

The Intellectual Dimension of Democratic Transition in Iraq After 2003

Prof. Dr. Zeyad Jihad Hamad

University of Aliraqia, Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Principal

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Abstract

This research is trying to highlight the intellectual dimension of the democratic transformation in Iraq after 2003 AD. The research is divided into two main topics: the first topic is titled “ the intellectual dimension of the democratic transformation”. While the second topic was titled “ the reality of the experience democratic transition in Iraq after 2003 AD ”. Finally, the research ended with a conclusion including important conclusions and then reference list.

Key words: *the intellectual dimension; the democratic transformation in Iraq after 2003 AD.*

1. Introduction

Addressing the topic of democratic transition comes as a reaction to and result of the profound crisis experienced by authoritarian regimes that have lost their flexibility and ability to adapt to socio-political and economic changes. Internal and external factors significantly influence this transition. We must understand that democratic transition does not necessarily represent a path to prosperity, freedom, and good governance. Rather, it depends on the quality of the political institutions that emerge from the transitional phase and their effectiveness in addressing inherited and emerging problems. Studying democratic transition raises numerous hypotheses and adds new experiences. The intellectual dimension of the transition to democracy is at the forefront of the dimensions and factors influencing democratic transition. The nature of authoritarian rule, its deviation in exercising power, the widening gap between the authoritarian ruler and the ruled, and the lack of legitimacy of authoritarian power make raising the topic of democratic transition an urgent necessity, especially after peoples subjugated by authoritarian rule realized that there was no escape from confronting authoritarian regimes, fed up with intellectual, political, social, and economic stagnation. Democratic transition refers to the gradual process of transitioning from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. Indicators of the validity of the transition process include the erosion of the authoritarian regime and the emergence of a reformist and conservative elite within it; the emergence of civil society institutions and their strong influence in monitoring power, realizing individual demands, and wresting power from them; and the emergence of effective political parties that express real, not superficial, pluralism and work to curb the reins of authoritarian power through organizing demonstrations, protests, and the language of conscious political opposition,

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on the one hand; and, on the other hand, a commitment to implementing their electoral programs and promises made to voters during the election season. In short, democratic transition is witnessing the emergence of political actors on the political scene, after previously being characterized by a single authoritarian political color. It also means the process by which the exercise of political power becomes less arbitrary and less exclusionary of others, influenced by a set of internal factors that are inseparable in their nature of influence from external factors, variables and international circumstances. Addressing the nature of democratic empowerment in Arab countries in general and Iraq in particular is an issue with a certain specificity, as it assumes addressing the issue from all its aspects, as it is a problem that concerns the authority as it concerns the citizen, affects the state as it affects society, and concerns the ruler as it constitutes a concern for the government. The matter is not limited to that only, as democracy deals with the form of government, the behavior of the rulers and its system, the nature of the state and its objectives, the relations of the parties in the political process as a whole, and the adjustment of the relations of social forces and their balances. Hence, democracy in Arab countries attracts the attention of the feelings of their people as much as it affects the interests of other forces. The issue of democratic transformation has received and continues to receive special importance in view of the developments and transitions towards democracy witnessed by the political systems in the Middle East, and the importance of the change that occurred in Iraq on April 9, 2003. This change in Iraq provided an opportunity to set foot on the path of democratic transformation and its stages and steps. However, this transformation faces many internal obstacles that interact with external influences, "regional and international," according to different stages, positions, and variables.

2. Basic foundations of research

2.1 The Research importance : The importance of the research lies in clarifying the intellectual dimensions that influence the process of democratic transformation in light of the developments and transitions towards democracy witnessed by the political systems in the Middle East countries in general, and what Iraq witnessed after 2003 in particular. Therefore, it was necessary to research in depth the influential intellectual dimensions and clarify their importance as a reference that can be used by researchers of this important topic.

2.2 The Research problematic : The research problem emerges in the case of Iraq as a model, as Iraq has been under the rule of the Baath Party for four decades, which is the authoritarian dictatorial rule from which Iraq has suffered greatly as a result of the policies of this repressive fascist regime. Therefore, the attempt at democratic transformation will witness great difficulties, at the forefront of which are intellectual difficulties represented in spreading a true democratic culture among the Iraqi people, as they have learned in the atmosphere of dictatorship and the one-party system, and the extent of their acceptance of the other and the extent of society's acceptance of multi-party system and the idea of majority rule and respect for the minority and the game of exchanging roles in the political process and the peaceful transfer of power.

2.3 The Research Hypothesis

The research is based on the hypothesis the topic of democratic transformation is broad and vast, and that we will address the intellectual aspects of the democratic transformation process in Iraq after 2003. Because the democratic transformation process in Iraq is still nascent and at the beginning of its journey, it requires persistent efforts to preserve what has been achieved and strive to develop it. Therefore, discussing the impact of intellectual dimensions on the democratic transformation process has become an urgent scientific necessity.

2.4 The Research methodology : adopted the analytical approach, and this approach serves as a guide and proof that the researcher used to reach the desired results and goals by employing the foundations of the approach, its elements, and steps to reach the desired results. The descriptive approach was also adopted throughout the research.

2.5 The Research structure: The research was divided into two main topics : The first topic was entitled“ The intellectual dimension of the democratic transformation process. ”,while the second topic was entitled“ The reality of the democratic transformation experience in Iraq after 2003 AD ”.Then the research ended with a conclusion that included the most important conclusions, followed by a list of source.

3. The Intellectual Dimension of the Democratic Transition Process.

Before delving into the intellectual dimension of the democratic transformation process, it is necessary for us to shed light on the definition of democratic transformation, albeit quickly. This process means: [The decline of dictatorial systems of government in all their forms and colors, to be replaced by other systems of government that rely on genuine popular choice, legitimate political institutions, and free and fair elections. When we say that elections must be free and fair, it means that individuals enjoy individual and collective freedoms, and limits are placed on the work of the executive authority to prevent its arbitrariness and injustice against citizens. These elections are a means of exchanging power and accessing it, and this is an alternative to authoritarian rule and the violation of laws and the constitution. For others, it means: the process by which the exercise of political power becomes less brutal and oppressive to citizens, and the will of tyranny is broken, whether this tyranny is that of one individual or the tyranny of the majority. This type appears when individual and collective freedoms are absent, without defining the powers of the state. Democracy is the tyranny of the majority representatives who are impossible to choose in free and fair elections in the absence of freedoms. (Fayez Rabie, 2004, p. 179).

The topic of democratic transition gains relevance in light of its presence as a system of government that societies groaning under the yoke of tyranny and oppression can aspire to. It is the only alternative proposed globally to various types of authoritarian regimes. (Azmi Bishara: 2020, p. 15)

The three essential components of any transition to democracy are : (Azmi Bishara, 2020, p. 15)

3.1 First: Political participation based on the equality of value among citizens, as citizens are capable of distinguishing between good and evil, and have the right to participate in determining their fate and influence public decisions that affect their lives .

In general, this is primarily represented by periodic, fair elections for the legislative authority (in a parliamentary system) or legislative and executive elections (in a presidential system), without reducing this participation to elections.

3.2 Second: The rule of law prevails, and limits are placed on power to prevent its abuse. This means defining legislative and executive powers:

- i. By term, through periodic, transparent, and fair elections.
- ii. By powers, by distributing them among various institutions, thus achieving balance and a degree of mutual oversight between them using multiple tools.

- 3.3 Third: Guaranteeing the political rights and civil liberties that the second component (the rule of law) protects and safeguards. Without these, the first component (political participation) becomes impossible or is practiced only formally.

The democratic transition process goes through several important stages, the most prominent of which are : (Ibtisam Al-Kutbi et al.: 2004, pp. 62-65):

- 3.4 The stage of the collapse of the authoritarian regime: This stage begins when indicators of the erosion of the authoritarian regime appear on the horizon, such as conflict and division within the regime's structure, the division of its political elite between reformists and conservatives, and the growing degree of independence of civil society institutions, making them more independent and powerful. This leads to a political crisis within the regime, ultimately paving the way for a democratic transition.

However, it should be noted that the establishment of a democratic regime may not necessarily follow the collapse of the authoritarian regime, as this collapse may result in another form of regime.

Authoritarianism leads to circumventing the democratic experience in a country that wants to bring about a democratic transformation process.

- 3.5 The transition phase: This represents the period of time required to transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one, punctuated by the possibility of a regression from democracy. This phase is described as the transitional stage between the collapse of authoritarianism and the transition to democracy. It should be noted that this phase reflects the level of maturity of popular sectors, reflecting the responsibilities placed upon them in the need to emerge from authoritarianism, combat it, and disseminate the democratic ideology that lays the foundation for the transition phase.
- 3.6 The stage of supporting democratic transition: This is the next stage before the transition occurs, in order to prevent setbacks in the transition process. Ensuring so-called "procedural democracy" during the transition phase does not mean that the regime has been permanently stabilized or that it is on a smooth path toward consolidation and the consolidation of democracy. The essence of this phase is the acceptance by political actors of the legitimacy of all new institutions .
- 3.7 The stage of democratic maturity: This is the stage in which true democracy is achieved. This stage aims to establish the new model of democratic institutions in preparation for the maturation and growth of the concept of democracy in society. At this stage, economic democracy is achieved, which works to achieve an equal pattern for the distribution of goods and services. At this stage, social democracy is also achieved, which grants all segments of society the same degree of rights to political participation.

Samuel Huntington identified five causes of democratic transition : (Samuel Huntington, 1991, p. 33)

- i. Contagion: When the people of a particular country begin to demand democracy, neighboring countries are affected, and the citizens of those countries begin to demand reform from their governments, as happened, for example, in the third wave of democracy in Eastern Europe in 1991.

- ii. Collapse of an authoritarian government: When the existing regime is unable to provide for the basic needs of its citizens and maintain the political system, citizens demand reform, even revolution, to rebuild the local order. One example of this is the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was partly caused by economic recession.
- iii. Economic growth: The liberal concept suggests that increased economic growth creates a middle class, which in turn demands opportunities to engage in the political process. In such cases, social mobilization becomes rapid, diminishing the legitimacy of the authoritarian government. Examples of this include what happened in South Korea and Taiwan.
- iv. The choice of political leaders :This is considered one of the main keys that come from the ruling elite, especially when leaders become aware that democratic transformation is the only solution to maintain the current regime. Political leaders begin the process of democratic transformation. For example, the former President of South Africa, Frederik Willem de Klerk, led South Africa to become a democratic state by making numerous amendments that ended the era of apartheid. He also led several dialogues with the African National Council, led by Nelson Mandela, which led to the formation of the first multi-racial government .
- v. The Influence of Non-State Actors: Actions taken by international organizations or foreign states exert pressure on authoritarian regimes. For example, the collapse of Marcos in the Philippines was the result of international pressure, particularly from the United States Of America.

Just as there are causes behind democratic transition, there are patterns of this transition, the most prominent of which are : (Firas Al-Bayati, 2013, pp. 22-24)

- i. The pattern of democratic transition following historical social revolutions, such as those that occurred in Britain in 1688, the United States in 1776, France in 1789, and Romania against the rule of Nicola Ceaușescu in the late twentieth century.
- ii. The pattern of transition under the authority of occupation or in cooperation with it, such as the role of the British occupation in India and the role of the American occupation in Iraq after 2003. However, the success of this pattern does not depend solely on the will of the occupying state, but rather on the adoption of democratic values and procedures by the elites in the occupied country.
- iii. The pattern of transformation under the management of an enlightened democratic elite. This is a pattern of transformation that comes after the collapse of authoritarian regimes, the death of the authoritarian ruler, or a military defeat that strips him of his legitimacy, leading to the arrival of democratic elites who manage the transformation process and choose to impose constitutional restrictions on their exercise of power, such as the death of General Franco in Spain in 1976.
- iv. The pattern of tactical political openness that leads to unexpected democratic demands. This pattern begins with the ruling elites attempting to determine the duration of their stay in power by showing a little flexibility and tactical or gradual political openness, such as allowing the existence of small opposition political parties or clubs and cultural groups, then restricting them from building independent popular bases. The ruling elite is then unable to halt the reform process through the opposition. However, this pattern requires the strength and agreement of the opposition and does not apply to a weak or fragmented opposition, such as the "former" Soviet Union under President Mikhail Gorbachev.
- v. The pattern of authoritarian elites contracting to withdraw from political life after the cost of repression and violence against the masses increases, such that the ruler is unable to cover the costs of repression and, at the same time, cannot manage the democratic transition process. Therefore, the best possible alternative for the ruling elite is to withdraw from political life after signing a contract guaranteeing them a political amnesty with

certain privileges, and pledging not to stand in the way of the new democratic authority, such as the withdrawal of Chilean President Pinochet from political life in Chile in 1990.

As for Arab countries, democratic culture represents a major obstacle to the consolidation of democratic values in Arab societies. The thinker Ali al-Din Hilal emphasized that the practice of democracy cannot grow or flourish in a climate of apprehension and suspicion of others, one pervaded by conspiracy theories and suspicion that other parties harbor ulterior motives and hidden, undeclared goals. The democratic transition process cannot be managed according to the logic of wars of extermination—that whoever is not with me is against me—or according to the logic of a political faction leader who holds all the solutions to the state's problems and that other parties must submit to him and accept his policies. The success of the democratic transition process requires us to address and remedy the state of fragmentation, societal disintegration, and lack of trust in state institutions. We must work to restore the rule of law and ensure the independent functioning of judicial institutions to achieve justice and consolidate legal principles. (Ali al-Din Hilal, 1983, pp. 11-13)

Hence, we find that the qualitative distinction between democratic systems of government from one country to another is an expression of the achievements of the democratic transition process, the stability of the democratic culture in society, and the evolution of practice. Scholars of democracy believe that the current stage of it is still far from the ideal democracy that democrats seek to approach through the ongoing and extended process of democratic transformation, where democracy corrects its course through its mechanisms as long as The people, in word and deed, are the source of authority. No one individual or minority has sovereignty over the majority, with the majority respecting the minority. The principle of citizenship remains fully and equally applied to all citizens without discrimination. (Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, 2013, p. 144)

Experts in democratic transition studies believe that there are commitments that the transitional authorities must adhere to in order to achieve the democratic transition process, as follows : (Mohamed El-Mukhtar Ould El-Saad and Mohamed Abdel-Hay, 2009, pp. 48-52)

- i. Respecting the principles of democracy.
- ii. Organizing and conducting all elections within their specified deadlines without delay for any reason.
- iii. Organizing a referendum on constitutional amendments that guarantee the rotation of power.
- iv. Impartiality of the committee, the government, the central and regional administration, and the judiciary during the electoral process and the transitional period.
- v. Establish fair mechanisms for financing political parties, identify their sources of funding, and halt these funding sources if they are foreign. Parties that receive funds and assets from abroad will be a docile tool implementing the agendas of the state funding this or that party.
- vi. Conduct a comprehensive awareness campaign for the various electoral stages and instill a conscious political culture among all segments of society.
- vii. Prepare sound electoral lists and establish a grievance mechanism with the Independent Election Commission and the courts.
- viii. The transitional authorities pledge to consider reviewing the voting system and the weighting of electoral districts to ensure greater fairness between the number of voters and the percentage of population in each electoral district.
- ix. Respect the Independent Election Commission and provide it with the necessary means for its work.

- x. Organize free and fair elections that respect the requirements of democratic practice and invite international observers to monitor the elections.
 - xi. Return to the constitutional system following the installation of elected democratic institutions. The armed forces and security forces will then return to the role defined for them by the constitution and the law and will then refrain from any participation in public political life.
 - xii. Respect the rule of law and public freedoms, and ensure full compliance with the law, whether as rulers or ruled.
 - xiii. Guarantee the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution upon return to the constitutional system: freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and freedom of assembly.
 - xiv. Guarantee pluralism, both intellectual and political, as pluralism is the fundamental component of democratic theory.
 - xv. Freedom of pluralism in the audiovisual sector and the establishment of a supervisory and regulatory committee to carry out this role.
 - xvi. Enact a new press law that is compatible with the post-democratic transition phase and repeal all outdated provisions that restrict the freedom of the press and journalists.
 - xvii. Establishing a human rights committee and facilitate the return of refugees who were exiled and displaced due to the policies of the dictatorial regime, facilitating their integration and reclaiming their rights, including employment.
 - xviii. Take all necessary measures to prohibit slavery, overcome its consequences, and prevent its recurrence.
 - xix. Respect the rule of law and establish the necessary measures to safeguard the status of judges, establish a code of conduct for them, strengthen the General Inspectorate of the Judiciary, and provide judicial police assistance to judges. Reform the judiciary, train existing judges, and organize intensive training courses for judges to educate them on contemporary legal concepts. Ensure that only those with a sound understanding and training in contemporary law succeed.
 - xx. Implement the recommendations of the committee charged with judicial reform, and update, review, and adapt the texts.
 - xxi. Propose amendments to legal texts that are inconsistent with the law and constitutional freedoms within a maximum period of three years from the date of the Constitution's entry into force, and ratify international human rights laws.
 - xxii. Change the pattern of governance and develop a national strategy to combat all forms of corruption and bribery. Engage NGOs and international experts in the preparation of this plan and consultations on it.
 - xxiii. Establish special courts to try any official proven to be involved in corruption and bribery, and sentence them to the maximum penalty as a lesson to others and the public, and return the stolen funds to the state treasury.
 - xxiv. Work diligently to raise per capita income through the equitable distribution of national wealth and the development of strategic plans to combat poverty, unemployment, and inflation. Raise the level of education and improve its quality by improving solid scientific curricula and building new schools and universities. Care must be taken to enhance the health sector by strengthening infrastructure, building hospitals and health centers, and sending doctors on scientific missions to European and Western countries to develop their skills.
- We believe that if these pledges and the aforementioned steps were implemented on the ground in every country that witnessed a political transition from a dictatorial, tyrannical regime to a democratic system, this regime and this country that witnessed this change would be at the pinnacle of political glory that any country aspires to, because democracy can only be achieved by accepting pluralism and differences, resolving disputes peacefully, the peaceful transfer of power, ensuring the integrity of periodic elections, conscious political participation of the masses, selecting the

development program that is most appropriate for society, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, organization and political action, the independence and integrity of the judiciary, and the dissemination of a conscious political culture that contributes to creating an understanding among citizens that their country is everything in their life and that they know their rights and duties.

4. The Reality of the Democratic Transition Experience in Iraq after 2003.

After the overthrow of the former regime on April 9, 2003 by the American and British occupation forces, we can classify the pattern of Political transition that took place after this date as a pattern of transition under the authority of occupation, such as the role of the American occupation on April 9, 2003, as we mentioned previously in the patterns of democratic transition.

The process of Democratic Transformation requires requirements, the most important of which are : cultural – intellectual requirements, and social – economic requirements. Since the 1980 s, this process has become so broad and comprehensive that it has cast its shadow over the middle East region, especially Iraq after April 9, 2003. (Robalyn Stone and Michael Young, 2014, pp.330- 331).

American decision-makers confuse means with ends, thus continuing to view themselves as consistent and immune from accusations of double standards or hypocrisy. This is important for Improving their self- image when they adhere to their values and interests. Such precise terminology is a source of real confusion and bewilderment for many in the Arab World who recognize the glaring contradictions between the united states stated objectives and its stated goals and its actual behavior. The confusion in understanding is generally due to the fact that the term itself (democracy, for example) actually denotes different meaning (such as verbal action or de facto policy as opposed to the democratic process). (Amr Thabet: 2006, pp. 46- 47).

The process of democratic transformation is a gradual, step by step process that requires establishing a democratic culture among the governed who were entrenched under the yoke of dictatorial, tyrannical rule, so that they are qualified to understand the philosophy and idea of democracy and what it means in terms of popular sovereignty of the nation and the choice of the founding authority established for the democratic constitution as a new social contract that paves the fertile ground for the establishment of free and fair elections based on Genuine political participation of voters in choosing their representatives in parliament and establishing the rule of law and strong, independent civil society institutions as components of democracy. (Patrick Clausen: 2005, p. 30)

The democratic transition process in Iraq has faced and continues to face many obstacles, the most prominent of which are:

4.1 The weakness and division of society: After the establishment of the modern Iraqi state in August 2021, Iraqi society was composed of ethnicities and sects that coexisted under a centralized state, but each had its distinct entity, characterized by its own beliefs, traditions, rituals, associations, institutions, leadership, and positions. These human groups, ideologically divided yet seemingly united under a single centralized state, were, from a societal perspective, the primary collective reality to be taken into account. This was because the distinct entity of each group produced and continued to nurture a sectarian sentiment on the one hand and a national sentiment on the other, in the face of which all other forms of social cohesion diminished. Some leaderships, which may be correctly called "feudalisms, played a major role that was not in the interest of the Iraqi social formation when the interests of political feudalism were linked to the social division into sects and nationalities. Political feudalism exploited the sectarian reality on the one hand and the national reality on the other to protect its interests and feed its ambitions to possess the reins of leadership within its limited environment. The external powers (Britain) on the one hand (based on the well-

known policy of divide and rule) and the (feudal) rulers on the other hand, and based on the same policy and approach, fed the basis of the social division until it became a socio-political system in which the interests of the external powers intersected with the interests of the rulers who ruled without true legitimacy, with the interests of internal groups that can be called political feudalism based on their roles and approaches. Thus, the state of division in Iraqi political society was sown, nurtured, and grew—sometimes apparent, sometimes hidden—into sectarianism on one side, and nationalism on the other side due to the policies of coercion, marginalization, and brutality of, which deepened under the rule of the former Ba'athist regime that ruled Iraq for four decades, It was absorbed into the souls under the weight of, and as a political reaction to eras that ranged from a parliamentary monarchy representing a foreign master (the British), to military dictatorship, backwardness, personal ambitions, and shortsightedness to a state of peak tyranny. (Judge Nabil Abdul Rahman Hayawi, (w. d.) , pp. 117-118)

The causes of the state of division in Iraqi political society are historical, and therefore should not be considered an unavoidable fate, because everything historical, with its causes and forms, is subject to the dictionary of change and disappearance. Political sectarianism was born as a result of specific historical circumstances and turbulent political conditions, while national extremism arose and grew as a result of the same circumstances and conditions. Consequently, both tendencies—political sectarianism and nationalism—are ultimately subject to the fate of those historical circumstances and factors. The advanced analysis was necessary at a critical, comprehensive stage that Iraqi society is experiencing today. The proper path to diagnosis and treatment lies in studying how the pillars of sectarianism, on the one hand, and nationalism, on the other, support each other, so that we can understand how those pillars upon which the state of division is based can be shaken and collapsed. This is because comprehensive, objective awareness of the sectarian reality, on the one hand, and the national reality, on the other hand, is a basic and necessary condition, even more essential, for working to change and replace them with a unified socio-political system that is aware of and committed to the common interest, and that realizes—as individuals and human groups united by religious doctrine or national affiliation—that common value is a supreme goal that unites them. Society arises and continues as a result of its individuals' sense that there is a common value and a unified goal that unites them. The common interest does not mean the interests of individuals, nor the interests of the human groups that make up society, nor the interest of the state as a state, but rather the good of society as a whole, that is, the society within which individuals and groups as members forming an institution, which is the state. The philosopher Aristotle said, " People continue to live in society not merely to live, but to live a better life." Living together presupposes harmony between individuals, groups, and segments of society, which inevitably leads to prosperity and through which the common interest is achieved. This harmony is achieved .(When feces special goals into individuals and groups achieve common good and unity of society because unless there is agreement , The intersection occurs, which leads to conflict, and the unity of society is exposed to disintegration, and the common good becomes prey to the conflicting forces. Harmony is not based on the material element – expressed by interests – alone, but rather on the spiritual element that lies in the Harmony of feeling, and this Harmony is embodied in the idea of the country. No society can remain united unless its members feel the need to participate emotionally in the social whole that they constitute. The country is the tangible social reality, and it is one of the basic sources of collective movement. Without the country, there is no strong, unified society with a balanced Political system. (Judge Nabil Abdul Rahman Hayawi, (w. d.) , pp.118-121).

Diagnosing what is wrong with our contemporary Iraqi society is essential to laying the foundations for a new political society free of ills, flaws, and the causes of division and discord. It is a comprehensive society whose components all aspire to a common value that unifies their aspirations and goals, while maintaining and respecting secondary affiliations within the context of a general atmosphere of freedom and equality. The question that arises is, what did Iraqis truly lack that would enable them, in all their diversity, to integrate into a comprehensive society with a shared value? Or, in other words, what is the common factor that could make the entire Iraqi people a comprehensive society with a shared value? To answer this question, it is important to look back at the past, at the reality of the Iraqi people

until April 9, 2003. Until the eve of the historical moment represented by the aforementioned situation, society was divided into several types of divisions. On the socio-economic level, there was a conflict that was sometimes apparent and sometimes hidden or repressed. On the level of power, there were conflicts, tensions, and contradictions within the ruling class, on the one hand, and between it and the ruling party, on the other hand, confronting a people stripped of the rights of organization and freedom of belief, as well as all other political rights. On the level of general social conditions, society was divided: Arabs confronted Kurds; Kurds confronted Arabs and Turkmen; moderate Sunnis confronted their extremists; and moderate Shiites confronted their extremists. And Extremists within both sects were confronted with each other, on the one hand, and with their origins, on the other, not to mention the confrontation with the regime and its single party. For the Kurds, their hopes and aspirations as a distinct ethnic group were summed up in gaining recognition of their distinctive national characteristics, the right to use their language, the right to respect for their culture and traditions, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to a form of self-administration, given the specificity of their presence within a specific geographical area, as they constituted the absolute majority there. After a long and bitter struggle with successive governments of varying nature since the beginning of national rule, they were able to extract the (Autonomy Law) , which recognized their national rights and established the foundations of self-rule for the Kurdistan region. If we trace the history of the Kurdish issue, we find that with every negative development like power and every deterioration in the conditions of democracy, freedom, and equality, the Kurdish struggle increased in ferocity, intellectual depth, and crystallization. With the increase in repression and the division of the Kurdish ranks, the situation reached the worst imaginable level of distrust and widening gap, which created within the Kurds a state of conviction, if not faith, that coexistence with the (Arab governments) was close to impossible, and that the solution was a kind of autonomy, or a condition between autonomy and independence—more than autonomy but short of complete independence.

Based on this belief—out of conviction or faith based on the developments that followed the granting of self-rule — they began to think about the need for such an entity to have material and geographical support, so they began to call for expanding the area of Iraqi Kurdistan to include other regions. Their struggle also narrowed down to a specific national scope, and a feeling of alienation from Iraqi society appeared in the (Iraqi Kurdish) body. One began to hear phrases such as: "I am a Kurd, not an Iraqi," or the language of discrimination between the Kurdish people and the Arab people in Iraq. In reality, Iraqi society, as a - comprehensive society- , a significant part of it has alienated itself, and its struggle has transformed from a struggle for the comprehensive whole to a limited, partial struggle. This alienation served the fascist Ba'ath regime, which relied on dividing the ranks. It is also an alienation that weakened the unity of ranks necessary for the comprehensive and total society in a historical confrontation that required unity of thought and struggle for the goal of (all) : freedom and democracy. (Judge Nabil Abdul Rahman Hayawi, (w.d.) , pp. 121-124)

On the other hand, Iraqi Arabs were divided among themselves, and the prevailing feeling was that the followers of the Ja'fari school of thought (Shiites) were the party opposing or directly intersecting with the authority. The repressive apparatus of the fascist Ba'ath regime, from the very top down, viewed all the movements of Shiite scholars with caution and suspicion and treated the practice of Shiite rituals harshly, even repressively, and prohibited them. They inflicted brutal and liquidated blows on all those who belonged to Shiite religious parties, especially the Islamic Dawa party and the rest of the Shiite Political forces and Movements, which created a growing feeling of sectarian oppression, and made the greater part of the Iraqi people, from the entire or comprehensive society, separate themselves in their struggle and aspirations from the cause of the afflicted whole. At the same time, followers of the other sect (Sunnis) were suffering from two things : first : an authority that looked with suspicion and hostility at every committed religious trend, and fought with pressure, coercion, and all kinds of oppression every tendency toward a bloc, organization, or party, and suppress it mercilessly. The second : the feeling of being falsely accused

that the government is " sunni – oriented" or that " The sunnis are the rulers and enjoy spoils of power", and that they are the source of tyranny. This has caused this section of Iraqi society to withdraw and withdraw from the struggle for the sake of the comprehensive whole. Under the pressure of a sense of injustice from the ruling authority on the one hand, and further alienation from the other sect on the second hand, and from the Kurds on the third hand. (Judge Nabil Abdul Rahman Hayawi,(w.d.) , p.124)

The answer to the specific question we posed is : what did the Iraqis lack in order to unite together into a comprehensive community with a shared value, or what is the common Factor that could become a shared value that unites them as a comprehensive or inclusive community?

By diagnosing the conditions of the Iraqi society sections and situations, we will find that democracy and justice are what were lacking in the lives of Iraqis. Democracy is the first common factor that can unite them and make them a complete or comprehensive society. Under true justice – comprehensive – they arrive as a single society to adopt it as a foundation and moral value by implementing the principles of equality and the rule of law that applies to both rulers and ruled, If everyone's efforts were united in the struggle for true democracy, not fake or superficial democracy, as a common value and as a way and key to achieving comprehensive justice, the parts of this society would not have been torn apart. And when the people were divided, even if democracy had actually and truly prevailed, there would be no need for the (sections) of the Iraqi people to struggle over (sharing) the legacy of power, and to enter into competitions over who would present the best plans to establish an authority that would win the title of (the weakest authority) in order to prevent any oppression or tyranny in the future. (Judge Nabil Abdul Rahman Hayawi,(w.d.) , p.125

4.2 Corruption: Corruption is widespread in all types of political systems, to varying degrees, although some downplay the extent of corruption in democratic states and exaggerate its significance in countries with totalitarian regimes. It must be noted first that democracy does not mean solving all the escalating problems inherited from dictatorial regimes. A problem such as corruption worsens in the early stages of democratic transition. The first years of transition to democracy often witness widespread social frustration, and some members of society tend to express their nostalgia for dictatorship due to what they perceive as a prior disappointment. This is partly an expression of resentment toward a chaotic and unclear reality. The end of a dictator's rule does not mean the end of corruption; rather, there is a stage of arduous work, as a dictatorial regime is one based on the exclusion of the majority. It may fight corruption not so much to please the people as to limit corruption to the circle loyal to it, which enters into a relationship of mutual assistance with the authorities to ensure their loyalty. During the transition process, corruption may spread and cause weakness authority and the rise of new political elites are attempting to improve their economic situation and strengthen their standing in the political arena. Moreover, democracy is based on the distribution of authority rather than concentrating it in one hand. This distribution of authority is accompanied by the distribution of resources, opening additional channels for illicit enrichment, and the use of public funds to serve private interests and loyalists. Most dangerous of all, if everyone practices corruption and tolerates it to cover up all corrupt parties, then the role of accountability, parliament, and oversight bodies ends. We reach a stage where an integrity commission may also fail to fulfill its role and become incapable of doing so. Therefore, it is impossible to talk about purifying and developing the political system to advance toward democracy without combating corruption which is an important component of this effort. (Shahd Ghaleb Ali, 2024, p. 1)

Democracy does not provide solutions to all economic problems. It is a governance mechanism that relies on the efficient use of inputs and their quality, such as well-thought-out plans, new programs, and sound decisions.

Furthermore, corruption is not only a political and economic problem but is, at its core, a moral problem. Therefore all democracies have failed to eradicate corruption, including those established democracies in the West. Scandals of political, financial, and administrative corruption have shaken Italy and Spain and have recently emerged in Germany and France, as well as in the United Kingdom, due to scandals involving members who were questioning the distribution of authority and resources, opening additional channels for illicit enrichment, and the use of public funds to serve private interests. Democracy alone does not eliminate corruption, nor is it sufficient to eradicate it from its roots. Rather, it tightens the noose around it through its mechanisms for exposing it, which are easier than in a totalitarian regime. If a democratic system is not affected by political corruption, it will provide an effective and transparent system for oversight of all executive bodies and government actions. A free media and civil society institutions will play a role in exposing manifestations of corruption and creating a public pressure group. An impartial judiciary also plays a significant role in punishing and deterring corrupt individuals, www.facebook.com A democratic political system prevents one political party from monopolizing power over other parties through pluralism. The majority governs, while the minority monitors mistakes and circulates of Power complicates the work of corrupt individuals by hiding behind influence. Moreover, the electoral process is a constant obsession for political parties, who constantly attempt to ward off accusations of corruption from their political record and history. Governments in democratic systems are constantly under pressure from constant surveillance and monitoring, enabled by the active participation of the media. (Shahd Ghaleb Ali, 2024, p. 1)

But corruption does not allow the mechanisms of democracy to operate at their full potential. Rather, it strives to empty these mechanisms of their content. Parliament's oversight authority is overridden by a preemptive strike, by controlling its members. Electoral districts are divided in a manner that serves the interests of these parties, attempting to fragment the votes of others and competitors. Elections are also restricted to the major parties according to an electoral law that is tailored to the parties' needs. This facilitates the process of understanding, concessions, and compromises between them. Here, money plays a major role in buying votes or manipulating ballot boxes. (Shahd Ghaleb Ali, 2024, p. 1)

It is not accurate to say that corruption is more prevalent in democratic countries than in dictatorial ones. Mussolini's fascist Italian regime and the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union were known for their ugliest forms of corruption, as well as corruption in other political systems—tribal, individual, and familial—all of which rely on corruption to ensure the continuity of rule. However, it can be said that corruption is less prevalent among just rulers and authorities, but more prevalent in authoritarian regimes. Corruption is rampant in authoritarian governments but less prevalent under just governments. (Shahd Ghaleb Ali, 2024, p. 1)

The limited spread of corruption makes it easier to detect, neutralize, address its causes, and dry up its sources. However, if it becomes widespread, combating and confronting it will become more complicated, and the treatment process will take longer, especially given the presence of behaviors, rules, and institutions that perpetuate the phenomenon at the administrative and political levels. Given the seriousness of the phenomenon, numerous studies have examined and analyzed it, most of which have reached an important conclusion: the prevalence of corruption is due, in part, to the monopolization of power by individuals or groups, as well as to the declining level of oversight, the decline in transparency, and the absence of accountability. (Shahd Ghaleb Ali, 2024, p. 1)

Political corruption is an indicator of a flaw in the management of the Iraqi state since its inception. It resulted in serious repercussions that made the task of building democracy during the monarchy difficult and ended with the beginning of the republican system, which was characterized by militarism. There were no connected links to complete

the building of the state in the contemporary concept, and perhaps the most important reasons lie in the quality of the ruling elite. Since 2003, Iraq has been at the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, making it one of the most corrupt countries in the world. This is expected to remain so for a long time, hindering the democratic transition process. This preoccupies Iraqi society and the international community due to the decline in development and investment opportunities and the undermining of the legitimacy of the existing political system. The prevalence of political corruption on this scale, its widening scope, its interconnected networks, and the interconnectedness of its mechanisms threaten the stability of the political system, hindering the building of democratic political institutions and the process of economic development. (Transparency International, 2005, pp. 33-34)

Although corruption affects all societies, scholars argue that public acceptance of corruption varies from one society to another and according to different contexts. However, some corrupt activities occur in both developed and developing countries, as well as in democratic and non-democratic systems alike; for example, corruption in the education and defense sectors, police corruption, and corruption in sports. Corruption is a "trans-systemic issue," affecting all societies, classes, age groups, and nationalities, regardless of political systems and governmental organizations, based on traditions, values, norms, and private institutions. (Transparency International, 2005, p. 34)

4.3 The prevalence of illiteracy and ignorance: Unfortunately, illiteracy rates are widespread in Arab countries, including Iraq, reaching approximately 40% among males and 60% among females, not to mention the appalling shortage of infrastructure within the Ministry of Education, including schools, institutes, and educational centers. (Abdul Khaliq Hussein, 2008, pp. 41-42)

This is determined by the presence of a significant percentage of illiterates in Iraq, exceeding 12% of those aged 15 and older, according to a statement by the ministry's official spokesperson. If accurate, this percentage represents more than five million illiterates, a significant number given global scientific progress. Illiteracy can also have many negative effects, including,

- Educational: The spread of ignorance is linked to many other problems.
- Economic: increased poverty, unemployment, and a lack of job opportunities.
- Security: Deviation towards delinquency and crime, and increased rates.
- Social: family and social disintegration, and moral decline.
- Psychological: poor and weakened awareness and perception.
- Health: The prevalence of unhealthy habits leads to the spread of diseases. (Muhammad Mahdi Saleh and Firas Jassim Musa, 2023, p. 1)

Some statistics on illiteracy in Iraq:

The overall illiteracy rate in Iraq reached 12.3% in 2022, up from 20.5% in 2010.

- Females topped the illiteracy rate, reaching 28%, while males 13%.
- In rural areas, 20%; while in cities, 11% respectively.
- The highest illiteracy rate is in Muthanna Governorate 22%, followed by Dohuk Governorate (18%). (Muhammad Mahdi Saleh and Firas Jassim Musa, 2023, p. 1)

Among the causes of illiteracy in Iraq are: (Muhammad Mahdi Saleh and Firas Jassim Musa, 2023, p. 2)

- Wars and disturbances.
- The previous economic blockade and its current effects.
- Poverty and unemployment.
- Poor management and planning
- Displacement and migration.
- Corruption.
- Low parental educational attainment, which influences the tendency to discourage children from learning.
- Learning disabilities such as dyslexia, learning difficulties, and slow learning.
- Lack of personal desire for education.
- Some societies are influenced by customs and traditions that prevent women from participating in public life, including exercising their right to education.
- The unequal distribution of public services across the country's various regions often results in urban residents receiving better educational services than those living in rural areas.
- The poor competence of some teachers, particularly those teaching early grades, in achieving these students' academic goals.
- The lack of attention to training specialized teachers to educate the elderly.
- The growing population, which requires more diverse services, including educational facilities, and if the country's economic capabilities are weak, it will be unable to meet these needs .
- .-Some Schools are not an attractive environment for education, but rather an environment that repels it.
- Laxity in implementing legislation related to compulsory education.

All of these reasons and factors stand as obstacles to the growth and spread of a conscious democratic culture that is responsible for achieving the democratic transformation process in Iraq in this regard.

- Illiteracy limits the ability to understand the principles of democracy, such as freedom of expression, equality before the law, and majority rule. Illiteracy weakens public opinion, making individuals more susceptible to external factors, such as misleading media or political propaganda. Illiteracy reduces the effectiveness of democratic institutions, such as parliament, courts, and civil society institutions.

There are many obstacles hindering the democratic transformation process in Iraq, but there is no room to mention them here in the folds of our research due to their large number. However, we have limited ourselves to the most prominent of these obstacles, emphasizing that true democracy embracing the principles of freedom, equality, and justice—including freedom of choice, the rule of law, and the equitable distribution of national wealth's—is the optimal remedy for these obstacles that hinder impede the democratic transformation process.

5. Conclusion

The use of the terms "democratic transition," "democratic transition process," or "transition towards democracy" varies widely in academic and political circles, including the degree of its occurrence and the conditions for its establishment. In its broadest sense, the concept of democratic transition refers to the transition from a non-democratic system of government to a democratic one. Democratic transition represents a stage through which the old non-democratic system is dismantled and collapses, and a new democratic system is built. The transition process includes elements of the new political system, such as the constitutional and legal structure, institutions, and political processes. Furthermore, the transition process may witness conflicts, compromises, and negotiations between power centers within countries. Democratic transition consists of the regime making a qualitative leap in the levels of democracy, either from an authoritarian system to an electoral democratic system, or from a semi-authoritarian system to a more democratic system. Democratic transition reflects a process of radical and comprehensive change or transformation in the structure of society. This is perhaps due to the impact of revolutions, which can have profound effects at all levels: intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural.

It is well known that there is no single, ready-made recipe for the democratic transition process, as each case takes on an ideological character linked to the nature of each society and its social, political, and cultural composition. However, there are general features of the institutions, roles, structures, behaviors, interactions, and values that can produce a democratic state. Thus, democracy is not a ready-made, pre-prepared model for easy use whenever the ruler or the people decide to do so. Rather, it is a climate that gradually imposes itself as a reality with the growth of citizens' awareness and the development of their readiness to be qualified to practice true democracy.

Addressing the nature of democratic transition in Arab countries in general and Iraq in particular is a matter of particular specificity. This is because it requires approaching the issue from all its aspects, as it is a problem that concerns the government as well as the citizen, affects the state as well as society, and the ruler's concerns are also a concern for the ruled. It is not limited to this only, as democracy addresses the form of government, the behavior of the rulers, its system, the nature of the state, its objectives, the relations of the parties in the political process as a whole, and the adjustment of the relations of social forces and their balances. Therefore, democracy in Arab countries captures the attention of their peoples' feelings as much as it touches on the interests of other forces. The issue of democratic transition has received and continues to receive special importance in view of the developments and

transitions towards democracy witnessed by the political systems in the Middle East, and the significance of the change that occurred in Iraq after April 9, 2003. This change that occurred in Iraq provided an opportunity for a democratic transition. Except that, this transition faced and continues to face many internal obstacles that interact with external influences, "regional and international," and at different stages, positions, and variables.

6. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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