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Globalisation and the Challenge of Democracy in Arab North Africa

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Abstract

Democratization processes have emerged recently as an essential component of globalization and thus, have been paramount in its discourse, and as a political prerequisite for integrating developing countries in the global market. The emphasis, however, has been on liberal democracy. The paper argues that the very process of globalization based on unequal global power relations and the externally formulated policies imposed on developing countries of the south are neither democratic nor an expression of their authentic needs and interests. In this respect globalization represents a denial of democracy on the global level. Meanwhile, the early and involuntary adoption of structural adjustment programmes by globalized countries of the south, with their socially polarizing impact, have enhanced the exclusion of greater numbers of the people from economic, social, and political processes and led the already undemocratic governments to adopt a more authoritarian praxis to enforce unfriendly globalization policies. A nominal liberal democracy was adopted only to bring the globalized economic elite to power to the further exclusion and marginalization of the majority of the population. The paper then discusses the debate by African and Arab intellectuals on the different types of democracy and their relevance to Arab North African societies.

Résumé

Les processus de démocratisation sont récemment devenus un critère essentiel à la mondialisation, tout en occupant une grande part dans le discours sur ce phénomène. Ils constituent également une condition sine qua non pour rejoindre les pays développés au niveau du marché mondial. Cependant, l'accent a surtout

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été placé sur la démocratie libérale. L'auteur affirme que le processus même de la mondialisation (qui est basé sur des relations de pouvoir inégales), ainsi que les politiques formulées de l'extérieur et imposées aux pays en développement du Sud ne sont ni démocratiques, ni le reflet des réels besoins et intérêts de ces pays. Ainsi, la mondialisation est un dénigrement de la démocratie au niveau mondial. En outre, l'adoption prématurée et involontaire des programmes d'ajustement structurel (caractérisés par leur focalisation sur le social) par les pays globalisés du Sud a renforcé l'exclusion des populations des processus économiques, sociaux et politiques, et poussé les gouvernements déjà non démocratiques, à adopter des pratiques encore plus autoritaires, afin d'appliquer des politiques hostiles de mondialisation. Une démocratie libérale que de nom a ainsi été mise en place pour amener au pouvoir une certaine élite économique globalisée et pour mieux exclure la majorité de la population. L'auteur aborde ensuite le débat des intellectuels afro-arabes portant sur les différents types de démocratie, ainsi que leur adaptation aux sociétés nord-africaines arabes.

The problematic

During the last two decades of the twentieth century globalisation has become a sweeping phenomenon re-shaping world societies through socio-economic, political and cultural mechanisms with the objective of integrating all world economies into a global capitalist market.

At the same time the world has witnessed a series of important changes, the most significant of which were the crisis of the welfare state; the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc; the failure of the state-led development strategies and programmes in the developing countries of the South leading to their debt crises.

While the reason for the first one was explained in terms of the crises of capital accumulation, the reason for the second and the third was the absence of democracy.

To promote developing countries' integration into the global market, they had to adopt economic and political reforms, which were largely prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank. The main reform agenda included economic measures such as financial liberalization; privatisation of the public sector, and reduction of public expenditure on social services, and political measures such as the 'democratisation' of political systems through adopting political pluralism and greater freedom for civil society.

As a transnational phenomenon, globalisation transcends national boundaries. Consequently, the role of the state, being a barrier to the TNCs freedom of movement, had to decline. In addition, the objective of integrating all world economies into a global market controlled by international capital presumes a minimal role of the state. Meanwhile, the responsibility of

economic and political reforms pertinent to globalisation with their negative impact on the majority of the population is assigned to the state, which tends to resort to coercive authoritarian measures to maintain its power and control.

In this context, while Arab/North African countries adopting reform policies moved relatively faster in implementing economic liberalization, they were slow in introducing political liberalization, and showed strong resistance to real democratisation. Representative liberal democracy was formally adopted, albeit with mechanisms to preserve state control in alliance with the new economic elite. Regarding civil society organizations, the majority of which are NGOs, their statutory status also ensured close control by governments.

In addition, governments encourage only the formation of promotional welfare, service delivery and pseudo-development NGOs which play a functional role in reducing, if only partly, the negative impact of the globalisation policies, soothing social tension and thus, help to sustain the status quo.

The main argument of this chapter is that in the past decades, with the development of the globalisation processes, the experience of Arab North Africa has proved that within the context of underdeveloped market economies, socially polarized class structure and increasing poverty rates, the majority of the citizens, who exhibit very low indicators of social capital, are increasingly marginalized through the mechanisms of liberal/representative democracy and thus are excluded from effective participation in development processes. Civil society organizations using the same representation mechanisms only succeed in maintaining a dominantly patron/client relationship in which the beneficiaries are permanently kept as recipients of aid and services, instead of being transformed into active development agents.

The chapter will try to explore the impact of globalisation on Arab North Africa, their possibilities for democratisation and structural constraints. In this context it will deal with the following issues:

- An analysis of the socio-economic and political conditions of globalised Arab North Africa countries, in connection with the democratisation process.
- The impact of globalisation and the role of the state vis-à-vis civil society in relation to the democratisation processes.
- Relevant debates on globalisation and democracy.

Preamble

Despite the variations in the socio-economic and political formation of Arab societies, and despite the different attempted strategies to promote

development over the last five decades, development remains the major challenge for Arab countries. Democracy, as an issue closely linked with development, was another challenging issue. In recent decades globalisation became a prominent factor, and a context in which all other issues, especially development and democracy, are being greatly influenced and shaped. However, it should be noted that these three processes are dialectically interactive and mutually influential.

As concepts are socially and historically determined, they are normative and their meaning and content change according to historical and social context. Thus, it is necessary to define the main concepts of this paper i.e. globalisation, development and democracy in relation to the socio-historical conditions of Arab North African societies at this historical juncture.

Globalisation

Despite its sweeping impact, globalisation is still one of the most controversial issues, both on the intellectual and the political level. Although there are several definitions of globalisation, we will give two which are pertinent to two divergent approaches: the functional, and the structural definition (El-Baz 2001). Both definitions could be divided also along the line of the difference between globalisation discourse and ideology, on the one hand, and globalisation as a historical process, on the other (Abdel-Fadil 2000:115). Moreover, each definition tends to produce a strategy consistent with its logic and methodological assumptions.

The functional definition is descriptive and symptomatic. It addresses globalisation by describing its manifestations and achievements such as, great technological and scientific achievements, information and communication advancement, the power and dynamism of the transnational corporations (TNCs), and a dominating open global market that guarantees the free movement of capital, products and services, and labour. The cultural and ideological discourse of this definition is the propagation of globalisation as the victory of western civilization that marks the end of history (Abdel-Fadil 2000:116). It is in this context that globalisation is presented as the ultimate inescapable phenomenon which is turning the world into a universal village. Therefore, those who wish to survive in this world should rehabilitate, restructure and adjust themselves and their societies so that they can become sufficiently fit to be accepted and integrated into the one existing model i.e. the global market as an outcome of western civilization. The advocates of this approach are not concerned with existing contradictory interests between different parts of the world arising from structural inequalities, nor with potential marginalizing or even exterminating impact of globalisation on some societies, nor the inherent contradictions of the process of globalisation itself.

In this context, the social Darwinian principle of 'survival for the fittest is the name of the game'.

However, a more humanistic offspring of this approach continues to believe in the 'inescapable' quality inherent in the globalisation process, but not only are they aware of its positive impact on the human race, but they are also aware of its potential negative impact. Therein, the globalisation strategy pertinent to functional definition defines the ultimate goal as the integration of all world economies in the global market. To achieve this goal, the developing economies should be restructured and adjusted, so as to qualify for global integration, by following a universal prescription formulated outside their societies by the global managers of the globalisation processes. However, growing awareness of the negative impacts of globalisation highlighted by UNICEF's report titled 'Globalisation with a Human Face', drew the attention to the possible disfunctioning of globalisation mechanisms if concerted action is not taken to reduce these negative impacts. It is in this context that, the functional vision of globalisation added to its strategy supportive policies with the objective of facilitating and minimizing, as much as possible, the globalising pains.

The structural definition of globalisation is analytical, dynamic and historically oriented. While it deals with the manifestations of globalisation, it analyses its mechanisms and the structural logic/rationale of its development, in a historical perspective. In this context it presents globalisation as a dialectical historical process, and an advanced phase of an ever-changing human history, in terms of cumulative scientific knowledge and technology, and therefore, it is not the end of history. It is also an advanced phase in the development of capitalism, based on the differential and unequal levels of development of different world societies and thus, it creates a new world division of labour characterized by economically and politically unequal power relations on a world scale. The advocates of this approach maintain that globalisation is, by its very nature, polarizing i.e. the logic of global capitalist expansion produces growing inequality between the members of the system. Thus, there could not be catching up mechanisms from within the system. The catching up from late development comes from policies of de-linking which means submitting any society's relationships with the global market to the primary requirements of the internal development of that society (Amin 1999:120).

De-linking in this sense is the opposite concept of 'adjustment' to the global trends because such unilateral adjustment, by necessity, leads to more peripheralization/marginalization of the weaker members of the system. De-linking also means becoming an active agent in shaping the globalisation

process getting it to adjust to the requirements of one's own development (Amin 1999). National policy-makers, herewith, should be able to determine economic policies on the basis of actual national priorities and future needs. The policies thus, should arise from and express national interests (Abdel-Fadil 2000:81). In this sense globalisation, which would benefit the developing countries, should be authentically participatory with driving mechanisms towards social and human equality.

Globalisation assumes the global integration through freedom of movement of the markets of goods and services, capital, and labour. Nonetheless, only the markets of goods and services and capital have been able to embark on global integration, while the labour market remains segmented. This phenomenon increases global inequality through the differential exploitation of workers based on the segmentation of the labour market (Amin 1999:121, 141). This is further aggravated by the restrictive immigration policies adopted by the advanced countries of the North. Therefore, the polarizing effects of global markets need to be investigated more carefully. With capital, especially 'financial capital', becoming infinitely mobile, and labour being only partially mobile, the globalisation process should not be seen as synonymous with a global labour market at the world scale (Abdel-Fadil 1998:1).

Globalisation and the Arab/North Africa region

The special nature of the Arab region today is derived greatly, among other things, from its oil wealth. The oil has been functional, for the second half of the twentieth century, in shaping all Arab societies. It had a strong impact on the development of both the oil as well as the non-oil countries through labour migration, which was accelerated during the 1970s with the boom in oil prices. However, other factors have influenced the socio-economic formations of the Arab countries, such as their relationship with western capitalist countries, in addition to the radical socio-economic and political changes resulting from the revolutions, which occurred in some Arab countries in the 1950s and the 1960s. The response to globalisation by different Arab countries would depend, to some extent, on: the initial socio-economic and political conditions of each country; their different levels of development; and their actual degree of integration into the global economy.

It has been argued that globalisation is not a new phenomenon and that the first wave of globalisation began in 1870 through commercial activities and overseas investments. Thereafter, came the second wave of globalisation starting in the 1970s through the TNCs operations within the process of 'internationalisation of production' (Abdel-Fadil 2000:116). Each wave of globalisation had a centre from which its influence spread all over the world. The Arab region, it is suggested, was a radiant centre for globalisation in that

sense more than once throughout history. However, since the rise of modern western civilization the Arab region became a passive recipient of the influence of globalisation. In 1998 two centuries have passed since the first contact between the Arab region and the 'Modern West' through Napoleon's campaign on Egypt. Few years later Mohamed Ali inaugurated a new round of interaction between the Egyptian and the world economy through exporting cotton to Europe and importing production, knowledge and war arts from Europe. The nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed series of integrations of Arab countries, one after the other, into the world economy through British or French occupation or American hegemony. These processes had strongly affected the Arab region economically, socially, politically and culturally (Amin 1999:8).

However, the recent form of globalisation has its own features, manifestations and mechanisms for global integration. Given the dialectical nature of the globalisation process, it is necessary to highlight the recent processes through which the Arab region along with other developing countries began their formal integration into the recent globalisation process.

The crisis and the aftermaths

The crisis that has engulfed the developing countries over the last two decades can be traced to the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, that precipitated the recession in the developed countries, which, in turn, impacted developing countries through declining demand for raw materials, high international interest rates and deterioration in the terms of trade. The signs of emerging crisis were increasing; current account deficits as most governments of the developing countries continued to finance expenditure through borrowing. On the other hand they had a much higher level of investment than could be covered by domestic savings. In addition, many developing countries were encouraged by financial international institutions to borrow in international financial markets (Mkandawire & Soludo 1999:21; Zaki 1999:44).

By the early 1980s it became obvious that this situation was unsustainable. Unable to pay their debts most developing countries were abruptly frozen out of international financial markets. By the mid-1980s the debt crisis reached its peak.

The explanation of the crisis was polarized between external factors (decline in terms of trade, the instabilities in the global financial and commodity markets) and internal factors, i.e. policy failure. Each explanation failed to integrate the other factors into their policy proposals. For those who focused on domestic policy failure namely: the World Bank and the IMF, they failed to estimate the role of external factors. For them a pivotal explanation of the crisis was the monopoly of policy making by the state,

which represents social elements in a manner that particularizes policy and drives it away from the larger societal concerns (Mkandawire & Soludo 1999:22). This has led to the claim that the role of the state must be minimized.

Since the understanding of the source of the crisis affects the perception of the solution, the prescription of the World Bank and the IMF for the developing countries was formulated in what became known as the Stabilization Policies and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The initial formulation of these policies had no reference to either poverty or social justice.

The burden of debt became increasingly unmanageable, Egyptian debt reached nearly \$50 billion in 1990; Algeria's was \$26 billion, Morocco \$28 billion. For Egypt, and Morocco the ratio of debt to GDP was close to 100 per cent. Mauritania had one of the highest debt burdens in Africa. As debt service began to consume over one-third of export earnings, Arab countries were increasingly forced to undertake stabilization and structural adjustment policies (Richards 1994:5, 6). Thus the initial impetus for the SAPs came from outside the Arab countries. It was the unwillingness of foreign creditors to continue to finance budgetary deficit that led the Arab countries to turn to the IMF for assistance (Ibid). While these policies were a solution for the crises, they were at the same time mechanisms for integrating the adjusted Arab countries in the global market.

Globalisation and the role of the state in the Arab region

Globalisation as a transnational process transcends national boundaries. Consequently, the importance of the state, as a barrier to the TNCs freedom of movement, declines. In addition, the objective of global integration of all world economies in a global market, controlled globally, presumes a minimized state role: Therefore, it is possible to point out to the link between this postulate and the emphasis of the World Bank and the IMF on the 'policy failure' assumption and hence, recommending as an essential prerequisite for implementing reform policies, the withdrawal of the state from most/all economic, social and political functions.

Although there are considerable differences among globalisation theorists, the majority would advocate and adopt a global point of view. They deal with the world as a whole and as a unit of analysis assuming the existence of a general autonomy and 'logic' to the globalisation process, which operates, relatively, independent of other subunits of analysis e.g. the nation, the state or the region (Ritzer 1998:81–82). 'While they may be right about the traditional imbalance in sociological concern, to the benefit of the nation state, and the contemporary importance of global processes, it is correct to

say that the nation-state still has a paramount importance in the contemporary world' (Ritzer 1998:82).

The situation in the Arab region reflects with even greater clarity the necessary role of the state, albeit based on democracy as a prerequisite, since some Arab countries are still in the stage of state building with no solid economic, political or social institutions to replace the state in managing public affairs. However, it should be clear that any successful development requires real popular participation through institutionalised and participatory democratic mechanisms.

Moreover, ERSAPs present an inherent contradiction in the reform processes, i.e. the responsibility of implementing the ERSAPs, with their negative impacts on many people, is designated to the state which, in order to achieve this goal, usually resorts to the use of every powerful, authoritarian and coercive measures that could be used. Meanwhile, the state is requested, within the context of globalisation, to do away with its power and authority and to democratise the system. Thus, the state in the Arab region is still playing a very important role especially in implementing the ERSAPs. It is worth noting, however, that while Arab states have gone a long way in economic liberalization, they are still holding back against political liberalization.

Regarding the state's economic role, even in the oil producing countries, despite the dominance of free market economies, it adopts a state-led welfare development strategy. The concentration of wealth in the state is far superior to private incomes and savings. This places the central state in a unique position to allocate resources to comprehensive development activities. A number of these countries invest intensively in relatively successful industrial and services projects. Other investments benefit from state subsidies within the context of development plans for well-defined economic and social objectives (Abdel-Ghani 1999:177).

Globalisation, social mobility and socio-economic polarization of Arab/North Africa societies

Globalisation as a multidimensional complex process has a diverse impact on different countries of the world as well as on different social groups within the same society, based on their different socio-economic conditions and their level of human development. Therefore, the globalisation process produces two contradictory processes of integration and exclusion. It is suggested that the impact of globalisation on developing, including Arab, countries tends to integrate a small part of the country's elite into the processes of production and capital accumulation within the global market, which grants them a standard of living way above the country's per capita income.

Meanwhile, the number of people who get marginalized and socially excluded from production and income circles increases rapidly. The dynamics of social and economic exclusion produce poverty, which results in poverty in poor people's abilities, which then, reproduces itself in a vicious circle until social polarization becomes, in different degrees, the main characteristic of developing societies. This situation is bound to threaten the social cohesion in society and the very basis of the state. It produces social tension and, economic and political instability (El-Khawaga 2000:24).

The adoption of the ERSAPs by a number of Arab countries has resulted in different forms of social mobility, largely to the benefit of the business classes active, mostly, in non-productive activities in the private sector. Meanwhile, as a result of increasing poverty rates, a downward social and economic mobility of the vast majority of the population has taken place comprising civil servants, unemployed graduates and the uneducated females. Most of these groups were forced to turn to the unstable and unprotected informal sector to earn their living.

Moreover, class polarization connected with the new liberal policies is having a negative impact on the very existence of some strata of the middle class. The members of the upper stratum, characterized by higher income and close connections with decision makers and public sector management, benefit from the new liberal policies. The conditions of the middle stratum, which depend mainly on fixed income, are worsened due to the decline in their real income as a result of price inflation of goods and services. In addition, large numbers of them lose their jobs through privatisation processes. Their situation is continuously degenerating to the level of the poor majority. The deterioration of the lower stratum, which represents the majority of the middle class, is usually devastating (Zaki 1998:168). This situation is reflected in low quality of life indicators in the Arab countries compared to countries like Malaysia or China, which are subjecting the process of integration into the global market to the needs of their countries' development.

It is worth noting here that while the globalisation discourse emphasizes liberal democracy and political pluralism, the problems arising from social polarization and exclusion, and the authoritarian coercive measures adopted by adjusting governments are, in themselves, obstacles for achieving democracy or for developing a dynamic civil society. Economic and social marginalization would, by necessity, lead to political marginalization i.e. the negation of democratic participation.

Development

An analytical definition of development should include the following elements:

- Development is an ongoing process i.e. it does not have an ultimate fixed goal, but rather a continuous progressive societal movement. The goals and mechanisms of development change according to time and different societal contexts. In each historical phase development produces the social forces/agents who have the right and the power to lead, to determine development goals, and the mechanisms and tools for achieving them. In this sense development is a relative and an ever-changing concept.
- Development is a comprehensive process i.e. its subject is society as a whole with its economic, social, cultural and political structures as interconnected and mutually interactive. In this context, development's main goal would be enhancing and mobilising economic, social, and political resources and opportunities so as to satisfy peoples' needs in such a way that they are integrated in society and able to participate in decision-making processes.
- The objective of development is to enhance and mobilize human, material and cultural resources of society and put them to optimal use. However, it should be noted that human resources are the most important factor. Human beings are the creators of material and cultural wealth/resources, which they endow with social value. Thus, people-centred development is the viable strategy in which all citizens can participate in realizing its goals, as well as benefiting from the product of their work. This type of development entails the adoption of both participatory democracy and social justice as necessary conditions for achieving a comprehensive sustainable development.

It should be noted, herein, that achieving comprehensive sustainable development entails, in addition to the above mentioned elements, the existence of the following conditions:

- a) Development goals and objectives should express the real needs of the majority of citizens. Thus, they should emanate from society itself, and thus, should be determined by the people at the local level as well the national level. Therefore, development strategy and its objectives should not be decided and imposed from outside the concerned society. This, by necessity, raises the question of independent, but not isolated, development.

- b) In this context utmost consideration should be given to the citizens' creative initiatives through real popular participation in the processes of decision-making and implementation of development policies. Mainstreaming marginalized groups, especially women, in all development processes is a prerequisite for their success. Consequently, elimination of mechanisms of social polarization, discrimination and exclusion is a necessary condition for successful development.
- c) To attain development goals, all efforts should be made to maintain national independence vis-à-vis dependency and hegemonic globalisation. In this respect, development should become a tool for an alternative globalisation, based on equal global power relation.

Democracy

Democracy is a concept and a socio-historical process. Thus, while the term 'democracy' had only one definition since the Greeks i.e. rule by the people, throughout history there have been 'people' and 'non people'. Since the French Revolution in 1789 the modern definition of democracy has established three concepts of democracy in European theoretical and political discourse. These concepts were liberal democracy, social democracy and socialist democracy. From a theoretical perspective each one of them emerged as a critique of pre-existing economic and political forms of organizations. However, after the World War I and after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 all three concepts/forms co-existed e.g. liberal democracy in Western Europe and North America, social democracy in Scandinavia, and what was supposed to be socialist democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The product was three competing conceptions of democracy but two competing systems of economic and political organizations i.e. the capitalist and socialist systems (Mafeje 1992:2). Inability to distinguish between systems and models created a problem for the developing countries, which viewed these systems as models, i.e. abstracted forms free of their substantive content, and thus capable of being reproduced in different socio-economic and political formations. This was apparent in the ex-colonial countries some of which saw themselves as extensions of the metropolitan countries and thus, tried to reproduce the liberal political model, while others, who obtained their independence through a long anti-imperialist struggle, were ideologically inclined to adopt what they perceived as an anti-imperialist model, i.e. a form of socialism based on the one-party system.

On another level, concepts have an intellectual dimension as well as a utopian quality. Thus, the notion of democracy involves intellectual and political assumptions, which transcends actual reality. The discrepancy

between what is experienced in real life and what is perceived as an ideal life is, therefore, a source of tension and of revolutionary impulses in society. It should be admitted, however, that in no revolution can ideal society be attained. This implies that utopia is a permanent feature of all social existence and a guarantee for continuous social movement (Mafeje 1992:3).

Liberal democracy, which pervaded Europe, North America and the British dominions as a political form and utopia for two hundred years unrivalled, is by far the oldest and the most well advertised form of democracy.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the notion of social democracy emerged as a critique of liberal democracy and its social foundation. The issue was social democracy as against liberal democracy, which, while claiming democratic rights for all, did not realize social equity for the workers in industrialized Europe. Thus, throughout Europe the struggle for social democracy was associated with the labour movement. However, due to lack of clarity on the side of the social democrats on certain issues e.g. the national question, social democratic parties in Europe, except in Holland and Scandinavia, fell into the hands of colonial and fascist nationalist states. Some of them argued that the industrializing countries needed colonies so as to improve the living standards of the working class in the 'civilized world'.

Since World War I liberal democracy has lost its power as the leading democratic form. The critique of liberal democracy became general not only among socialists and social democrats but also in the capitalist countries themselves. The failure of the liberal parties to win popular support in the inter-war period and after the Second World War signifies the inadequacies of liberal democracy. This was not an ideological revulsion by the voters but a well-founded perception of the good that was not being delivered. This became much clearer during the Deep Depression of 1929–1933 when the liberal model with its trickle down assumptions could not help in easing the crisis. Thus, it paved the way for the Keynesian revolution in economics. The state was called upon to intervene which signalled the rise of the welfare state.

However, it should be understood in this respect that the critique of liberal democracy is not a denial of the value of the rights it introduced but about the same rights which are denied by the actually existing capitalist system (Mafeje 1993). Thus, theoretically the issue concerning 'liberal' democracy versus 'social' democracy was about distribution of the social product and political power between classes in capitalist societies, which liberal democracy does not address.

Socialist democracy as a concept corresponded with the emergence of communist parties in Europe and was the form adopted by the Soviet Union

in 1917. It is based on international proletarianism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was seen as a negation of class rule and exploitation. Thus, it assumed that social and equal economic rights would automatically produce equal opportunities for political participation. However, neither international proletarianism nor the dictatorships of the proletariat were achieved.

The concept of the 'New Democracy' introduced by Mao Tse Tung was a departure from 'socialist democracy' predicated on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao Tse Tung succeeded in situating the National Question within the socialist trajectory. For him the concept of 'New Democracy' cuts across classes so that progressive and patriotic factions and strata, from classes other than the peasants and the workers qualified for membership in the democratic national alliance against colonialism and imperialism, provided that their participation does not threaten the conditions of livelihood of the majority of the people (Mafeje 1992:17). In so far as the 'New Democracy' defines its subjects and objects, it is anti-liberalism. Thus, under the concept of 'New Democracy' primacy is given to the conditions of livelihood of the majority of the people. It derives its national character from being, by necessity, anti-imperialist. This was an important departure from European socialist democracy based on the dictatorship of the proletariat, both of which they failed to achieve. Not surprisingly the socialists in the 3rd and the 4th Internationals rejected this concept.

Debating democracy

The prevailing crisis in the developing countries since the 1980s was about the 'state and civil society' and 'democracy'. At the same time policies of globalisation were imposed on the developing countries, endorsed by the donor community and credited by autocratic regimes, which dominate the scene in the developing countries.

Interestingly enough, the same powers, which imposed these marginalizing policies, called for democratisation and good governance, as pre-requisites for development in the developing countries. Since the politics of globalisation tend to minimize the role of the state, western scholars found it expedient to construe this as a matter of 'civil society' versus the 'state' and linking it to democratisation and good governance as necessary conditions for development.

Acutely aware of the crises of democracy in their countries many Third World scholars joined the debate. Among them were African and Arab scholars, albeit with some differences. Their main concern was the intensification of autocratic rule by presidents 'for life', and recently for the life of their children, the increasing marginalization of vast sections of the citizens, and frequent violation of civil rights.

On the African scene this has inspired a collective intellectual effort by African scholars, which resulted in a publication entitled *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa* (Anyang' Nyong'o 1987) as well as the CODESRIA research project on 'Social Movements, Social Transformation and the Struggle for Democracy in Africa' launched in 1988. No longer was it assumed that the state had the monopoly of the political initiative. As far as one can tell, the debate of the late 1980s among African scholars represented initially a disagreement within the left about political priorities and strategies rather than ideological preference. However, the debate was escalated in the early 1990s to reflect that African scholars especially within CODESRIA have become less homogeneous than they were assumed to be. In his article (1989) Shivji denounced liberalism and attacked his fellow leftists for indulging in 'unabashed celebration of Liberalism' under prevailing African conditions. As a matter of fact his views were verified by the fact that in the new 'democratisation' in Africa the popular masses who initiated the process got usurped and marginalized by the liberal petit-bourgeois elite (Mafeje 1998).

The debate has since produced yet another confrontation between the more polarized African scholars of the left and the right. Jibrin Ibrahim (1993) has launched a severe attack on the African left accusing them of anti-liberal bias. He singled out senior African radical scholars such as Samir Amin, Claude Ake, Archie Mafeje, Mahmood Mamdani, Issa Shivji and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba whom he referred to as 'Icons'. He condemned them for 'having spent too much of their intellectual careers demolishing liberalism'. He, as Mafeje put it, ignored the well-known fact that the experience of liberal democracy in some African countries e.g. South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana has brought no change in the situation of the mass of the people. Neither 'participatory democracy' nor better access to means of livelihood has been achieved. Thus, liberal democracy had disqualified itself in the African context with no need to the effort of the 'Icons'.

To sum up the African debate, the supporters of liberal democracy had the following arguments:

- Liberal democracy is a value in itself. It should not be linked to or sacrificed for any particular economic system or development strategy (Mkandawire 1991).
- The critique of liberal democracy, is for some a justification for dictatorial and authoritarian regimes (Ibrahim 1993).
- Although liberal democracy is not sufficient, it is a necessary starting point to a better understanding of democracy, 'half bread is better than no bread' (Mkandawire 1991).

- Some revolutionary intellectuals accepted liberal democracy as a phase in which civil liberties such as, freedom of expression, meetings, organizations could be used to enhance their political activities and thus can achieve their revolutionary goals.

The opponents of liberal democracy had the following arguments:

- Experience of liberal democracy in the third world proved that it could only create opportunities for power circulation among the ruling elites (Shivji 1990) the rest of the citizens were excluded from both political participation and access to means of livelihood.
- Liberal democracy is class bounded by nature. It aims at rationalizing and justifying the interests of the dominating classes. It is a necessary condition for reproducing the class structure and its social base (Mafeje 1991).
- While social democracy in the west superseded liberal democracy after World War II, to support globalisation processes the west, led by the USA, is enthusiastically trying to spread liberal democracy in Third World countries using foreign aid as an enforcing mechanism.
- Social democracy, after its short defeat, has emerged in the west again. The same is happening in the ex-socialist regimes, which show that political and civil freedoms as important as they are, are not sufficient if accessibility to means of livelihood is not guaranteed through economic and social democracy.

The Arab debate

Similar to African scholars, democracy has become an important concern to the different factions of Arab intellectuals, it was not clear whether this was a tactical move or a strategic belief. This lack of clarity was based on the nature of their intellectual and ideological positions which are inherently exclusive and thus, unable to accept other views. Moreover, none of these factions had a sufficient social or political base to dominate the political scene. In this context, defending democracy seemed to be one way to secure a place in the political arena rather than an authentic belief.

The previous statement, though not openly admitted by the factions concerned, might not be completely unfounded. For example, Islam for the Islamists is the ultimate epistemological reference. It is the rule of God and, thus, sacred. Therefore, it should be adhered to by everybody and those who do not are treated as unequal, if not altogether excluded. Likewise, Arab nationalists consider nationalism and national identity as the only force capable of integrating the Arabs into one nation, without which Arab renaissance and

progress cannot be achieved. The same belief stands for the leftist groups as the only holders of a scientific methodology capable of comprehensive analysis of the Arab societies and their dynamics towards progress and social change.

Nonetheless, Arab scholars, intellectuals and political activists are continuously engaged in debating national issues among which democracy takes an important place for several reasons. First, the failure of the national liberation regimes in the 1960s was attributed to the absence of democratic participation. Second, despite the adoption by many Arab regimes of political pluralism, the margin of democracy is still very limited and practised under strong state control. Third, globalisation has brought the issue of democracy to the forefront in connection with the newly reduced role of the state and the rising importance of civil society. The debate centred mostly around the constraints on democratic transformation in the Arab countries and the future prospects for democracy (Muwatin 1997).

The following are the general trends of the debate:

- Liberal democracy was accepted as the paramount form for democracy. The advocates included a number of intellectuals who were previously on the left. Their argument was blindly based on the failure of the Arab national 'socialist/populist' experiences of the one party system. While their doubts were partly justified, they did not, objectively, evaluate these experiences in their historical context, nor did they pay any attention to the hegemonic role of external forces, which was instrumental in the collapse of these regimes.
- The emphasis on liberal democracy with its political and civil liberties through a strong civil society set the scope of the battle as between two protagonists; the state on one side, and the intellectuals as representatives of civil society on the other. This tendency reflected a lack of understanding of the complex relationship between the states and the socially determined differentiated civil society, of which some factions are in alliance with the state. Moreover, the emphasis on liberal democracy represented an honest adherence to the agenda of globalisation. Therefore, the fact that the USA and the World Bank, which are imposing liberal democracy as part of their 'political conditionality', are strong supporters of many autocratic and authoritarian regimes is never discussed.
- Only a few intellectuals of Marxist's and nationalist's stand questioned the class nature of liberal democracy and called for the inclusion of

social and economic rights into the concept of democracy (Abdalla 1997:167)

- Other intellectuals, e.g. Nasserites, argued that democracy was never a popular demand for the Arab masses while social justice was. In addition, democracy requires the building up of a strong popular base committed and willing to change anti-democratic regimes (Issa 1997:210). Otherwise, liberal democracy continues to circulate political power among the political elite.

Democracy discourse of different Arab political factions

The Islamists

Islamic movement in the Arab region is the only political movement, which was able to transcend elitism and build a base among the masses. This gave it a real political power, despite the fact that it is not recognised by state as a legitimate political movement, and it is continuously harassed by state security. Although the movement uses Islam as the ultimate reference point, it should not be treated as a homogeneous body of political thought. Organizationally, it is divided into several factions according to their specific political agenda and strategies, with many contradictions between the factions and within the same organization.

Regarding the position of these movements vis-à-vis democracy they could be divided into three sections. The first section comprises the radical political Islamic movements, which work clandestinely. Thus, their ideological writings are not for public circulation. The information about them comes mainly through the security, judiciary and media, which consider them terrorists (Abdul-Fattah 1997:17–18). The ideological product of these groups is not only anti-democratic, but it is also anti-state, anti- society and anti- other political forces. They reject all existing social political systems as Anti-islamic.

The other two sections whose ideological product could be acquired are the ‘conservatives’ and the ‘enlightened’ Islamists. The first group adheres literally to the text, emphasizing the literary meanings of written words. The texts (the Quran and Sunna ‘the Prophet’s sayings’), to them are eternally applicable to any society and at any historical moment. For them liberation of the Islamic nation takes priority over democracy. Their version of democracy is based on the ‘Shura’ notion (a consultative council appointed by the ruler to advise him with no commitment on his part). Democracy for them is only an institution for governing. What is more important is the rules and principles from which governing is derived i.e. Islam (El-Shawi 1997: 28). Thus, democracy for this group is the rule of Islam according to the text, which does not allow differences, pluralism, or circulation of power.

The 'enlightened' Islamists believe that Islam should be renewed through 'Igtihad' i.e. informed effort, so as to be compatible with the societal changes occurring over time and in different social contexts. They use much more flexible interpretation of the text ensuring that it is relevant and beneficial for society. While Islam is their reference point, they do not see it as incompatible with modern political thoughts such as democracy, i.e. people's right to vote, to choose their ruler and to depose him if he proves to be unfit for the post (El-Awwa 1997:150–154).

Evidence suggests, however that the position of Islamists vis-à-vis democracy changes according to the political incidence and whether they are in power or out of it. For example, the Islamic state in Sudan contained the civil society and transformed it to branches of its political organization (Ibrahim 1997:32–36).

The Arab nationalists and Nasserites

The priority issues of the national liberation struggle have influenced Arab nationalist and Nasserite political thought. Thus, democracy came third after independence and Arab unity. This was even more consolidated by the confrontation with Israel and imperialist powers. However, when nationalist forces came to power socio-economic democracy was given priority over political and civil liberties. The first was considered more relevant and effective in mobilizing the masses for building a strong Arab nation. The issue of democracy for Arab nationalists came to the forefront after the 1967 war as a prerequisite for national liberation and Arab unity (El-Dajani 1997:98–99). The issue emerged again forcefully in 1982 after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and it continues to gain greater value among Arab nationalist nongovernmental research centres. It was suggested that the problem is not the absence of democracy from the Arab nationalist thinking, but rather the predisposition to push democracy aside in nationalist thinking, especially on the level of praxis (Saied 1997:115–16). Other nationalist views attribute the lack of popular demand for democracy in the Arab countries to the fact that it was replaced by anti-imperialism and national independence and not by social justice. Worse than that, while the Arab states are facing external threat, some intellectuals call for exchanging national/state sovereignty for democracy. While democracy is a human need, as the Nasserites claim, realizing it at the expense of social justice is bound to create social and political conflict. Thus, what should be done in the context of globalisation is to democratise the state rather than weaken it. Further, social justice should be part of the democratisation process so as to satisfy the needs of the masses. This vision brings social democracy to the core of the Nasserites discourse (Issa 1997: 134–35).

The Arab Marxists and Socialists

In their critique and evaluation of the failure of the socialist experience in Europe, the Marxists objective was to renew and rebuild the socialist paradigm democratically (Bekdash 1998:182-188). Their discourse maintained that:

1. Liberal democracy is not a product of bourgeois society but it was the outcome of the struggle by the working classes in alliance with other progressive forces in European societies at the end of the 19th century. The bourgeois classes accept this form as long as it does not threaten their interests. If it does, other effective forms of bourgeois dictatorship, such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Spain and later on Pinochet in Chile, emerge and control political power (Bekdash, *Ibid*).
2. Likewise, oppression and absence of democratic liberties are not inherent in socialism. Examples from the Paris Commune and the birth of the Soviet Union were given to show that political pluralism existed under the leadership of the communist parties. They maintain that the one party system was developed owing to the rising class conflict in Russia and the increasing external threat to the new revolutionary regime.
3. Political pluralism existed in other socialist countries e.g. Poland, Bulgaria, and China ...etc. Nonetheless, major mistakes were committed during these experiences, which marginalized the non-communist parties politically, albeit without destroying them, so much that they have continued to exist after the fall of the socialist regimes e.g. the Bulgarian Farmer's party and the Polish Peasants Party.

Concluding that there is no contradiction between socialism and political pluralism, some Arab Marxists believe that the package of 'liberal democracy and economic affluence' introduced recently by 'American imperialism' and its allies is a trap which will cause the Arabs to lose their independence and national sovereignty. Thus, they argue that:

1. The struggle for democracy is closely linked to the struggle for national liberation, sovereignty and independence.
2. The concept of democracy is much wider than political and civil liberties, important as they are. It should, by necessity, include equitable distribution of income on both the national and international levels (Bekdash, *Ibid*).

Other Arab socialists were more critical of the absence of democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as Arab societies. They were especially disappointed by the failure of Arab populist regimes with socialist

inclination, which failed to fulfil their expectations. The failure was attributed to the undemocratic nature of the regimes, which patronized the masses and appropriated their rights and initiatives to build their own society. This opinion maintains that while the Arab society has many common characteristics, due to the uneven development of its different parts, as well as, the adoption of different economic and social strategies, some signs of pluralism are showing. Arab pluralism is reflected in the existence of religious, national, cultural and political minorities, which has produced differentiated interests, and different levels of political awareness. In their opinion future Arab socialist society, should respect pluralism, eliminate discrimination and grant equal economic, social, cultural and political rights to all citizens. The mechanism for achieving this goal is nothing less than democracy. Learning from experience, they maintain that future socialist society should be based on a combination of different types of ownership of means of production i.e. public, private, cooperative and communal ownership. The economic system would be a mixture between planning and market mechanisms based on the principles of social justice. Political power under future socialism should not be monopolized by the state. A strong civil society should share political power, which would take the form of a wide front representing all social forces benefiting from socialist transformation. Thus, democratic pluralism is the only guarantee for bringing about this change through citizens' free choice and not through imposition (Shukr 1998:192-195).

According to this view, liberal democracy is a necessary mechanism for managing such pluralistic societies. However, liberal democracy cannot be truly representative unless social and economic democracy is realized. The suggested alternative to liberal representative democracy, therein, is participatory democracy in the form of elected popular councils, political and social organizations, trade unions and civil society organizations. Thus, building socialism would be achieved by the people and not on their behalf. This should, by necessity, provide mechanisms for the circulation of power, which obliges political groups to evaluate their actions and redress their mistakes (Shukr & El-Hilali 1998).

Everywhere now lines are drawn between the right, which strongly believes in the concentration of wealth and power and to this end is prepared to dismantle the welfare state and dispense with distributive justice, and the left which zealously believes in the redistribution of wealth and power in favour of underprivileged social groups. However, advocating social democracy as well as democratic pluralism, Third World scholars would be on firmer ground since these have turned out to be universal issues after the collapse of the ex-socialist societies, which helped to re-introduce the question of social

democracy in united Europe. The triumphant right wing could not consolidate the power of the bourgeoisie without making social democratic concessions. Furthermore, the new Eastern European regimes have discovered very quickly the negative impact of introducing liberal democracy without social democracy.

In Third World countries the struggle for social democracy entails a number of civil liberties. However, the people do not only want freedom of organizing and expressing their views, but they also want to have access to means of livelihood and a fair share of the national product, as well as access to decision making.

It is important at this point to highlight the fact that neo/liberal democracy is structurally linked to globalisation discourse and mechanisms, which are inherently antagonistic to social democracy, or any form of democracy that implies more equitable distribution of wealth among nations or among social groups within the same society. This reality places the struggle for social democracy within the context of anti-globalisation struggle.

Civil society and the state

Renewed global interest in civil society should be looked at as part of the globalisation agenda. On the level of discourse it is considered an essential component of the democratisation process. Operationally, civil society is being promoted as an alternative to the state, the functions of which should be minimized, so as to create the necessary conditions for globalisation.

History has shown that individual civil rights are not attributable to individual achievements but rather to social struggle. Bourgeois thinkers knew this during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Their problem was to reconcile individual freedom with the necessity of social organization. They resolved the issue by drawing a sharp distinction between the 'state' and 'civil society'. The state, however, was seen to impose its will on individuals. To protect them, the solution was that the individuals should insist on independent existence outside the state. Thus 'civil society' was seen as a 'community of private citizens who by virtue of their collective existence and political awareness guaranteed individual freedom'. This assumption was not totally true for two reasons. First, since civil society derives its strength from its organization into different social groups with different interests, it is likely to have social competition for power and for protecting common interests. In this case it is difficult to talk about the abstracted individual, as did the bourgeois thinkers. They, on the other hand, called on the state to guarantee and protect civil liberties. To realize this objective the state should have the right to overrule individuals or even groups.

The second point is that the counter position between the 'state' and 'civil society' is negated by the fact that civil society is not homogeneous. Part of civil society reflects the social character of the state and, thus, is organized to guarantee its social reproduction (Mafeje 1998). This part of civil society usually comes from among the elite, which controls economic and political processes to the exclusion of other social groups. Therefore, they are usually strong supporters of liberal democracy. In the meantime, being there, they vote for 'presidents for life' and entrench themselves in power through fraudulent use of the mechanisms of representative democracy. On the other hand, other parts of civil society, which represent social forces whose interests are opposed to the socio-economic and political regime, might organize themselves for the purpose of achieving social change. This part of civil society would usually develop into social movements, which create their own autonomous democratic space within civil society and engage dialectically with formal political and governmental institutions (Craissati 2000).

Given the differentiated nature of civil society relative to the state, structurally and institutionally, independence becomes a necessary condition for Arab CSOs democratic participation. Such independence is determined by two factors:

- The first is the nature of the dominant political regime as a point on a continuum between the two poles of authoritarianism and democracy. It should be noted that the degree of polarization towards either of the two extremes changes with historical and political instances, and the level of political and institutional development of the regime e.g. a change towards democracy is easier in countries, which tolerate, even to limited extent, political pluralism and have the relevant institutions such as, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Lebanon. While countries such as the Gulf States where democratic institutions are absent, the change would be more difficult.
- The second is the level of development of the civil society; institutionally, structurally and operationally; its civil, political and intellectual dynamism; its commitment to authentic representation of the social forces as its social base and source of legitimacy. A strong social base guarantees its protection from the pressure and hegemony of the state and/or any other external powers. The degree of development of civil society is also influenced by the existence or absence of civil culture based on dialogue and peaceful means for solving conflicts in society.

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between the state and civil society is dialectical and interactive. It develops through the dynamics and mechanisms of confronting contradictions and conflictual issues, which are determined by economic, social, cultural and political changes in society (El-Baz 1997:110-113). However, for proper understanding of the operational dynamics of civil society regarding its role in development and social change, it should be analysed according to one of the two paradigms in which CSOs operate, i.e. the functional and the structural paradigms (El-Bassam 1997).

According to the functional paradigm, the role of functional Civil society organisations (CSOs) falls mainly within the realm of philanthropy, welfare and service delivery functions. In developing countries CSOs have recently started some fragmented development activities in the context of the liberal policies of poverty reduction. These activities are void of any real meaning of comprehensive development. In this context, the role of functional CSOs is characterized as follows:

1. Through the welfare and service delivery activities, functional CSOs replace the state in its responsibilities for social services, especially within the context of ERSAPS.
2. By providing care and services to the impoverished and marginalized groups, functional CSOs reduce the social and political tensions emanating from severe social polarization and exclusion.
3. Although functional CSOs are increasingly playing an economic role i.e. generating income through production and employment activities, the selected activities aim at reducing part of poor people's hardship, rather than changing their social status by tackling the structural causes of social inequality, nor bringing about any radical change in the social system i.e. social transformation.
4. Functional CSOs are, as generally observed, politically conservative and thus work to maintain the status quo.
5. The welfare and service delivery role of functional CSOs does not enhance citizens' participation. Thus, some scholars consider this type of CSOs a mechanism for reproducing, the dominant patron/client relationship which historically dominated civil society all over the world (Landim 1992:3).

The structural paradigm is linked to the structural role of CSOs in the processes of development and social transformation. It is viewed, herein, as an institution and an essential actor in the social structure. Civil society thus become a

collective agent for social and political change. The role and characteristics of structured CSOs are as follows:

1. They play a balanced role with other institutions i.e. the state and the market and thus, are independent and not a residual category to any of them.
2. They acquire more permanent institutional characteristics as a sector with established rules and norms. Thus, their activities are usually planned rather than ad hoc reactions.
3. They transcend the welfare/service delivery functions, as a goal, to the comprehensive development role based on mobilization, advocacy, capacity building and empowerment of the target groups who would be prepared to become the de facto owners of the CSOs.
4. Through their role in advocacy and empowerment, they become a mobilizing force for integrating the people in a process of 'participatory development'. Civil society thus become an equal partner with the state and the private sector.
5. They play a militant role through their mobilizing and empowering mechanisms. They help people to develop critical abilities, which is the base for social creativity. Civil society thus becomes a collective agent for development and social change.

This type of CSOs are best exemplified by some grass-root NGOs in Latin America and Asia which aim at bringing about structural changes in society, and creating citizens who are able to militate for their social, economic and political rights.

It is worth noting that within the context of globalisation, Arab functional welfare and service-delivery CSOs are the dominant type, and they are strongly encouraged by international organizations, donor agencies, and Arab governments. Structural CSOs, though they rarely exist, are permanently harassed by governments.

Arab civil society/democracy and the state

In the last three decades Arab civil society grew rapidly in terms of size and role performance. However, this applies mostly to one part of Arab civil society i.e. NGOs. Unfortunately, NGOs are neither the best example for judging the strength of Arab civil society nor the best way of conceiving it. In order to have a lasting impact on their society, NGOs must attain a recognized institutional status for themselves i.e. become structural NGOs. In this part of the study reference will be made to three areas of Arab civil society,

which are relevant to the issue of democracy: Arab NGOs/state relationship, NGOs/beneficiary relationship, and democracy within Arab NGOs. The information in this part depends mainly on the findings of a comparative, theoretical and field study in ten Arab countries (El-Baz 1997).

Arab CSOs/state relations

The relationship between the state and Arab NGOs is influenced negatively by a number of factors i.e. the undemocratic nature of Arab regimes; the mutual lack of trust between the governments and the people; peoples' dependence on the government to serve and patronize them at the same time. Positively, the relationship is influenced by growing international interest in the role of NGOs; the governments' need for the NGOs welfare and service delivery activities as a result of adopting ERSAPS and pertinent reduction of public expenditure.

However, all Arab countries including those who adopted economic reform policies are showing strong resistance to 'democratisation'. While some of them adopt a limited form of liberal democracy, they maintain a strong control over political and civil actions. As a result, chances for the formation of structural CSOs are very limited. The few existing advocacy and empowerment CSOs are facing a lot of pressure from governments. Using legislation, among other things, as a tool for controlling civil society, Arab legislators have given vast prerogatives to governments over CSOs, from the time of their inception to their legal end. The study previously referred to (El-Baz 1997:132-135) underlined the following observations:

1. Despite the fact that a high percentage of CSOs' leaders said that the law and the relationship with the government did not affect the organizations' independence, many, particularly among the educated and the intellectuals, believed that there was a pressing need for legislative change so as to realize more independence and democracy for NGOs.
2. Arab governments maintain a contradictory and opportunistic attitude towards CSOs. On the one hand, they wish to activate the CSOs so that they can relieve governments from their social services responsibilities, especially within the ERSAP policies. On the other hand, they insist on keeping a strong hold on the sector. Hence, Arab governments practice the relationship in a functional and selective manner, which changes according to circumstances and to their objectives at different points of time.
3. External factors, as embodied in global interest in CSOs' participation, had a positive influence on the relation between the state and CSOs in most Arab countries in the study, except in the Gulf States where foreign influence is restrained by the governments. Although this was meant partly

to improve their image in the international arena, such positive influence was apparent both in the change in governments' formal discourse regarding CSOs in most Arab countries, and in the greater margin of tolerance shown by the state in dealing with them.

4. Arab CSOs, as functional CSOs operate in accordance with governments' policies. They accept the latter's control as a normal part of the relationship. In practice, there is no demarcation line between government and civil actions. This situation negates Arab CSOs independence, which is a precondition for the existence of an effectively functioning civil society.

CSOs/beneficiaries relations

With almost complete absence of Arab structural CSOs, the existing functional Arab NGOs, mainly the promotional type, maintain an undemocratic relationship with the beneficiaries/the target groups. Research results indicate that the relationship of CSOs with the target groups is a patronizing one i.e. a patron/client relationship. The CSOs see the target groups as incapable of identifying their own needs because they lack sufficient awareness. In this context CSOs act as if they have the monopoly of awareness, knowledge and, hence, the ability to make decisions on behalf of others. The target group's role is thus, reduced to sheer dependence on others for receiving aid, in utter negation of the requisites of development, which insist on peoples' real participation.

This kind of relationship could be attributed to the traditional spirit of Arab civil society which was originally associated with charity and welfare. Hence, the target groups were regarded as powerless, incapable, and permanently in need of assistance. Considering the target groups as potentially active social partners, who should be mobilized and empowered so as to participate in development processes. It may also be due to the prevalence of the charity and welfare functions of Arab NGOs over other functions. This tendency is likely to increase due to social polarization, rising poverty, and the withdrawal of the state from its responsibility for social services.

Democracy within Arab CSOs

Since the main objective of civil society organizations is to widen the scope for democratic participation. The democratic practice within the institutions themselves should become a basic component of their internal mechanisms; otherwise it would be rightly said that 'one cannot give what one does not have'. Research results (El-Baz 1997:99) show that in 92 per cent of Arab NGOs, election is the common tool for selecting Board members and chairpersons. In some Arab countries, a number of board members are appointed by the state, or by other institutions, such as donors' agencies, or religious

sects in control of NGOs. However, the prevalence of the election system is not, necessarily, an indication of real democratic practice. For elections are often a mere formal procedure. The result is the domination of the same leadership for years on end; so much so that some organizations are called by the name of their leaders, a phenomenon referred to as 'the personalization of NGOs'. Regarding circulation of power, the results reveal that 1 to 5 presidents have headed 82 per cent of the NGOs since their inception. By relating the number of presidents to the age of the organization, the results showed that the average number of years a president of the board of directors spends in his post is high in Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon. It is low in Tunisia and the Sudan where most of the NGOs are relatively new.

The results also revealed a difference in the number of Board members, being at its highest in Morocco, Palestine and the Sudan and lower in Egypt and the Gulf states. A smaller number of Board members reflect a greater concentration of power. As for the frequency of board meetings, there is a relationship between the high number of board meetings and the momentous role played by the NGO sector in society, especially in a situation of war or civil strife, where the role of the state is limited or even absent. Thus the average number of meetings was higher in Lebanon and Palestine than it was in other countries. Though the General Assembly is the main subject of the democratic process in CSOs, its role is still marginal. Thus, the president and the board of directors monopolize decision-making in Arab NGOs.

The practice of democracy in Arab non-governmental organizations is thus sheer formality, with power remaining in the hands of few individuals at the top.

Globalisation, democracy, and civil society

It has been argued throughout this chapter that while liberal democracy has been a central issue in the globalisation discourse, it has been practically negated by the very essence of the globalisation process i.e. its mechanism of social polarization, marginalization and exclusion of the impoverished majority from economic, social, and political processes.

Evidence suggests that, liberal democracy, as practised in globalised under-developing countries of the South, has become a prerogative of the corrupt economic elite, in alliance with autocratic political regimes. Meanwhile, social democracy, as a subject for peoples' struggle and socio-economic empowerment, is being denied as an obstacle for capital accumulation / economic growth, which are necessary conditions for the integration in the global market. In the same context, globalisation discourse and mechanisms are promoting and advocating civil society, as a mechanism for people's democratic participation in the development processes.

However, examining the impact of globalisation on CSOs of the South, including Arab CSOs, highlights the following observations:

- The promotion of civil society in the South is structurally linked with the diminishing role of the state as a requirement for accelerating globalisation processes. The fact that the strong and effective civil societies of the North have developed along with the development of strong and well-established States, is usually ignored. Civil society in this context is used as a globalisation mechanism. In this respect, international donors blindly support, and sometimes encourage CSOs in their conflict with their Arab governments, with the objective of weakening the state.
- Arab CSOs are subject to the same global unequal division of labour/power of their countries. This is reflected in Arab CSOs' residual/dependent status within global CSOs networks. Their representation in the Boards of global networks is mostly ceremonial. The candidates are usually selected from among the supporters of globalisation agendas, which are formulated in the global centres and thus, do not reflect the needs and rights of Arab societies. The specific interests of Arab societies are, therein, ignored and mystified through advocating false issues, such as global citizenship and global village. In this respect, the prevailing undemocratic international relations, which is a characteristic of globalisation, is reproduced to characterize the relationship between Arab and International CSOs and thus, help to perpetuate the unequal power relations globally.
- Recruitment of national CSOs by external/global powers, to realize political objectives in accordance with globalisation agenda. CSOs are used to undermine political regimes and to change socio-economic and political systems, e.g. the role played by the CSOs in undermining socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries (Soros 1991). This role is being played in some Arab societies, especially in war situations or in areas where social and political conflicts could weaken, or lead to the dissipation of the state. In this context, foreign funding becomes an important area for investigation.
- Global institutions, UN and donor agencies adopt the functional definition of CSOs based on welfare and service delivery functions. The practice of development activities by these CSOs is mostly limited to local community development projects, with the objective of improving the standard of living of the target groups. Most funded projects tend to serve globalisation policies and principles, e.g.

promoting market economy and neo liberal values. The donors' intentions do not include changing the social position of, or empowering the target groups. The latter are thus, kept as receivers of help in a patron/client, dependent relationship. Under this conditions the target groups could neither have access to participatory democratic mechanisms, nor to be transformed to positive agents for development.

This practice by functional Arab CSOs is antithetical/impeding to the mobilizing and empowering role of structural CSOs as mechanisms for transforming the people to become active agents for development and social change, within the context of real participatory social democracy. Only structural civil society can become a mechanism for participatory democracy. However, this form of civil society is being strongly curtailed and undermined by both globalisation policies and autocratic regimes.

On the other hand, globalisation has also had a positive impact on Arab CSOs. New opportunities for Arab CSOs were created. They were able to have contact with CSOs from both the South and the North through networking and meetings in international forums. They could develop their capacities by exchanging views, and learning from each other's experience.

Despite the suspicion cast on foreign funding, some Arab CSOs benefited from funding by international CSOs with humanistic world vision. The benefits were much higher when the targets were related to CSOs' capacity-development. Embryonic forms of Arab structural CSOs are beginning to emerge, especially in the areas of environment, gender empowerment, and some human rights organizations. Moreover, some Arab structural CSOs are developing into social movements, and becoming active in the ever-expanding anti-globalisation campaigns. Internally, they are forming a base for the struggle for real democracy i.e. participatory social democracy.

Conclusion

Despite the existence of a limited democratic margin in some Arab societies, real democratic participation does not exist. Globalisation, structurally defined, leads increasingly to socially polarized societies with unequal distribution of wealth and, consequently, unequal access to social, economic and political opportunities. The impoverished and marginalized social majority are excluded from participating in the development processes. In globalised Arab societies, more citizens and classes are marginalized every day through globalisation mechanisms. In this context talking about liberal democracy is a negation of the citizen's rights to real participation.

In Arab societies deformed liberal democracy has been reflected on civil society's functional performance, setting limits on its possible transformation to a structural agent for development and social change. Globalisation and

Arab autocratic regimes have led Arab civil society to be reproduced in conformity with the undemocratic forms dominating the Arab political scene.

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