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The Authoritative Governance in the Middle East And the Process of "Transition to Democracy"

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Abstract:
During past two decades, "Pass through a democratic status" gave attention by most Middle East analysts. In fact, since the early 1980s, The Middle East and The North of Africa affected by third wave of democratization effects and both state and society felt its impacts. Since, civil society has been promoting and strengthening, from one hand, and sovereign governments gradually withdrawal has begun, from the other. In a number of countries, this civil society strength with weakness and withdrawal of sovereign governments was so that made some analysts optimists to the coming Middle East. However, during the time, it was revealed that the democracy in the states' viewpoints was different from the Middle Eastern citizens' democratic calls. Put it differently, the sovereign political elites sought for a democracy in which there was no changes in power relationships, and participation declined to a quantitative presence in elections - with predictable results - as well. This led the writers and analysts to adopt more real and precise positions to obstacles of democratic transition. To better understanding, one should aware that, like any other social changes, this democratic transient, in each nation and country, requires proper subjective and /or objective conditions to achieve. Proper subjective grounds mean penetration of democratic thoughts and notions among peoples. Besides, Proper socio-economic conditions are very important and necessary; the increased and promoted middle-class and its independence of state is the most important indications of these objective situations. Of course, these two positions is hard to reach, and it doesn't mean that this democratic transition will be occurred so fast and simple, since, as evidently, the historical and cultural background might appear a rigid and hard obstacle - or on the contrary - shortens this process.

Keywords: Democratization, Authoritarianism, Political Participation, Civil Society, Islamism, Middle East

Introduction

Over the past two decades, "transition to democratic state" has drawn attentions of most analysts of the issues of the Middle

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East. Following important developments in the last quarter of the 20th Century and building on similarities in the processes and consequences of such developments, Samuel Huntington employed the term "the third wave of democratization"; which do experts of political and international affairs accept widely. In fact, by time, the numbers of analysts who have tried to show how far are existing authoritative regimes of the region, and discuss possible ways for transition increases.

According to Huntington, A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time. A wave also usually involves liberalization or partial democratization of political systems that do not become fully democratic. Three waves of democratization have occurred in the modern world. Of course, each wave of democratization was usually followed by a reverse wave. (Huntington, 1373[1994]: 18-19) The first wave of democratization covers the period 1828-1926. the second wave occurred in the period 1943-1962; and the third wave began with the well-known April coup in Portugal in 1974. After the Southern Europe, the wave went to Latin America; and early in 1977, it went to Asia. Lately in 1980's the Eastern Europe was influenced by this wave; and early in 1990's Africa was influenced. In this process, entrance of the third wave of democratization to Eastern Europe was perhaps the most important and far-reaching one; for it led to overthrowing of the authoritarianism of the Eastern Block, and consequently, resonance of the wave in the world. To put it more accurately, upon collapse of the socialist Block, not only a region but also the international system entered a new phase. "Developments of 1990's should be regarded, as a matter of fact, as a border between traditional international systems and the appearing system at the threshold of the 21st Century". (Masoum Zadeh Kiaee, 1381[2002]: 161)

According to Huntington, five factors have been of influence in creation of the third wave of transition:

1- The deepening legitimacy problems of authotarian systems in a world where democratic values were widely accepted.

2- The unprecedented global economic growth of 1960's which raised living standards, increased education, and greatly expanded the urban middle class in many countries.

3- The striking changes in the doctrine and activities of the Catholic Church to oppose authotarianism.

4- Changes in the policies of external actors (including the US and Soviet Union) since the late period of 1960's.

5- Snowballing or demonstration effects … of the first transitions … were providing models for subsequent efforts at regime change in other countries. (Huntington, 1373[1994]: 46)

As noted by Huntington, there has been a serious resistance against the first and second waves; and each wave has been followed by a return wave; the first return wave covered the period 1922-1942; and the second one happened during the period 1958-1975. Thus, when writing his book, he did not deny that there might be another return wave in the global process of democratization, and spoke of possible emergence of national, religious, oligarchic, populist, and even technocratic-

electronic authoritarianisms. According to him, such factors as decreased legitimacy of democratic regimes because of their systematic failures international economic crisis, absence of usual and necessary prerequisites to consolidate democracy, and snowballing would be of influence in formation of this return process. (Huntington, 1373[1994]: 320-22)

To discuss democratization and authotarianism more precisely, one has to make distinction between "transition to democracy" and "consolidation of democracy". According to O'Donnel, the process of democratization consists of two transitions: firstly, transition from the previous authotarian regime to a democratic one; and secondly, transition from the democratic regime to consolidate democracy "to consolidate democratic regime". (O'Donnell, 1992: 18-19) The second transition means that democratic regime shows more efficiency actually and "democracy … becomes the only game in town". (Przeworski, 1991: 26) The first transition might be seen more in two last decades; but the second transition is more important. As a matter of fact the problem faced by many countries arises here; for, this is not a short-term and easy path to go; and consequently, authotarianism may return.

The question which arises here is "How is democracy consolidated?". In reply to this fundamental question, which may assure the second transition and prevent return of authotarianism, there are two approaches: some scholars emphasize teaching of democratic values to most citizens through a long-term process of sociability. And some others think that absence of important challenges concerning legitimacy of democratic institutions as well as systematic and competitive elections is of importance. The first approach considers "democrats" as assuring continuity and consolidation of democracy and demands for formation of "democratic political culture", while the second one emphasizes election and its being institutionalized. The problem is that the first approach, though it is more fundamental, has no referent in the objective world, and it is inconsistent with historical realities; for in no known case, a majority of democrats seems to exist before emergence of political democracy. (Przeworski, 1991: 48-49) At the same time, because of its emphasis merely on election, is not able to make a distinction between democratic and quasi-democratic countries. And it is not able to distinguish democratic countries from (in Ottaway words) quasi-authotarian ones. (Ottaway, 2003)

It is because of such defects that some analysts do not focus on the conception of "state" of "society", and organize their discussions in other way. For example, having studied Egyptian experience, Bahgat Korany speaks of democratization of relations between the State and society as well as their dialectics. (Korany, 1998: 39) Linz and Stepan think that democracy will be consolidated if three conditions are fulfilled:

1- Behaviorally, a democratic regime in a territory is consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a non-democratic regime or turning to violence or foreign intervention to secede from the state.

2- Attitudinally, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life in a society such as theirs and when the support for antisystem alternatives is quite small or more or less isolated from the prodemocratic forces.

3- Constitutionally, a democratic regime is consolidated when governmental and non-governmental forces alike, throughout the territory of the state, become subjected to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process". (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 6)

Realization of these three conditions means that democracy will enter people's life and become the only game in town. As seen, despite many theorization and attempts made to employ previous experiences, there is, apparently, no assurance to prevent return of authotarianism; and emergence of a perfectly "democratic" and "consolidated" society and state seems to be essentially an unattainable ideal.

Global Acceptability of Democratic values

As said, among factors leading to emergence of the third wave of democratization is gradual acceptance of democratic values. Here, it should be noted that various and mostly old problems in the Middle East have helped to more acceptance of such values. In other words, dissatisfaction of the "status que" and invalidity of governing ideologies has not been caused by spread of democratic values; but it has been there even before this. All countries of the region have faced apparently "unsolvable" economic problems; and functions of their statesmen against internal and external political forces have been criticized; for examples, since the mid-1970's, consequences of economic policies in the countries of Middle East have increased dissidences; and even followed by protests and revolts in Egypt (1977, 1986), Tunis (1978, 1984), Morocco (1980, 1984), Jordan and Algeria (1989). And this was the case when establishment of social justice was the most important promise of Arabic States in 1960's and 1970's. (Dekmejian, 1377[1998]: 65-7) In 1970's Iran faced various political and economic protests which led to the 1979 Revolution. Nevertheless, because of continuance of problems and non-fulfillment of promises, dissidences increased and were followed by invalidity of governing ideologies. On the other side, radical Islamism which tried to replace such ideologies as socialism and nationalism during 1970's and 1980's did not succeed reasons. Growth and development of communication technologies on the one hand and economic and social progresses of the Western Block on the other helped to spread democratic values gradually; and in particular, invalidity of Leftist ideologies in 1990's increased importance and acceptability of "democratic alternative". This democratic alternative was at the same time rival of both governments and some existing current such as Islamism. Actually, this "alternative" spread in such a way that Islamists might not ignore it; thus, they had to adopt a position against it.

Here a question arises: "what was the content of this new alternative; and what values did it make important for the Middle East societies?"

To provide a reply to this question thought it seems to be an easy task, is not so easy; for, it requires careful and comprehensive study of the process of democratization, its content, and consequences. Nevertheless, a relatively suitable reply may be found through summing up of existing ideas and views.

1- Human Rights. The first axis often mentioned to reply the above question is the issue of human rights. Today, human rights have been actually become an international re-

gime; and title such as "humanitarian international rights" have been penetrated in existing discussions (whether governmental or non- governmental). (Plattner, 2002: 58) Apart from the fact that many countries introduce observance of human rights as an essential condition in their relationships with other countries, (See: Dalacoura, 2003) there are many non- governmental organizations active throughout the world and observe actions and activities of governments carefully. Since early in 1980's, such organizations have grown in the Middle East rapidly; the most important of which is Arabic Organization for Human Rights (Cairo) founded in 1983. Topics such as citizen rights or woman rights are usually classified under this title; and incidentally, there are many organizations trying to increase citizens or women knowledge of their rights[1]. Early in 1990 is an organization called Islamic Human Rights Organization (affiliated to Judiciary Faculty) was founded in Iran. Some of such organizations have been strikingly active in political and social scenes, and managed to be of influence through cooperation with each other or institutions such as UN.

Such developments do not permit any government to show itself as opposing human rights or accept to be labeled as "opponent of human rights". As a result, repression, violence, and non-observance of human rights have become more costly throughout the world, including the Middle East. That is why Saad Eddin Ibrahim has optimistically considered the future decades of the world as belonging to human rights and democratization. (Ibrahim, 1989: 39-43)

2- Political Participation. In the light of the global wave of democratization, the concept of political participation has become an important transnational political value which should be dealt with even by non-democratic systems to emphasize their own being democrat and pariticipability. As a result, political participation is one of the main elements of political development and democratization in all societies, and legitimacy of political systems has been considered as being largely conditioned by creation of participative political institutions. Political participation means one's being included in various levels of activity in political system- from not being included to having political official position. To vote is mentioned usually as the lowest level of participation. (Rush, 1377[1998]: 123-34) According to Milbrath and Geol, level of political participation changes with four important factors: political motives, social status, personal characteristics, and political environment. (Milbrath and Goel, 1977)

In the last two decades, most countries in the Middle East have tried various policies to attract public participation. In addition to Iran and Turkey wherein periodical, ordered, and relatively competitive elections have been hold, many Arabic countries have provided a more suitable environment for political activities of people. For example, one may mention events of recent years in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and even Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is clear that under pressure of public opinion, have progressed largely; and this process will most likely continue.

Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate concerning importance or rate of this process; nor does he think that real political participation has been realized in the region or will be realized within soon. According to Parry, in study of political participation in each and every country, three factors should be taken in account:

- The way to participate (formal or informal; opportunity to participate; interest in participation; sources available

1- For more information about women conditions in the Middle East, see: Esfandiari (ed.), 2003.

for people to participate; common attitude towards participation)
- Strength of participation (level of participation; number of participations by individuals)
- Quality of participation (impact resulted from participation; study of the impact of people's participation on rulers' function and policy-making). (Parry, 1977),

The third feature of participation seems to be the most important point which should be taken into account in this study. In many countries of the region, ordered and periodical elections have been held since 1980's; and even attempts have been made to create participative political institutions; actually, however, rulers' functions or policy-making process have not been influenced. To put it more precisely, to direct public demands for political participation, governments have chosen a manipulated and controlled pluralism. (Zatman, 1988: 63-8) This reminds one of the points emphasized by Korany and Noble, i.e. that two processes of "liberalization" and "democratization" are not the same in the Arabic Middle East. (Korany and Noble, 1998: 1)

3- Small Government, Strong Civil Society.

Influenced by internal and external developments during recent decades, including failure of regional governments in fulfillment of their own political and economic promises, necessity of smalling government and changing its roles has drawn attentions. Now that outlook of citizens has changed, government seems to be no more a single and strong agent who is obliged to do many functions; but the "civil society" is emphasized as an independent space between government and society. (Hudson, 1995: 71) This sphere is beyond individual interests, nor is it be covered by official power. This new outlook means going from government as custody and main director of economic and social plans to government as an institution cooperating with semi-governmental and non-governmental organizations. At the same time, there is a strong inclination toward strengthening civil society and its institutions; in recent years, and particularly given growth of the middle class, nongovernmental organizations have grown rapidly. If continued and deepened, growth of such organizations "will lead to spread of political participation… so that citizens may acquire, to some extent, real and meaningful control on public policy" (democratization). (Korany and Noble, 1998: 1) Here, importance of growth of non-governmental organizations-instead of the number of political parties-should be emphasized; for, policy of party pluralism is often directed from above, and parties are not representatives of social classes and political forces.

4- Accountable and Transparent Government.

Among topics that have been accepted following the global wave of democratization in the Middle East is necessity of accountability of government and its acting based on the principle of transparency. Government's transparency means that comprehensive and true information concerning functions of political leaders should be available for citizens- as their right to know- and this makes it possible to have a fair evaluation of functions. Government's accountability has three important features: legal, political, and financial. (Bitham and Bowil, 1376[1997]: 90-3)

According to Sklar, accountability is so important that he regards it as an inseparable part of the concept of democracy. He, of course, make distinction between two kinds of accountability: 1- Democratic accountability based on which power belongs ultimately to people and statesmen have to be accountable for their decisions and functions to citizens; 2- Accountability based on the Constitution. This means that governmental authorities are accountable for their decisions and functions to each other. Sklar says that the first kind is a deep concept, while the second one is a marginal one; and each of the two creates a different form of commitment. (Sklar, 1996: 26-7) He mentions that the two above kinds relate to, and strengthen, each other.

Though making political leaders and officials of the countries of the Middle East accountable and obliged to be transparent has become a pubic demand, given existing structures, however, this is a complicated and long-term process. While social groups in the Middle East are severely demanding democratic accountability, statesmen accept at most the second kind of accountability. Of course, there is no pure democratic government in the real world and no governmental system may be perfectly democratic. (Sklar, 1996: 27) The problem, however, is that in most countries in the Middle East, interpretation and execution of laws is conditioned by wills of rulers. Thus, accountability of statesmen and power institutions is not regarded to be so serious.

Through a more detailed study, one may add to the above list, but it seems that these four titles are the most important values, which are attractive in the contemporary Middle East, and have become ideals of many social and political groups. At the same time, the third wave of democracy has been accompanied by two general considerations which are not of less importance than the above four titles; though these two considerations have not been so spoken of.

Relation between Economic and Political Liberalism.

During the process of democratization and in particular in the period of its influencing on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, relation between economic and political liberalism became more evident. (Leftwich, 1996: 14) And this has put much pressure on the governments in the Middle East. As known, most countries of the region have adopted the policy of privatization- within the frame of recommendations of Global Bank and International Money Fund- and tried to attain some sort of economic liberalism; and they have accepted even controlled political liberties but not "real" changes in existing relations, and they have not inclined to establish democracy deeply. (See: Norton, 1993: 205-16) Global experience shows that though political and economic renovations are not the same, real and serious renovation in economy relates largely to political renovation (i.e. establishment of democracy).

The End of Teleological Models of the History.

The second consideration is that there is no predetermined destiny, "but process of dialogue and agreement which is continuous and causes democratic life to continue". (Kazemi and Norton, 1383[2004]: 178) As a matter of fact, as said by Giddens, one of the characteristics of the age of globalized modernity is that teleological models of the history would be discarded and disenchanted. On the other hand, because of modernity thinking concerning itself, the age of meta-narrations and liberating policies has ended and is replaced

by "policy of life". (Giddens, 1990: 38-39 and 51; Giddens, 1991: 210-14) Importance of this (end of teleological models of the history) is found when we remember that policies governing the modern Middle East- whether socialist or Islamic- had been absorbed in teleologism and Messianism. (See: Hudson, 1971) Now that such models have been disenchanted, the particular duty of many political activists in the region who saw themselves as leaders of their societies has been actually eliminated. In this regard, attention should be paid to the writings of new generation of thinkers, writers, and academicians in the Middle East who have distanced themselves from previous intellectual patterns; in the same way, ideas of some former political activists have undergone certain changes.

Islam and Democracy

Having reviewed what said, it becomes clear that context of political and social activities in the Middle East is other than what it was in the past; and because of gradual acceptance of democratic values by people (social environment), political activists- whether governmental or non- governmental, will be naturally influenced. This leads us to another question: is Islam consistent with such new (democratic) values or not? Importance of this question will become clear if we have in mind the key role played by Islam in formation and meaningfulness of lives of majority of people of the region; and that is why many analysts of problems of the Middle East have done many researches concerning "Islam and Democracy" in the last decade. They are usually members of one of the two camps: "Confrontation lists" and "Accommodation lists" (Gerges, 1999: Ch. 2) or "New-Orientalists" and "Neo Third word-lists". (Hunter, 1381[2002]: 150)

Confrontation between Islam and Democracy: some researchers think that Islam and democracy are not consistent, and in this regard, there is no difference between minimalist (moderate) Muslims and maximalist (extremist) Muslims. They think that problem is that Islamism defines the West as "the other". Thus, it targets western values. Even if some inclination is seen toward some western values or institutions, it is periodical, instrumental, and tactical. Lewis summarizes Islamists' approach to election as follows: "one man, one vote, once". (Lewis, 1993: 61) That is why he says that as Islamic groups have penetrated governments, situation have become much worse. (Lewis, 1993: 93)

Pipes, on the other hand, come to a similar conclusion; he thinks that Islamic laws are in opposition to values of the modern world. (Pipes, 2000: 89) That is why he thinks that opposition of Muslim fundamentalists to the West is more serious and deeper than that of communists. (Pipes, 1994 in Gerges, 1999: Ch. 2) According to this view, "Islamic groups should be fought and defeated". (Pipes, 1994 in Gerges, 1999: Ch. 2) Gilles Kepel is among those who find essential differences between Islam and liberal democracy. According to him, in the essence of Islamic teachings, no concept of democracy may be found. (Kepel, 1994: 194)

One of the most famous scholars of this group is Huntington. Though his well-known article "Clash of Civilization" is mostly referred to in this regard, in his *Third Wave of Democracy* he says: "Whatever the compatibility of **Islam and democracy** in theory, in practice they have not gone together". (Huntington, 1373[1994]: 337) This idea was for-

mulated later in the form of the doctrine of "clash of civilizations"; a clash which is not based on ideological or economic debates, but has its roots on different cultural values. On the one side is the Western civilization; and on the other stands possible allegiance of Confucian-Muslim countries. (Huntington, 1372[1993]: 112)

Such interpretations show that in most cases, no difference is considered between Islam- as a religion- and Islamism- as an ideology; and thus they regard Islam and democracy as two entirely different worlds, and at the same time, they take democracy as an equivalent to liberal democracy.

Possibility of Peaceful Coexistence of Islam and Democracy: Emphasis put on three points causes some other researchers to adopt another approach: the first is that Islam is other than Islamism; the second is that Islamism should not be regarded as an integrated movement, but as a spectrum, in which all kinds of moderate and extremist groups may be found. The third is that democracy is not the same as liberal democracy. John Esposito, Graham Fuller, and Bassam Tibi are among the most famous authors who have discussed in this regard.

Esposito says that to show a violent picture of Islam is some sort of reductionism, which is an obstacle to "correct" understanding of Islamic values. In fact, religion may be interpreted in various ways; and, as shown by Iran's experience, this has been the case until now. Emergence of radical Islamist groups has its roots more than religious outlook in economic and political problems of the Islamic countries, and it is a reaction to governments of the region and West's support of Israel. (Esposito, 1992: IX, 180-181, 208-209, 215) Fuller is of the same opinion, and in one of his new works, he says: democracy and Islam are potentially entirely consistent. For the same reason, he expects for long-term ability of this process. (Fuller, 2004: 3) According to him, the reasonable question is that the question whether Islamists are ready for victory or defeat in elections relates to the political culture of the country more than Islam. (Fuller, 2004: 8)

Bassam Tibi, though in the camp of passivists, has provided a relatively different opinion. He sees Islam as a religious creed and cultural system, and political Islam as a reaction to cultural modernity and a reality called "domination of the West". For Tibi, political Islam is a sign of a double crisis in the Islamic world (crisis of spirituality and structural crisis, i.e. political and economic-social crisis). (Tibi, 2001: IX and 2-3) Thus, he tries to emphasize Islam as a cultural system so that a sharp line between Islam and what provided by Neo-Absolutists may be drawn. Neo-absolutist is a name given to Islamic fundamentalists by Tibi. (Tibi, 2001: 6) Having studied claims of political Islamists, he asks whether political Islam will lighten the end of dark tunnel of the Middle East. He thinks that answer is negative. (Tibi, 1385[2006]: 27)

Apart from that which of the two approaches is more realistic and convincing, it is clear that relation between Islam and democracy has turned into a subject, which cannot be easily ignored. Meanwhile, this shows that democracy and democratic values have become a fundamental question in the Middle East to which political groups and activitists, whether official or unofficial, whether Islamist or non-Islamist, have to clarify their relation.

Seeking for Democracy and Future of the Middle East

Political developments of the Middle East

show clearly that transition to democratic situation is neither easy nor guaranteed. Events of the recent years- and in particular downfall of the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq- led to discuss continuity and deepening of the third wave, democratic domino, and even beginning of the fourth wave in the region, today we see that, because of the effects and consequences of the third wave, many countries in the Middle East have accepted only superficial changes; and the nature of power and political-economic relations have not so changed. That is, perhaps, why Korany and Nobel emphasize that in the Arabic Middle East, "liberalization" and "democratization" are not the same. In addition, Bromley says that historically "democracies are stranger to this region". (Bromley, 1997: 329)

Concerning future of democracy in the Middle East and existing obstacles to it, there are to general views. While accepting existing difficulties, some persons have an optimist look at this process; for example, given developments in Egypt, Saad Eddin Ibrahim considers growth of civil society as a natural movement and is hopeful for its future. (Ibrahim, 1995a: 37-8; Ibrahim, 1995b: 29-57) According to him, in 1980's and 1990's Arab world has witnessed a trilateral struggle between authotarian regimes, Islamists, and institutions of civil society to acquire and maintain power. (Ibrahim, 1997: 21) In his recent analysis, he has said that the problem of Arab societies stems from the pressures exercised by dictators and theocrats. (Tibi, 1385[2006]: 4) Norton tries to evaluate the role played by civil society more realistically and sees its motion positive and forwardly. (Norton, 1993: 205-16) In the other side are those like Hisham Surabi, Mustafa Kamal al-Seyyed, and Hudson. Having mentioned the term "neo-patriarchy" and provided a political analysis for it, Sharabi has clarified his position in advance, and shown that difficulty of the path. (Sharabi, Hisham, 1380[2001]) Mostafa Kamal al-Seyyed thinks that in spite of optimism of this like Ibrahim, civil society and its institutions have to go in a long road to consolidate themselves and limit power of the government. (Al-Sayyid, 1995: 131-47) While mentioning some main factors, which may ease political changes in the Middle East and going toward democratization, (Hudson, 1988: 29-33) Hudson shows an optimist view. According to him, these factors are "decrease of oil income", "increase of proponents of change", and unreliability of "American connection", insufficiency of institutionalized participation, weakness of intelligence institutions, progress of opponents in making uses of technology, and emergence of the rival ideological currents. Later, however, he began to criticize Norton and Ibrahim; and given to later events, he thought that there is a low chance for creation of democracy in the region. (Hudson, 1995: 71-4)

The point, which should be paid attention here, and incidentally has been mentioned by Sklar, is possibility of accountability based on the Constitution- without observing the principle of democratic accountability.

Though the two kinds of accountability are confirming and strengthening each other, but we may see that one is observed (accountability based on the Constitution) and non-observance of the other (democratic accountability) by political leaders and leaders. This is done by governments, which feel themselves under the pressure of the effects of global wave of democratization. In fact, this kind of acceptance of accountability is

not a help but some sort of resistance against the wave of democratization; for it results in superficial changes and does not change current patterns governing political and economic relations. As a result of this situation, though there may be systematic and periodical elections and attempts may be made be made to create participative political institutions and three powers may send reports of their performance for each other, no trace of real influence of people on the functions of governments is seen. "As a matter of fact, here we see a kind of illusive democracy". (Abdalla, 1192 in Ahmadi, 1992: 3) Though, more systematic and competitive elections are held, less real election is possible for people; opponents are suppressed, and political parties are, in the last word, a tool in the hands of governing elite.

To confirm these points we have no to go to defamed examples such as Iraq and Libya; a review of developments of countries such as Tunis and Egypt will provide interesting data in this concern. In Tunis and in spite of promises and sometimes-hopeful actions taken by the president, Zain Al Abdin Bin Ali, no deep change in the relations between the President, Party, and government resulted. On the one hand, he renamed the governing party as The Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), and like Habib Burqibah, increased the Party's reliance on himself on the other. The legal approval for the establishment of new parties approved in 1988 was "mostly designed to keep away from people's mind unavoidability of the full victory of proponents of The Constitutional Democratic Rally in public elections and elections of municipalities". (Murphy, 1383[2004]: 219) Today, repression of serious critics and opponents continues.

In Egypt under Sadat and Mubarak, there was a controlled system with some parties, which played more the role of a relief valve than a real competitive game. In fact, as long as a government can keep its balancing act, it would continue to be pacified. (Brumberg, 2002: 62) Playing such a role is of influence in survival of the governing elite; and if a political group-, whether Islamist or not- which has its roots in the society, takes the power, existing political and economic relations will change and an unbalanced structure will govern. Consequently, the government in Egypt shows hard reactions to empowering of political groups and parties; the last example of this is events occurred before and after parliament election in 2005. Interestingly enough, such governments emphasize on denial of the western values and necessity of nationalization of democracy to justify their own functions.

Based on these points, one may conclude that under governments which accept to be accountable to legal institutions and only based on the Constitutions and reject to be accountable to real demands of the society, political parties and civil institutions are not able to play their roles. If rooted in the society, such institutions are greatly under pressure and control, and they may survive not for a long time, or turn into neutral groups. In other words, these groups are like separate islands showing the threshold of toleration of authotarian governments in the Middle East. Experiences, of course, show that governments take another action simultaneously, i.e. creation of civil and political institutions. These apparently independent institutions present a favorable picture of a democratic society and social-political participation and even show association of the country with the global process of democratization. Actually, however, they are tools to control and organize the society. By employment of such tools, structure of power continues to exist, and a

suitable political culture, which is essentially subjective, is reproduced. Continuity of characteristics of this culture means that in spite of existence of accountability, relation between rulers and the ruled is a vertical one. Creation of such associations and groups puts civil groups under pressure. As mentioned by Carapico, political leaders in the Arabic Middle East have continuously tried to penetrate in women organizations, associations of barristers, student groups, or workers unions. "By the same token, governments tried to intercept democratization resources by

Founding national commissions and quasi-non-governmental federations of their own." (Carapico, 2002: 392) Consequently, such institutions are mediates between society and government. However, in reality, they act in opposite direction, and provide a structural environment necessary for obedience, opportunism, authotarianism, political passivism, silent protest, extensive fear, pessimism, and political distrust. (Bashiriyeh, (1381[2002]: 66) A study of situation in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, and even countries of the southern margin of the Persian Gulf provide expressive evidence in this concern.

On the other side, absence or weakness of independent civil associations and political parties provides a suitable context for empowering of those forces who, in the course of war for power and internal debates or ever-increasing and serious domestic or foreign pressures and while being loyal to the governing frames and general relations, manage to usurp mottos. For example, in 1998 election and developments after it in Iran, a current made uses of absence of powerful political parties, which have their roots in the modern middle class and attempt to realize their demands, and having introduced some ideals of this class, managed to attract their votes. In fact, acceptance of the modern middle class leads to return of an elitist political current from margins to the context and temporary reduction of protests and domestic political, economic, and cultural dissatisfactions as well as foreign pressures.

The Road Ahead

What said, in spite pf some favorable data, does not depict a good prospect of democratic transition in the Middle East. In fact, events of Afghanistan and Iraq show clearly that for emergence of "democratic man" and "democratic culture" a long road should be passed through. It will be a kind of naivety if one thinks that existence of crisis in authotarian regimes of the Middle East-, which occurs periodically- guarantees democratic transition. Even a combination made of crisis in such regimes as well as growth of democracy seeking in this region does not mean that a democratic regime will emerge necessarily. As said by O'Donnel concerning Latin America, credit of democratic discourses will benefit democratic players, but in the course of time it will shrink. (O'Donnell, 1992: 21) In fact, any other social change requires realization of suitable subjective and objective contexts. By suitable subjective context, we mean penetration of democratic ideas and concepts in the minds and language- and in particular language of mass of people. At the same time, existence of suitable economic-social context is of importance and required for occurrence and continuity of transition; and the most important sign of this suitable objective context is growth of the middle class and reduction of its dependence on the government. In addition to these two, histori-

cal-cultural background as well as kind of political and economic relations may become a hard obstacle to this path; or in contrary, it may shorten the period of transition. It is here that importance of views of Seymour Martin Lipset- because of emphasis put on economic and social basis for growth and consolidation of democracy becomes more evident; on the other side, we come near to view of those who think that empowerment of democratic political culture is a better guarantee for growth and deepening of democratic systems.

The last point is that facilitation and deepening transition to democratic situation in the countries of Middle East and growth of demands for democracy by any group or current, like any other political and social phenomenon, require attention paid to Islam and the key role by it in the lives of people in this region. The experience of Turkey shows clearly that emergence and empowerment of moderate Islamist currents or formation of an allegiance by them may be of influence in growth of democracy and increase of legitimacy of political activities based on it in a religious society. May this experience be repeated in other countries of the Middle East? It seems that in the present time and given economic social problems in many countries of the region-, which has been of influence in weakening civil society- as well as absence of translations of modern ideas and concepts for majority of Muslim people of the region, domino of religious radicalism is more probable than democratic domino.

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