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Cyber Warfare in the Light of International Humanitarian Law

Dr. Ahmed Hatem Al-Rubaie

Assistant Professor of International Law - Iraq

Introduction:

In the last ten years, the international community has witnessed a tremendous boom represented by the widespread spread of computer technology and electronic information networks, and this development has radically transformed our lifestyle and the way we interact with the world around us, as access to information has become easier and more flexible than ever before, and reliance on these technologies includes a wide range of essential services and infrastructure that directly affect our daily lives, as their impact has extended to controlling physical systems such as electrical transformers, operating transportation means such as trains, managing health services in hospitals, It has also been used to operate electronic radars and complete commercial transactions, and has expanded to include the management of stock markets and other vital sectors that form the backbone of the modern economy.

Despite the tremendous progress made by the information revolution, at the same time it has created new challenges that threaten the stability of the international community. Cyberspace has emerged as a fifth field of warfare alongside land, sea, air and space. This field has unique characteristics, as it is intangible and unconventional in its movement, which makes it an ideal tool for launching attacks or exercising force without the need to move military pieces or physical assets from one place to another, and the unpredictable nature of this field increases the complexity of dealing with it, as it is difficult to predict when or how it may be used to cause disruption.

The spread of what is known as cyber attacks has contributed to revealing the vulnerability of information networks and the ease of penetration, as a result of over-reliance on the protection programs installed on devices, neglecting to change passwords regularly, neglecting to update systems, and engaging in the use of public Wi-Fi networks or random connections. In addition, major countries seek to exploit cyber attacks as a complementary factor to traditional military attacks, in order to increase pressure and influence on opponents during military operations, and the difficulty of identifying the perpetrator of cyber attacks tempts countries to use these means extensively.

Problem of study:

The legal issue of the research is centered on trying to answer questions related to the definition of cyber warfare and the applicability of the rules of international humanitarian law to it, as the rules issued by the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977 are still binding on all activities during armed conflicts. However, these rules face challenges due to the evolution of the means and methods of warfare.

The relevance of the study:

The importance of this study is to highlight the potential humanitarian repercussions resulting from the use of cyber operations in cyberspace during armed conflicts, compared to traditional methods of warfare.

When referring to the importance of the topic from the perspective of its novelty, the focus is on cyber warfare, which is regulated by international humanitarian law, as a key axis for defining the framework within which cyber operations can be considered part of the context of an armed conflict or a factor that may lead to it, with the aim of ensuring that such operations are used during armed conflict in line with the relevant international obligations and norms.

Study methodology:

The nature and subject matter of the research requires a heavy reliance on the analytical-deductive approach, with the aim of studying and analyzing the general rules of international humanitarian law to determine the extent to which they can be applied to activities carried out by states and non-state actors in cyberspace, which may be considered or characterized as armed conflict or part of it.

The structure of the study:

This research deals with the topic of cyber warfare within the framework of the rules of international humanitarian law, as it is divided into two parts, preceded by an introductory introduction, and in the first demand, the concept of cyber warfare will be highlighted through two sections: The first section deals with the definition of cyber warfare, while the second section focuses on analyzing its legal nature. The second requirement will discuss the applicability of the rules of international humanitarian law to cyber operations, and this will be done through two sections, where the first section deals with the comprehensiveness of the rules of international humanitarian law, while the second section studies the specificity of cyber operations and their impact on the applicability of those rules.

At the end of the study, a conclusion will be drawn that presents the most important conclusions and recommendations reached during the study.

First requirement

The concept of cyberwarfare

It will focus on defining the concept of cyber warfare by explaining that the rules of international humanitarian law, as the legal framework governing armed conflicts, do not cover all cyber operations or what is known as cyber attacks based on the comprehensiveness of the term, as the term is used in many areas outside the scope of armed conflict ,These areas include activities related to commercial companies, governments, cybercrime, and other criminal offenses, in parallel with the interest in cyber attacks that fall under the umbrella of international humanitarian law, hence the need to clarify the concept of the term, distinguish it from others that may be similar in meaning, as well as highlight the legal nature of these attacks.

First Section

Definition of Cyber Warfare

Cyber is a term derived from the ancient Greek word *kybernetes*, which means remote leadership and management, and has evolved over time to become an umbrella term that reflects the ability to control and direct from long distances, whether in technological, social or even philosophical contexts.(1)

In the terminological concept, Michael N. Schmitt (Michael N. Schmitt) defined cyberattacks as "actions taken by a state to target an adversary's information systems in order to influence and damage them, while at the same time protecting the information systems of the attacking state."(2)

If, depending on the circumstances, cyber attacks result in an escalation of tension to the level of armed conflict, then we are talking about the concept of cyber warfare, which is also known as a cyber attack under the rules of international humanitarian law. This term relates to any cyber operation, whether offensive or defensive in nature, that is likely to result in injury or even death to individuals, as well as negatively affecting property by damaging or destroying it completely, From a broader perspective, cyber-attacks are considered broader in scope than cyberwarfare, as they may fall outside the context of traditional wars, and some of these attacks may even be the first spark that leads to the outbreak of armed conflicts, highlighting their seriousness as a factor that may redefine the concept of international security and the balance of power in the digital world.(3)

Cyber warfare differs from conventional warfare in many aspects, as conventional warfare relies on the use of regular armies and is usually preceded by clear declarations of the state of war, in addition to the existence of specific and direct battlefields, on the other hand, cyber warfare is characterized by its undefined nature in terms of field and objectives, as it relies on attacks launched through global information and communication networks that transcend international borders, and this war relies on a new type of electronic weapons, specifically designed to keep pace with the nature of competition in the information age.(4)

(1) Dr.. Ahmed Abis Naama Al-Fatlawi, Cyber attacks: its concept and international responsibility arising from it in the light of contemporary international organization, Al-Muhaqqeq Al-Halli Journal of Legal and Political Sciences, Babylon University - Faculty of Law, Issue 4, Eighth Year, 2016, p. 614.

(2) Michael N. Schmitt, Computer network attack and the use of force in international law: Thoughts on a normative framework, Columbia journal of transnational law, 1998– 1999, Vol. 37, P890.

(3) Philip Levitz, The law of cyber– Attack, 2012, Vol. 100, Issue 4, P833.

(4) Amr Rida Bayoumi, The Dangers of Israeli Weapons of Mass Destruction to Arab National Security, Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, 2002, p. 25.

In 1968, the United Nations Committee on Conventional Arms defined non-conventional weapons as follows: "weapons resulting from nuclear explosions, weapons containing radioactive materials, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any other weapons that may be developed in the future with destructive properties similar to those of nuclear bombs or the aforementioned weapons."⁽⁵⁾

The reference to "and any other type of weapon manufactured in the future with a destructive effect similar or close to that of non-conventional weapons" is a step towards expanding the traditional concept of these weapons, which includes nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as this modern concept extends to include damage resulting from cyber attacks in the context of armed conflicts, as cyber attacks may target the computers and information networks of targeted states, exposing civilians to multiple risks, including the loss of basic needs such as drinking water, medical care, electricity, and the disruption of these systems. This makes controlling the effects of these attacks extremely complex, which increases the scale of the destruction they can cause if their repercussions cannot be contained.

The definition of the topic raises an important issue related to the characterization of cyber attacks as part of armed conflicts, whether international or non-international conflicts, as this is directly related to international humanitarian law, which is a set of rules aimed at mitigating the effects of armed conflicts for humanitarian reasons. Since the field of application of IHL is limited to armed conflicts, it is first necessary to draw a clear line between situations that can be categorized as armed conflicts and those that cannot. However, this task is difficult when it comes to cyberattacks, especially since these attacks are often carried out in highly irregular circumstances.⁽⁶⁾

Regardless of the issues previously mentioned, cyber attacks are considered part of cyber warfare when they are used in the context of an armed conflict and aimed at achieving military objectives, so they can be defined as actions taken by parties to an armed conflict to gain an advantage over their opponents in cyberspace, through the use of various technological tools and technical experts. These advantages include damaging the enemy's computer systems by destroying them, disrupting them, or breaching them to seize their data. These advantages can also include obtaining sensitive information that the enemy seeks to keep secret, which is known as cyber espionage, or exploiting computer networks to achieve specific objectives within the framework of an armed conflict that rises to the level of war.⁽⁷⁾

(5) Omar bin Abdullah bin Said al-Balushi, "Legality of Weapons of Mass Destruction in accordance with the rules of international law," Mansurat al-Halabi al-Huqqamiya, Beirut, 2007, pp. 15-17.

(6) Omar Mekki, International Humanitarian Law and Terrorism, International Committee of the Red Cross, p. 93.

(7) Herbert Lin, Cyber conflict and international humanitarian law, International review of the red cross, 2012, Vol. 94, N886, P515.

Second Section

The Legal Context of Cyber Warfare

Researching the applicability of IHL rules to cyberwarfare requires first determining the legal characterization of this issue in terms of the legality or illegality of cyberwarfare, in the context of the use of force in international relations, and the relationship between the right to resort to war and the law of war is characterized by a necessary tension, as modern rules of international law generally prohibit the use of force, except in two specific cases: The individual or collective right of states to self-defense,(8) or law enforcement measures adopted by the Security Council.(9)

The law of war aims to strike a balance between the requirements of military operations and humanitarian considerations by imposing clear limitations on the conduct of operations. Despite this balance, the use of force in international relations is illegal under the United Nations Charter, which states that "all Members of the Organization undertake to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations."(10)

This raises the question of the concept of force, whether it is limited to the use of armed force in aggression or armed attack carried out by states through their forces or affiliated groups,(11) or whether it also includes other forms such as economic or political pressure, without limiting it to military force only.(12)

Adopting the first criterion, which relies on the kinetic component of the armed forces, is inconsistent with many forms of use of force in wars, regardless of their legality, such as biological, bacteriological and cyber attacks, while relying on the second criterion expands the concept of the use and threat of force to include economic and political coercion, which may be in line with the objectives of the UN Charter according to the opinion of the majority of scholars, as it expands the concept of aggression and justifies using counterforce based on the right of legitimate defense.(13)

(8) Article 51 of the UN Charter.

(9) Article 42 of the UN Charter.

(10) Article 2 (4) of the Charter of the United Nations.

(11) Alaa al-Din Hussein Makki Khamas, *Use of Force in International Law*, Military Press Baghdad, 1982, p. 67.

(12) *Ibid*, p. 68.

In the context of the above, explanatory frameworks for cyber warfare are related to the concept of power, as cyberspace has contributed to strengthening it and controlling its basic elements in international relations, as superiority in this field has become pivotal to carry out effective operations across land, sea, air and space using technological command and control systems, and this calls for redefining power as a system of material and immaterial means and capabilities, visible and invisible, that a state employs to achieve its interests and influence the behavior of other political units.(14)

Another type of cyber warfare is the use of cyberspace as a parallel or supportive arena for a conventional war on the ground. An example of this is what happened in Syria on December 6, 2007, when its air defenses were subjected to a cyber attack targeting a suspected nuclear facility in Deir ez-Zor. The Israeli attack disabled the defenses, allowing the planes to carry out the bombing of the site without detecting the attack. (15)

Second requirement

The applicability of IHL rules to cyber operations

While we have previously touched on the concept of cyber warfare, despite the ambiguity of this concept, in this context we will focus on the use of "cyber attacks" or "cyber operations" in the context of armed conflicts, and these conflicts, whose definition is not disputed, are those in which weapons are used or likely to be used by all or some of the parties.

In this context, we note that the material scope of application of IHL relates to the period of armed conflicts, whether these conflicts are of an international or non-international nature, and this thesis aims to explore the compatibility of IHL rules with cyber operations and their applicability to this type of conflicts.

(14) Joseph Nye, *International Disputes - An Introduction to Theory and History*, translated by Ahmed Amin El-Gamal and Magdy Kamel, Egyptian Society for the Dissemination of Knowledge and World Culture, Cairo, 1997, p. 82.

(15) Heather Harrison Dinniss, *The status and use of computer network attacks in international law*, Phd thesis, London school of a economics and Political science, 2008, P 33.

First Section

Principles and Rules of International Humanitarian Law

If we agree that the rules of international humanitarian law do not explicitly refer to cyber operations, the absence of a specific reference does not mean that these operations are excluded from the scope of application of this law, as the general rules of international humanitarian law aim to regulate all methods and means of warfare, including the use of weapons, which makes them comprehensive of technological developments and cyber operations.

This comprehensiveness was emphasized by the article contained in Additional Protocol I to the 1977 Geneva Conventions, which stipulates that "any High Contracting Party, when studying, developing or acquiring a new weapon or instrument of war or a new method of warfare, shall verify its compatibility with the rules contained in this Protocol or any other relevant rule of international law, reflecting the commitment of states to ensure that technological innovations in the field of war do not lead to the violation of humanitarian rules, thus ensuring that international humanitarian law remains a comprehensive and adaptive reference to all forms and methods of armed conflict, including cyber operations."⁽¹⁶⁾

The core principles of international humanitarian law can be deeply drawn upon when attempting to assess their applicability to the concept of "cyberwarfare" as a form of modern armed conflict. Perhaps the most prominent of these principles is the Martens Clause, the cornerstone of humanitarian protection in the absence of explicit legal rules. This clause, originally established in the preamble of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and reaffirmed in Additional Protocol I of 1977 and in the preamble of Protocol II, clearly states that "In the absence of a specific rule of treaty law, belligerents remain under the protection of customary law, the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience."

(16) Article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

It is worth mentioning the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, in which the Court emphasized the crucial importance of the Martens clause. The Court noted that this clause cannot be questioned as to its continued existence and applicability in various circumstances, regardless of developments in the nature of armed conflicts or the weapons used in them. The Court also emphasized that the Martens clause is an effective and vital means of dealing with rapid advances in military technology, including innovations that may bring about radical changes in the fields and mechanisms of warfare.(17)

We can also cite the judgment of the United States Military Court in the Krupp case in 1948, which highlighted the practical importance of the Martens Clause and went beyond considering it as a mere moral declaration or theoretical principle. The Court affirmed that the Martens Clause constitutes a general legal rule that makes the established customs among civilized nations, the laws of humanity and the dictates of public conscience an integral part of the applicable legal framework, especially in cases where the specific circumstances are not covered by the provisions of treaties.(18)

Consistent with what was mentioned earlier, international humanitarian law scholars agree that there are basic rules that must be observed in armed conflicts, regardless of their nature or level of development. The most prominent of these rules is contained in Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977. The Protocol emphasizes a very important principle for the protection of civilians, as it explicitly states that: "In case of doubt as to whether a person is a civilian or a non-civilian, that person shall be considered a civilian."(19)

The prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, which aims to protect civilians and civilian objects from harm resulting from indiscriminate hostilities, includes attacks that are not directed at a specific military objective, that rely on means or methods of warfare that cannot be accurately directed at legitimate military objectives, or that use means of warfare whose effects cannot be predicted as required by international humanitarian law, resulting in the injury of civilians and civilian objects in conjunction with military objectives, among other basic principles that are part of the generality of international humanitarian law, as well as the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, This principle is one of the main pillars of ensuring respect for the rules of distinction in armed conflicts, as it obliges conflicting parties to take the necessary measures to accurately direct their attacks to military targets only, and to avoid causing unjustified damage to civilians. With recent developments in the means of warfare, such as cyber warfare, this principle remains strongly present, as parties must ensure that any cyber attacks do not violate these rules and do not cause indiscriminate damage that unlawfully affects civilians or civilian infrastructure.(20)

(17) Blinding weapons: Reports of the meetings of experts convened by the international committee of the red cross on battlefield laser weapons, 1989– 1991, ICRC, 1993, P 78.

(18) Ibid, P22– 23.

(19) Article 50, paragraph (1) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

(20) Article 51, paragraph (4) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

Second Section

The specificity of cyber attacks and their impact on the application of IHL principles and rules

Despite the comprehensiveness of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, the radical changes that have occurred in the nature of warfare since the adoption of the original Geneva Convention more than 150 years ago are undeniable. The means and methods of warfare have evolved to levels not anticipated by the drafters of that convention, and the most prominent manifestation of this evolution is the increasing use of cyberspace for military purposes, which represents a new challenge that highlights the urgent need to review the rules governing the conduct of armed conflicts, and this requires formulating these rules in a way that accommodates the nature of modern cyber uses to ensure their compatibility with legal principles.(21)

In the context of applying the principle of distinction to cyberattacks, the Tallinn Manual, while not mandatory in its rules, notes that civilian objects may not be targeted through cyberattacks, and emphasizes that, for example, cyberattacks that may lead to the destruction of civilian systems or infrastructure are prohibited, This reflects a practical application of the principle of discrimination in the context of cyberspace, as it obliges parties involved in conflicts to take care not to harm civilian infrastructure or non-military objects. This highlights the importance of taking into account the rules of international humanitarian law when using modern technology, ensuring a balance between military necessities and protecting civilians from harm resulting from armed conflicts.(22)

This reality increases the likelihood that attacks will result in widespread collateral damage that may affect vital services such as health, water, energy, or communications. In light of these difficulties, determining whether collateral damage is proportionate to the expected military advantage becomes a practical and legal challenge, requiring the development of tools and criteria for assessing proportionality in this context, to ensure compliance with the principles of international humanitarian law and to protect civilians from unjustified harm.(23)

(21) Jeffrey T. G Kelsey, Hacking in to international humanitarian law: The principles of distinction and neutrality in the age of cyber warfare, Michigan law review, 2008, Vol. 106, Issue7, P 1437.

(22) Michael Schmidt, Warfare through Communication Networks, Attacks on Computer Networks and the Law of War, International Journal of the Red Cross, 2002, p. 105.

(23) Dr. Ahmed Abis Naama al-Fatlawi, op. cit., p. 638.

With regard to the principle of military necessity, the Tallinn Manual indicates that when there are multiple options between military objectives that could achieve a similar military advantage, the objective that is expected to cause the least possible risk to civilians and civilian objects should be selected, requiring the attacker to make the most humane decision and minimize collateral damage as much as possible.

The manual also states that if there are multiple military targets, but one provides a greater military advantage than the others, the attacker is entitled to target that target directly to achieve the greatest possible military advantage in the context of armed conflict. However, consideration must be given to the potential damage to important civilian infrastructure and facilities, as well as the effects on civilians of being deprived of the services or functions provided by those facilities.(24)

The application of the principle of military necessity in cyber attacks requires a balance between achieving military advantage and minimizing harm to civilians, especially since targeting cyber infrastructure may lead to far-reaching repercussions, such as the disruption of vital services such as electricity, telecommunications, or health care, so respecting this principle becomes essential to ensure that cyber military operations remain within the limits imposed by international humanitarian law.

Conclusion:

After a brief review of cyber operations in the context of the major technological transformations that the world has witnessed, through the development of computers as a tool for processing and preserving information digitally and the emergence of the Internet as a means of communication and transmission of information at high speed through data sent over the air, cyber attacks have emerged as a complex phenomenon that can manifest as internal crimes, and these crimes require effective legal treatment through penal and regulatory legislation that criminalizes illegal access to websites and information systems owned by others, with the aim of protecting digital rights and property.

At the international level, there is an increasing need for cooperation between countries to confront these cybercrimes, which often target major financial and banking institutions, as well as companies specialized in programming communications systems and data management. This cooperation requires a comprehensive international legal framework that supports information exchange and coordination between the concerned agencies, to ensure an effective response to these crimes and enhance the security of cyberspace as part of the global system.

(24) Hisham Bashir, Introduction to International Humanitarian Law, 1st edition, National Center for National Publications, Cairo, 2012, p. 89.

After that reference, it became necessary to delve deeper into the study of cyber attacks as part of the threats that affect the military and political levels during armed conflicts, as these attacks have reshaped the concept of means and methods of combat in an unprecedented way, which made them the focus of our research, and through this research, we were able to draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The use or threat of force in international relations is unlawful according to the principles of contemporary international law. However, different interpretations of the term "force" are raised in relation to cyber-attacks, between a standard that links it to the kinetic elements of the armed forces, and another that includes any use of force that results in a violation or tangible impact on the national security of another state.
2. Applying the principle of distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants to military cyberattacks, especially offensive ones, presents a very complex challenge, as the attacker is often thousands of kilometers away from the targeted location, making it difficult to accurately distinguish between military targets and civilian objects, and increasing the risk of indiscriminate or unintentional damage due to the nature of cyberspace and its global interconnectedness.
3. The absence of clear criteria for the use of cyber attacks during armed conflicts complicates the application of the principle of military necessity, especially with the targeting of dual-use facilities that serve both military and civilian efforts, and this overlap raises challenges in the balance between achieving military advantage and protecting civilians, requiring careful regulation to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law.
4. The assertion of the principle of proportionality in the context of cyberattacks appears to remain ambiguous. This principle requires that an attack be canceled or suspended if it is determined that the intended target is non-military or specially protected, or that the attack may result in loss or damage to civilians and civilian objects that outweighs the expected direct military advantage. With the complex nature of cyber attacks, the application of this principle becomes more challenging, requiring precise criteria to assess potential damage and effects.
5. From our findings, despite the difficulties facing the application of IHL principles and rules to cyber attacks, these difficulties should not be compared to an idealized hypothetical case of conventional warfare, but rather the possibility of developing cyber programs to ensure their compatibility with the optimal application of IHL rules, thus enhancing adherence to humanitarian principles even in the context of modern armed conflicts.
6. Broadening the interpretation of IHL principles, such as the Martens Clause, is necessary to cover changing circumstances, especially with regard to modern means and methods of warfare such as cyber-attacks. Such an interpretation ensures the protection of civilians and combatants in accordance with the principles of humanity, while strengthening the law's ability to keep pace with technical innovations and fill emerging legal gaps.
7. Recognizing state responsibility for the actions of individuals or groups under its direction or control, including violations through electronic programs, ensures accountability for international violations, enhances individual criminal responsibility, and allows for the prosecution of those behind the direct perpetrators of such crimes to achieve comprehensive justice.

Reforms in the Gulf countries to achieve first-world status

Dr. Kloud Abdel-Karim Masoudi

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Introduction:

Political and economic reforms are considered the main essence of the political transformation process in different systems of government, as they are seen as a pivotal pillar for achieving progress and stability in the country. The signs of political reform of a democratic nature were first launched in Western political systems, in which the economic reform process was closely linked to the concept of the market economy and its mechanisms, and after the destruction of the countries as a result of the Second World War, two global economic movements emerged that were completely different in terms of economic orientations, mechanisms and policies followed.

The Western mainstream, led by the United States, established the economic foundations of a free-market system based on capitalist rules that regulate the economy through business competition and innovation, while the Eastern camp adopted a socialist approach based on central planning and collective management of economic resources.

Despite the sharp polarization between these two systems, the repercussions of the global debt crisis that hit many developing countries had a major impact on the overall global economy. These economic crises pushed developing countries to implement economic reforms supported by international economic organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These organizations set strict conditions as a basis for obtaining grants and financial loans, which eventually led to major shifts in the economic policies of debtor countries, especially at the end of the 1980s.

Similarly, these transformations included the countries of the socialist camp, including the Russian Federation, which gradually began to implement comprehensive reforms aimed at improving the economic structure and restructuring the political system. In terms of political reform, theoretical efforts centered on supporting democratic institutions, promoting human rights, the rule of law, and respecting the principles of transparency and community participation. These values were included in international charters and declarations and became an integral part of the reform plans adopted by international institutions to promote sustainable development and deepen democratic frameworks at the global level.

These principles and policies are elaborated on in the following paragraphs to explore their role and impact in creating a more stable and prosperous future for societies.

Search issue:

Many recent studies and writings have addressed the issue of economic reforms as a direct response to the global policy trends promoted by international economic and financial organizations. However, these writings seem to have focused mainly on adopting these prescriptions without devoting sufficient attention to the new trends that redefine economic policy in the context of developing countries. On the other hand, some other writings have addressed this topic from historical or political angles, which has caused the theses on this topic to fall into a clear issue at the level of analysis and in-depth details on this vital topic.

This disparate approach has led to the absence of a unified methodology for understanding the nature of economic reforms as a contemporary issue that requires careful and thoughtful analysis. This shortcoming is particularly evident in the failure to provide clear data on how the risks resulting from these reforms can be managed or to find comprehensive solutions to the issues associated with them.

In light of these data, the current research attempts to address this gap by questioning the fundamental issues related to this topic, and among the main questions it seeks to ask: What is the exact concept of political and economic reforms in their current context? What are the tools and mechanisms they rely on to bring about fundamental changes in political and economic structures? How are these reforms reflected on social and economic conditions, especially in developing countries? What is the depth of their impact on the future of the economies of these countries in light of the complex challenges they face?

The relevance of the study:

The importance of this study stands out in that it addresses a modern topic centered on important contemporary issues, as it seeks to answer multiple issues raised by a large number of writers and researchers belonging to various schools of thought. These issues relate to topics that still lack complete or conclusive answers, as there are still theoretical and practical issues that require further study and clarification. In addition, this field is witnessing a diversity of jurisprudence offered by political economy specialists who seek to achieve a broader vision by extracting specific aspects from the experiences of some countries and attempting to generalize them as solutions to issues that have so far remained untested or insufficiently mature.

The study aims to provide knowledge content and data that can play an important role in forming guiding convictions for the coming stages, contributing to supporting efforts to build the economies of developing countries, in an attempt to bridge the gap between what is theoretically proposed and what can be practically applied, while maintaining flexible and open horizons to achieve future aspirations.

Objectives of the study:

The study focuses on highlighting the importance of discussing political and economic reforms as a modern theoretical framework that aims to address imbalances in undeveloped economic structures in developing countries. It also seeks to provide vocabulary and tools that support the review of data, statistics and practical experiences that can contribute to overcoming the shortcomings and gaps associated with economic and political growth. The study also deals with reviewing the experiences of countries that have followed this approach, highlighting the positive and negative aspects of it.

First article

The concept of political and economic reform

First: The concept of repair:

Reform, in all its dimensions, aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth vision that allows full knowledge of its concept and its various dimensions, and the language, with its terms and concepts, shows that reform carries variable and diverse meanings that appear in multiple contexts, whether through dictionaries or specialized literature, we find that these concepts reflect diverse visions of reform mechanisms and align with the needs of entities that suffer from certain issues in their workflow, as approaches are adopted that differ relatively from one concept to another.(1)

For this reason, we have emerged multiple types of reforms such as political, economic, administrative, social, cultural and other fields, and with regard to the definition of reform in language (Reform), it means improving or making something more good, in other words, reform means returning something to a better situation after its corruption, with the aim of making a positive change in what exists, the process is characterized by reconstruction or correction if there is a defect or corruption that should be corrected.(2)

(1) Imad Abdul Raziq al-Sheikh Daoud, Corruption and Reform, Arab Writers Union Publications, Damascus, 1st edition, 2003, p. 35.

(2) Mohamed Mahmoud al-Sayed, The Concept of Political Reform, Al-Hiwar al-Momtaden, No. 55, 2011.

Secondly: The concept of political reform:

It refers to all steps and efforts that require implementation primarily by a variety of actors, including governments and governmental institutions, as well as civil society with its various components, as well as private sector organizations and companies. These efforts are managed indirectly and directly at the same time with the aim of achieving tangible and sustainable progress at the level of societies and nations, which requires a confident pace and thoughtful methodology that avoids any delay or hesitation in taking the necessary actions. This strategy is concerned with moving societies forward by building advanced political systems that bear a democratic character and seek to achieve the values of justice and effective participation in a way that ensures harmony between different sectors and levels, leading to a better future that reflects the real capabilities and potential of all parties in society.(3)

The Dictionary of Political Terms defines “political reform” as a process aimed at improving the political system by confronting corruption and authoritarianism. Political reform is an essential element to consolidate the principles of good governance, as it is associated with a set of values and practices such as the rule of law, transparency, popular participation in decision-making, achieving justice, improving administrative effectiveness and efficiency, enhancing accountability, and renewing the vision and strategies associated with the management of public affairs.(4)

This reform includes developing a clear vision of a political process characterized by correcting its constitutional and legal formulations in a way that ensures a general consensus on the laws and constitutions in force. It is also based on strengthening the rule of law, achieving the separation of powers and defining the relationships between them in order to create a balanced and more effective system. This approach is considered one of the pillars adopted by the United Nations Program on Good Governance in the Arab States to promote effective and inclusive governance.

(3) Mohammed Abdullah Yassin, The American policy towards political reform in the Middle East, Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, No. 26, 2010, p. 72.

(4) Ismail Ali Saad, Society and Politics: Theoretical and Applied Studies, Dar Al-Maarifa Al-Jami'a, Alexandria, 1st edition, 1983, p. 212.

The conclusion emphasizes that any reform process must be based on a set of foundations and conditions that ensure its effectiveness and the achievement of its goals. In this context, the following elements must be taken into account:

First, there must be a context or an anomalous and deviant situation that clearly calls for reform. In the absence of this anomaly, the need for reform loses any justification, which may make it unnecessary and closer to being a useless intellectual luxury. This anomaly can be represented by the absence of justice, lack of freedom, widespread poverty, and deteriorating political and security conditions. The existence of a specific defect helps to recognize the issues and diagnose the points of failure in order to choose the appropriate solutions to the challenges facing the state and achieve the desired change effectively.(5)

Second: Reform should be directed towards improvement and positive development, aiming to eliminate tyranny and replace it with freedom, and replace injustice with justice, chaos with order, fear with security, and illiteracy with science and education. From this perspective, reform becomes an essential tool for achieving stability and improving the quality of life within society, ensuring its development and prosperity at all levels.(6)

Third: The concept of economic reform:

The concept of economic reform includes addressing the imbalances that the country suffers from in the economic sector, and directly addressing the economic and social issues and crises that negatively affect the national economy, especially the productive sector, and these crises hinder the achievement of sustainable economic growth and keep pace with advanced economies.(7)

(5) Adel Abdul Latif, Political reform in the Arab countries in the light of international standards and regional speculation in international projects to combat corruption and call for political and economic reform in the Arab countries, research of the symposium organized by the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization, Beirut, T1, 2006, p. 88.

(6) Abdullah Muhammad Abdul Rahman, Political Sociology, The evolutionary arising, the modern contemporary trends, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, Beirut, T1, 2001, p. 199.

(7) Nader Farjani, Al-Hakam al-Saleh, Rifa'ah al-Arabs in Al-Hakam in the Arab Countries, Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Issue 256, 2000, p. 16.

Economic reform is understood as a comprehensive rebalancing of economic, fiscal and monetary conditions, in addition to promoting stability in terms of exchange rates and income. It also includes the long-term restructuring of productive units with the aim of increasing production capacity, improving production rates, and stimulating the economy to achieve sustainable and measured growth. (8)

In addition, the reform focuses on diversifying the various economic sectors to achieve real and tangible development in these sectors, while avoiding dependence on a specific sector only. This requires developing clear development plans for educational institutions to encourage innovation, support scientific research, and provide an environment capable of creating qualified scientific cadres that effectively contribute to the management of official state institutions with high efficiency and accuracy.(9)

The economic reform steps include the following points:

- 1.Thoughtful and gradual reform: The economic reform process must be directed according to logical priorities and carried out in an integrated and careful coordination. Taking hasty or ill-considered measures can lead to unsatisfactory results, so attention should be paid to defining the areas and steps of reform accurately and carefully to ensure the achievement of the desired goals in a comprehensive and orderly manner.
- 2.Adapting to the dynamics of change: Economic reform is a changing process influenced by many social and political factors, so it is necessary to use flexible and dynamic methods and mechanisms that are compatible with the ebb and flow of the reform process, and these methods must take into account the surrounding circumstances, so that solutions are designed that interact positively with reality and are commensurate with its changing needs.
- 3.There are no magic solutions: The success or failure of reform policies depends largely on the efficiency of the country's political apparatus and the ability of the specialized technical cadres that lead the transformation processes. This economic, social and political transformation requires careful planning and collective efforts based on a clear vision and effective implementation mechanisms to achieve the required change.

(8) Amin Awwad Al-Mashafi, Political Reform, Meaning and Concept, Jordanian newspaper Al-Dustour, Issue 6, 2011.

(9) Adeeb Qasim Shindi, The Iraqi Economy to Where, Dar Al-Rahab, Najaf, 1st edition, 2011, p. 303.

Second article

Political Situation in the Gulf States

Since its establishment in 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been able to maintain its existence and continuity until today, reflecting the importance of the idea represented in it and the absence of any current alternative that parallels its role in the regional scene. Despite this, there are clear differences in the policies of the GCC countries, whether in their positions on international and regional issues or in their relations with neighboring countries, but these differences have not led to undermining the existence of the council or its vital role.

The importance of preserving the GCC is clear in light of the nature of the deep cooperation between its states and the similar social and cultural characteristics that unite them. The urgent need to preserve this grouping not only stems from the success of the Council compared to other Arab unitary experiences that witnessed multiple stumbles, but it is also reinforced by the growing disillusionment with the role played by the Arab League, especially as shown during recent meetings and the decisions that resulted in unfulfilling aspirations. In addition, the importance of the Council emerges from another angle, as the United States views it as a vital tool serving its interests.(10)

This study does not have the space to provide a comprehensive and detailed review of all the achievements made by the Council in its various fields, whether at the political, economic or social levels. However, it can be said that the main focus is on the political aspect, as the failures and challenges faced by the Council in this area are clearly visible, which will be addressed and discussed in more detail in the following context.

First: Political challenges:

Since the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the region has not enjoyed real and sustainable political stability. The announcement of the GCC's establishment coincided with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, known as the First Gulf War, which lasted eight years until the end of the 1980s. This long conflict left deep imprints on regional politics, and although the period of relative calm that followed the end of the war was short and of limited impact.

(10) Sadiq Muhammad Tawfiq, Development in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, World of Knowledge, No. 109, 1986, p. 104.

As the region entered the last decade of the twentieth century, another profound crisis exploded, affecting not only the Arab Gulf states but the Arab world as a whole. This crisis opened the door to new conflicts and plunged the region into a continuous spiral of wars, divisions, and foreign interventions that have not subsided since the early 1990s. While these crises are growing, especially with the increasing US threats directed towards Iraq at the time and the declared and vague desires to break up the Iraqi state into multiple entities, it is clear that this spiral carries with it a serious danger that complicates the chances of achieving political stability.

Security challenges:

The Gulf political process involves many issues, most notably issues related to national security. The security challenge, which was the main motivation behind the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), remains at the top of the political priorities of the Arab Gulf states.

With regard to the position of the GCC countries on Arab and international issues, the presence of these countries within the GCC has not had a clear impact on the positions of other Arab countries, especially with regard to the Palestinian issue, as the GCC countries have taken political positions in harmony with the orientations of Arab countries with close relations with the West and the United States of America, and it cannot be said that the political achievements of these countries differ significantly from the achievements of the rest of the Arab countries.(11)

The Council's international influence:

At the international level, the influence of the GCC states remains limited and close to the general Arab situation, which suffers from great weakness in the global arena. These states have no significant influence in international politics, and even for those who believe that oil represents a political tool in the hands of these states, the situation seems different. Oil-exporting countries are fully aware that they depend heavily on the revenues from this resource for their political, economic, and social survival.(12)

(11) Tanira Bakr Misbah, "The Strategic Development of Power Interests and its Impact on Gulf Security," *Journal of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies*, No. 46, 1986, p. 89.

(12) Keshk Ashraf, *The Gulf and the International Ocean in Search of a Unified Strategy*, *International Politics*, Issue 171, 2008, p. 203.

The political achievements of the GCC at the Arab level remain significantly limited, as the GCC has not been able to excel or create a remarkable distinction in common regional issues compared to the rest of the Arab countries. However, the field of financial donations and economic assistance was a clear exception, as it was a distinct tool for Gulf political influence during certain periods. However, this field witnessed a significant decline after the second Gulf War, and this decline in the level of support reflected the Gulf states' dissatisfaction with some poor Arab countries that adopted neutral positions or showed sympathy for Iraq.(13)

Second: economic challenges:

The GCC countries lack any real influence in the political arena, and even for those who see oil as a tool of political leverage, the reality is that oil-exporting countries are fully aware that they cannot do without oil revenues for their economic survival(14) .

When reviewing the economic achievements of the GCC countries, it is clear to see how much facilitation has been done to enhance cooperation between these countries, such as reducing taxes and customs, facilitating freedom of movement and mobility, in addition to facilitating the passage of goods between the GCC countries. These countries were characterized by the launch of joint economic projects that support economic integration between them, and although the details of these projects do not need an extensive discussion here, a set of salient points deserve focus when evaluating this tangible economic progress in the region, including the following:

- The similarity of the economies of these countries reduces the economic viability of joint ventures when viewed from a cost-benefit perspective, as most of these economies rely heavily on oil revenues, while most joint ventures focus on consumer aspects, making competitive returns unlikely.
- The economic dependence of the GCC countries on the outside world deprives the agreements between these countries of any real economic value, as they rely heavily on importing most of their needs from abroad and do not have products that can form the basis for exchange between them.
- Many international agreements related to economic affairs offer alternative opportunities for many countries, providing more favorable terms and facilities than are currently available, especially under the World Trade Organization (WTO) system.
- The lack of diversification of income sources and the almost complete dependence on oil revenues reinforces individualism and selfishness in international relations, which has negative effects on the level of cooperation among GCC countries, especially with the escalation of competition for oil markets. This situation becomes more complicated in light of the decline in oil prices, which adds new challenges to these countries, especially with the emergence of emerging oil powers in the global market, especially in the Caspian Sea region.(15)

(13) Abtahi Mohammad Ali, "Iran and International Relations" in Gulf Future Challenges, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 1st edition, 2008, p. 110.

(14) Haqi Saad, Principles of International Relations, Wael Publishing House, Jordan, 3rd edition, Jordan, 3rd edition, 2006, p. 78.

(15) Al-Thani, Fahd bin Abdulrahman, Development Strategy in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, Dar Al-Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2001, p. 165.

Despite the progress achieved, most of the economic achievements associated with the GCC remain limited to formal and facilitative aspects, instead of focusing on productive projects capable of competing internationally. This issue adds to the list of challenges facing the GCC countries, especially since many of them suffer from clear economic pressures, as evidenced by the efforts made to localize jobs as a result of high unemployment rates, in addition to reducing government spending and laying off a large number of Arab and Western workers in favor of relying on low-cost Asian labor. (16)

Third article

Gulf countries' efforts in political and economic reforms

The Arabian Gulf region occupies a pivotal strategic position in the system of international politics, due to its enormous potential associated with its huge reserves of energy sources such as oil and gas, as well as its unique geographical location, which gives it geostrategic and economic importance with great influence. These factors have made the issue of ensuring security, stability and balance of power in the region a top priority on the foreign policy agenda of the United States of America. It should be noted that the challenges facing this region are complex and stem from a highly volatile geostrategic reality characterized by rapid changes and internal and external divisions.

Given this volatile nature, addressing the issue of regional security requires a comprehensive approach that aims to identify the various sources of threat, in addition to exploring appropriate mechanisms to confront them and develop effective protection strategies. Despite the relative decline in the threat posed by extremist terrorist organizations, especially after the relative elimination of ISIS in both Iraq and Syria, as well as the curtailment of Al Qaeda activity in Yemen and some other regions in the Middle East, the threat of terrorism and religious extremism continues, and this threat remains a major element that represents a concrete threat to the security and stability of the region.(17)

(16) Al-Issawi Ashraf Saad, A Comparative Reading of the Impact of the Second and Third Gulf Wars on the Security of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, Gulf Research Center, Dubai, 1st edition, 2007, p. 145.

(17) Osama al-Khouli and others, Arabs to Where, the Arab Future Book Series, Center for Studies of Arab Unity, Beirut, T1, 2002, p. 108.

First: Political reforms:

The political reforms required to meet the current challenges are increasingly important not only at the local level, but also for the international community as a whole. This approach is based on the premise that achieving a prosperous and sustainable economic system requires reforms at the political level. In today's changing world, the interconnectedness between politics and economics is more evident and influential than ever before, and thought leaders and decision-makers in the Gulf countries need to recognize and capitalize on this deep interconnectedness. (18)

The implementation of thoughtful and appropriate policy reforms could contribute significantly to a more sustainable and smooth development. Such reforms could help overcome the challenges associated with the “rentier economy” situation that relies heavily on oil wealth, and instead contribute to the establishment of a balanced economic model that relies on diversification of resources and enhanced stability. (19)

Democracy has become a global issue in the 21st century, gaining global attention and becoming a pivotal issue affecting humanity in general. Since the end of the Cold War, the concept of “democratic peace” has emerged, the basis of which goes back to the German philosopher Emanuel. Democracy not only plays a role in addressing security challenges and preventing wars, but also contributes to creating a favorable environment for the development of a free market system. (20)

In order to achieve the desired political reform in a sustainable and comprehensive manner, work must be done to develop the educational system, as it is the foundation that determines the nature of the visions, values and behaviors adopted by social elites. The educational system plays a pivotal role in shaping the consciousness of individuals and groups, as it is the main means of transferring ideas and developing a deep and sustainable democratic culture that contributes to qualifying elites capable of leading political and social transformations. (21)

(18) Ali Khalifa Al-Sabah, *What After Oil: The Status of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries and an Attempt to Foresee Future Prospects*, Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, Kuwait, 2001, p. 88.

(19) Abdulaziz bin Badr Al Saud, *op. cit.* p. 102.

(20) Osama Abdel Rahman and others, *The Arab Gulf and Democracy Toward a Future Vision to Enhance Democratic Endeavors*, edited by Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, Center for Studies of Arab Unity, Beirut, T1, 2002, p. 28.

(21) Osama Abdel Rahman et al, *op. cit.* p. 39.

If the educational systems in the Gulf countries, for example, are able to adopt a culture of democracy within a clear and specific framework aimed at preparing enlightened elites who possess a comprehensive vision of these values, this will lead to laying the foundations for deep structural reforms affecting both the state and society, so that leaders, decision-makers and members of society more broadly can adapt to the changing circumstances and challenges imposed by regional and international transformations, thus contributing to achieving stability and sustainable development. (22)

In this context, practical steps should be taken immediately to enhance local popular participation in the political decision-making process. This can be achieved by broadening the base of popular engagement through building effective and strong civil society institutions, as well as organizing fair and transparent legislative and executive elections that include all segments of society without exception. It is also necessary to work on integrating all sects and social segments without discrimination into the political process to ensure fair and balanced representation that contributes to strengthening national unity and stability.

The principles of transparency, independence and impartiality of the judiciary must be emphasized, in addition to ensuring the separation of the three powers: legislative, executive and judicial, so that each side works independently and effectively without interference affecting the performance of the other. For legislative oversight to be effective, it must form solid foundations to ensure the accountability of the executive authority and monitor its performance in line with the aspirations and higher interests of society. (23)

In this context, it is important to note that political reform does not mean implementing radical and sudden internal changes, nor does it refer to very slow internal transformations. Rather, it requires political systems to take a decisive stance on moving towards change, while identifying pivotal sectors that can form the basis of this transformation. This should be done in a gradual and systematic manner, characterized by clarity of goals and vision. (24)

The Gulf region today is home to a large segment of the middle class that has emerged strongly over the past three decades. This class has been able to reach high levels of university and advanced education, and this educational advancement has enhanced their ability to actively participate in, and sometimes even lead, the processes of social and economic transformation. This process naturally includes civil society actors that have evolved and formed over the course of these three decades. (25)

However, the scene in the Gulf countries is characterized by a remarkable paradox. The activities of civil society are subject to strict supervision by governments, which seek to regulate it in a way that preserves their interests and strengthens the role of the state, yet this civil society has the potential and capabilities to play pivotal roles that contribute to supporting the state and complement its efforts, making it a flexible and adaptable partner that can adapt to changes and a driving force that can work in balance between the ambitions of the state and the needs of society.

(22) Al-Naggar Ahmed Sayed, Egypt, Iran and Turkey, Economic Reality and European Relations, Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 2003, p. 110.

(23) Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, "Toward a Comprehensive Concept of Democracy in Arab Countries," Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, No. 338, 2007, p. 45.

(24) Mouloud Tabib, Political Sociology, Publications Seventh of April University, Zawiyah, Libya, 2007, p. 98.

(25) Nayef Ali Obeid, The Gulf Cooperation Council in a Changing World: A Study of Internal Developments and External Relations 1990-2005, Gulf Research Center, Dubai, 2007, p. 116.

Second: Economic reforms:

The process of economic reform should start from the highest level in each country, but at the same time it must be in line with the integrated collective framework, and to achieve this, a set of measures are adopted that balance the country's individual goals and interests with the collective orientations:

1. There is an urgent need to adopt a long-term future vision for the authorities responsible for decision-making, as a comprehensive framework must be designed for an economic strategy that contributes to the realization of this vision, and it is important that this vision is integrated and has clear milestones based on thoughtful approaches and methods that are believed and implemented by all participants in the decision-making process, and all groups of society should be involved in an effective manner, so that these different groups are empowered and make them feel that they are real partners in bringing about the desired change, not just passive recipients of measures imposed on them.(26)

2. In reformulating its role in the development process, the state must adopt a new approach based on reducing its dominant role in the exercise of economic activities, whether related to production, trade, financing and employment. This traditional role led to the inflation of the government apparatus, which resulted in a host of negatives, most notably the excessive dependence of citizens and the private sector on government spending, subsidies and assistance, and the marginalization of the role of the private sector in economic activity, making it necessary to reconsider this strategy to enhance the role of the private sector and balance economic roles among the various entities.(27)

3. Developing the private sector by gradually shifting from a universal to a selective subsidy policy, while promoting integration between the private and public sectors to achieve higher levels of efficiency and sustainable development.

(26) Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, op. cit. p. 51.

(27) Amin Saati, The Gulf Cooperation Council and its Future, Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, Cairo, 1997, p. 40.

4. Preparation for this change must be done in a deliberate manner and over a sufficient time frame to minimize the burden on groups that may be affected by these policies. It also requires an integrated media plan that accompanies the implementation process, which is concerned with taking the pulse of the street and clarifying the dimensions and reasons for this change, with the aim of achieving the greatest possible collective consensus on these decisions.

5. To provide the appropriate political environment that paves the way for the success of reform policies and the realization of their desired goals, utmost importance should be given to applying the principles of transparency and accountability practices in all aspects of government performance, as these principles constitute the solid base and solid foundation from which any effective reform efforts are launched, and it is worth noting that development experiences in many countries of the world have failed, and sometimes completely failed, due to the prevalence of corruption in its various forms and mismanagement that affected various state sectors, and thus the absence of these essential points led to the waste of resources and their misuse, which hindered progress and development.

Conclusion:

The establishment of a federal entity for the Gulf states has long been a popular demand united by all the peoples of the Gulf Cooperation Council, driven by logical reasons related to a common history, deep-rooted culture and interconnected human relations. However, with the increasing depth of transformations and changes in the global political scene, the idea of establishing a Gulf union has become an urgent necessity that can no longer be postponed, as the threats and dangers facing the Gulf states take on an existential character that affects the continuity of the Arab Gulf in its current form, and there is no meaningful way to address these challenges except by establishing a strong and effective Gulf union, regardless of the form that this union may take.

The Gulf Arab states face ongoing internal, regional and international challenges, making it necessary to seek to build a strong federal entity based on foundations compatible with the renewed cultural heritage. This approach takes into account the supreme interests of the peoples of the Gulf, based on a scientific and realistic vision of the current and future changes in the region. The need for these efforts increases in light of the phenomenon known as the "Arab Spring" and the spread of its effects in many Arab countries, in addition to the importance of strengthening cooperation and multiple similarities between the Gulf states and their peoples due to common factors of convergence.

In general, this study sought to provide a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the concept of political and economic reform, with a focus on exploring the most prominent challenges facing the Gulf countries in this context. The study also addressed how to address these challenges through deliberate strategies and effective mechanisms aimed at enhancing their capabilities to achieve sustainable development and keep pace with regional and international transformations.

The behavioral approach of religious parties in dealing with their societies in Arab countries

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Introduction:

The basic rules of political practice and the development of any democratic system of government require a focus on a set of principles and values that are the cornerstone of ensuring justice and equality among all, and promoting the principle of the rule of law and citizenship. These principles are not only limited to individual rights, but also include enshrining the right of society to enjoy spaces of freedom and effective participation in formulating political decisions, which promotes stability and societal development.

Therefore, political parties are considered an integral part of this system, as they play a pivotal role in achieving a balance between different political and social forces through electoral competition and commitment to democratic mechanisms, but the important question here becomes: How can parties maintain their goals and enhance their political visions for the benefit of society as a whole without deviating from the path of justice and equality?

Political action obliges these parties to follow a comprehensive vision that works to achieve the common good by developing positions and policies that are in line with the needs of society and strengthen the legitimacy of the legislative and executive authorities, but the real challenge lies in how these parties can balance between achieving their own interests and preserving the structure of the democratic system in a way that serves everyone without exception.

In this context, fundamental questions arise about the nature of these parties' relationship with the existing political system and their actual contribution to bringing about positive changes within the democratic framework. The parties' approach must be based on a practical and transparent vision that enables them to achieve their political goals while maintaining the continuity of institutional work and supporting public stability. Therefore, the political action strategies of these parties must be characterized by clear directions and flexibility to deal with the changing dynamics of society, and this requires developing highly credible programs that dedicate efforts to achieve national progress around which everyone rallies as a common goal without discrimination or exclusion.

Can political parties with a religious background play a role in achieving and ensuring civil peace, or does their nature complicate matters more than it solves them? A fundamental question relates to the ability of these parties, through their involvement in democratic mechanisms such as legislative elections and other popular processes, to offer real solutions to conflicts related to civil peace. Does this involvement constitute a solid base on which to build efforts to achieve lasting societal stability, or do these parties, relying on religious legitimacy concepts, have difficulty reconciling their theological authority with the democratic mechanisms that are based on?

In other words, a profound debate arises here: To what extent can a religious authority that derives its legitimacy from a divine source be reconciled with popular systems of government based on majority opinion? Can a logical and sustainable balance be achieved between these two inherently contradictory frameworks?

Problem of study:

In their proposals, religious political parties combine the general and comprehensive on the one hand, and the specific and circumstantial on the other. In their general aspects, they seek to form a state based on Islamic legal foundations characterized by a common orientation that deals with issues with a wide flexibility that facilitates their acceptance within social and political contexts, while in their circumstantial positions, they show flexibility and tactics that reflect the nature of the stage and the reality.

When these parties announce their agreement to disengage from the “general” and “circumstantial” propositions, the question arises as to the extent of their ability to actually implement this, especially since such a separation may be considered a major challenge to their intellectual and political structure. Does this announcement stem from a careful strategy aimed at restructuring their approach, or does it reflect an internal disintegration due to real-life pressures? Can the general and the circumstantial be reconciled in a harmonious political formulation without sacrificing the essence of one at the expense of the other?

A central question is raised about the role of parties in this issue. Do they work to escalate tensions and pour more oil on the fire of conflicts to fuel them, thus strengthening divisions? Or, on the contrary, do they seek to calm these differences and address them in peaceful ways, and perhaps even contribute to establishing a fertile ground for understanding and encouraging constructive dialogue between the different parties?

The relevance of the study:

There is a significant influence on the behavior of religious parties that can be observed as a result of the intertwining of the national and international dimensions, especially during and after the elections, and this influence seems to become more pronounced and more intense in the immediate post-election period, and with regard to the political context of parties with a religious ideological character, the shifts that accompany these political periods between the polls and the aftermath show the importance of studying this equation in depth.

Understanding this behavior is a fundamental basis for analyzing political trajectories, and researchers and analysts should not lose sight of the fact that adopting calls for tolerance may be an effective tool that contributes to enabling such parties to reach power, and with this access, the greater burden becomes on them in how to manage existing crises and work to solve them effectively.

Objectives of the study:

The plan of this research aims to study the issue in depth, including analyzing all relevant aspects such as challenges and possible solutions. The focus in this study is to provide a comprehensive vision that supports the understanding of the topic and contributes to achieving accurate scientific results that support the following desired goals:

1. This research focuses on the foundations of the Islamic vision of the relationship between religion and politics within the framework of theoretical Islam, based on the religious texts and intellectual interpretations that crystallized this connection. It also reviews the impact of blending political practices with legal rules in the development of Islamic political systems and the extent to which this linkage affected the concepts of justice, governance, and legitimacy throughout history.
2. Monitoring and analyzing the activities of religious parties in Arab societies requires a careful study of the ideology they espouse and the methods they adopt to achieve their goals at the political and social levels. These practices vary from attempts to influence legislation, to exploiting religion for political gains, to building popular bases based on religious identity.
3. A number of preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the data presented, which highlight key points and form the basis for a deeper understanding of the issue under consideration.

First article

What political parties are

Scholars and jurists differed in defining the concept of political parties as a result of the different perspectives from which they start to understand the nature and objectives of these parties. In the context of different definitions, some consider political parties “as a social and political organization that includes under its banner a group of individuals who share the same political principles and visions, this organization strives to translate its ideas and principles into concrete reality through institutional and collective action.”(1)

The political party aims to expand its popular base by attracting the largest possible number of citizens to join its ranks. The party also sets its sights on the goal of reaching the ruling authority by participating in elections or cooperating with the ruling authorities, and if this cannot be achieved, the party at least seeks to directly or indirectly influence the decisions and laws issued by the ruling authorities, ensuring the promotion of its political vision and the achievement of its strategic goals, and in this concept the vital role of political parties as a tool to express the aspirations of the people and organize political action to achieve common goals is evident.(2)

Political parties are also defined as “a group of united individuals who seek by various democratic means to reach power with the aim of implementing a specific political program.”(3)

Political parties are also defined in the provisions of the Parties Law as follows: “It is an organized gathering of a group of people who meet based on certain rules and provisions strictly defined in this law, and this group shares specific principles and objectives that it seeks to achieve, so that it works using peaceful democratic political means as a tool to achieve its visions and programs, and these programs are represented in specific issues related to the political, economic and social affairs of the state, with a focus on effective participation in assuming the responsibilities of governance and managing the country's affairs in a transparent and law-abiding manner.”(4)

(1) The party is defined as “a group of people, groups, or organizations that are in favor of something.” Ibn Manzoor, *Lissan al-Arab*, p. 299.

(2) Dr.. Nabila Abdel Halim, *Political Parties in the Contemporary World*, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1982, p. 82.

(3) Dr.. Suleiman Al-Tamawi, *The Three Powers in Contemporary Arab Constitutions and in Islamic Political Thought*, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 6th edition, 1996, p. 543.

(4) See Article 2 of the Egyptian Political Parties Law No. 40 of 1977.

The Supreme Constitutional Court has defined political parties as “organized groups that work using democratic means with the aim of gaining the trust of voters, in order to participate in assuming the responsibilities of governance and implementing their programs that aim to contribute to the political, social and economic progress of the country.”(5)

We can conclude that political parties, regardless of their different definitions or forms, basically seek in all political systems to reach power, as this goal is considered a fundamental part of the nature of the existence of any political party and a basic principle on which its establishment and continuity are based, and to achieve this goal, parties work to gain the support of citizens and expand their mass base, through multiple means that vary between the organized programs they create and the events and activities they implement for the purpose of awareness and influence.

Moreover, political parties do not stop at recruiting citizens or strengthening their ranks with members, but also extend to their political upbringing, a vital aspect that can be achieved through specific curricula aimed at increasing members' awareness of their political and societal role, promoting a culture of active participation, and enabling them to have a deeper understanding of the political scene.

In addition to these internal efforts, parties attach great importance to influencing the decisions made by the state's political system. By doing so, the party seeks to ensure that these decisions are in line with its strategic goals and vision for the future of the society it serves, thus becoming an effective force that does not only engage in the existing political system but seeks to shape it to serve its aspirations and political agenda.(6)

In order to clearly understand the nature of the role of political parties within the political system, it is necessary to delve into aspects related to the emergence of these parties, both globally and locally.

At the global level, political parties emerged with the development of electoral experiences in many countries of the world, and with the establishment of parliaments, parliamentary blocs were formed, which became the basic nucleus for the emergence of a large number of political parties, and there was remarkable cooperation between these blocs, especially those that are close in terms of ideas and views, and over time, the need for joint action took root, and this realization increased with the growing influence of parliaments in political systems, to the extent that the activity of parliamentary blocs began to go beyond the walls of parliaments in order to influence public opinion, which later led to the establishment of permanent organizational parties seeking to attract members and the passage of time.(7)

(5) See the court's decision of 5/5/1988.

(6) Dr.. Hussein Jamil, The Emergence of Political Parties, Arabic Encyclopedic House, 1984, pp. 22, 23.

(7) Dr.. Osama al-Ghazali Harb, Political Parties in the Third World, World of Knowledge, 1987, p. 76.

At the national level,(8) political parties emerged as a result of the movements of groups that sought to organize themselves in the face of colonialism and work for liberation from foreign occupation, and this trend generally reflects the political, social, economic and cultural interactions that prevail within society.(9)

Based on this, it is clear that political parties emerged in their first stage as an expression of the needs and requirements of political life, but they did not develop to play an influential role in contributing to development and political participation until after they established their organizations, structures, programs, programs, activities and goals on the foundations of democracy, and this came within a legal and constitutional framework that gives them legitimacy and highlights their importance in the development of the political system.

Political parties have sometimes become the bridge between authority and society, enabling them to play a pivotal role in absorbing citizens' discontent, fears and hopes, translating them into actionable political, economic and social demands, and transforming their aspirations and ideas into practical action programs that express their ambitions.

Second article

Religious Parties and Political Parties

First: Fiqh al-Quta'a and jihad against infidel regimes:

The intrinsic link between religion and politics makes it forbidden for humans to create fictitious systems or laws, because if they do so, the authority and reference point will go to the Leviathan, and this is what the verse refers to: Don't you look at those who claim to believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and then seek to refer to the Leviathan, and Islam by its very nature can only find full application through the Islamic system of government, as the invitation in the verse emphasizes: Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and follow no other.(10)

(10) Dr.. Tharwat Badawi, The Origins of Political Thought and Major Political Theories and Doctrines, Arab Renaissance House, 1976, p. 109.

Any system of government that does not derive its legitimacy and foundation from Islam is considered invalid and unacceptable according to Islamic law, and Muslims are prohibited from accepting it or relying on it, as it has been mentioned that whoever separates from the Islamic community, even by an inch, is as if he has ripped his neck from the bond of Islam, thus establishing his departure from the religion and its principles. It is also reported that whoever removes his hand from legitimate obedience will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection in a state of weakness, without arguments or excuses, and whoever dies without a covenant or pledge of allegiance to a Muslim imam dies as if he was in the way of the first jahiliyya, that is, in a state of religious loss and lack of legitimate fundamentals in his life.(11)

Therefore, a ruling that is not based on clear and explicit sharia evidence cannot be categorized as a ruling of Islam or Islamic jurisprudence in any way. The Salafi art of this jurisprudence is based on a strict approach that reflects an intellectual and spiritual break with regimes and governments that are perceived as “infidels,” adopting a sharp vision centered on takfir and prohibition, which excludes any space for discussion or constructive dialogue and pushes trends that reject the plurality of opinions and ijtihad, believing that Islam prohibits any form of disagreement or intellectual divergence. In this view, there is no place for intellectual freedom for those with different perspectives, and if someone tries to think freely outside this strict framework, he is considered a dissenter and therefore equivalent to declaring a jihad against him in the name of adhering to the principles of religion, which is equivalent to declaring a jihad against him.(12)

These parties represent a force that combines religion and politics, taking the liberation of Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon as their main goal, while at the same time seeking to establish a state based on Islamic law or the so-called rule of God as seen in Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, and Egypt. On both levels, whether seeking liberation or statehood, these parties have relied on the jurisprudence of qiyada and jihad as a basic approach.(13)

(11) Ahmed Al-Qassas, *The Foundations of the Renaissance*, published by the Cultural Awareness Association, Dar Al-Umma, 1st edition, 1995, p. 171.

(12) Dr.. Ahmed Adel, *Political Parties and Electoral Systems*, Egyptian General Book Organization, 1992, p. 46.

(13) Dr.. Noman Al-Khatib, *Political Parties and their Role in Contemporary Governance Systems*, Dar Al-Thultaqafa for Publishing and Distribution, 1983, p. 206.

Second: The Jurisprudence of Participation and Engagement in the Mechanisms of Western Democracy:

The same period witnessed a noticeable rise in interest in the jurisprudence of peaceful change and the promotion of democratic participation, with fatwas clearly supporting and defending democracy.(14)

In the Islamic context, Shura occupies a high position as the deepest and most complete model of participation, as it is not just a decision-making mechanism, but reflects the essence of interaction and cooperation between individuals to serve the common good. From this perspective, democracy can be considered an initial facet or an entry point that paves the way for the more comprehensive and integrated nature of participation that is embodied in Shura.(15)

Engaging in political life and accepting participation in it based on recognizing the legitimacy of political pluralism and acknowledging the existence of parties with different visions is a pivotal step towards understanding the road to power, a concept that has come to be known today as the jurisprudence of participation.

The jurisprudence of participation distinguishes between the concept of the state and the concept of authority. The state, from a legal point of view, is considered religious, while authority is civil in nature, whether in governance or administration, and derives its legitimacy from the will of the people. Participation is practiced as a means to reach power, where the deeper and more comprehensive goal is to achieve the establishment of a religious state.(16)

This idea is based on the well-established jurisprudential rule that people know best about the affairs of their world and what their reality requires. In this context, democracy expresses the embodiment of the will and understanding of the people, as it is a means and method of organizing political and social life in a consensual manner, allowing interaction with challenges according to the requirements of the times. From an Islamic perspective, the rule remains with God in its absolute legislative sense, while the management and administration of political affairs is a human affair that belongs to the people, who are directly responsible.

(14) Fahmi Huwaidi, *Islamic Discourse in a Renewed World*, published by the Abdul Hamid Shoman Cultural Forum, 1998, p. 122.

(15) Dr.. Ragheed Al-Salah, *Political Party Laws: International and Arab Experiences*, Center for Studies and Research in Social Sciences, 2006, p. 198.

(16) Dr.. Sara Dabbaghi, *Political Education and Instilling a Culture of Good Governance*, Madarat Al-Siyasiyya Magazine, Issue 7, 2018, p. 66.

Al-Ansari believes that fundamentalist movements, despite their success in undermining the credibility of a large number of regimes in Arab and Islamic countries, have not been able to provide an inspiring or attractive model that can be emulated, whether in their party organizational practices or in their official authoritarian performance during their assumption of power, and he wonders why the “revolutionary” or “militant” The events in Sudan proved that the differences between these experiences remain limited, as the Islamists there sought to monopolize society, which led to the establishment of an authoritarian regime.(17)

There is a historical rule that expresses a recurring fact in the course of societies and civilizations, namely that power by its very nature tends to absorb or even swallow the ideology that was the main driver of its emergence. At the moment of transition from the stage of advocacy to the stage of empowerment, a profound structural shift in priorities and goals occurs. The stage of advocacy is inherently associated with revolutionary movements that seek to destabilize the existing regime and bring about a radical change in the structure of the state, and is often characterized by strict adherence to ideology, fueled by the values of jihad, sacrifice and absolute belief in the cause.(18)

In this stage, the emerging state begins to consolidate its authority and rearrange its priorities to serve its political and social stability. This period requires the ruling authority to deal with the “different other” and try to integrate it into the new political system, an approach that may require flexibility in applying ideology and a broader partnership with different currents to ensure continuity and legitimacy, in which case power becomes the main driver, and ideology is reformulated to suit the requirements of governance and managing complex state affairs.(19)

(17) Muhammad Jaber al-Ansari, *Arabs and Politics: Where is the flaw?*, Dar al-Saqi, T2, Beirut, 2002, pp. 43, 44.

(18) Dr.. Ali al-Din Hilal Desouki, *Modern Trends in Political Science*, Supreme Council of Universities, 1999, p. 370.

(19) Muhammad Salim al-Ewa, from the publication *Islam and Democracy*, Abdul Hamid Shoman Cultural Forum, Jordan, 1998, p. 78.

Third article

The repercussions of religious parties on peace in Arab societies

The selection of the countries considered in this study is based on a specific criterion: the existence of political parties within these countries that are based on religious backgrounds or have a religious orientation. It is noteworthy that these parties, at certain stages of their political career, were allowed to work and activate from outside the circles of official authority and governing institutions, after which they had the political context and the opportunity to move to practice political action from the heart of these institutions and within decision-making centers.

The importance of this choice stems from the main objective of the study, which is to monitor and track the extent to which these parties are able to modify their positions or change their behaviors on specific issues that are closely related to the threat to civil peace and stability, by comparing their policies and practices during the two phases of their existence outside and inside power.

To achieve this analytical goal, the study focuses on a number of countries that have witnessed the emergence of religious parties with great influence in political life, as the study takes the central political models of these parties as a field of analysis and monitoring: Lebanon, due to its sectarian and political complexity; Palestine, given the role of religious movements in resisting the occupation and shaping the political scene; Egypt, as a model for political Islamist movements that went through different stages of rule and opposition; and finally Iraq, where religious parties play a pivotal role in shaping the political map after the major events that the country witnessed.

Lebanon:

Since its establishment in the 1980s, Hezbollah has focused its activities outside the framework of government institutions, devoting its efforts mainly to fighting Israel and liberating the occupied territories. However, 2005 marked a turning point in its political career when its representatives managed to enter the Lebanese parliament following the parliamentary elections, making it an active player within the formal political system. It is worth noting that this achievement was preceded by other successes in 2004, when the party's candidates succeeded in filling a large number of seats in municipal councils in various regions and villages of Lebanon.

Hezbollah emerged as a political and military force, which enabled it to gain support, especially among Islamic circles, with a special focus on the Shiite community. This support came as a result of its call for the establishment of an Islamic republic in Lebanon, in addition to its commitment to the project of “national Islamic jihad”(20) to liberate the Lebanese territories occupied by Israel. In addition, the party established strategic alliances at the regional level with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Syria, which strengthened its political positions within the Lebanese map.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, the resistance against the Israeli occupation turned into a practice characterized as “jihadism” with an Islamic jurisprudential reference, to which Hezbollah groups are exclusively committed. This practice differed from other Lebanese parties that fought the military struggle based on national concepts not necessarily related to Islam. This exclusive focus on the concept of jihad was reflected in the party's image and goals, creating an impression among many political analysts in Lebanon and abroad that its activities primarily serve the Shia community without regard for other sects and sects in the country (21).

Syria:

This principle is based on Hezbollah's vision of the Lebanese-Syrian relationship, which he expressed by saying that Lebanon should not engage in confrontation or hostility with Syria, but rather refuses to consider it an enemy. In the context of explaining the relationship between the resistance and the Syrian arena, Nasrallah pointed out that the decisions for the resistance's operations in Lebanon from 1982 until today, and in the future, do not come from Damascus or Tehran, despite pride in close relations with them. Instead, he emphasized that these decisions are made in Beirut, in the south, in every free and honorable Lebanese home that rejects aggression. (22)

He also explained that Hezbollah's relationship with Syria is not just a circumstantial alliance, but a commitment that stems from a national vision that considers Lebanon's interest first and foremost. He added that since 1982, the relationship with Syria has been a clear friendship that Hezbollah is not ashamed of, but believes in and seeks to strengthen, and called on all Lebanese to build strong ties with Syria as this serves Lebanon's national interest(23).

(20) “Jihad” is an Islamic jurisprudential term that means the need to fight anyone who wants to harm Islam, and jihad is on several levels and types, such as verbal jihad, financial jihad, psychological jihad, etc.

(21) It is worth noting here that the Lebanese Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and the Amal Movement were active participants in the military resistance to the Israeli occupation of the land.

(22) Text of Mr. Nasrallah's speech at the funeral ceremony for the martyrs of the Ghajar confrontation at the Sayyid al-Shuhada Complex, Ruwais, published by Hezbollah's Media Relations Office, 2005.

(23) Ibid.

Palestine:

Hamas emerged from the womb of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt in 1928 as one of the oldest organized Islamic movements. Over time, the Muslim Brotherhood focused its efforts in Palestine on social and charitable activities, as it sought to support Palestinian society in light of the challenges imposed by the Israeli occupation. However, with the escalating role of other factions such as Islamic Jihad and the PLO in leading the front lines of resistance against Israel, signs of a clear decline in the role of the Muslim Brotherhood on the political and field levels began to appear, which put them in a position of isolation from the public scene and decision-making.(24)

In light of these major transformations, the Muslim Brotherhood found itself faced with the need to reformulate its presence more directly and effectively in the Palestinian arena, hence the birth of the Islamic Resistance Movement, also known as Hamas, in December 1987. The movement was established in response to these challenges with the aim of participating actively and directly in leading the resistance against the occupation, taking advantage of its Islamic background to present a vision that combines field work and religious work.(25)

In its founding document, Hamas stated that the liberation of the occupied territories can only be achieved through armed struggle based on the concept of Islamic jihad. Based on this approach, Hamas did not recognize the PLO as the main reference point for the resistance or a true representative of the interests of the Palestinian people. It also categorically rejected any form of negotiation with Israel or participation in international initiatives and conferences that seek to reach a peaceful solution to the issue of the occupied territories, and it is notable that Hamas did not present a clear or detailed internal political program, instead, its media campaigns focused mostly on highlighting the issue of the occupied territories.(26)

Hamas took advantage of the PLO's position during the 1990 Gulf crisis to its advantage, as it took a different position from the PLO by supporting Saudi Arabia against the Iraqi regime at the time. This position resulted in Hamas receiving financial support from Saudi Arabia, in addition to assistance from Iran, which contributed by providing some military training to a number of its fighters.(27)

(24) sulayman altamawi, *alsultat altanfidhiat aleadidat althalathatu, alqayid altanfidhi, bint albahithat alhadithat walsiyasiat alaiqtisadiat walajtimaia (dirasat muqaranati)*, lubnan, dar alfikr alarabii, ta5, 1996, sa62.

(25) Ramzi Al-Shaer, *Ideology and its Impact on Contemporary Political Systems*, Cairo, Dar Al-Nahda, 1979, p. 104.

(26) Souad El-Sharkawy, *Political Systems in the Contemporary World*, Cairo, Arab Renaissance House, 2nd edition, 1982, p.

(27) Ali al-Din Hilal Desouki, *op. cit.* p. 184.

Hamas witnessed a significant escalation in its military activities against Israelis after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo Accord in 1993. This agreement was a turning point that pushed Hamas to deepen its presence in the Palestinian arena, as the movement began to attract a wide public base under slogans that combined the Islamic identity with the national banner it raised, and as a result Hamas entered into political competition with the PLO in an increasingly serious manner, as it sought to consolidate its position as an alternative and influential political force at the popular level.(28)

Egypt:

The Muslim Brotherhood is known for its call to return to the provisions of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah as the basis for governance in Islamic countries, and the group adopts a slogan that expresses its principles: God is our goal, the Prophet is our example, the Quran is our constitution, jihad is our way, and death in the way of God is our highest wish.(29)

The Muslim Brotherhood repeated its attempts to integrate into the political arena by allying with a range of different parties during parliamentary elections, such as the Wafd and Labor parties, and was able to achieve great success in the Egyptian People's Assembly elections held in December 2005, winning 88 seats within the parliament. (30)

The concept of the state has remained one of the main pillars of the political and intellectual struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and other parties and organizations in Egypt. From this perspective, it is possible to address the axes and issues related to the role of the Muslim Brotherhood and its influence on the conflicts of societal peace, whether those that preceded their participation in governing institutions or those that followed their actual entry into power. This is clearly evident in how they deal with the process of building the state and achieving so-called reform, something that has sparked wide debate about the feasibility of their vision and its suitability for various development and political paths.

(28) Al-Majali Rakan, Determinants of political development and its obstacles in the Arab world, Al-Riyadh newspaper, Issue 13587, [Http: www.pau.alriyadh.com](http://www.pau.alriyadh.com).

(29) Huda Mitkis, Contemporary Trends in the Study of Political Systems in Third World Countries, Cairo, Cairo University, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, 1st edition, 1999, p. 135.

(30) Mahmoud Mohammed Rabie, Ismail Sabri Mokled, Encyclopedia of Political Science, Kuwait, Kuwait University, Faculty of Commerce, Economics and Political Science, Vol. 1, 1994, pp. 272, 273.

Iraq:

Religious political parties, especially those with a Shiite character, play a pivotal and influential role in shaping the features of political action in Iraq during the current stage. Among these parties and organizations, a number of prominent forces stand out, most notably the Imam al-Sistani Marja'iyya, which represents an important religious and political weight, and the Sadrist movement led by the controversial cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, in addition to the Dawa Party, one of the oldest Shiite political organizations in Iraq, whose most prominent leaders include the well-known Ibrahim al-Jaafari.(31)

On the other hand, the political map of the Sunni opposition is very different; it is rare to find political actors with a purely religious background among them. Most of the Sunni opponents are former army officers who lost their positions after the major changes in the country, or figures who previously cooperated with the Baathist regime before parting ways with it for various reasons. In addition to these, some influential Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar and Mosul provinces can be mentioned, as well as remnants of traditional Sunni Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islam.(32)

As for the topics and issues related to the effectiveness of these parties and organizations in influencing civil peace conflicts, they can be summarized and focused on the issue of the attitude towards the occupation authority. This particular aspect has become a key driver that reflects political and national identity, not only at the local level, but its influence has extended to form an important axis in regional and international discussions. Hence, the way parties and organizations deal with this issue is an indicator of their ability to promote internal stability or reformulate their relations with various influential forces.(33)

(31) John Luca, *Moving Toward Democracy in the Arab World*, translated by Ghassan Salameh, *Democracy without Democrats: The Politics of Openness in the Arab-Islamic World*, Beirut, Center for Arab Unity Studies, T1, 1995, pp. 36, 37.

(32) Ali Khalifa al-Kuwari, *The Arab Gulf and Democracy: Towards a Future Vision for Enhancing Democratic Endeavors*, Beirut, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2002, p. 36.

(33) Huda Mitkis, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Conclusion:

At the end of this brief study on the role of religious parties in advancing democratic transitions, it can be concluded that these parties played a prominent and influential role in this context, and their political and social activities were not limited to electoral competition, but went beyond it to become more effective and active compared to many other religious parties in the same environments.

These parties were characterized by the establishment of well-established party entities with a clear organizational structure and internal system that governs their course and directs their activities. They also demonstrated a remarkable ability to play pivotal roles in elections, not only through active participation, but also through their exceptional ability to mobilize public opinion and organize the masses to adopt their visions and programs. These parties entered politics with programs known for their relative stability and clarity of their long-term goals, which increased their credibility in the political arena.

In addition, these parties have demonstrated great intellectual and political flexibility in dealing with contemporary issues, especially through their acceptance of the principles of citizenship as a basis for dealing with members of society regardless of other affiliations, and their adoption of the principle of comprehensive equality between citizens in terms of rights and duties. These parties also witnessed a remarkable transformation, gradually abandoning their character as global movements to become local political actors that focused their activities within their countries, which shows their adoption of a practical and pragmatic approach that is consistent with the challenges of the times and the necessities of political and social realities.



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