



Building Democratic Arab Political Parties in Light of the Consequences and Challenges of the Post-Arab Spring Revolutions

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Abstract:

The study aims to highlight the important role of internal democratic practices within political parties and their impact on the democracy of the political system; for there can be no democracy at the level of the political system without such practices within political parties, as the latter have become the true benchmark of modern democratic systems.

Adopting the descriptive-analytical method, the study has focused on the foundations, components, and determinants of a democratic party that political parties in Arab countries must adopt, particularly in light of the challenges brought about by the events of the Arab Spring.

Key words: Party-based democracy – political parties – party splits – a party’s grassroots support

Résumé :

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L'étude vise à mettre en évidence le rôle essentiel des pratiques démocratiques internes au sein des partis politiques et leur impact sur la démocratie du système politique. En effet, il ne saurait y avoir de démocratie au niveau du système politique sans l'existence de telles pratiques au sein des partis politiques, ces derniers étant devenus le véritable critère d'évaluation des systèmes démocratiques contemporains.

Adoptant la méthode descriptive-analytique, l'étude s'est concentrée sur les fondements, les composantes et les déterminants du parti démocratique que les partis politiques dans les pays arabes sont appelés à adopter, notamment à la lumière des défis engendrés par les événements du Printemps arabe.

Mots-clés : Démocratie partisane – partis politiques – scissions partisanses – base militante du parti.

Introduction:

Scholarly debates and discussions, particularly those concerning democratic practice within Arab political parties, have lagged significantly behind, for reasons that vary from one Arab country to another. Monarchical systems of governance have not permitted the existence of political parties, as is the case in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Meanwhile, the remaining Arab political systems - whether monarchical or republican in character,



whether they followed a single-party path before transitioning to political pluralism, or whether they embraced pluralism from the outset of independence - have never subjected the idea of intra-party democracy to genuine debate or discussion.

Accordingly, addressing this subject has become an urgent necessity, both academically and practically, especially given that the Arab region is experiencing significant internal political transformations on the one hand, and momentous and serious geopolitical shifts on the other, in light of the challenges posed by the post-Arab Spring era and its consequences. We firmly believe that contemporary Western academic and scientific studies no longer raise the traditional questions concerning how leaderships are elected, the powers granted to them, and the party structures responsible for managing internal disputes within party organisations.

Instead, they have come to focus on how the party base can be included in the process of intra-party decision-making as an indicator of a party's degree of democracy, as well as on the appropriate and necessary methods for attracting new members who support the party and believe in its principles and objectives. The central problematic that can be raised is: how can democratic political parties be built in Arab countries amid the consequences and challenges of the post-Arab Spring era?

Significance of the Topic: The events of the Arab Spring constituted a fundamental turning point between two phases experienced by certain Arab political systems: a phase characterised by ruling regimes that restricted or confiscated all forms of political freedoms, and a subsequent phase that resulted in the overthrow of those prevailing regimes and produced a political transformation that generated enormous challenges for those states in their pursuit of the desired democracy, and in the recovery of political rights and freedoms that had been confiscated by the previous political regimes.

This is a phase of profound importance for individuals, society, and the state alike. The errors of the past must not be repeated, for democratic transition never occurs easily without sacrifices and concessions, without the building of democratic institutions that uphold the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution, and that work to protect and safeguard them. Political parties are part of those institutions upon which the smooth and democratic transition between the two aforementioned phases depends; for building democratic parties is the surest path to building democratic systems of governance.

Research Methodology: This study adopts the descriptive-analytical method in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, to uncover its principal features, and to lay the groundwork for understanding and interpreting it, as well as for constructing a vision of what political parties in Arab countries might look like in the future.

Structure of the Study:

Chapter One: Democratic Party Practice

Section One: The Consequences and Challenges of the Post-Arab Spring Revolutions



Section Two: Democratic Practice as a Normative Criterion

Section Three: The Foundations of the Democratic Party

Chapter Two: Determinants and Pillars of Building Democracy within Political Parties

Section One: Determinants of Building Democracy within Political Parties

Section Two: Pillars of the Democratic Party

Chapter One: Democratic Party Practice

This chapter examines the concept and practice of democracy within political parties by exploring the challenges that emerged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring revolutions, the role of democratic practice as a normative standard, and the fundamental principles upon which democratic parties are built.

Section One: The Consequences and Challenges of the Post-Arab Spring Revolutions

The popular uprisings in certain Arab states - commonly referred to as the Arab Spring Revolutions, which were ignited in the Republic of Tunisia in 2010 - demanded change, the building of democratic political systems, and the achievement of social justice. These uprisings were not merely a matter of citizens taking to the streets against corruption and repression; they carried with them the aspirations of Arab peoples for a better future. They marked a decisive turning point and a prelude to a new and different historical phase that has yet to fully materialise.

It is true that the Arab Spring Revolutions led to regime change in some of the Arab states that witnessed those uprisings - including Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Sudan, and Yemen - yet several of these countries subsequently entered into violent and protracted political and security trajectories characterised by multiple crises. Some states successfully averted the bloody scenario, such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, while others sank into it, including Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen.

The following are the consequences of the Arab Spring Revolutions after a full decade:

First: The democratic transition has faltered in most Arab countries that experienced those revolutions, and some have entered a dark tunnel characterised by violent armed conflict. They have not known the post-revolutionary stability required for the reconstruction of the formal and informal institutions of the political system and the state apparatus - as is the case in Sudan, Libya, and Syria.

Second: Islamist political parties came to power in the wake of the Arab Spring Revolutions, yet their fall was as swift as their rise, for several reasons: ¹

1. The utopian nature of their slogans and programmes;

¹ - Boujemaa Jab Allah and Abd al-Aziz Tawal, "Jadaliyyat Sut'u' wa Ufoul Harakat al-Islam al-Siyasi ba'da Thawrat al-Rabi' al-'Arabi" [The Dialectic of the Rise and Fall of Political Islam Movements after the Arab Spring Revolutions], *Majallat Huqoul Ma'rifiyya*, No. 1, 2020. p 220.



2. The absence of long-term strategic planning and the prevalence of improvised, reactive responses;
3. An exclusionary discourse and behaviour toward those holding differing views;
4. The erosion of trust among various political actors regarding the sincerity of Islamist movements in upholding human rights and democratic principles.

Third: Social media platforms played a significant role in igniting the popular uprisings and contributed to their organisation, in the absence of the various political actors and parties that were overtaken by events. These platforms subsequently became a comfortable refuge for citizens to express their aspirations, intentions, objectives, and opinions on various political, economic, and social issues with complete freedom and without restriction. The vast space that these platforms have granted to individuals is one that political parties have failed to provide to the popular base they purport to represent -and this constitutes a major challenge for political parties in Arab countries, if they genuinely aspire to function as an effective force for change within both society and the political system.

Section Two: Democratic Practice as a Normative Criterion

Judging whether any political system is democratic or not is closely linked to the democracy of its political parties. This study contends that demanding the practice of democracy within political parties is a necessary priority that cannot be bypassed; it has become the true criterion by which contemporary democratic political systems are measured.

The volume of activity that a party militant devotes to partisan work, as well as the position they hold within the party's structures - particularly those closest to the centre of party decision-making - constitutes the true criterion for distinguishing between members who exert influence and those who do not within the party's political life.²

However, regardless of how much the degree of influence among party members may vary, the general structure of parties - despite their differing political compositions - plays a normative and defining role in determining the degree of members' influence within the party,³ as does democratic party practice, which is built upon the principle of equal opportunities for all party militants, whether in assuming positions and responsibilities or in the rotation of power, provided that this occurs within the general framework and direction of the party.

From a theoretical standpoint, all legal texts governing the internal organisation of parties explicitly stipulate internal democratic practice. Yet in reality, the actual functioning of those

² - Abd al-Qadir Mushri, *Al-Ahzab al-Siyasiyya fi al-Dimuqratiyyat al-Gharbiyya* [Political Parties in Western Democracies], Dar al-Khalduniyya, Algiers, 2010. P252.

³ - Ibrahim Mashrub, *Al-Mu'assasat al-Siyasiyya wa al-Ijtima'iyya fi al-Dawla al-Mu'asira* [Political and Social Institutions in the Contemporary State], Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1998. P15à.



parties is entirely otherwise: they are not committed to democratic decision-making within their own structures, even as they loudly call upon the political authority to embrace democracy and transparency - a wholly inconsistent position that is in need of correction. ⁴It is regrettable that the majority of Arab studies that have addressed the issue of intra-party democratic practice - rare as they are - confine themselves to examining and describing the historical development of parties and their stances on pan-Arab causes, without going beyond that to examine their structures and patterns of interaction. ⁵

The recency of political transition in most Arab countries following the events of the Arab Spring Revolutions of 2010 has not been to the advantage of most political parties, particularly the nationalist ones, given that those revolutions were in large part the result of the failure of those parties to bring about the anticipated development. All parties have lost the bet for public sympathy across all social classes and levels, having failed to achieve intellectual and political freedom during the years of national construction following independence. When the Arab Spring Revolutions arrived, they caught those parties entirely off guard: some were dissolved, while others continued to operate under new political, social, and economic conditions imposed by this phase. On this basis, building democratic Arab political systems that would erase the failures of previous phases requires the formation of competitive political parties that possess a comprehensive political, social, and economic project - not mere electoral promises and programmes - as this constitutes the fundamental foundation upon which contemporary political systems rest. ⁶

Section Three: The Foundations of the Democratic Party

The collapse of any structure is caused by the absence or weakness of the foundations upon which it rests. No political party, regardless of its orientation, can achieve its objectives or sustain its presence in political life without being built upon pillars and foundations that ensure its balance and integrity. Among these foundations are the following: ⁷

⁴ - Hasan al-Badrawi, *Al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya wa al-Hurriyyat al-'Amma* [Political Parties and Public Freedoms], Dar al-Matbu'at al-Jami'iyya, Alexandria, 2000.pp 117-118.

⁵ - Atef al-Sa'dawi et al., *Mafhum al-Ahزاب al-Dimuqratiyya wa Waqi' al-Ahزاب fi al-Buldan al-'Arabiyya* [The Concept of Democratic Parties and the Reality of Parties in Arab Countries], Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2011.p 53

⁶ - Wajih Zughuib, *Tatawwur al-Mujtama' al-Lubnani: Muqarabat Qanuniyya Siyasiyya* [The Evolution of Lebanese Society: Legal and Political Approaches], Al-Markaz al-Istishari lil-Dirasat wa al-Tawthiq, Beirut, 1997.p 51.

⁷ - Georges Corm et al., *Al-Dimuqratiyya Dakhil al-Ahزاب fi al-Buldan al-'Arabiyya* [Democracy within Parties in Arab Countries], Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2004.pp 28-29.



First: A party programme bearing a distinctive ideology, working to realise a comprehensive and consensual political, social, and economic project - flexible enough to accommodate the consequences and challenges of the post-Arab Spring era.

Second: The capacity of a political party to survive within a competitive pluralistic system requires the maintenance of internal stability, and this can only be achieved through an internal regulatory framework that guides disagreement and conflict among party cadres without exclusion or marginalisation.

Third: Guaranteeing freedom of expression, dissent, thought, and creativity, while supporting the participation of party cadres in decision-making.

Building on the foregoing, it is worth noting that social or international pressure - or both simultaneously - or a change in those who hold power, or a change in prevailing ideas, may correct the democratic deficit at the level of the state. However, the situation is different when it comes to democratic practice within political parties. Given that the political party is a fundamental pillar of democratic systems, the absence of internal democracy means that the entire political process - at both the party level and the system level - suffers from an intellectual dysfunction that is difficult to remedy. Its negative repercussions on the various societal systems have come to pose a genuine threat to the stability of the state and society alike, and push the political process toward insularity, individualism, and a pervasive mistrust of every positive step.⁸ Internal conflicts within parties, conducted outside the organised frameworks of democratic practice, yield grave consequences for the party - and here we can only mean internal party splits.⁹ Therefore, we cannot speak of party democracy in the absence of a diversity of opinions within the party.¹⁰ Furthermore, disagreements and the alignments that arise from differing views are a natural phenomenon within a party, and may indeed be regarded as a positive and beneficial element for fair and democratic competition within the party.¹¹

⁸ - Muhammad Sa'id al-Sharkasi, *Al-Shabab wa al-Hay'at al-Siyasiyya wa al-Niqabiyya* [Youth and Political and Trade Union Bodies], Top Press, Rabat, 1999. pp 25-26.

⁹ - Hani al-Hawrani et al., *Al-Murshid ila al-Hizb al-Siyasi* [The Guide to the Political Party], Dar Sindbad lil-Nashr, Amman, 1995. p62.

¹⁰ - Barilari André, Marie José Guédon, *Institutions politiques-100 plants détaillés*, 4^{ème} édition, éditions Dalloz, Paris, 1998, p95.

¹¹ - Muhammad al-Sabbah, *Al-Fa'il wa al-Shahid* [The Actor and the Witness], Dar Saras, Tunis, 2012. pp 190-191.



Indicators for Studying Democracy within Political Parties

These indicators may be identified as follows:¹²

First: The distribution of power and jurisdiction within the political party - this indicator determines, on its basis, the internal regulatory framework that constitutes the structure of the political party and the method by which party decisions are made.

Second: The relationship between the elite and the members within the party - this indicator determines the organisational frameworks for member participation in the internal political process, in addition to the various methods for attracting new militants who believe in the party's principles, as well as the regulatory frameworks governing the rotation of power within the party organisation.

Third: Patterns of interaction within the party elite - this indicator determines the means by which influence is contested within the party elite, with disagreement over political and ideological issues constituting the primary driver of that contestation within the party.

Chapter Two: Constraints and Pillars of Building Democracy within Political Parties

This chapter analyzes the key factors influencing the construction of democracy within political parties and highlights the essential institutional, organizational, and normative pillars required to establish and sustain a genuinely democratic party structure.

Section One: Constraints on Building Democracy within Political Parties

A set of internal and external constraints governs the building of intra-party democracy, and these may also be regarded as genuine criteria for measuring the degree of a party's democracy. They may be identified as follows:

Democracy at the Level of the State and its Political System:

The absence of intra-party democracy is a reflection of its absence at the level of the state and the political system. That is to say, the weakness of political parties and their inability to develop and improve their functioning is attributable to the restrictions imposed by the state and its institutions. Accordingly, it is not possible to build political parties without a framework that protects and gives effect to the freedom of party practice and the expression of the legitimate aspirations and objectives of their members -and providing such a framework is the responsibility of the state and its institutions.

The growth of extremist and violent tendencies within opposition political parties is nothing other than a reaction to the growth of extremism and violence on the part of the ruling parties or the state. Consequently, it is impossible to speak of the existence of strong and

¹² - Omar Kherroubi Bazara, *Ishkaliyyat San' al-Qarar al-Hizbi Dakhil al-Ahzab al-Siyasiyya fi al-Watan al-'Arabi* [The Problematic of Intra-Party Decision-Making within Political Parties in the Arab World], Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, University of Algiers 3, 2017/2018.p110.



democratic parties within a general system founded on arbitrariness, oppression, and the absence of freedom.¹³

The Laws Governing the Work of Political Parties:

The purpose of party legislation in all contemporary states and political systems that embrace democratic practice as the primary and sole driver of the political process is to regulate the functioning of parties of all persuasions - and of the social, cultural, and political classes they represent - within the framework of constitutions that broadly govern the institutions of the state and society. This allows for the building of a competitive party life founded on peaceful principles in the access to and exercise of power. Among the most important objectives for which party laws exist is also the regulation of the internal structure of the party, as well as its interactions and its relationship with the external environment, within political systems founded on political and party pluralism. International standards have drawn upon a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness of party laws in organising party life within an atmosphere of effective and sustainable political pluralism.¹⁴

Accordingly, the formulation of laws governing the work of political parties may differ according to the varied experiences and the political, social, and even economic specificities of states. There is no single, one-size-fits-all model that can be applied to all countries. However, this does not mean that there are no common elements and international standards characteristic of democratic systems that may be adopted when drafting and implementing such laws. These may be stated as follows:¹⁵

1. The adoption of an independent body with full authority to grant, refuse, or withdraw accreditation from political parties on political, social, cultural, or economic grounds that pose a threat to the stability of the state and society.
2. The recognition of citizenship as a fundamental condition for the accreditation of parties, within the framework of constitutional provisions governing the relationship between the state and society.
3. The recognition of democracy as a fundamental condition for the establishment of political parties, whereby it constitutes the sole driver of the party's internal functioning, within a

¹³ - Omar Kherroubi Bazara, *op. cit.*p110.

¹⁴ - Omar Kherroubi Bazara, *op. cit.*p111.

¹⁵ - Ra'd al-Tamimi, "Qira'a fi Qanoun al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya wa al-Ma'ayir al-Dawliyya lil-Dimuqratiyyat fi al-'Alam - al-Furas wa al-Tahaddiyyat" [A Reading of Party Legislation and International Democratic Standards in the World - Opportunities and Challenges], October 2015, accessed 2/5/2026, <https://www.bayancenter.org/2015/10/736/>



framework that acknowledges transparent party and political competition at the level of the political system and the rotation of power.

4. Respect for the provisions of the constitution and the laws governing the work of political parties as the backbone and foundation of political action.
5. The state's commitment to intensifying oversight of political party financing and the manner in which those financial allocations are spent, with the aim of ensuring equal opportunity and creating equitable conditions among competing parties in elections - what is commonly known as political money.

According to a study conducted by the International Institute for Democracy on party laws in 159 countries, five models were identified around which the legal framework governing the work of political parties in most countries of the world revolves: ¹⁶

1. The Prohibition Model (the establishment of parties is prohibited by law);
2. The Licensing Model (the establishment of parties is authorised by law);
3. The Promotion Model (the establishment of parties is supported and encouraged, organisationally and financially);
4. The Protection Model (a particular party or parties are protected while the functioning of other parties is obstructed);
5. The Rule-Setting Model (aimed at regulating or controlling party activity).

Among Arab countries, some prohibit the establishment of parties and deliberately refrain from mentioning them in the constitution and other laws, as is the case in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Other countries grant such authorisation, for example Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, Egypt, and Mauritania. Most Arab countries that authorise party activity share features of the third, fourth, and fifth models.

Intra-Party Democracy and the System of Governance:

The establishment of political parties in Arab countries was an expression of specific political and economic orientations. These parties emerged under conditions that can, at best, be described as undemocratic or un conducive to democratic practice. Some of these parties found acceptance from the authority or from the public - as was the case with the nationalist parties and liberation movements that subsequently transformed into political parties, such as the National Liberation Front party in Algeria. Naturally, those parties relied on their historical legacy and historic leaderships without attaching importance to the internal democracy of the party. Their fate was failure, weakness, decline, and recurrent internal splits, as a result of the clash of orientations and interests in the absence of a general framework to guide those disagreements. In many Arab

¹⁶ - Atef al-Sa'dawi, *op. cit.* p58-60.



countries, the authorities exploited those conflicts and internal struggles to undermine the stability of those parties by employing every available means - including co-opting party cadres and offering them posts and responsibilities within the state apparatus.

The Cultural and Social Character of Political Parties:

Political parties are an expression of the social forces, intellectual currents, and political movements present in any given society; the political party is, at its core, an expression of a social class. ¹⁷The party base is considered the fundamental criterion of the strength of a political party: size reflects strength and smallness reflects weakness, though this is not an absolute rule. The strength of a party is always measured by the extent of its national reach. Moreover, the greater the role that base plays in influencing the internal decision-making process, the greater the evidence of the party's democratic character. Intra-party democracy expresses the existence of a culture of dialogue and intellectual dissent within the framework of the party's general principles, as well as within a framework of mutual respect between the base and the leadership - it is an expression of complementary action conducive to the achievement of the objectives the party has set for itself.

Accordingly, the political party is, above all else, an expression of an idea, an interest, or a societal need and popular demands. What justifies the existence of a political party within society and the political process in general is its representation of a segment of citizens and its defence of their objectives and aspirations within the framework of the general principles of society and the state. On this basis, democracy within the party requires legitimacy, and this legitimacy is derived by the party from its party and popular base. It is an expression of the people's need for it; the breadth of the popular base confers the legitimacy the party seeks, and this may in turn facilitate the achievement of internal democracy - through commitment to the terms of the contract that embodies the societal project endorsed by the party's militants and to whose elaboration and formulation of principles they have contributed. ¹⁸

The party's societal project is built upon a social base, which the parties represent in the political process. Contemporary party institutions work to define the boundaries of political, cultural, and social relations with that social base, to carry its concerns and demands and work

¹⁷ - Hasan Hanafi, "Al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya bayna al-Shar'iyya wa al-La-Shar'iyya" [Political Parties between Legitimacy and Illegitimacy], November 2010.

<https://www.alethead.ac/wejhatarticle/> Political Parties: Between Legitimacy and Illegitimacy

¹⁸ - Atef al-Sa'dawi, *op. cit.*p67.



toward their fulfilment, and to maintain that relationship continuously and consistently through the party's commitment to giving it concrete expression without departing from the constitutional frameworks of society and the state. Most parties rely on the votes of their members and sympathisers to build a stable base of social support, ¹⁹thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and democratic character of their work.

Intra-Party Democracy and the Electoral System:

The electoral system has a proportional influence on the overall cohesion within a party. An electoral system based on large multi-member constituencies and list-based voting encourages the various basic structures of the party to cooperate closely and to reach agreement on the composition of electoral lists in order to secure the election of candidates, thereby producing strong cohesion among the party's bodies. If, however, the electoral system adopts single-member constituencies, each party body becomes an independent entity, which in turn leads to a weakening of internal party cohesion. Among the factors that also contribute to strengthening this cohesion is the adoption of proportional representation based on a single national constituency; moreover, voting in favour of the party rather than the individual may serve to strengthen the influence of ideas while diminishing the influence of personalities. ²⁰

The Extent of the Impact of Structural, Organisational, and Institutional Determinants of Parties:

Measuring political effectiveness within and beyond parties is determined by the presence of a set of elements, the most prominent of which are the structure and organisation of parties. These may be summarised as follows: ²¹

1. The organisational structure and the political programme of the party;
2. The methods and channels of political communication within the party between the base and the leadership elite - the indicator that expresses the degree of internal party cohesion;
3. The size of the party's popular base, the strength of its reach, and the degree to which its members and militants are committed to the party's general principles;
4. The sources and volume of the party's funding;

¹⁹ - Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies*, translated by Ahmad Ya'qub al-Majdhuba, n.p., Amman, 1996.p177.

²⁰ - Riyad al-Samad, *Al-Mu'assasat al-Ijtima'iyya wa al-Siyasiyya fi al-Dawla al-Haditha* [Social and Political Institutions in the Modern State], 3rd ed., Al-Mu'assasa al-Jami'iyya lil-Dirasat, Beirut, 1983.pp157-158.

²¹ - Arab Thought Forum, *Al-Ahzab al-Siyasiyya fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi: al-Nash'a wa al-Azma* [Political Parties in the Arab World: Origins and Crisis], Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, Cairo, 2005.pp102-103.



5. The nature of the relationship, particularly between the leadership elite and between it and the party base, as well as between it and the external political environment in which it operates;
6. The capacity of parties to perform the functions assigned to them, such as interest articulation and aggregation, political socialisation, political communication, participation, and others.

Section Two: Pillars of the Democratic Party

As noted earlier, the strength or weakness of a party is measured by the extent of its national reach and the degree to which it practises democracy internally. The democratic party accordingly possesses certain pillars, which may be stated as follows:

The Internal Statute: No political party can be established without regulating its internal organisation. The party's internal statute serves as the party's constitution and the definitive framework that governs all work within the party; it is the document that unequivocally guarantees democratic practice within the party institution, and it must be subject to amendment and development in a democratic manner and on the basis of the convictions of the party's militants from the base to the leadership.²²

A Plurality of Political Orientations within the General Direction and Unified Ideology of the Party Organisation: The diversity of intellectual interpretations and visions within the party is an expression of renewal and the absence of intellectual stagnation, which grants the party the capacity to adapt flexibly to all political, intellectual, social, and cultural developments within the state and society.²³ This plurality of intellectual viewpoints is an expression of a general principle enshrined in the party's internal statute, namely the freedom of thought and expression at both the individual and collective level, and it conveys the impression that the political process is founded upon democratic practice in the making of party decisions, which are taken by majority vote within the party.²⁴ Furthermore, the party is considered an institutional organisation rather than a personal entity in which members and militants owe blind obedience to a leader - what may be termed constructive self-criticism, which helps to identify areas of dysfunction and shortcoming, and grants the party a new and perpetually renewed impetus that reduces the likelihood of internal splits.²⁵

²² - Khalid Sulayman, "Al-Mumárasa al-Dimuqratiyya Dakhil Hizb Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami" [Democratic Practice within the Islamic Action Front Party], *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, No. 26, 2003.p54.

²³ - Haydar Sabbah Subhi, *Islah al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya* [The Reform of Political Parties], Dar al-Kutub al-Qanuniyya, Cairo, 2012.p116.

²⁴ - Khalid Sulayman, *op. cit.*p54.

²⁵ - Haydar Sabbah Subhi, *op. cit.*p117.



That membership, with its democratic conditions, shall alone be the basis of duties and the source of party rights.

That the party's members shall be the source of authority within the party, with no guardianship exercised by an individual, a minority of party members, or any other party over the party's decisions.

The Prevention of the Duality of Authority within the Party: It is not permissible to combine executive authority and legislative authority within the party; the latter is vested by the internal statute of the party in the elected General Congress, to the exclusion of all other bodies — with the necessary existence of an independent judicial party authority in the form of a council or judicial court tasked with resolving disputes that arise within the party before recourse is had to the state judiciary.

The Adoption of Elections as the Sole Mechanism - within a framework of requisite transparency -for the assumption of leadership positions within the party organisation, in addition to the recognition of competitive political action within a framework of party and political pluralism.²⁶

Conclusion:

There is no disagreement whatsoever that intra-party democratic practice constitutes the fundamental criterion of democratic political systems - especially given that the political party has become the primary and sole pillar for the rotation of power in democratic political systems. Yet party democracy is relative and is determined by a set of constraints, beginning with the state and its political system, the electoral system defined by electoral legislation, and the influence of social, political, economic, and cultural factors on the manner in which parties emerge. These constraints, taken together, serve to define the content of party democracy.

The constraints mentioned above determine the course and content of the work of political parties. However, characterising those parties as relatively democratic requires a set of pillars, among them the existence of a framework that defines the internal organisation of the party and sets out the methods, procedures, and regulations governing its work, as well as a plurality of political interpretations within the general direction and unified ideology of the party - which reinforces cohesion among the party's bodies - and the recognition of elections as the sole mechanism for the rotation of party authority without the exclusion of any party.

What this study recommends is that Arab political parties renew and update their principles and methods of operation, particularly in light of the increasing preference among individuals for using modern technologies in political participation and communication, while working to build a political and social project that takes into account the critical phase through which Arab systems

²⁶ - Riyad al-Samad, *op. cit.* pp157-158.



and states are passing - given the internal and external challenges that oblige political parties to participate actively in strengthening the domestic front and raising political awareness among youth, and to endeavour to attract them through all modern means in order to carry the party's political and social project forward. Finally, and most importantly, political parties must adopt the practice of democracy within their own structures, without excluding dissenting opinions - and this, of course, within the framework of the party's general orientation - before demanding that the political authority itself practise democracy.

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