneous. The Arab Spring bears common and similar facets, based on the similarity of the regime’s neopatrimonial character, the absence of democracy, efforts to become integrated with neoliberal globalism and the adoption of its choices, and other things. This made the overthrow of the regime a necessary prerequisite for any reform in most countries. It also rendered the goal of building a modern civil democratic state, a state of law and justice, respect for human rights and the alternation of power through constitutional democracies and other norms, a common issue that applies to all countries. However, sharing essential facets and goals does not mean a similarity of pathways. The latter are governed by more varied and complex circumstantial elements that include the following:

- ▶ The political and institutional historical characteristics of each regime;
- ▶ Economic and social history;
- ▶ The degree of societal organization;
- ▶ Actual balances of power;
- ▶ Internal, regional and international alliances;
- ▶ The skills of the regime and the opposition in adopting successful strategies, the degree to which each of the regime and opposition is organized, and other attributes. Additionally, other elements exist and it is impossible for them to be similar from one country to the next.

Hence, it is inevitable that national tracks will be distinct, despite the fact that this will occur against a backdrop and basic facets that are common to the Arab Spring. Commonalities do not negate that which is specific and distinct, and vice versa, except when the approach is naïve.

Factors contributing to the distinctiveness of national pathways

We speak of distinctive national pathways within the Arab Spring based on varied features and qualities, the most important of which are:

- ▶ The speed with which the regime, or its head, falls and with which authority is transferred;
- ▶ The level of violence that accompanies mobilization and the transfer process;
- ▶ The extent to which extraneous players influence decisions affecting the path of change.

Hence, we attempt to analyze national pathways and their similarities and differences, based on the following questions/elements:

1. Chronological antecedence, in the sense of who started the mobilization to achieve change first? Chronological antecedence belonged to Egypt and Tunisia, which “benefited” from the element of surprise in two important regards: The first is that no one knew the extent to which change could occur (that is, the fall of the regime). This mitigated the intensity of the confrontation, because the regime did not sense the danger to its existence. The second is that the influential external forces were taken by surprise, were not ready to intervene, and their performance was confused. This aspect was, of course, not present in the other countries.

2. Cohesiveness of the regime and its apparatuses, in the sense of the existence or non-existence of those who defended it: In the cases of Egypt and Tunisia, the army did not defend the regime (or the president). This reduced the violence of the process of change. In Yemen, tribal balances and splits within the military institution played a similar role and had the same effect of reducing the bloody nature of the conflict. However, when the regime had a cohesive military force to defend it, the regime used it (the example of Syria is the most obvious, but this also occurred in Libya and Bahrain). In the cases of Syria and Libya, this led to an open-ended armed conflict.
3. Regional and international alliances, or when does the outside decisively intervene? There are also differences in the role played by the external factor and its direction. In the cases of Tunisia and Egypt during the first change, that external role was limited due to the element of surprise (and possibly other elements). However, in other cases, external intervention was clear, large-scale and decisive. In the case of Bahrain, intervention by the Gulf states quickly decided the situation in favor of the continued rule of the existing regime; in Libya, NATO's military intervention was decisive in destroying the forces of the regular army that were heading for Benghazi, and in the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. This would not have been achievable had it not been for external military intervention, because the possibility existed of moving to a scenario similar to the current Syrian scenario. In Yemen, external intervention, namely the Gulf initiative and the UN, contributed to finding a political exit and launching a dialogue (before Yemen entered a state of crisis caused by the Houthi coup). As for Syria, several competing international parties intervened (Russia and Iran in the first instance in support of the regime; Turkey and several Arab countries that adopted changing positions in support of one party or another against the regime; the US and the Europeans; and the UN with its confused and failed initiative). In other words, the Syrian regime's regional and international alliances contributed to protecting it. Moreover, the cumulative effect of all interventions – with some being in contradiction with others – contributed

to propelling Syria towards a path of destructive futility and absolute militarization of the conflict. The Syrian people, who have been completely excluded from participating in determining their own future, are paying for this every day.

4. The capabilities of the regime and the effectiveness of the strategies adopted by the parties to the confrontation:
Neither the capabilities of regimes, nor the capabilities of the oppositions are similar. Moreover, those regimes that faced mobilization later than others did benefit from the experiences of those that had experienced it first, and attempted to avoid being overthrown. The two obvious examples are Syria and Yemen. In the case of Syria, the regime depended on its strengths, namely its control of the military elite, the support of part of the Syrian people and its regional and international alliances. It studied the factors that had influenced the fall of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, and adopted a policy of going on the offensive, formulating its own cohesive narrative of the conflict as one against extremism and terrorism from the very beginning (although this did not hold true at the time). It banned independent media and mass public gatherings in central squares and used overwhelming force, directly contributing to the militarization of the confrontation. This strategy achieved success from the perspective of prolonging the regime's life and preventing its overthrow. It also enhanced its ability to bargain and negotiate, particularly as the situation became militarized and chaotic, extremist and terrorist groups grew stronger and several foreign parties intervened. As for Yemen, former president Ali Abdullah Saleh gave in to the pressure of the Gulf-international initiative, but secured a protected foothold within Yemen, was given immunity from prosecution and adopted a policy of rejection and obstruction of any measure that would lead to a radical change in the actual positions of power (particularly in the military establishment). When the time came, he changed his alliances and participated with the Houthi coup against those in charge before the coup.

5. Other elements influencing national pathways: In addition to the aforementioned, scrutiny of Arab experiences during the last few years reveals the existence of other factors influencing national pathways, the most important of which are:
 - A. Pluralism and diversity in the population mix of the country concerned. In this regard, the degree of harmony within the population and societal mix plays a role in determining pathways according to the characteristics of each society. However, such harmony plays a role in the early stages of a confrontation that unifies groups with various choices and agendas that have come together to overthrow the regime. As authority is transferred and as tasks and agendas become varied, political divisions resurface. This was the case in Egypt, where a confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood developed, and in Tunisia, where a confrontation with Ennahda developed.
 - B. The availability of abundant financial resources plays a role in enhancing the regime's ability to take pre-emptive measures, or to mount an early response to popular demands, particularly those that are social and economic.
 - C. A history of internal wars and occupation plays a substantial role in spreading a climate of caution, and reduces the possibility of uninstitutionalised mobilization outside of large political parties and currents. This occurred in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon, and to an extent in Algeria. Hence, the appropriate conditions for the launch of a widespread spontaneous movement demanding change or the overthrow of the regime did not exist. In some cases, the regime was weak compared to other political, sectarian or ethnic forces to the point that the demand of overthrowing the regime was no longer valid, particularly when authority no longer resided within state institutions, but outside them.

7. LESSONS FROM HISTORY: THE 1987 INTIFADA IN PALESTINE

Two phases

We propose a distinction between two phases in the Palestinian struggle, separated by the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987. Such phasing is current in Palestinian and Arab political literature. However, we are now endowing it with a special significance, the crucial importance of which would not have been apparent had it not been for the Arab Spring.

Armed struggle from the outside

The first phase was governed by the logic of armed confrontation (conventional war and/or resistance) with the aim of liberating the land. The Palestinian decision rested with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), based in footholds outside occupied Palestine, and the struggle was dominated by armed undertakings. The relationship between the two parties (the PLO and the state of Israel) was an “external” relationship, i.e., between two entities that were mutually exclusive, with no intersecting ground between them. The role of Palestinian society itself, which was called “the interior”, was secondary in relation to this armed resistance, which dealt with Palestinian society from the perspective of forming support networks for the external armed struggle and participating in it when possible. The PLO merely dealt with it as an “interior”, not as a civil society.¹³

According to the logic of that phase, any actual change to the situation was limited to the possibility of military and political victory on the basis of a national - regional - international balance of power that was believed to allow a clear defeat of Israel and the liberation of Palestine.

13 The description of the Palestinian people in occupied Palestine before the Intifada as a civil society is meant to transcend the vague concept of “the people,” which does not deal with Palestinian society as a social fabric formed by relationships, dynamics and linked groups interacting with one another in all aspects of life and with an occupation carrying out the functions of a local authority in its capacity as an occupier. This vague concept of the people entails overlooking many aspects of strength in confronting the occupation itself, as became subsequently apparent.

The physical field of the struggle was between Israel and the PLO, in its capacity as a national liberation movement, or an authority in the making, struggling from outside the borders; the basic actors were the Fedayeen, that is the fighters of the Palestinian organizations, constituting the “army” of an inherent authority, which was the PLO, on the one hand, and the Israeli army in its capacity as the army of the Israeli state on the other hand. Hence, the confrontation was between two states, once of which had actually come into existence (Israel), and the PLO, which inherently was a state-in-the-making (which is the essence of liberation movements). Although the form of the military confrontation as far as the PLO was concerned was resistance (not a regular army), during periods when it flourished and the Palestinian armed struggle escalated, the structure of this resistance turned into something resembling regular formations to a large extent (this rendered it more exposed and weaker in its confrontation with Israel in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s).

Liberating people first

The second phase dates back to December 1987,¹⁴ with the beginning of the first Intifada, which represented a historical turning point. The struggle against Israeli occupation moved away from armed resistance – which was located externally and waged according to the logic of national liberation movements that practise both armed and diplomatic action to liberate the land – to a struggle against occupation on occupied Palestinian territory. The two sides to this struggle were Palestinian society and the authority of the occupying state, which had placed itself as a practicing local and occupying authority. Occupation rendered it into an embodiment of absolute repression and of

14 A momentary encapsulation of a historical phase is an approximation and is related to terminology. It can be easily argued that previous resistance processes, mechanisms, protests and even cases of previous eruptions preceded that date, and that they contributed to the outbreak of the Intifada. In the Palestinian case, the uprising on Land Day on 30 March 1976 and annual commemorations of it are an example. However, analysis requires a momentary historical encapsulation of the outbreak of the Intifada, because it constituted a turning point in events and developments, but such a momentary encapsulation does not mean that the moment is disconnected from a previous historical process. This is not an unfamiliar approach in political and social history.

full violation of the collective and individual rights of Palestinian citizens, society and people. The physical field of the struggle was the interior of the occupied state itself, rather than between two external separate fields. The actor was Palestinian society, in its capacity as a civil society, whose members were Palestinian citizens (that is, individuals who enjoyed rights vis-à-vis the state and authority, even though they still did not have their independent state) and various civil formations (neighborhood, village and camp committees, societies, schools and universities, markets, unions, various population sectors including students, merchants, business owners, craftsmen, young people, women, etc.). It should also be clarified that Palestinian society under occupation is exclusively and necessarily a civil society, because it is under occupation, and because it is prohibited from forming itself into a state or a political society in the first place.

Methods of operation were civic and peaceful. It's most effective tools were sit-ins, strikes, demonstrations, solidarity, continuing protests and stones at the very most. Everyone participated because the means of civic resistance are available to all without exception. The objective was also liberation and establishment of the independent national state. The strategy of action was based on liberating citizens and society from the authority of the occupation and then liberating the land, not the other way around. The first Intifada had the opportunity to ascertain the success of this strategy on the ground. It was relatively successful in liberating Palestinian society from the "authority" of the occupation by rebelling against it and stripping it of the ability to control people. As a result, the occupation gradually lost control of the refugee camps, neighborhoods and villages to the point where it had to physically withdraw from them, because the rebellion in those areas rendered its physical presence there impractical.

The first Palestinian Intifada from the perspective of the current Arab mobilization

What can we conclude from the above-mentioned developments?

The popular civic uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over four years was able to create a qualitative change in the conditions of the struggle against occupation. For the first time, Israelis found themselves facing certain defeat in confrontation with Palestinian civic society. This prompted them to fundamentally change the way in which they practised their occupation, to retreat from their rejection of any settlement and to accept the principle of searching for alternatives. Hence, the Intifada achieved the establishment of a national authority/state that had not existed, with the full understanding that it was a partial authority/state under occupation. Another achievement of the Intifada was to transfer the struggle into Occupied Palestine itself, after it had mainly been a military confrontation (resistance) taking place from other Arab territories.

Drawing on the aforementioned analytical terms, what occurred was that the Israeli occupation decided to partially give up its position as a direct local authority running Palestinian society and some of its associated functions to a partial Palestinian national authority that would play that role, while the Israeli occupation would keep its status as an occupier, controlling all the crucial levers affecting the lives of Palestinians.

These changes transformed the armed resistance into a government authority, that is, into a new Arab regime to be added to the already existing Arab regimes. That transformation may perhaps have been the most important in terms of the process underway, the outcome and developments in Palestine following the Intifada, because of the Palestinian resistance's pre-existing readiness to change into a regime similar to the existing neopatrimonial Arab regimes. It can even be said that the developmental pattern of the resistance movement and the PLO turned its structure and operative mechanisms in the places where it was present (particularly Lebanon) into a latent authority/government resembling the other Arab regimes. The pattern of its relations and resistance in the latter part of its presence in Lebanon became more like wars

waged by conventional armies. In a nutshell, the PLO turned into an authority/government framework in search of a land, and the first Intifada provided it with the necessary conditions for achieving that dream. This explains the PLO's haste to harvest the fruits of an Intifada waged by Palestinian society inside the occupied territories by entering a settlement that was not necessarily the best one that could have been reached had the PLO's leaders been less hasty.

The new situation after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority

The formation of the Palestinian National Authority with minor and superficial powers and limited capabilities fundamentally changed the terms of the conflict from what they had been during the Intifada. The relationship of Palestinian civil society with the Authority includes contradictions and conflicts, as is the case with any authority, particularly if it is undemocratic. This pitted Palestinian civil society against the Authority, rather than against Israel. The conflict with Israel was transformed once again into an external conflict between two states: Israel and Palestine, although the latter is a semi-state, or an entity that has the appearance of a state, whereas it had been a state-in-the-making when it was outside Palestine (the PLO). This returned the terms of the struggle with Israel to something resembling the first phase, but under conditions less favorable to the Palestinians. The strengths – albeit limited – that the PLO had enjoyed when it had practised armed struggle from Lebanon and theoretically from other locations outside Palestine were lost when the PLO turned into an authority/national state that is actually at the mercy of the occupation and with hardly any means of exerting any pressure.

A significant contradiction soon arose between Palestinian civil society, which had resisted occupation for several decades, and its “national authority,” which took the shape of a ready-made leadership formed abroad and foisted on Palestinian society. It was no secret that Israeli occupation, instead of continuing to bear the difficulties of its position and functions as an authority that was violently repressing civil society, had assigned that task to the Palestinian National Authority. That task resembled

a shock absorber, to which were added security tasks, entailing protecting Israel's security, by means of commitments included in the agreements that the Authority signed with Israel. Those commitments were binding on the Palestinian Authority/state, according to the logic of relations between states.

The contradiction between Palestinian society and its national authority became a dangerous factor. Its danger increased as years passed by and the neopatrimonial nature of the Palestinian Authority gradually took shape. The Authority is usually described as repressive, corrupt and despotic. Its political opponents (particularly, Hamas and Islamic Jihad) even accuse it of betraying national interests. This laid the necessary ground politically and morally for them to turn the Authority, rather than Israel, into the main opponent. Liberation from occupation became secondary, or to put it more accurately, resisting Israel turned into a tool to be used in the power struggle on the pretext that building a strong authority will lead to building an independent state, either through war or through peace, with no difference between the two.

We believe that this situation will continue because the agenda of both sides is one of power, not of liberating the land and the people. That is the basic situation, and there will be additional repression of people and society, subjugating it on different pretexts and in different ways. Palestine these days is experiencing a sharp division between Fatah and Hamas, and between the West Bank and Gaza. This is the phase of almost fully liquidating all the achievements of the first Intifada. Hence, we must recognize that if the first Intifada, from our perspective, was a civil revolution similar to the current Arab mobilization, or possibly even more advanced, it can be said that the counter-revolution succeeded in aborting it and liquidating its positive results, with the exception of some civil resistance pockets that still resist every now and then. Therefore, the lessons of the Palestinian experience, in that respect, are very useful for gaining a better and deeper understanding of the current Arab mobilization and for scoping out its future.

The counter Intifada

Israel was the first to understand the danger of the Intifada, because it realized that if such a resistance pattern were to continue, it would certainly lead to undermining the Israeli presence in the territories Israel occupied in 1967. Israel also realized that the Intifada could perhaps even go further, because that kind of resistance and action for change was capable of moving to the territories occupied in 1948 as well. Therefore, Israel found it necessary to take speedy measures so that the Intifada would not mature and generate its own continuity and recreate its leadership, which was rooted in Palestinian society, perhaps transcending its time and name: linguistically, the Intifada is nothing more than a passing moment of rebellion. Three forces participated in aborting the Intifada, or in the counter-revolution, to use current terminology that describes the dangers faced by the process of change and transformation in the Arab countries that rose up against their regimes. These forces are: Israel and the US; the Fatah movement (which is the actual leadership of the PLO) and Hamas. Each of these forces played a role that complemented the roles played by the other forces from the objective point of view. This does not rule out the possibility that overt understandings in one direction or another were reached through political or intelligence channels. In that respect, we refer to the following points:

- A. The danger that Israel and its US ally faced was that the Intifada would take root and become institutionalized if it went on for long enough to allow it to mature and produce a leadership and a national authority branching out of it. Israel's priority was to change the conflict from a struggle within a single entity/ state, between Palestinian civil society and the occupying local force (Israel) into an external conflict between two states once again, while ensuring that the leaders of the Intifada itself would not occupy any decision-making positions in any prospective (incomplete) national authority.

For that reason, Israel, the US and the international community participated in direct negotiations with the PLO until they arrived at the Oslo process (after going through the Madrid process). Israel did so because it preferred to negotiate with a familiar enemy whose limitations it knew well and understood (that is the PLO), than to negotiate with the leaders of Palestinian society whose leadership would be the outcome of the Intifada. Israel adopted a two-pronged strategy: The first was to achieve a speedy settlement because time was on the side of the Intifada and its leadership. The second was to marginalize the leaders of the interior in favor of negotiating with the external leaders in order to benefit from their strongly driven efforts to turn into an authority at any price. The aim was to impose a settlement that would fulfil Palestinian rights as minimally as was objectively possible based on the balance of power at that time.

- B. The leadership of the PLO contributed to aborting the Intifada by being over-hasty in trying to benefit from the change that the Intifada had brought about in the balance of power. The PLO leadership cashed in on that change prematurely to transform itself from being an authority/state by force to being an authority/state in actual fact on part of the land of Palestine. The PLO leadership did not make the conditions of the negotiation a priority, nor did it give precedence to arriving at the very best possible settlement framework that would achieve as much of the Palestinian rights as possible. This, from an objective perspective, could have been possible, because Israel was weaker in its confrontation of the Intifada than first impressions suggested, and it was prepared to offer the Intifada's leaders greater concessions. In a nutshell, the PLO considered that its priority was to have a land it could rule as an authority, thus affirming that the land, which is an area over which authority can be exercised, was the main issue, not the people. In practice, this meant parachuting in the frameworks of authority/state/ apparatuses that had been formed outside Palestine onto the land and society. This meant that one of the main functions of the Palestinian National Authority was to stop the Intifada, in its capacity as an Intifada by Palestinian civil society, and that the

Authority is in practice the occupation's direct line of protection. The reasoning behind this is that the Authority is a national state, and hence, the phase of civil resistance is no longer the appropriate form for political action. Such action must return to its traditional form of occurring between two states on the basis of negotiations, because armed confrontation has become impossible from the Authority's perspective. The need arose at times to use armed resistance as an instrument during times of crisis, as was the case during the siege of the Mugata'ah (Palestinian government headquarters in Ramallah).

- C. The role of Hamas in aborting the Intifada was more complex. It changed the nature of the Intifada itself from being a movement by an entire society that was civic in nature into an armed military and security confrontation, thus doing away with all that movement's strengths. This strategy was based on two objective factors: The first was the continuation of the occupation itself, and hence a continuation of the situation and the practices that had caused the first Intifada. The second was that the Oslo agreement and the authority that it produced were frustrating because they were below expectations and did not achieve sufficiently acceptable conditions that would allow continued progress towards achieving Palestinian national rights. Hamas returned to the idea of the legitimacy of resisting occupation, repeating the experience of the PLO itself during the phases in which it had flourished, but from within the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly Gaza. It contributed to aborting the Intifada and its results by confiscating the Intifada itself and transforming it into armed action that included a preference for suicide/martyrdom operations carried out by individuals, or with Katyusha rocket attacks. It then built up its military-security apparatus and took actual control of part of the land, turning it into a base for its operations, following which it turned into an obvious authority in the Gaza strip, first through elections, and then through military control. Militarizing the Intifada and confiscating it in such a manner, Hamas deprived it of all its ability to change the balances of power in the way that the first Intifada had done. The Intifada was transformed

into an amended form of the guerrilla action that the PLO had practised from outside Palestine for decades. Moreover, Hamas was transformed in Gaza into a neopatrimonial authority that parallels the neopatrimonial Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. It dominates the inhabitants of Gaza and destroys civil society there like any other authority in the Arab world.

The lessons of the first Intifada and of the process of aborting it

In this context, several lessons can be deduced from the Palestinian experience, the most important of which are:

The first lesson: The Intifada has taught us that movements for change that are based on wide civil society participation and that use civic methods are more capable of achieving a positive change in the conditions of conflict than other forms that have for long been considered more revolutionary and effective. The Intifada was also more effective in attracting Arab and international support, constraining the occupation from using the most severe forms of violence to suppress it. The first reason for bringing about such constraint was the societal and civilian nature of the Intifada, which was impossible to deal with using direct military strategies, particularly since the confrontation was an internal one between an authority and a society, rather than one between two states that could go to war.

The second lesson: The Intifada also taught us that civic movement was ahead of political forces, and that it succeeded in unifying all components of Palestinian society in their variations, including men and women, young people and adults, workers and employers. This unity was not merely theoretical. It was also a practical unity on the ground and encompassed decentralized forms of action, initiative and learning from experience from one day to the next.

The third lesson: There are numerous counter-revolutionary forces at home and abroad. This is not connected to good or bad intentions, but to the actual choices that the parties concerned make, which might be against the interests of the revolution and of change. We must not be surprised that some of the counter-revolutionary forces belong to currents that have an undisputed

“revolutionary” past or present. Those parties in particular are more capable than others of suppressing revolution and change, and of throwing it off its course.

The foremost and undisputed element of strength of a movement for change is to be a civil society movement that is carried out through peaceful civic means. Political parties and institutionalized civil movements must take this fact into account and adapt to it, rather than try to jump onto the bandwagon and use their organizational capabilities and institutions to impose pathways and slogans that will weaken the movement and transform it into a factional movement. If this applies to the movement of a people under occupation that has the right to practise all forms of resistance, it applies even more to other cases that do not involve occupation, and that are characterized by confrontation between internal parties.

8. THE LESSONS OF HISTORY: LEBANON, THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE TO A NON-STATE

Introduction

The starting point for the Lebanese case is February 2005, when changes occurred in succession following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Those changes resulted in a radical political shift that had very interlinked external and internal dimensions: A) They resulted in a withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. B) Authority was transferred from a political alliance “supportive of the Syrian regime and under its tutelage” to a new, hybrid alliance.

The usefulness of the Lebanese example is that it illustrates the complications affecting the transitional phase and its long duration. Moreover, Lebanon provides a clear example of moving from one transitional phase to the next before any of them has been completed. This is an extremely useful point for the current Arab revolutions, because it can offer concrete experience that is unrelated to an oversimplified image of the nature of transitional phases that is prevalent in some circles.

Lastly, it is also useful because it provides an example of a neopatrimonial format for a non-statist parliamentary regime, that allows a relatively wide margin of freedoms and pluralism with decentralized neopatrimonial features, given that “political sects” are a basic player in a weak state. It is also characterized by an open economy that has been integrated into the global market for a long time. In that sense, its globalized capitalism is not recent, and has not grown out of previous forms of a statist regime, or a regime based on centralized planning.

Traditional neopatrimonialism between 1943 and 1975

The Lebanese neopatrimonial system that began with independence and continued until the outbreak of the 1975 war was a neopatrimonial regime based on the local influence of the prominent members of traditional political families, who allied themselves with financial elites within the framework of a sectarian political system and a state based on clientelism. Such clientelism was used as a direct tool to reproduce the same leaderships and the regime. The characteristics of traditional neopatrimonialism during that period were clearer than in subsequent phases.

The nature of the regime and the neopatrimonial state in Lebanon before the war was based on an alliance between families enjoying political, social and cultural influence of a decentralized, local and inherited nature, on the one hand, with a very concentrated economic-financial oligarchy, on the other hand. That alliance was enabled by a sectarian regime. Moreover, a significant degree of actual authority resided outside of the state. The pattern of sectarian and local leadership strengthened this trend, rendering “society” stronger than the state. In other words, we were witnessing a “communalization of the state” in a certain sense, unlike the situation that existed in most other Arab countries, where the prevalent pattern was one of “statifying society.”

The neopatrimonialism of the civil war: from the 1970's until the 1990's

The following occurred:

- ▶ The political took over the economic and the social;
- ▶ The externally political – referred to as nationalist, pan-Arab or regional – took over the entire political space;
- ▶ Violent and armed conflict, in the shape of war or wars, took over the mechanisms of civil political confrontation and conflict;
- ▶ The exterior took over the interior by means of successive operations that ultimately led to marginalization of most parties, making them followers of stronger regional and international powers or blocs.

All the above led to a marginalization of both the reformist and the traditional neopatrimonial dimensions. An extremist neopatrimonialism of war became the dominant pattern.

The Lebanese civil war¹⁵ produced new players on the political scene, introduced changes to the roles of the parties comprising the regime and the ruling authority, and amended the relative and absolute weights of each party.

The shift to open armed confrontation spelt the regime's failure to ensure its "normal" operations, whether in its ability to control the conflicts of interest within its mechanisms and bases, or in its ability to reproduce itself and renew its constitutional institutions by means of elections or other constitutional and legal means. In a country in which society had originally been stronger than the authorities/state, the war further marginalized the central authority and its institutions, further strengthening "civil society," which turned into a society of near total internal warfare.

It is worth noting that ever since the outbreak of civil war in 1975, the internal and external dimensions merged: the Palestine problem, the conflict with Israel, the "Arabism of Lebanon" and regional and international polarizations. It was no longer possible to separate those two dimensions. This had very grave consequences for the development of the internal political process. It became a general framework for the overall development of the conflict in Lebanon, during all its stages to date and in both its military and peaceful political forms. Hence, the course of national Lebanese issues has been subordinated to regional and international issues to a serious extent that almost negates the very idea of the Lebanese state and entity.

15 The term "Lebanese civil war" denotes the entire range of military confrontations and conflicts that occurred from 1975-1990, including the Israeli invasion, the civil war, and the wars over internal hegemony between the parties constituting the two main parties to the conflict.

The roles of the main participating parties developed in the following manner:

1. The Lebanese state continued to be needed by all parties during most phases of the conflict, except for some temporary and extreme moments that were not destined to continue. Everyone wanted the state to continue to perform particular basic financial functions: payment of salaries and preserving a unified currency; general policy for the purpose of unified representation abroad; and internal policy since the idea of the Lebanese state continued to be necessary because none of the parties to the conflict were putting forward an actual proposal to irreversibly fragment the state in favor of an alternative state-entity. Some of the extreme solutions that emerged at certain junctures during the conflict were not viable for internal and external reasons. Hence, the state and its institutions continued to perform limited roles, but their authority was weak, and they declined further under the dominance of the warring armed political groups. As a result, the state became more fragmented, because different groups controlled different areas. During the two-year war (1975-1976), the state lost the army, which had been its main instrument of authority. The army was divided, became fragmented and its effect as an instrument of the central authority was neutralized, although what could be preserved of it was superficially preserved.
2. The role of traditional leaderships was deeply shaken. This varied according to the specific dynamics within each region and sect and the positions these leaderships occupied along the main axes of the regional and national conflict. The way in which this occurred can be linked to the concurrent influence of the following three factors:
 - A. Militarization of local leaderships and the strength of their linkage to the armed conflict in the country;
 - B. The ability of local leaderships to preserve their influence over the social - electoral base;
 - C. The position of local leaderships regarding the main conflict at the national level, and their relationship and link to the international and regional powers that were deciding the course of events during each phase.

The effects of these factors differed according to the circumstances of the local leaderships and their positions within the overall conflict, giving rise to three main kinds of situations:

- ▶ Leaderships with completely marginalized roles;
- ▶ Leaderships whose roles were marginalized because they had not participated in military action, although they had held on to a relative role because of regional or national alliances, or because they had held on to a local – national position of influence on social and economic grounds that were not completely invalidated;
- ▶ Traditional leaderships that experienced an enhancement of their roles because they combined traditional family leadership, action by armed militias, and regional support.

The beginning of change in the façade of the ruling authority and the state

The loosening of the influence of traditional leaderships opened the way for changes in the regime's façade.

As the state weakened and its presence on the ground contracted, the neopatrimonialism of war progressed in the form of possession or geographical hegemony over regions and sects. The logic of war spoils (protection money, royalties, direct control, killing, political and sectarian cleansing, etc.) prevailed. Militia powers succeeded in seizing areas of influence and control and in taking control of parts of the state and its apparatus at the national and local levels. Within that context, it was inevitable that such hegemony would become complete within single areas and sects. When emerging extreme political agendas reached their zenith, “cleansing the internal front” became a priority and precondition for the progress of a particular political agenda in the eyes of its proponents.

The neopatrimonial authority has turned into neopatrimonial authorities that are spread across the spectrum of militias holding control on the ground. It is a decentralized neopatrimonialism of war, this time, to which the description post-patrimonial applies. The extreme model of post-patrimonialism is “weak” or “failed” states, the political systems of which are governed by warlords

who manage a kind of ongoing civil war. In Lebanon's case, such systems manifest themselves as partial and incomplete statelets in which those warlords exercise forms of direct authority over people through de facto militia authorities. Such authority includes some aspects of sovereignty, such as building external alliances and obtaining financing from various external and internal sources.

The war ended after 15 sickening years of generalized attrition that affected everyone. None of the parties involved in it were able to achieve their agendas. At that point, the regional - international factor intervened once more and drew on the same traditional leaderships to formulate the Taif Agreement in 1989. Several months later, a Syrian military operation against the Ba'abda presidential palace and General Michel Aoun was carried out, and Lebanon entered a "transitional" phase. Armed confrontation was halted in favor of a political process under direct Syrian tutelage.

The Taif Agreement: a model for the beginning of the transitional phase

Two Taifs, not one

Taif signified an entire 15-year phase in the life of the regime and the state in Lebanon (this was the period of direct Syrian tutelage over Lebanon) and it formed the constitutional and institutional framework for the operation of the Lebanese state, and continues to do so. In reality, there are two Taifs:

1. The first is the Taif Agreement itself, as a document of national détente, comprising the text and content of the agreement. At a specific moment, it offered the possibility of an internal dialogue that would produce a Lebanese détente and put Lebanon on a transitional path towards a political system that would be more responsive to the country's internal needs, as well as being more of an expression of the various components of Lebanese society.
2. The second is the Taif system, which is the format of the regime and political practices that actually took shape. They are a system and a format that reproduce an authoritarian alliance based on subordination to an external force. They reproduce the elements of crisis, division, disjointedness and war in Lebanon.

That is to say, Taif in this sense is the format for the practice of Syrian tutelage over Lebanon, because that tutelage was the decisive and unchanging factor that characterized this phase in general and in detail.

In that sense, the Taif system is different to the Taif Agreement, and it was the former that buried the latter. The Taif system institutionalizes a group of internal sectarian and regional interests, and in that capacity is an attempt to kill the agreement itself, since the Taif system that came into existence can only survive on the basis of hindering internal dialogue and reproducing the factors of division and disintegration.

Post-patrimonialism, the Troika and the Lebanese-Syrian security system

The question we will answer first is: What are the new features that the Taif system introduced into the Lebanese neopatrimonial system, which before the war was characterized as traditional neopatrimonialism? The mainstay of traditional neopatrimonialism was inherited local influence, which in general belonged to the prominent members of the political families that formed the basis of the regime and the state through an affiliation that was part of a sectarian format. That category was allied to the historical capitalists who also belonged to families wielding traditional influence during past historical phases.

During the war, transformations occurred that led to the formation of a neopatrimonialism of war, which was based on fragmenting Lebanon's geographical and political fields and on acquisition by the militias of parts of the land and the state institutions and apparatus. The new players, who came to the fore through war and the force of arms, mingled with the traditional leaders, particularly those that had joined the war and set up their own militias. The neopatrimonialism of war had the following characteristics:

1. Carving up the country into shares;
2. A retreat of the state and the rule of law;
3. The use of force and violence to acquire rent on economic and political returns;

4. Actual authority existed outside the state and was distributed amongst those who had power and controlled militias here and there. Those militias were usually supported by external allies;
5. The “political” became the sole decisive and conclusive factor, while the “economic” retreated to a secondary level and was overwhelmingly dominated by a rentier quality and a system of royalties.

Emerging from the pathway of civil war towards peace required a return to the political and geographical unity of the state, and a resumption by the central state of its role. That is what the Taif Agreement sought to achieve. However, despite the crucial role of regional and international efforts to bring about the agreement, there was an urgent need to bring about a solution through Lebanese mechanisms that enjoyed some sort of legality and legitimacy, even partially. Therefore, what remained of the original constitutional institution – the Lebanese parliament – was used, and it served as a midwife, contributing to producing the settlement in its final format and allowing it to see the light of day. This meant the traditional players in Lebanese politics regained part of their role, which had almost disappeared during the war. It was also necessary for the “economic” dimension to regain part of the role that it had lost during the war, since it was one of the components of the state, society and politics, particularly during times of peace, and it could not be completely overlooked.

On the other hand, the birth of the Syrian version of the Taif Agreement in 1990 as a result of the Syrian military assault on General Aoun – who was holed up at the presidential palace in Ba’abda – turned the Taif Agreement from a reconciliation accord amongst the Lebanese and a restoration of their sovereign state into an almost total authorization for the Syrian regime to consolidate its control over the whole of Lebanon, not only over parts of it, as had been the case prior to the Taif Agreement. For that reason, it was in the interest of the Syrian regime to reunify the state and its institutions under that regime’s direct hegemony, with regional and international cover. Such cover had not been previously possible, because the Syrian regime had been directly involved in the Lebanese civil war with one or more parties during various phases of that war from 1975 to 1990, having changed its allies more than once.

The neopatrimonialism of Taif: the comprehensive dimension

To define and summarize the qualitative transformation that occurred at the level of the state and the political system in Lebanon following Taif, it can be said, “Lebanon itself was considered a spoil of war.” It was a neopatrimonialism that transcended the framework of the state itself – the nation state, the national state – becoming a neopatrimonial relationship between states. That relationship resembled the format of traditional colonialism; for example the French colonialism that had preceded independence. Given the fundamental difference between the natures of the Syrian and former Lebanese regimes, Syrian involvement in the Lebanese civil war prior to Taif and Syria’s military assault on the presidential palace during General Michel Aoun’s presence there, the description of “spoils of war” is the most fitting for the situation in which Lebanon found itself. Therefore, the relationship between the Syrian regime and Lebanon could not be described as one of indirect subordination or hegemony, but rather as a relationship of direct and forced subordination. The Syrian regime – by means of its apparatus – turned into the actual ruling authority in Lebanon. As for Lebanese institutions, governments and their institutions, they had the appearance of being Lebanese – as was the case during the final phases of the old colonial relationships (the Ottoman and the French) – whereas the real decisions about forming these governments and the substance of their choices and measures were subject to the interests of the Syrian regime in every way. The narrow margin of freedom to manoeuvre that existed was required by circumstances and balances and did not damage those interests.

Change cannot be stopped

The Taif system refused to implement the Taif Agreement, which entailed temporary and transitional measures and a process of national reconciliation. However, this did not preclude a change in the political atmosphere and alliances amongst various parties following Israel’s unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

What occurred between 2000 and 2005 was an attempt to build new political and popular alliances in Lebanon, reshuffling the political - sectarian mix that had prevailed since 1990. The demand for redeployment, or for a Syrian withdrawal, which had

been a priority only for some of the Christian powers, turned into a common national demand that transcended sects, and around which most political groups rallied. It was a new attempt, based on the text of the Taif Agreement itself, to break free of the fossilized “Taif system.”

The pre-1975 regime in Lebanon, which lacked flexibility and was not qualified to accept the idea of amending how power was shared, even from within the regime itself, prompted it to resort to repression and violence, opening the doors to civil war in 1975 and plunging the post-independence system into an open-ended crisis. Likewise, the Taif system, with its basically regional component and its subordinate Lebanese component, refused to show any flexibility in response to changing circumstances, represented by Israel’s withdrawal and its internal effects. It also refused to recognize the cumulative changes that had occurred in Lebanon since 1990, preferring to resort to repression and violence as it sought to prevent any amendment in the distribution of power, whether with Syria, or within the regime. As a result, Lebanon has been plunged into an (almost) open-ended crisis since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. That crisis continues in 2015-2016.

A new phase: after Hariri’s assassination and the 2005 Syrian withdrawal

The beginning: a genuine transitional phase

The slight numerical majority of the 14 March Coalition was not enough to achieve an actual transfer of authority, and to comfortably shift policy direction. The large parties leading the coalition prioritized gaining a parliamentary majority that would allow them to form a government under their leadership over effecting a transformation in the political tendencies of the social base and introducing new elements and more freedom and independence to the practice of politics in society.

Hence, we were before three levels of change:

1. Transfer of governance, expressed as a change in government, which is what the transitional phase was limited to in every sense of the word. Even so, the transition was incomplete, because the new majority 14 March movement re-elected Nabih Berri, one of the pillars of the Taif system and the 8 March coalition, as speaker of parliament for two terms.
2. Transfer of authority, which occurred partially and relatively. However, it did not occur decisively at the national level. What was achieved was a fragile and indecisive majority that led to unstable tendencies. Moreover, there was a transfer of actual authority within mass regional and sectarian blocs. Some fell under the influence of the powers supporting the Syrian-Lebanese security system, while others fell under the influence of other powers. This did not include all blocs and regions.
3. Transformation at the medium and base levels in the rules of political practice. The change that occurred was very limited, and it mostly occurred by means of a “struggle” by minority trends and formations against the dominant forces over political representation and political life (and at time societal life as well, on both sides: 14 March and 8 March).

To sum up, governance was transferred, in the sense that the government changed, but authority was not transferred. Governance was transferred, but Lebanon did not actually move into a new phase. Instead, Lebanon continued to flounder as it attempted to leave the Taif system. It was unable to exit the Taif system because of the delicate balance within government institutions, because authority was not transferred, and because there was no real transformation in society that would have restored the role of citizens as basic and real active participants in deciding the policy of the country, after their complete exclusion by the Taif system.

The following factors created this complex situation and allowed such a long suspension of institutions:

- A. The positioning of actual decision-making authority outside of Lebanon.
- B. The persistent existence of actual authority outside of the state and its institutions.
- C. The combination of a weak balance within the institutions of governance and the state and their prolonged inability to formulate a project for a comprehensive and attractive civil state, on the one hand, with poor performance in managing the lives of citizens, the fragmentation of authority and decisions, and the mutual repulsion amongst the state's components, including the government itself, on the other hand.
- D. The exclusion of citizens once again from actual participation in political life and public affairs.

***From Doha 2008 until 2013: Another transitional phase
Lessons to be learned***

The outbreak of the crisis in Syria and the way in which it developed played a decisive role in determining the course of events in Lebanon. Once again, the state of internal division in Lebanon turned into a division over positions on the Syrian crisis first and foremost. Internal conflicts seemed like mere details compared to the sharp and violent polarization that prevailed regarding the Syrian issue, with some supporting the Syrian regime and others supporting those opposed to it. The positions of the Lebanese parties became linked to regional parties to an even greater extent than before. This has had very serious results, the most important of which are:

- 1. Lebanon and its issues have become a mere detail from the perspective of the Lebanese as well as from the perspective of regional and international players.
- 2. The basic political powers behave as though they are extensions of, or implementers of, regional policies, perhaps with some variations in degree, but without any essential difference in the way that this applies to the two main parties confronting each another internally.

3. The state and its apparatus have entered a state of obvious impotence, particularly in the field of security, although the state opted to preserve its shape, even if only for the sake of appearances. The chaotic security situation has become comprehensive and general, affecting large and small powers, gangs, criminals and individuals. The idea of the state has entered a stage of shrinkage and disintegration.
4. The direct participation of the country's political actors in the Syrian conflict has contributed to the "cancellation" of the idea of an entity and a state. The most major, effective and organized participation was by Hizbollah, which openly became an organized military participant in the fighting in Syria in defense of the regime. This signifies cancellation of the borders between the two countries, and has practically cancelled the idea of the state itself. On the other hand, the participation of some parties in support of the Syrian opposition was less organized, less efficient and less focused, and was based on religious - political - sectarian mobilization. Moreover, such support was not openly or officially declared by any side. However, the political and religious leaderships that had the ability to influence such participation did not exert any real effort to limit or reduce it on the grounds that this would legitimize interference in Syria, whoever was supporting it, and would mean legitimizing any subsequent interference by any party in Lebanon on the basis of religion, ideology or sect. Direct military intervention in Syria will simply lead to non-recognition of Lebanon as an independent state-entity with sovereignty within the system of international relations.
5. The outbreak of the Syrian crisis disrupted the ability of Lebanon's parties – which had become polarized along the lines of the Syrian conflict – to offer mutual internal concessions and to arrive at settlements that would allow the state and society in Lebanon to be managed. Perhaps that is the most serious effect of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. An internal settlement amongst Lebanon's parties became almost impossible. Hence, the disruption of state institutions reached

its zenith: parliamentarians and political powers failed to agree a new elections law, and refused to hold elections on the basis of the law that was in effect. Elections were put on hold and parliament's term was extended twice in violation of the constitution. The work of the Constitutional Council was disrupted to prevent it from looking into the president's challenge against the first extension of parliament's term. Even more significant was the manner in which the Constitutional Council's work was disrupted. Three judges belonging to the Shiite and Druze sects heeded the instructions of the political leaderships of their sects and did not attend the council's meeting. By acting thus, they confirmed the neopatrimonial character that generally applies to all state institutions, including the highest judicial authority, which is supposed to be independent and immune. Najib Miqati's government resigned on 22 March 2013, and Tammam Salam was tasked with forming a new government based on sharing out power amongst all parties. Finally, Lebanon was unable to elect a president, whose term of office ended constitutionally on 25 May 2014, or to extend his term of office. This means that the vacuum and the violation of the constitution have become completely generalized.

Summary

Following transitional phases that spanned 23 years, from 1990 to 2013, during which several agreements of varying importance were concluded, from Taif to Doha, the result in practice was that Lebanon continued its forced march towards the semi-disintegration of the state, a return to a savage neopatrimonialism predicated on exterior forces and developments, and a further loss of elements of its independence.

Lebanon today is a suspended country awaiting developments coming from outside, as its civil society struggles for a recognition of its existence in the face of a political society that has taken control of the reins of government without actual authority, in a situation of total subjugation to external parties. Hence, contrary to prevalent opinions:

- ▶ “The transitional phase” is much longer than thought;
- ▶ “The transitional phase” is much more complex than had been thought;
- ▶ Transitional steps and functions are a procedural aspect of a long and gradual process that might last for decades;
- ▶ Moments of positive change are primarily the outcome of action by citizens on the street, and every setback to the positive path has been linked to excluding citizens from the arenas of action and decision-making;
- ▶ The course of actual development that transcends direct transitional procedures occurs under the influence of real, effective factors on the ground that manufacture a different situation, either propelling the course of transformation in opposite directions to what is stated in agreements, or giving written texts completely different interpretations.

Some were occupied, in a well-intentioned manner, with the procedural aspects of the transitional process and the transfer of governance. However, others were occupied with launching formative pathways that would be decisive in determining the fate of the country, emptying already concluded agreements of their content and transitional procedures of their meaning, and building a strong balance of power on the ground that would enable them to regularly block any progress and to impose their agendas on others.

9. THE CHALLENGES OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

The nature of the phase

Use of the terms “transition and transitional” has become common in referring to the current phase experienced by Arab countries that experienced mobilizations that led to changes at the top of their regimes. Such a description is an over-simplification compared to the nature of the changes and transformations that have begun and are expected to continue. Limiting the description of this phase to “transitional” will give rise to knowledge-related and practical confusion in understanding transformations that are underway and their connotations, and in understanding the challenges that they face. We suggest the use of three terms that will together express the overall transformation that has begun and that is also desired. These three terms describe the phase on which we are focusing as transitional, foundational and formative, reflecting the facets and levels of the transformation that has occurred, and its possible future dynamics.

The transitional dimension

The term “transitional” emphasizes: immediate measures, the process of transferring authority, dealing with the problems arising from the state of revolutionary mobilization and the shocks that have occurred, offering compensation to victims and for material damages and regaining the rhythm of normal life, security and economic activity with as much normalcy as possible. It also includes urgent measures to achieve national and social reconciliation where needed. This includes “transitional justice” measures, such as fact finding, identifying those responsible for crimes and corruption and trying them, giving justice to those who suffered injustice under the previous regime, starting to regain funds smuggled out of the country and checking contracts tainted by corruption that have been concluded with companies, among other things.

Measures described as transitional must have an instant and temporary nature, must be carried out in a relatively short period, and must not, to the extent possible, introduce structural changes in the institutional, political, economic and societal situation in general.

The foundational dimension

The above-mentioned measures, which are of a transitional nature, are insufficient. If we view the transformation process from the political and institutional perspective, we find that it also requires specific measures in response to the most pressing demands that relate to the political and institutional system, which were the subject of and the most important reason for mass public protests. Such specific measures include discussions to formulate a new constitution, an elections law and laws to regulate the media, political parties, civil society, women's rights, etc. They also include creating opportunities to participate in central decision-making institutions and local bodies; starting to draw up policies and launching a process of national dialogue regarding the new political, economic and social choices that are required. Such steps are needed, and go beyond having a transitional nature. We suggest describing them as foundational, because they include agreement over the texts and foundational choices of the new regime. Hence, the phase we are discussing is also foundational, in addition to being transitional. Its foundational nature means that it will be lengthier than had it merely been transitional.

The formative dimension

The same phase includes a more significant and important dimension that also allows it to be described as formative, in the sense that it is the historical phase during which potential cornerstones are established for a possible new societal project that goes beyond a mere change in government, the regime and foundational texts. It also includes a societal negotiation to formulate a "new social contract," discuss a societal transformation towards modernism in a consistent manner that involves democratic transformation in society as well as in the state. It also includes bringing about a transformation in culture and values so

that the system of rights is the actual regulator of relations amongst people, and between them and the state, based on the principles of citizenship, the prevalence of justice, etc. All of this does not merely entail a transformation of texts. It also involves a radical transformation in the structure, culture and relations of society. The duration of such a transformation is tangibly longer, and it must be factored in, whether during the selection and implementation of transitional measures, or when drafting foundational texts in order to ensure that they do not include elements that would undermine the dynamics required for the continuation of the process of societal transformation.

In that context, the strong emergence of extremist movements, the most recent incarnation of which is the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), indicates the need to distinguish these three dimensions. Such movements have a formative project that is the exact opposite of the desired societal transformation, and must be seen as a backward civilizational phenomenon that is antagonistic to modernism and progress. Overlooking this issue weakens the understanding of this phenomenon and of efforts to tackle it.

The consequences of confusing between dimensions

The most significant challenge facing the Arab Spring is that all parties must respect and preserve a balance and integration among the transitional, foundational and formative dimensions of the transformation process that was launched by the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in December 2010 and continues to date. Disturbing that balance will introduce many complications to the overall Arab Spring, and to the Arab Spring as it specifically applies to each of the countries concerned. Neglecting such a balance throws the door wide open to a counter-revolution that will either abort the Arab Spring, or cause it to deviate from its desired objectives and outcomes.

In general, arbitrariness that would negatively affect anything that has a foundational quality and that would subordinate it to an immediate transitional interest must be avoided in transitional measures. Moreover, foundational measures should be free of arbitrariness that would negatively affect the future formative

path, disrupt it or push it towards crises. It is therefore necessary to do everything possible to protect the formative developmental dynamic from any restrictions governed by political interests and immediate transient balances.

In the same context, from the practical perspective, it is necessary to take note of the various levels of the transformational process in order to tackle the circumstances that paved the way for the Arab Spring and directly caused it to occur. The formative dimension relates to dealing with the structural transformations that paved the way for the Arab Spring. The foundational dimension deals with what we considered to be the direct causes of the Arab Spring in relation to the political regime and its problems and development problems in general, including economic and social problems. The transitional dimension deals in particular with the event-related causes that sparked protests, the direct results of protest days, and the way in which the authorities dealt with those protests and their direct consequences, including their effects on the security situation and living conditions.

The ultimate goal that is to be achieved and that was the general one clearly declared by the revolutions: building a modern democratic civil state and achieving social justice, human dignity, freedom and the rule of law, and it is the criterion by which progress or regression are measured. Overlooking that goal means losing the compass that directs the process.

The most prominent illustration of confusing the transitional with the foundational was oversight of the principles that should regulate each pathway. This took the shape of a harmful blending between an electoral pathway that produced a political majority on the basis of which a government was formed to manage the affairs of the country during the transitional phase, on the one hand, and a supposed process to draft a constitution, on the other hand. In both countries where this occurred, the majority that was achieved in the elections was taken as a basis for reproducing the same balance in the process of forming a government, a legislative council, and the committee tasked with drafting the constitution. However, the government is governing as an expression of the balance of power

between a majority and a minority at the time of elections, and that majority is inconclusive and unstable because of the nature of the phase itself. On the other hand, the drafting of the constitution is a process of collective agreement about the principles upon which the state is based, and it must not be subject to the immediate balance of power at the time, or solely governed by the political dimension.

The above is based on the fact that the government might change when the parliamentary majority changes, or under different circumstances. However, the constitution is a reference text that is binding on the government that is in power and on any subsequent governments. The constitution comprises the general principles, the common space, upon which both the political majority and the political minority must agree. Before they agree on it – and this is of utmost importance – most sectors of society, if not all of them, must agree on it. Such agreement must transcend party political expressions, which necessarily remain incomplete.

Therefore, the political forces that came into authority after the revolutions and argue that they won elections and gained a majority, hence gaining the right to form founding councils and committees to draft the constitution of the majority, are resorting to improper, arbitrary criteria. Under proper, non-arbitrary criteria, their electoral win should only apply to the right to form a government, but it does not at all apply to the drafting of the constitution. Mixing a political authority's exercising of political governance with drafting the constitution – that is mixing transitional tasks with foundational tasks – was a grievous mistake committed by the transitional governments in Egypt and Tunisia. It was the root cause for the resurfacing of division and crisis in relations both amongst political parties and on the street. We emphasize that we are describing this as a mistake from the perspective of the analysis we are undertaking. However, in politics, this is deliberate action that expresses the ideological and political choices of the parties concerned. Hence, it is not a mere technical mistake, or mismanagement on their part.

Elections

Forces that are allied go their separate ways once the regime has fallen, and they adopt different positions, plans and objectives as specific agendas emerge more strongly than before. Preserving the wide revolutionary coalition to the extent possible is not exclusively achievable by agreeing on all content and programs during this stage. It can take the shape of an understanding achieved through dialogue regarding positions on immediate and urgent issues – that is issues of a transitional nature. Such an understanding should also focus more on mechanisms for dealing with pluralism, the principles of comprehensive national dialogue and how to achieve accord, more than on the content of such accord.

The general impression of the current pathway in the countries that experienced a clear political change does not suggest a great deal of success in that regard. A big problem exists, relating to the fact that general elections that were held – the first and second rounds – particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, did not express all the revolutionary forces, particularly the independent youthful elements, in a sufficient and balanced manner. It was those youthful elements that played the most significant role in sparking the Arab Spring in public squares. The general tenor of the Arab public mobilizations was independent of political parties and institutions and went beyond them. Those parties and institutions joined the Arab Spring after it had been launched. However, the better-organized parties were able to secure stronger representation in elected representative councils, while the independent revolutionary forces only had a marginal presence. Hence, there was no congruence between the image of the revolution, and the image of parliaments. That is a major challenge with strategic implications for the future of the Arab Spring.

There are several reasons for this. They include the use of mechanisms of partial representation, particularly general elections, which were held during a turbulent and unstable phase. General elections are an indispensable mechanism, and they are the basic and foundational mechanism that characterizes political democracies. However, the mechanisms and rules of elections,

even those that are ideal and are not marred by the suspicion of fraud or cheating, are by nature mechanisms that are biased in favor of the forces that are most organized. In other words, general elections boost the chances of representation by the most organized forces, and reduce the chances of independents or those that are least organized. The latter were the core of the revolution and its basic force. It is possible to enhance representation through direct elections with the participation of representatives of all tendencies, population sectors, unions and local bodies, including those who vote indirectly through their union and civic bodies. This is likely to be more representative of the revolutionary mobilization and society, and more representative of the nature of mobilization and the phase.

Conventional political thought, including modern globalized political thought, is not fit to be the only framework for analyzing what occurred, evaluating it, and coming up with future projections.

Special rules exist during moments of change that are closer to political thought in its original progressive and multi-faceted format, which is not reduced to its institutionalized conservative format, as is the case with current political thought, including political thought in Europe and the US.

Finally, agendas were incompletely adopted, and there was a retreat from the demands of the revolution. In that context, if the focus on political change – overthrowing the regime, for example – is necessary, understandable and proved its effectiveness during popular protests on the street, this does not mean that people did not have an integrated set of demands: freedom, justice, dignity, and work, among others.

Transformation into polarization based on identity – ideology

Turning political polarization, which is based on economic and social choices and interests, into an ideological and cultural polarization along predominantly religious lines is one of the most important challenges confronting the transitional – foundational – formative process. It is not surprising that the issue of the

relationship among religion and the state and women's rights are the most heavily discussed topics in the media and in political discourse that is directed at the public in all the countries that experienced political transformation. By the same token, other issues attract little discussion, despite their extreme importance. They include guaranteeing the neutrality of the state apparatus and ways of achieving this; the inclusion of texts on economic and social rights in the constitution; and perspectives on dealing with religious, ethnic and linguistic pluralism in the countries concerned. All these are also extremely important issues.

The course of the Arab Spring faces this serious challenge, and the possibility of turning into a futile ideological conflict. Such a conflict can destroy the course of transformation to democracy, paving the way for a counter-revolution that could take various forms. The issue arises of equality between men and women, and of considering women's rights to be an integral part of the human rights system, which must be guaranteed and protected by inclusion in the constitution and in all other formative texts, laws, and institutions. That system must be at the heart of the process of democratic transformation, and should be considered as a genuine criterion for such a transformation. The need for stating this issue in the ideological and political spheres springs from the fact that discrimination against women is a basic element in the political and ideological structure of the state.

In this respect as well, it is feared that allowing the ideological dimension to dominate the current and future course is one of the hidden strategies that is being deliberately used to promote a retreat from the declared objectives of the revolutionary mobilization.

The dual taboo: religion and women

There is evidence that all of the controversy regarding the religion of the state, the religious reference of the constitution and legislation, and as an extension of that, rejection of equality between men and women – irrespective of how many different forms such rejection may take – is an artificially provoked debate originating outside the framework of the revolution and the change that has

occurred. There are no indications whatsoever in any of the Arab revolutions that occurred at the time, that any demands of this kind existed. To the contrary, the inherent model of the desired state was the constitutional democratic state, based on free general elections, the separation of powers, the neutrality of the state apparatus and equal rights for all, including women, who played a major role as citizens in the revolution itself. The above-mentioned controversy was thrust into the agenda from outside the context of the revolution. It was imported from the programs of the so-called religious political parties, not from the programs of the revolutionary forces and social categories that had brought down the regime. Those from the religious political parties who participated in overthrowing the regime and espoused such ideas did not dare to publicly articulate them or make them a constituent element of the Arab Spring. Or they tried and failed.

Debate of those two issues sought to change the format of large coalitions in society. Those coalitions were polarized between supporters of constitutional democracy, equality and human rights, on the one hand, and those opposed to them, on the other hand. The debate was aimed at shifting the issue from one of polarization related to the future of the political system and the state into a qualitatively different context in which polarization would occur over issues related to a retrograde perspective on religion, women, culture and identity. Not only so, that debate also aims to establish the future of the regime and the state on a new neopatrimonial basis that will inevitably consider constitutional democracy and human rights as its foremost opponent.

To sum up, all of the counter strategies – including deviation from some of the revolution's objectives or their complete confiscation, neglect of economic and social agendas, counter-attacking on the issue of religious reference points and women – will contribute to burying the process of possible and desired democratic transformation. That transformation was declared as the foremost objective of the revolution. However, those counter strategies will contribute to stopping history once again at the moment when a particular individual or group came to power, using all means

to immortalize that moment itself and permanently establish the transitional balance that brought it about by considering it as the continuous and unchanging essence of our states and societies.

The neutrality of the state

The neutrality of the state's apparatus in its performance of its daily functions, its operation according to clear and binding principles and its independence from being used as a crude instrument in the service of the political authority, the ruling party or the ruler is at the heart of the concept of the neopatrimonial state, both in cases when such neutrality exists or when it is absent. Establishing a neutral and relatively independent state apparatus is one of the major cornerstones of a modern democratic civil state. It is also one of the most important guarantees for preventing a return to statist and non-statist despotism.

The transitional authorities in general followed a course of reproducing the same neopatrimonial state and establishing a state-apparatus controlled by the ruling party. That problem existed prior to the revolution, probably less sharply than the way in which the ruling parties in Egypt (the Muslim Brotherhood) and in Tunisia (Ennahda) tried to re-establish it, because both parties have a totalitarian ideology. In other words, they are more capable of exerting control over the state apparatus according to the totalitarian state model. That model was mitigated at the start, compared to the situation that had prevailed under Ben Ali and Mubarak, who had controlled the state apparatus through their followers and relatives by means of a system of corruption – clientelism – and rentier practices rather than by means of a totalitarian ideological system. To be more specific, the administrative apparatus enjoyed a wider margin of independence under Ben Ali and Mubarak than would be the case if it were to be restructured by the Muslim Brotherhood or the Ennahda party.

The point here relates to independence, rather than to efficiency, or to any other issues. Hence, both the Tunisian and the Egyptian pathways entail serious risks of the possibility of moving backwards with regard to the neutrality of the state apparatus.

The fear that this could occur explains why large sectors of the population and public administration officials tend to vote against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia. They do so, not on a purely political party basis, but from the perspective of fear of a totalitarian hegemony over the state apparatus. This partly explains the result of the elections in Tunisia, which favored Nidaa Tunis. The situation was more complicated in Egypt, where the intensity of the conflict and the violence it produced heightened fears that security and the state would break down. This made the idea of accepting strong military rule more palatable, resurrecting the conundrum of the state's neutrality and its totalitarian nature, but from the perspective of nationalist ideologies.

Democracy and institutions

A distinction is usually made between three “kinds” of democracy: representative, participatory and direct. Each has a special meaning and focuses on a specific aspect of the democratic process in a particular society or state.

Representative democracy: This refers to a democratic system based on institutions of government that are formed through general elections. Councils of representatives, parliaments and similar bodies that are known by various names are generally considered to be both legislative and representative bodies. They are legislative in terms of their function and representative in terms of the manner in which they are formed. They are not entitled to their legislative role unless they are properly representative. Such proper representation is the basis of their functions, legitimacy and legality, which they derive from the people through an election process. A parliamentary representative gains his position and role in his capacity as a representative of the people. Representative democracy is the basis of modern democracies, particularly constitutional democracies.

Participatory democracy: This type of democracy focuses on a particular aspect of the democratic process that aims to ensure the participation of citizens and popular participation in the best possible manner. Prolonged practice has revealed genuine gaps in representative democracy, as is the case with any system.

This is particularly the case when an election process is marred by flaws, or when citizens lose interest in politics, or when the party system is ineffective or lacks diversity. Researchers and activists both took note of these deficiencies and deemed that the work of constitutional institutions was insufficient. They also considered that participation on the basis of citizenship must not only be limited to Election Day. Participatory democracy involves establishing participatory frameworks and mechanisms that complement the work of the main constitutional institutions within the political system at decentralized and centralized levels. This is the basis of the modern infatuation with decentralization, which works through economic and social councils, a tripartite partnership between the state, the private sector and civil society, and tripartite bodies that manage institutions and development programs. Participatory democracy complements representative democracy.

Direct democracy: This refers to direct participation by citizens in the management of public affairs. The meeting of citizens at public squares in ancient Greek city-states was a model of such direct democracy, which has become impossible as society has grown and as social organization has become more complex. In the contemporary world, general elections are considered the most important means of practicing direct democracy in the election of the people's representatives. In other words, the practice of direct democracy that is restricted and reduced to voting on a single day is what gives rise to representative democracy, which is embodied by institutions that remain in office for their entire life cycle, which comprises the time separating one election from the next. Popular activities by citizens on the street, outside of institutions, but not outside of the law, such as strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins, are also manifestations of direct democracy. Institutions seek to codify such participation by citizens and to interact with it by means of referendums and consultations at national or large-scale sectoral levels. Revolutions, which bring about a simultaneous change of institutions and laws, are an exceptional form of direct democracy. They transcend existing institutions, laws and mechanisms, which are in a state of crisis that prevents them from working, or that

undermines or paralyzes their work. This renders internal reform or change of such institutions, laws and mechanisms impossible, and change occurs in a revolutionary manner.

Institutionalizing democracy

European democracies have succeeded in institutionalizing their representative democracies, and have remained open to various forms of participatory democracy, for which they have established institutions. They have also established frameworks for direct democracy within the law, and by allowing public opinion, which well-established democracies do not overlook and cannot ignore, to influence policies. However, institutions and laws are the mainstay of such political thought.

On the other hand, UN agencies and other development bodies, particularly non-governmental or civil society organizations, have focused on participatory democracy in particular, because of the nature of their non-political work and tasks. International organizations have also focused on it because of their neglect of the political and cultural dimensions in the development process and because of their wish to avoid putting forward the issue of changing political regimes. This position on their part is the result of understandings regarding interests at the expense of commitment to democracy and human rights. Hence, the focus on participatory democracy has been an alternative to and a way of avoiding the issue of the need for political and democratic change. It has also been a tool to tame non-governmental development organizations and integrate them into the choices of the regime.

As for direct democracy, it is considered in conventional contemporary modern theory as a remnant of the past, devoid of any meaning outside of the frameworks defined by contemporary laws, such as referendums, and the moral authority of public opinion.

The Arab revolutions present challenges at several levels, including a direct challenge to theoretical political thought. We are witnessing a revolutionary process of change taking place on the street that does not fall within the framework of a gradual institutional process. In other words, we are experiencing a moment

that is exceptional, rather than one that conforms to the general rule. Exceptional moments have their special rules as well.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the three types of democracy, we are witnessing a heavy and repeated recourse to direct democracy – that is, direct action by citizens on the street – because genuine representative democracies did not exist in the Arab countries, and because political and civil institutions – both those loyal to the regime and those opposed to it – had been generally tamed. Their programs were limited to participatory democracy, which had also failed to qualitatively change the situation in the Arab countries. We are facing a classic situation in which resorting to direct democracy is the only possibility.

Revolution and coup d'état

The juxtaposition of revolution and coup d'état is incorrect, or it applies partially, to say the very least. Once we move past form and consider the essence of the subject, we see that revolution not only has political legitimacy, but also constitutional and legal legitimacy. Contemporary conventional political theory is incapable of answering this question, because European democracies, which currently operate according to that theory, have aged. They established their representative democracies and institutionalized them long ago. They have therefore lost their revolutionary and innovative quality, and turned into conservative democracies that can only see the world from the perspective of representative democracy and institutions. However, the current format of European representative democracy is nothing more than a historic format that defines the democratic system. The same applies to the prevalent political theory that underpins it. That theory is nothing more than a historical format that defines democratic political theory.

During the phase when modern political thought and its theories were being established, representation through elections took the form of authorization, or a delegation of power that was limited by or conditional upon two basic restrictions: The first was a commitment by an elected representative of the people in a particular area to the positions of the electorate and to not going against their

viewpoints. Moreover, the electorate had the right to monitor their representative as he/she carried out his/her task of representing it. The second was that the electorate could retain the right to rescind their authorization of their representative if they perceived his/her performance to be contrary to their opinions and interests. In other words, a representative could in principle lose his/her representative capacity before the expiry of his/her term of office for which he/she had been elected.¹⁶ However, as time went on, the purely representative aspect of a parliamentarian, in the sense of it being a delegation of power, became less relevant, and the representative became less bound to confine himself/herself to the opinion of those who had elected him/her. Moreover, it became impossible for the electorate to withdraw the delegation of power it had given the representative. The “duped” citizen was forced to wait until the full electoral cycle ended in order to do so. This was based on the logic of establishing institutional stability, the increasing complexity of legislative functions and other such arguments.

A return to the issue of the religious and the civil

The implications of the fall of the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for the religious and the civil aspects of politics and their role in the current process of transformation cannot be glossed over.

At the beginning of this book, the following reference was made to an observation regarding the first weeks of the Arab Spring in 2011: “Where religious, pan-Arab and socialist discourse failed, the discourse of a civil democratic state succeeded in overcoming many divisions and differences in opinions and tendencies within single countries. It was also able to build a joint discourse amongst countries that had drastically differing circumstances, from Yemen to Morocco, including all the other Arab countries.” At the time, we considered that the civic idea enjoyed widespread popular acceptance about which its proponents had previously not even dared to dream. This turned out to be a fact, as evidenced by the revolutions that actually occurred, despite all the subsequent complications (is any historical process free of complications?).

16 When the Industrial Revolution was in ascendancy and the confidence in progress was high, a consumer could return purchased goods to the vendor upon discovering that they were unsuitable, even if the goods were free of defects.

However, the question is whether this represents a fleeting moment and an exception to the original pathway and convictions that are firmly embedded in the popular consciousness, and that everyone perceives as being saturated with religion and faith, which are the essence of real, authentic popular culture. Or is that moment also an authentic culture?

The proponents of the former opinion globally and in our countries, who have adhered to the idea of that moment being an exception to all that is Arab and Islamic, perceive the coming to power of the Islamists in most of the countries that experienced the Arab Spring, particularly Egypt and Tunisia, as proof that religion and politicized Islam are constant and authentic. By the same token, they hold that the civic concept with all of its components – rights, justice, democracy, equality before the law, etc. – is the exception. However, how can this be squared with the fact that Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt fell, and that Ennahda lost the election in Tunisia?

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood was confident that the Egyptian people would prefer political Islam, which it represented, to all other choices. Parties similar to the Muslim Brotherhood in other countries held the same view and behaved on that basis. Whenever their political and social adversaries confronted them with demands pertaining to rights, democratic transformation, progress and civilization, they resorted heavily to religious discourse, presenting their rule as an implementation of Islamic *sharia* law. They believed that this would strengthen them and allow them to definitely win any confrontation between political Islam and any political civic concept – secular, atheist, Western, imported, introduced, etc. However, this did not save the Muslim Brotherhood's rule from being spectacularly overthrown in Egypt in a record short time. It was overthrown because it linked its practices to religion and *sharia* law, prompting the movement opposing it to openly reject thrusting religion into politics and the exploitation of religion in the service of party interests. The Muslim Brotherhood's opponents also moved the battle to the heart of popular mobilization mechanisms, confronting the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts to control al-Azhar and shutting down

informal places of worship that were springing up in low income housing areas that were being used by the proponents of a hybrid political Islam of an unknown identity.

In other words, the battle against the format of the religious state that these religious parties embodied and against the way in which they thrust religion into politics was not a battle of liberal, leftist or secular elites. It was a popular battle par excellence in which the most prominent religious establishment – al-Azhar – also participated. That is one of the general implications of the 30 June 2013 demonstrations against the Muslim Brotherhood, the hidden Islamic state, and equating Islam as a religion and a faith with the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood and of other groups, notwithstanding the fact that those demonstrations paved the way for direct military rule.

The experiences of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and the moderate currents of political Islam, as well as the extremist currents (which openly adopt terrorism) have all only brought catastrophes to countries and their peoples and to regions and their inhabitants where those currents have been able to gain influence. It should be noted that all such experiences were never once a natural and free choice made by citizens and inhabitants. That choice was imposed on them, by force of arms, money, and ideological hegemony, or usually by a combination of those methods. In order to impose such choices, states and governments pulled back from their roles, giving the proponents and organizations of the Islamic trend unrestricted access to many countries and areas. In certain cases from Yemen to Tunisia, they even supported them. In order to spread their ideology and turn it into the predominant culture, those Islamic currents used educational systems involving rote learning, the media, private schools and religious establishments. To the same end, hundreds of millions of dollars were allocated to finance and arm organizations, transport proselytizing and combat personnel from country to country, promote behavior advocated by those Islamic trends, establish media and satellite TV channels and build establishments that would support the development of such Islamic trends. It is therefore completely legitimate to pose the following counter

question: Let us suppose that those currents of political Islam did not have hundreds of millions of dollars and trained proselytizing combat personnel that were instructed outside their own countries, and that they did not have the capability of using official religious establishments without being monitored, as states and governments turned a blind eye. In other words, had those currents not had capabilities – which are mostly non-national or local capabilities, but mostly incoming cross-border capabilities – that no other party had, could they have achieved tangible advances, including winning the elections in Tunisia and Egypt, for example?

I think that the Arab peoples, like any other people in the world, are spontaneously in favor of public and private freedom, and that like any other people, they do not have a preference for state rule by direct or indirect religious authority, that they do not welcome restrictions on their personal freedoms, nor do they welcome the undermining of traditional family or modern civil relations in the name of religion. In that respect, we are absolutely no different to other peoples from India, to China, to Europe, which is our neighbor. All those peoples have been through such an experience, and we are no different.

The supposition that we are governed as peoples by religious political thought and ideology and by religious models is an orientalist stereotypical view that is completely erroneous. During pivotal moments in our modern history, we chose the civil concept and modernism, albeit with many distortions. During the Renaissance era, the Arab peoples and elites opted for pan-Arab nationalism, which is basically a civic and modern concept, rather than the religious option and the call to restore the caliphate that Atatürk had overthrown. The Turks are not very different to us. In the post-independence period, peoples and elites also opted for the civil state, which regrettably became despotic and neopatrimonial in most cases. They did not opt for the religious concept and religious ideology. To the contrary, those who espoused religious ideologies – the most prominent example being the Muslim Brotherhood – were closer to acceptance of continued colonialism than to acceptance of the change that had occurred, which was

drawing millions. During the current phase of the Arab Spring, the Arab peoples proved twice that they were in favor of the civil concept, that it was the original concept and that considering us political-religious beings is a completely erroneous view. The first time was in early 2011 when they rebelled to achieve a civil state and succeeded in imposing change by the power provided by millions of people on the street, and a second time when the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda were brought down.

We are no exception to the general pathway that all other peoples have taken in that regard. That is an undeniable fact, although it is possible to research the complications and requirements of that pathway in our countries and the digressions from it. We have no answer to this issue that would be different to the answers provided by the intellectuals of the Renaissance a century ago – Mohammad Abdu, al-Tahtawi, al-Kawakibi, al-Afghani, Salameh Mousa, Farah Antoun, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Kheir al-din al-Tunsi, Qasem Amin, al-TaHER al-Haddad and others.

Lastly, is there an answer to such questions?

Life itself provides the answer that people shape through their historic practices every day. The elements of the historic response, particularly the current response, can be detected in particular in the manifestations of the Arab Spring revolutions over the past few years.

The actual response given by those revolutions in practice is: the need to establish the civil, democratic modern state and demands for freedom, justice, equality before the law and the ability to make a decent living, among other demands. That answer does not include a call for a religious, or for a military state, or for a despotic neopatrimonial state of any kind, or for a state that does not achieve justice amongst its people.

That is an answer that cannot be denied. However, whenever new forces come to power and try to ignore that answer, to impose a religious or despotic security or military ruling order and to reproduce the neopatrimonial model and reject the principle of neutrality of the state and its apparatus and peoples' just demands, they reproduce the same crisis.

That is what occurred after the first stage of change, and it was the cause of the crisis that followed. That scenario is likely to recur if the hidden religious governance that quickly fell is replaced by open or hidden military governance, or by another form or repression that is based on a pan-Arab or traditional or neoliberal format.

The answer has existed since the Tunisian revolution of 2010: The modern democratic civil state. The facts are very stubborn. Whenever there is an attempt to ignore that answer and push a particular country down a different pathway, those who do so are raising the cost of the inevitable transformation to that desired state.



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