

# DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND PLURALISM

in Arab Countries  
Accumulating Dilemmas in a Turbulent Region

## Introduction

Political reform represents a process of radical modification and development in the form of governance or social relations in the state within the framework of the existing political system, and with the available means. In other words, it means developing the efficiency and effectiveness of the political system in its environment, internally and externally, and in light of the fact that the Arab region is witnessing the highest state of division, whether in terms of economic resources, which makes it three groups, rentier, consumerist, and fragile; or on another level related to a unilateral tyrannical country and another aspiring for freedom. There are common factors and characteristics among these countries, which is represented by their inability to achieve the transition towards diversity, integration, pluralism, and acceptance of the other.

Here, the problem of the study arises in the nature of this transformation as an important issue for those societies that seek to establish a strong relationship between the rulers and the ruled. This problem also concerns the nature of the state and the extent of its strength or not. Hence, the Arab world has long been suffering from the lack of democracy, not only that, but the existence of long-term authoritarian rule based on the enrichment of a certain group while the majority suffers from difficult economic conditions. Here, this is evident in cases such as Sudan, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco, in contrast to higher average incomes in the countries of the Arab Gulf, which have a divine gift of oil revenues.

Accordingly, the search for interests that frame a pluralistic political system that is characterized by diversity, integration, and acceptance of the other represents a trend that the heads of power and their beneficiaries oppose, where this category only cares about searching for its own interests, even if it conflicts with the interests and capabilities of the people. In light of the foregoing, the following main question can be asked: To what extent can diversity, integration and pluralism be achieved in Arab countries?

## **First: Diversity, inclusion and difference: starting points and limits of influence**

At the end of the nineties and the beginning of the millennium, a new phase began, which established the existence of a relationship linking democracy with development from the perspective that the quality of governance or the management of the country's affairs is a determinant of the success or failure of development. According to the United Nations Development Program, the elements of good governance include the following (United Nations, 2013: 17), which is participation, in the sense that people have an effective role in managing the affairs of their society; which requires that sufficient and equal opportunities be available to all people - males and females. Transparency, which means the availability and ease of access to information by citizens, as well as the correctness, accuracy, completeness and timely availability of information. Accountability, which means that public officials are subject to control and accountability for their exercise of the powers granted to them, and that they accept responsibility (even if partially) for shortcomings or incompetence, and amend their decisions in the light of that criticism. Then comes the rule of law, which requires the availability of clear and effective legal and judicial arrangements with regard to the exercise by individuals, groups and people of governance of their powers in all fields, while ensuring equality before the law for all, whether in enjoying opportunities for legal protection of their rights, or in being punished by applicable penalties. Effectiveness and the effectiveness of governance means reaching the optimal and best use of resources, that is, the allocation and management of resources in response to collective needs. This means the availability of capacity and competence on the part of the governing institutions; in addition to the presence of people's concerns and interests in these institutions. And fairness, which means ensuring fair and unbiased treatment of society without discrimination as well as fair distribution of the fruits and burdens of development.

In general, there are five important conditions that greatly affect the chances of political reform and democratic transition, which are the army's lack of control over production or the economy, and the extent of entrenched democratic and cultural beliefs<sup>(1)</sup>, as all countries are exposed to deep political, ideological, economic, military and international crises<sup>(2)</sup>. In addition, in the absence of foreign control hostile to democracy, democratic institutions are unlikely to emerge in a country subject to interference by another country hostile to democratic government, the nature of the prevailing economic system, whether it is participatory or rentier, and the multiple sub-cultures.

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(1) Mohamed, E.A. (2020), "The impact of political reform on the stability of the state of Kuwait since 2010", *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 101-114.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHASS-06-2019-0001>

(2) El-Erian, M. (2005), "Reform in the Arab world: a study on the concept of the concept", *ahewar Website*, available at:  
[www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=49256&tr=0](http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=49256&tr=0)

The emergence and continuity of democratic institutions is more likely to be in a country that is highly homogeneous and less so in a country with very different cultures and conflict<sup>(3)</sup>.

Pluralism refers to the institutional form that the acceptance of diversity takes in a particular society or in the world as a whole. At that time, tolerance represents an individual feeling, behavior, and coexistence, which promotes acceptance of others and does not go beyond the absence of conflict on the one hand. On the other hand, pluralism requires organizational and legal measures that guarantee and endorse equality and develop brotherhood among all human beings as individuals or groups, whether their differences are innate or acquired.

Pluralism also requires a serious approach towards understanding the other and constructive cooperation for the betterment of the whole. All human beings shall have equal rights and opportunities, all shall fulfill their equal obligations as citizens of a nation and of the world, every group shall have the right to organize and develop itself, and to preserve its identity and interests, and every group shall enjoy equal rights and obligations in the country and in the world<sup>(4)</sup>.

## **Second: The reality of diversity, inclusion, difference and acceptance of the other in the Arab countries**

With the occurrence of many countries in the Arab world after their independence in cases of failure, in the context of which successive military coups were only a perpetuation of the inability to develop politically from the democratic seeds planted by colonialism, societies were disturbed and economies eroded, and the transfer of power remained on the long waiting list.

All sects, factions, and groups, or what is called the triple failure (the regime, the opposition, and institutions) in the Arab world, as key political actors in the first place, are still suffering from catastrophic failure and accumulated disappointments, as the political process in the Arab world is limited to three main players: Regimes, their institutions and opposition forces. It refers to the secular opposition, whether liberal or leftist, and the Islamic one that renounced violence and decided to participate in the political process. Rather, this is due to an imbalance between these forces, which prevents democratic transformation in the Arab world during the past decades<sup>(5)</sup>.

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(3) Mohamed, S. (2014), "Political reform between concept and practice", sarahaordonya

(4) Osman, F. (2016). Islam and Pluralism in a Global Era.  
<https://www.islamicity.org/3793/islam-and-pluralism-in-a-global-era/>

(5) Amr Hamzawy, (2009). Opportunities for pluralism and its limits: the reality of political forces in the Arab world. Carnegie Doha Research Center. Doha. October.

In light of the fact that the Arab countries are a complex and diverse world, in which there is cultural diversity that is manifested in multiple dimensions: ethnic, tribal, religious and linguistic, resulting from history, traditions and immigration; what connects everyone is geographical presence and history<sup>(6)</sup>.

There are two types of ruling systems in the Arab world: the first is ruling systems that allow a degree of pluralism in one form or another, as there are opposition parties and civil society organizations, and the second is ruling systems that lack any kind of organized pluralism<sup>(7)</sup>.

This diversity must be managed, but after a decade of the Arab Spring, the bitter reality is that the Arab countries are in a worse state in terms of the three dimensions of the BTI indices (the political transition index, the economic transformation index, and the governance index) than they were 10 years ago. No hopes for the advancement of democracy, the expansion of economic participation, and the promotion of social justice remain almost entirely unfulfilled. An ideological polarization between ostensibly secular and Islamist forces dominates many countries in the region—notably Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan. Among the Arab countries, 11 out of 19 countries are still classified as “hardline authoritarian regimes”. Although the transitional government in Sudan has achieved the greatest improvement in the political transition, it is still classified as a “failed country”<sup>(8)</sup>.

### **Third: Indicators of diversity, pluralism, and acceptance of the other in the Arab world**

Considering the indicators expressing diversity, pluralism, and acceptance of the other in the Arab world, based on indicators of political stability, rule of law, corruption, and civil and political liberties, as follows:

1- Political stability and the rule of law: The Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism Index measures perceptions of the potential for destabilizing or overthrowing a government by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically motivated violence and terrorism. The Rule of Law Index also captures perceptions of the extent to which agents trust and adhere to society’s rules, in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police and courts, as well as the likelihood of a violent crime being committed.

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(6) Yahiaoui, D. and Al Ariss, A. (2017), “Diversity in the Arab World: Challenges and Opportunities”, Management and Diversity (International Perspectives on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Vol. 3), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 249–260.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S2051-233320160000003010>

(7) Amr Hamzawy previously mentioned

(8) The BTI Transformation Index.(2022). The BTI Transformation Index 2022.  
<https://bti-project.org/en/reports/regional-dashboard/ENA?&cb=00000>

Table No. (1), the ranking of Arab countries among countries, shows the evolution of the political stability index in 2021, which ranges between (-2.5 weak to 2.5 strong). Where Qatar and the UAE top the list, coming in 31st and 61st place, respectively. While 9 countries languish in late ranks, four countries come at the bottom of the list, which are Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Which indicates a decline in political stability in the Arab region, and that it is a region that suffers from a high level of risks and turbulence.

Table No. (1) Arab countries in the political stability index in 2021

Country	Ranking at the Arab level	Global ranking	Indicator value
Qatar	1	31	0.96
U.A.E	2	61	0.65
Oman	3	70	0.51
Kuwait	4	80	0.3
Jordan	5	118	-0.28
Morocco	6	126	-0.4
K.S.A	7	139	-0.58
Tunisia	8	148	-0.7
Algeria	9	157	-0.88
Egypt	10	164	-1.02
Lebanon	11	175	-1.49
Palestine	12	183	-1.84
Sudan	13	184	-1.94
Libya	14	189	-2.37
Iraq	15	190	-2.4
Yemen	16	191	-2.59
Syria	17	193	-2.66

Source: compiled by the researcher based on a database

<https://tagned.mod.gov.eg/CertificateSearch.aspx#StartContent.aspx>

Table No. (2) shows the ranking of Arab countries and the value of their rule of law index, where Qatar and the UAE lead this index among the countries of the Arab region. It comes in 34th and 42nd place, respectively, followed by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, while Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon come in the 100th place. On the other hand, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria rank at the bottom of the list in the Arab world and globally.

Table No. (2) Rule of law index for Arab countries in 2021

Country	Ranking at the Arab level	Global ranking	Indicator value
Qatar	1	34	0.93
U.A.E	2	42	0.83
Oman	3	64	0.41
Kuwait	4	75	0.26
K.S.A	5	76	0.23
Jordan	6	77	0.21
Tunisia	7	83	0.1
Egypt	8	102	-0.24
Morocco	9	104	-0.25
Algeria	10	147	-0.82
Lebanon	11	163	-1.07
Sudan	12	172	-1.21
Iraq	13	186	-1.73
Libya	14	187	-1.78
Yemen	15	188	-1.8
Syria	16	190	-2.07

Source: compiled by the researcher based on

[/https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings)

2- The decline in the level of political and civil freedoms. Arab countries suffer from a chronic dilemma represented in the inability to express political and civil freedom, as they are met with complex and intertwined obstacles and stumbling blocks. Table No. (3) shows that Libya, Saudi Arabia and Sudan rank 17, 21 and 23 globally and first in the Arab world, while Morocco and Lebanon rank 60 and 57 globally and are the most politically free among the Arab countries.

Table (3) Political Rights Index

Country	Ranking at the Arab level	Global ranking	Indicator value
Libya	1	17	7
K.S.A	2	21	7
Sudan	3	23	7
Syria	4	25	7
U.A.E	5	28	7
Yemen	6	32	7
Algeria	7	33	6
Egypt	8	37	6
Oman	9	41	6
Qatar	10	42	6
Iraq	11	53	5
Kuwait	12	55	5
Lebanon	13	57	5
Morocco	14	60	5

Source: compiled by the researcher based on

[/ https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings)

Regarding civil liberties, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt represent the Arab countries that enjoy the most, and are ranked 5, 7, and 20 globally, respectively, while Lebanon and Tunisia enjoy the highest degrees of civil liberty, ranking 76 and 115 globally, respectively. They are the two most Arab countries that enjoy civil liberties in the Arab region, see the following table.

Table No. (4) Civil liberties index in Arab countries

Country	Ranking at the Arab level	Global ranking	Indicator value
K.S.A	1	5	7
Syria	2	7	7
Egypt	3	20	6
Iraq	4	23	6
Libya	5	25	6
Sudan	6	28	6
U.A.E	7	31	6
Yemen	8	34	6
Algeria	9	35	5
Jordan	10	44	5
Kuwait	11	46	5
Morocco	12	50	5
Oman	13	53	5
Qatar	14	55	5
Lebanon	15	76	4
Tunisia	16	115	3

Source: compiled by the researcher based on

[/https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/civil\\_liberties](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/civil_liberties)





3- The absent democratic transition and the suppression of freedom of expression: Freedom of expression has been severely restricted in the Arab world, as governments have introduced more stringent legislation criminalizing freedom of expression; they continue to censor the Internet and invest in digital surveillance equipment. Civil society organizations considered their activism a crime and security forces across the region used unlawful force to suppress peaceful protests. Governments also continued to invest in expensive digital surveillance equipment such as Pegasus spyware to target human rights defenders.

4- Corruption Perceptions: The Arab world region reflects the risks of corruption that appear to be very high especially at the political level, which prevents any democratic progress and allows for further human rights violations. Table No. (5) shows that the first Arab country comes in 24th place, which is the United Arab Emirates, followed by Qatar in 31st place, and then followed by a group of countries that enjoy a high degree of corruption and a late ranking in the list, including (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq). In addition, Libya, Yemen and Syria are at the bottom of the list.

Table No. (5) Global Corruption Perceptions Index 2021 in Arab countries

Country	Ranking at the Arab level	Global ranking	Indicator value
U.A.E	1	24	96
Qatar	2	31	63
K.S.A	3	54	53
Oman	4	55	52
Jordan	5	59	49
Tunisia	6	71	44
Kuwait	7	74	43
Bahrain	8	77	42
Morocco	9	88	39
Algeria	10	114	33
Egypt	11	115	33
Lebanon	12	152	24

Iraq	13	156	23
Sudan	14	165	20
Libya	15	170	17
Yemen	16	173	16
Syria	17	176	13

Source: compiled by the researcher based on

[/https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/transparency\\_corruption](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/transparency_corruption)

5- Women's participation: According to an estimate by the International Labor Organization, the employment percentage of women in the Middle East and the North indicates an increase in this rate from 18% in 1990 to 19% in 2021, peaking in 2016 at 21%. Rates are still very low when comparing this rate with the example of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, which recorded 52%, North America 56%, East Asia 60%, and 60% in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 22% in South Asia in 2021. Arab women struggle in many different ways, sometimes with access to education, an area in which Arab countries have made great progress, but they still struggle with employment and leadership potential in many Arab countries.

## Conclusion

The issue of pluralism, diversity, integration, and acceptance of the other in the Arab countries represents the most controversial issue on the one hand, and on the other hand, the hottest one. While the Arab countries enjoy divine gifts and great natural and human resources, authoritarian and one-opinion regimes still prevail. In addition, the institutional growth of political and economic corruption, along with the fragility of women's status and their inability to achieve economic or political empowerment.

Therefore, the current article attempted to raise a question about how diversity, inclusion and pluralism can be achieved in Arab countries? By researching and presenting the most important relevant indicators, it was found that the Arab region suffers from a great contradiction among its countries, but they all share the same characteristics, foremost of which are repression, corruption, and the lack of pluralism. Therefore, the issue of freedoms, whether political or civil, remained confined to the vision of the individual, and it did not find an echo except at the beginning of the last decade with the Arab Spring revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, extending to Syria, Libya and Sudan, but it quickly turned into a civil war in both Syria and Libya. Tunisia is still the most liberal in terms of civil and political, although there are difficulties, at the same time, Sudan is still under the grip of the military. This clearly indicates that the Arab countries are still navigating shallow waters in matters of pluralism, diversity, and acceptance of the other, and they have a long way to go.

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