

Abstract

Political Partnership and Participation in the Arab World

The lack of theory of political partnership and participation in the reality of the Arab World negatively influences states, parties, elites and civil society institutions, taking different shapes from exclusion to assassination in more than one country. Therefore, the MESC has decided to issue a book based on a symposium titled **Political Partnership in the Arab World**. Held on September 19-20 2015, the event was attended by politicians and scholars from 9 Arab countries. Several papers were submitted on Political Partnership in the Arab World, in terms of components, objective conditions at the state and party levels, taking into consideration the current regional and international circumstances. The conception is also addressed with regard to qualified Arab parties and the impact on society, security, development, stability, sense of belonging and faith in the peaceful way of change.

In 8 chapters, political partnership and participation are discussed in theory and some Arab and international practices, reviewing their aspects and effect on the democratic process and election majority and minority.

Chapter One – titled **Arab Vision of Political Partnership** – states that one of the solutions to many crises caused by the lack of partnership is setting a social-political contract which regulates the relations between various segments and institutions. When interim and strategic objectives as well as each party's rights and duties are agreed upon, the foundation is laid for maintaining a secure, stable community; developing the state's constitutional structures; building the national economy; renewing the political landscape; expanding partnership and participation; and setting rules for cooperation and competition. Here, the state would adopt an equal stand on all the citizens' cultures, convictions and values, sticking to multiplicity, moderation and freedom. Instead of limiting the advancement of the country to a person or category of the people, such missions and targets need to be open for all through partnership and participation which incarnate genuine democracy in its human sense.

Chapter Two – titled **Evolution of Citizenship to Regional Horizons** – investigates the concept of Citizenship. There are three approaches in this regard. Firstly, the classical one confines the term to the contractual relation between a state and citizen to govern rights and duties. Secondly, the new one extends the term beyond the nationality's legal limits to Civil or Residency Citizenship, as is the case in the European experience that includes migrants. Thirdly, some are calling for a regional, international citizenship based on common human values, such as equality, liberty, participation and social responsibility. It should also comprise three aspects. The first is politics, whereby the individual has a sense of belonging to a political body of the state's legitimate institutions. The second is culture, whereby they feel the affiliation to a group that is equal in rights and duties. The third is economy, whereby "decent life conditions" in terms of public facilities and services are provided, along with social progress circumstances.

Chapter Three – titled **Sudanese Political Partnership** – looks into the theoretical and historical frameworks of the experience. It is found that there is a big difference between the concepts and deep impacts of partnership in power, on the one hand, and in national responsibility, on the other. According to history, the social reality represents a significant background to comprehend the nature of agreement and disagreement in the modern times. The parties as social entities of political difference declined – especially those with ideologies dating back to the end of the Cold War – paving the way for new entities.

Chapter Four – titled **Yemeni Political Partnership: Looking for the State** – lists a number of major challenges which hamper such a partnership. There are the absence of a legitimate and satisfactory political capital; non-political tribal and sectarian divisions; and the widespread employment of sovereign state institutions and basic community components in political conflicts. In order to achieve political partnership, the people shall determine the state's structures and functions. Such efforts have to be led by patriotic political powers which do not care for narrow identities. In other words, democracy needs to be adopted, in terms of tools and results.

Chapter Five – titled **Tunisian Political Partnership** – explores a unique experience in the Arab World. Although it was targeted by some parties of little popularity but much influence in the deep state, unions and media, Islamists and Secularists set a common vision to run the public

affairs. The dialogue and harmony between Ennahda Party and its fierce opponents to form a quartet coalition government constituted a turning point in the democratic advancement of the entire Arab region.

Chapter Six is titled **Reality of Political Partnership in Sudan: Alliance Dynamics vs. Agreement Obstacles**. According to the three democratic stages in which no party attained a majority, the political system is found to be in dire need for alliance. Such a political partnership shall represent as many as possible of the components of the highly multi-cultural and –ethnic society. In addition, the Sudanese political mindset needs to be re-shaped to be flexible, open to the other and void of bias and egoism.

Chapter Seven – titled **Bahraini Political Partnership** – looks into the kingdom's geographical, economic and political background. It reviews the democratic reform under Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa until 2002; political partnership in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which influenced Arab countries until 2010; and the partnership after the outbreak of the Arab uprising in 2011, bearing in mind the several internal and external factors. As for the future, the new vision shall maintain the approach of democracy and political partnership – despite the witnessed difficulties – since it coincides with the public and elite will. Everybody realizes that further democracy means security, political and social stability and economic advancement. To begin a new era without foreign interference, Bahrain can be a model of political partnership of a tribal state which turned to a constitutional monarchy in the Arabian Gulf.

Chapter Eight – titled **Palestinian Political Partnership: Challenges vs. Chances** – attempts to present a vision or options for a real political partnership. In order to overcome the difficulties and boost the opportunities, the value of the concept needs to be consolidated in its broad sense in the Palestinian political culture. It should be regulated in the form of a national action programme and seen in the official institutions' behaviour. However, as the land has been seeing a state of national liberation, political partnership should not be limited to the peaceful devolution of power as is the case in independent and democratic orders. Moreover, such a plan shall expand to include all the political system institutions (PLO and PA), internal and external segments, active powers – especially the private sector – and civil society organizations. In this context, a vision and practical framework are presented as guidelines for a genuine political partnership. The aim is to make true the Palestinian targets of liberation and independence or, at least,

inculcate such principles so they could be foundations for the following stages.

In conclusion, political partnership comprises entire national responsibility and political decision-making and constitutes the backbone of national unity. Nevertheless, most Arab regimes still live on the sidelines of democracy and constrict public participation, so that political multiplicity would not form pressure on the policies of the state and attempt to improve it. According to the book, the higher interests of the state shall govern all other considerations. For instance, participation in public affairs shall be open for parties and civil society institutions side by side with those 'permanent' government officials, in a bid to establish a durable national front before the new challenges to the region. In addition, to fortify the youth and make them an active part of the nation, rather than engage in useless or extremist struggles, a new Arab social contract shall be set on a common vision of critical political thought.