The reflection of political transitions in the Arab region on Arab societal security

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Abstract:

The study aims to highlight the political transitions that the Arab region has undergone since 2011, which have relied primarily on political reform as a mechanism for democratization, enacting the human rights, strengthening the stability of political systems, and eradication of corruption, poverty, unemployment and all other economic effects.

As well as to clarify their interrelationship with Arab societal security as the most important objective of the reform process in the Arab region. The study also seeks to explore the extent to which political transitions in the Arab region can be used to achieve societal cohesion in the Arab world, thereby achieving Arab social security as a lofty goal in Arab political transition processes.

Keywords: Political transitions; Arab; Social; Security; Region.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Arab States are witnessing a number of political and social transitions that have made them a fertile field for academic studies that attempt to scrutinize these new dynamics and the resulting new structure of States, societies and power imbalances at the regional and international levels. This will inevitably lead to dramatic repercussions and repercussions on national and regional security and stability, especially in the light of the ongoing polarization and political attraction between the various new and old political forces on the one hand. On the other hand, the state of social complexity resulting from the multiplicity and diversity of societies in which it exists as well as its implications for social security and for the stability of the systems that have undergone the escalations of the current political transition, including the continuing fragmentation in Syria, Libya and Yemen, and the absence of internal, regional and international safeguards to prevent the extension of the Syrian, Libyan and Yemeni war to the rest of the Arab states. In that regard and based on the entanglement of national and regional conflicts, the Arab States and their peoples are exposed to numerous risks that pose a continuing challenge to societies.

The study therefore seeks to identify the implications of the political transition in the Arab states for the region's societal security issues in the short and long term and to review the terminology used in this context. By discussing the following problematic: to what extent have the political transitions in the Arab region reflected on Arab societal security?

This subject can be addressed through the following axes:
- Conceptual and theoretical rooting of the study
- Political transitions in the Arab region
- The implications of political transitions for Arab societal security

2. Conceptual and theoretical rooting of the study:
2.1 The concept of political transition:

Despite the clear concept of the term "political transition", this term, like other terms used in the social sciences in general, and political science in particular, have different definitions given that it encompasses multiple

dimensions. In order to understand this term, it can be addressed as follow: The significance of the transformation first, which is meant to change something or move it from one image to another ([1]). The word "transition" means passage or transition from one situation to another. Reality and history attest to the fact that human societies do not always demonstrate a single situation, so that any social system contains two types of processes, one that preserve it and ensure its sustainability, and the second that work to change it and replace it starting from modification and ending with revolution([2]).

Sociology is thus one of the first fields of transition (transformation) for the study, and today's sociologists see change in social construction as one of the fields of contemporary sociology, where "Kingsley Davis defines social change as the transformation of social organization, both in its composition, construction and in its functions ([3]).

Although sociology was the pioneer to study the concept of transition, the field of sociology is not alone subjected to the logic of transition, since this concept occurred in other fields of sciences, including political science. The concept of political change refers to a shift in political structures or processes that affects the distribution and exercise of political power, including: power, coercion and political influence ([4]), because Political change affects political construction, such as permitting pluralism or calling for fair and free elections.

Political transition is essentially a qualitative shift in the nature of the political system and its working mechanisms, which may be peaceful in the form of a white political revolution or violent when it cannot be achieved peacefully. In terms of degree, it may be partial (limited) or inclusive (radical) when some political and economic adjustments to the (existing) political system are not merely applied ([5]).

In general, the process of political transition aims to rationalize the utility of resources and possibilities and to establish a modern society characterized by the use of modern means of culture, throughout which manifestations of urbanization are widespread. It is also characterized by a high percentage of learners, low reliance on traditional institutions and the influence of these institutions has generally diminished, particularly in the areas of social integration.

2.2 Political transformation and related concepts:

Liberal transition: Samuel Huntington argues that liberal transition is linked to an increase in individuals' freedom space, the release of political prisoners, to open space for public debate and the easing of censorship over newspapers, creating room for the formation and activity of intermediary organizations such as parties and associations under certain conditions, and the organization of elections to positions of simple authority and non-interference in favour of the ruling party's candidates. A liberal transition here may and may not lead to a complete transition to democracy [6].

Liberal transition has modest objectives compared to political transition, namely the easing of constraints and the expansion of individual and collective rights within the authoritarian regime itself, and it does not necessarily imply the establishment of a democratic transition, although it could contribute to stimulating this process.

• **Democratic transition:** Attempts have been made to root in the concept of democratic transition through the studies of Philip Schmeeter and Karl, Philip shamitter [7], where Philip Schmeeter and Jilliram O'Donnell argue that the concept of democratic transition refers to the phase between one political system and another and ends at the moment when the new system is fully established [8].

These transitions are determined, on the one hand, by the beginning of the degradation process of the authoritarian regime and, on the other hand, by the establishment of a form of democracy, the return of a form of authoritarian order or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative. These transitions may also produce a hybrid system or descend entirely into anarchy [9].

Consequently, democratic transition according to Schmetter is the process of applying democratic norms in institutions where they have never been applied before or extending these norms to individuals or subjects that have not previously been covered by them. Therefore, processes and actions are being taken to move from an undemocratic system to a stable democratic system, which Rusto defines as a union process in which three different-

motivated forces: regime, internal opposition, and external forces, each party attempts to weaken the other and the final outcome is determined according to the variable party to this conflict (**[10]**).

Political reform:

It is one of the concepts on which there is no specific concept within the framework of political science. In general, it means a process of change in political and institutional structures and their functions, as well as their working methods and objectives, through the legal tools provided by the political system itself. Based on the concept of progression, this means increasing the effectiveness and capacity of the political system to deal with new variables and problems. Reform is a change from within the system and with mechanisms emanating from within the system. In other words, developing the efficiency and effectiveness of the political system in its surroundings internally, regionally and internationally. On this basis, political transformation is different from political reform (**[11]**).

In general, all these reforms meet the desired objectives, which have been outlined by events and transformations that have taken place in some Arab States since the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, and whose events or repercussions are still ongoing. These events and transformations have involved Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, the Sudan and, to a lesser extent, Algeria and Morocco (**[12]**).

2.3. The concept of societal security:

After the end of the cold war, security studies shifted from traditional studies of security based on military threats to critical security studies, represented by three schools: the Wales School, the Paris School and the Copenhagen School. Although there is a difference in intellectual and theoretical backgrounds between these schools, they agree that attention should be paid to the individual as a unit of analysis in security studies, as well as the existence of other sectors that may be a source of threat to security, in addition to the military sector. Among these sector is the societal security sector, which was introduced within the framework of the Copenhagen School through which it attempted to address the insufficience of the security analysis of the world's ethnic conflicts in the early 1990s. This is the subject we will try to find out in this study.

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The notion of societal security:

Dr. Ihsan Mohammed al-Hassan said that societal security means: "The safety of individuals and groups from internal and external threats that may challenge them, such as military dangers, and the exposition of individuals and groupes to killings, kidnappings and attacks on property by vandalism or theft." ([13]). Barry Buzan defines it as: "Working to be free from threat, and in the context of the international system it means the ability of States and societies to maintain their independent entity and their functional cohesion against the forces of change they consder as hostile." Or it is to create an actual balance between (cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic) specificities and the need to build the logic of citizens' national integration in building a pluralistic and fair society ([14]).

Societal security is therefore all political, economic and cultural actions and plans aimed at providing comprehensive safeguards guaranteeing the comprehensive care of everyone in society, providing them with the means to maximize the development of their capacities and powers, and maximum well-being in a framework of political freedom and social justice.

3. Political transitions in the Arab region:

By tracking events, two waves of political transition in the Arab region can be observed. The first wave began since 2011 and resulted in the overthrow of the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, as well as Syria's entry into an asymmetric war with the support of countries and regional forces such as Turkey and the United States of America and finally Russia.

As for Bahrain's exception, its sensitive geographical position with regard to the royal regimes in the Arabian Gulf (other Gulf Cooperation Council member states). The fear of these monarchies that these protests will move into their countries, prompting them to initiate media blackout, support the royal family in Bahrain and respond to them using material force (Al Jazeera Shield).

For the Maghreb region, it has also been affected by these events and shifts, albeit to varying degrees. Therefore, we try to address what happened and/or happening in Tunisia and Libya (Noting that the movement of protests

was not limited to these two States but included Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania, but to a lesser extent than Tunisia and Libya, and was dealt with in softer ways, such as constitutional amendments such as Morocco and Algeria). We will try to see how these transitions affect Arab societal security.

The Tunisian Hirak began on 17 December 2010 in Sidi Bouzid city to protest against the deterioration of the poor social, economic and political conditions in Tunisia and in solidarity with Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire, refusing to accept humiliation. In addition to the revelations made by "WikiLeaks" about corruption inside the President own family. That is why thousands of demonstrators rejecting endemic unemployment, the absence of social justice and the exacerbation of corruption within the regime. These demonstrations quickly turned into an overwhelming popular movement that reached several Tunisian cities such as Tunis, Sousse, Sfax, Al-Guasserine, Guafssa, Al Kaf, and Qabes, and the slogans raised began to evolve from the pure social front(employment) to demanding more global rights in its social, political, economic and psychological dimensions. This movement was able in less than a month to overthrow President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia- who ruled the country for 23 years - on 14 January 2011[15].

In Libya, the events began on 17 February 2011, and most followers of the Arab affairs have anticipated a scenario different from Egypt and Tunisia, given the different nature of the political systems and leaders in the three countries. As events accelerated, the situation in Libya began to take a violent turn that reached a military clash between the regime and its opponents. The situation in Libya escalated during a month from peaceful protests and demonstrations into an armed confrontation involving international organizations and forces.

The evolution of the events in Libya necessitated a change in the attitude of international and regional forces and institutions. NATO's intervention in Libya followed Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, by which NATO forces led by France, Britain, the United States of America and other countries began the military operation in Libya in 19 Mars 1201.

However, Security Council resolution 1973 essentially guaranteed the establishment of an air exclusion zone within Libya with the aim of providing air protection to Libyan civilians in the face of the excessive use of force by the Qadhafi regime ([16]).

Despite the organisation of many successful elections in Libya from 2012 to 2014, the strong effects of the weakness or absence of a strong Libyan State appeared to be a prerequisite for building a democratic system in a non-State society. The devastating impact of these effects continues to lead to catastrophic consequences that divide the country and plunge it into growing choose ([17]).

Based on the foregoing, Libya has become a case that raises many critical issues that deserve serious attention and discussion, including the issue of democracy in exchange for nation building.

The second wave involved both the Sudan and Algeria starting in December 2018. The Sudanese revolution, which erupted on 19 December 2018, called for dignity, democracy and justice, reflected a recurring Sudanese pattern. Since independence, Sudan has experienced several transitional periods aimed at establishing pluralistic democratic regime. It also experienced three military coups and three people's revolutions or uprisings aimed at overthrowing the political system established by the military. The October 1964 revolution overthrew the regime of Ibrahim Aboud, who came through a military coup in November 1958. The 1985 April Revolution led to the overthrow of the Jaafar Nimiri regime, who also came to power with a military coup in May 1969. Then came the revolution of December 2018, which brought down the regime of Omar al-Bashir, who had ruled the Sudan since the 1989 military coup. It was also noticeable that most of the military coups occurred in the wake of a split among elites and political parties during their struggle for power, some of them came through the cooperation or invitation of civilian parties to the military for the purpose of taking power and thus confronting their civilian opponents([18]).

Many of the victims were killed in confrontations with the security forces and the army, especially after the army's coup against al-Bashir, and the

massacre of the General Command. The country witnessed a difficult negotiation process between the civilian forces that were at the forefront of the popular movement and the military establishment, which is the country's main organized institution. Ultimately, an agreement known as the "Constitutional Document" was concluded on 17 August 2019 between the Transitional Military Council, which took power after the overthrow of al-Bashir and the Coalition of The Forces of Freedom and Change. External factors have played a pivotal role here. This agreement was brokered by Ethiopian and African mediations. Furthermore, a few months after the transitional rule, the Sudan witnessed the announcement of the normalization of its relationship with Israel in the light of differences of views between the pillars of transitional civilian rule, but the military wing settled the issue in favour of normalisation[19]. However, the process of political transformation in the Sudan remains unstable, given the intervention of external forces with an interest in the continued Sudanese situation.

In the case of Algeria, protests and demonstrations took place in the context of the 2011 first wave revolts, but the then regime managed to circumvent the demands of the popular demonstrations, even though the demands of these demonstrations were limited and did not amount to a demand for regime change. The regime succeeded in maintaining the traditional balance between popular demands and control through the carrot and the stick policy. Thus, the people's revolts that overthrew the existing regimes in many Arab States have been wiped out. The first decade of the new millennium saw steps of political and constitutional reform, but it clearly showed that it was formal and did not lead to any real change.

With the former President's announcement of his intention to run for a fifth term at the end of 2018. As economic problems worsened by low oil prices and erosion of the exchange reserve, the budget deficit rose and the State adopted austerity policies, and the regime was unable to continue with its previously successful nepotism practices. This led to massive protests with specific demands in 22 February 2019. Initially, the protests were limited to rejecting Bouteflika's candidacy for a fifth terms, but these claims expanded after a few weeks to further demands such as the departure of all "symbols

of the former regime", and even a call for a transitional constituent authority. The revolution was characterized by its peaceful and sustainable nature and also by a lack of confidence between the people on the one hand and the regime on the other, which made democratic reforms not enjoying the confidence of a wide segment of public even after the cessation of Hirak and broad participation in the elections[20].

In general, several factors have caused an explosion of the popular Hirak in Arab States, which vary from State to State, but are generally similar to social marginalization, corruption, authoritarianism, poverty and unemployment... All of these factors are inherent to the Arab world. On the other hand, we find that external interventions in the affairs of Arab States have been another engine that attempts to exploit all these conditions in all forms and methods to destabilize them. This similarity of reasons has led to a convergence of outcomes, especially on the part of social security, which will be addressed in the next axis.

4. The implications of political transitions for Arab societal security:

The Arab region is currently experiencing chaos at all levels. The Arab Spring's revolutions and the resulting crises played a key role in shaping this chaos, negatively affecting the security of Arab societies. In this study, we will therefore try to focus on the most important pillars of Arab societal security on the one hand and the repercussions of political transitions in the region on these societies on the other.

4.1 The foundations of Arab social security:

The foundations and cornerstones of Arab societal security are linked to the interrelated efforts aimed at achieving security for individuals through the adoption of Arab regimes in all their fields with a view to achieving good livelihoods and preserving the dignity of Arab peoples. The importance of these foundations lies in the strong ground and solid basis for the preservation of citizens' rights in all Arab States. These foundations can be defined as follows [21]

- Cohesion among members of society: It is achieved when individuals belong to one country regardless of geographical boundaries.

- Justice and equality : Security is one of its most important objectives and is intended to implement peaceful provisions among adversaries, as well as to recognize the people's freedom and livelihood.

-Freedom: which recognizes the principle of individual and consequently collective dependence that includes all individuals and groups at its costs, which is known as social interdependence?

- The strength: which means firmness in the management and resolution of problems and diligence in addressing and correcting errors and not leniently compromising security in the social, political, economic, intellectual field as well as in other forms of security?

4.2 Challenges affecting Arab societal security:

The foundations and characteristics of Arab societal security are an essential general policy mechanism for addressing social problems and implementing development strategies, but they face challenges that impede Arab societies' progress and it can be enumerated as follow:

• The Arab Governments are focusing their efforts on the capital city, which is receiving special attention in the field of services, organization, and development and planning at the expense of the rest of the cities. As a result, the capital has become the most attractive city for migration in search of employment, education and better living conditions. This has led to an increase in its population, resulting in a decline in the quality and size of the population's services.

• Arab States allocate the equivalent of 18.5 per cent of GDP to military expenditure (the world average is 52.2 per cent), which exceeds the amount allocated to education and health.

• A weak democracy - if any - that includes the Security Sector Reform institution's programme to establish democratic control over the security sector, such active institutions capable of carrying out major tasks are highly necessary.

• Terrorist acts: According to the "State of the World" report, Arab countries are the most affected by terrorist acts, especially poor ones. These acts result in poverty, disease and environmental degradation, the conflict over oil and resources, such as the water crisis and other threats in the light of the

economic and social disparities compounded by the transformations of globalization, not to mention the threats to food security. Since the population growth, water shortages and climate imbalances geared towards drought in most Arab States are all indicators that qualify the threat to food security to be at the forefront of the challenges affecting Arab societal security.

4.3 The impact of political transitions in the Arab region on Arab societal security:

The issue of societal security is one of the most important issues facing the Arab world in the 21st century, due to globalization and the information revolution, as well as what resulted from the Arab Spring revolutions. This is what we are interested in in this study; given that societal security is one of the most important objectives of the political reform process in States embroiled in a complex transition period following the political movement that overthrew a number of political systems and this reflects renewed talk of societal diversity and its implications for societal security and system stability.

Political transitions in the Arab region have forced new developments and changes that have been instrumental in destabilizing security in Arab societies. as having negatively affected Arab societal security and contributed to increasing the frequency of unrest, complexity and devastation in the Arab countries and played a significant role in the emergence of movements and sects as well as the dominance of nationalism that contributed to changing the course of human life and the spread of crime, terrorism, lack of political reform. All the efforts of the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the international community have failed. One of the most significant repercussions of the Arab Spring's revolutions on Arab societal security is sectarianism, political reform, terrorism and democracy. For sectarianism, the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions had a major impact on the emergence of multiple sects, each calls for different ideas and ideologies, which lead to divisions and weaknesses in the society structure, and reflected in turn the erosion of security in Arab societies and the spread of different opposition movements, each claims a monopoly on religious

truth, and the holder of such ideology resort to violence in order to assert their claims exploiting in the absence of a single agreed reference. All of the above has ignited the flames of sedition in the region, particularly in Bahrain and Syria. The Economic Intelligence Unit has also classified the threat of internal division as very high in Yemen and Libya.

On the other hand, many Arab states have resorted to political reform. The Tunisian government established a Ministry of Human Rights and Political Reform to engage in discussions and recommendations on political reform, but the Constituent Assembly prevented this decision in December 2013. In Egypt, a Minister for Political Reform was appointed in July 2013, who stated that the time was inappropriate for political reform. The Constituent Assembly has not yet approved the proposal for the establishment of a transitional justice commission and hand over the mission to it. The same is true in Libya and other States. The Arab countries have not taken serious action on political reform, although it is necessary to achieve national reconciliation. With the lack of agreement between key policy players and the absence of justice and accountability, actions have turned into reprisals that destabilize society and its security. On the other hand, political reform has not affected building bridges of trust in the political process to heal the fractures created by decades of repression and pave the way for greater respect for human rights. On the contrary, political reform movements have provoked outrage among leaders, which has reflected the security of societies ([22]).

With regard to democracy, its implementation in the Arab States has become one of the most important challenges to societal security. The weakness and inadequacy of democratisation, which has been initiated by the liberations movements, has contributed to the emergence of major problems such as violence, extremism, poverty and unemployment, as well as serious repercussions on the economic, social and health field. The inadequacy of democratization in the Arab region has also helped the emergence of terrorist extremist groups, not to mention increasing unemployment, which has advanced the highest ratios in the world ([23]). The educational system in the Arab region is also not playing its required role in qualifying young people

for employment opportunities, which has contributed to their frustration and made them more inclined to violence and protest.

Meanwhile, the Arab armies played a major role in the failure and success of the Arab revolutions. They also had a major impact on threatening the security. They contributed to the deportation and displacement of millions of people because of the armies' bombing of unarmed civilian-populated neighbourhoods and the denial of their most basic rights, namely the right to security. The involvement of the armies in the revolts within Arab societies had negative and serious repercussions on societal security, resulting in continued killings, terrorizing and deportation in that country, as in the case of Syria [24].

With regard to terrorist attacks, it has become an instrument for threatening peoples and societies and has contributed to promoting the principle of violence, reprisals, violation of human rights, intimidation of civilians and the spread of fear and panic among the people. Revolutions also helped to promote the principle of extremism that invades the minds of different age categories, different religions and both sexes... It has helped to escalate violence that undermined society and its members and prevents it from attaining the stage of development and prosperity that is a requirement for all people around the world. Extremism has promoted the spread of a culture of destruction and the loss of innocent lives, and has caused political, economic and social decadence in Arab societies, which has led to the emergence of military cleavages and terrorist groups that constrain people's security and threaten societies.

Thus, it can be said that the political challenges of the Arab region have had a significant impact on Arab societal security, where inadequacy has contributed to political reform, the lack of proper democratization, the emergence of terrorist and extremist groups in the Arab region as well as increasing the frequency of conflicts and escalating disputes between peoples to pose a significant threat to individuals and peoples alike, destabilizing their security and contributing to the reduction of employment opportunities in addition to poverty, especially in poor regions and States.

5. CONCLUSION

Finally**,** we concluded that the Arab region suffers after the political transformations it has known, or what it has termed the Arab Spring revolutions, from severe political and intellectual crises. Although the aim of these revolutions was to create a new political culture based on democracy and the development of political institutions, as well as raising the standard of living of the Arab individual, improving the health, education and work fields, but the opposite happened. After these revolutions, the Arab world came out with multiple social and security crises that threatened Arab societal security, which is the essence of our study and through which we reached the following results:

- The concept of societal security is very complex because it deals with identities and cultures that are subjective and contextual, often leading to racist and exclusionary policies.

- Societal security is not a subsystem but a lens of analytical lenses through which the state of all the international system is unveiled and therefore all dimensions of human security operate with each other interdependently.

- Not paying attention to activating Arab social security creates a fertile environment for the growth of extremist and violent ideas that are contrary to national security.

- Political transitions in the Arab world play an essential and pivotal role in reducing and weakening societal security. They have had serious repercussions on the security and safety of individuals and have left serious disturbances and threats that have placed a burden on all Arab States.

- Many Arab Hirak States have resorted to political reform and change of leaders, which affected negatively the security of Arab societies and leading to widespread poverty, unemployment, crime and drugs and the dismantling of societies

- The Arab Spring's revolutions resulted in the strongest sparks that ignited political challenges that significantly affected societal security in the Arab world and led to several consequences for the security dimension, such as the emergence of sectarianism, dictatorship and terrorism, as well as the vast number of casualties, injuries and refugees left behind by these revolutions.

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