

مركز البيدر للدراسات والتخطيط

Al-Baidar Center For Studies And Planning



Democracy between the slogan and practice, and can a dictator make renaissance?

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As long as the concept of democracy has captivated souls, and people have been drawn to its slogans that promise participation, representation, and justice.

The word democracy itself possesses a specific meaning it is an ancient Greek term composed of two parts: 'demos' meaning 'the people' and 'kratos' meaning 'power' or 'rule'

the literal meaning of the word democracy is 'the rule of the people' or 'the power of the people'. How can one not find comfort in participating in the management of their own affairs?

The term first appeared in ancient Athens in the fifth century BC, where their democracy was direct, allowing free male citizens to participate personally in making laws and decisions.

The term was then revived in Europe during the Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, coinciding with the challenge to the idea of the divine right of kings and the rise of the concept of the people's will as a source of legitimacy. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term democracy began to describe representative systems of government based on elections the separation of powers and civil rights.

But the practical, political, and philosophical meaning of democracy is more and more complicated. In direct democracy means the people actually ruled. But in representative democracy which is the common form today the people don't rule they just choose who rules on their behalf. This raises fundamental questions about how true the representation of the people's will really.

In many cases, democracy turns into a tool for the elites, hiding the real power behind the facade of people's rule. It can even become a way to justify external control when it's imposed in societies that haven't experienced mature political processes. Modern democracy might just be reduced to formal elections that happen within pre-determined limits and actually don't affect the centers of political or economic decision-

making.

However, the democratic system remains an important means to limit despotism, even in terms of form it provides a margin for accountability and circulation, but it is not immune to manipulation or utilitarian exploitation.

Conversely, the history is not without examples of dictatorships that, in critical periods managed to launch radical transformation projects. In moments of stagnation, chaos, or indecision, a strong authority may be a temporary necessity to overcome obstacles. What is referred to as the enlightened or pragmatic dictator can achieve what systems bound by compromises or fragile balances cannot.

In our area, you can see examples like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Morocco, which have gone through significant economic and administrative changes despite the authoritarian systems in place.

Saudi Arabia, in its significant transformations, has relied on a dictatorship that has smoothly transferred power to the third generation, despite some alarming practices, such as the murder of the opposition(Jamal Khashoggi) abroad. However, the populace did not oppose this as they see major achievements realized. In light of these changes it has not been easy to stand against the commanding of virtue and the prohibiting of vice without a strong ruler.

and who other than a dictator has been capable of restraining the overbearing religious institution?

The UAE does not differ much in its management from that of Saudi Arabia, and similarly Egypt and Morocco are undergoing a significant economic transformation despite limited resources.

From the countries of the world, South Korea and Vietnam are worth examining. The hero of the economic miracle of the Han River in South Korea was Park Chung-he, a colonel who came to power through a coup in 1961 and saw his regime fall after 15

years. However, he put the country on the path of progress that has led it to where it stands today.

Vietnam remains a police state governed by a single party, yet it performed a miracle after emerging bankrupt from a two-decade-long war in 1975. It recognized that the Soviet approach was ineffective and thus shifted to a different method in 1986.

However, the challenge lies in the fact that few dictatorships prioritize developmental goals, and most slip into:

- Protecting narrow interests,
- Cementing power,
- Or stifling the internal vitality that is the basis of sustainability

Dictatorship is not always bad in all its details; when it is a closed totalitarian regime, it squanders opportunities for advancement because it obstructs three fundamental pillars of any renaissance:

1. Intellectual freedom (required for innovation and scientific research)
2. Political accountability (which prevents corruption and empowers the people to correct errors)
3. Economic dynamism (related to ownership, incentives, and competition).

It can be said that North Korea and the Soviet Union represent classic examples of the failure of systems that place power above the human being, security above freedom, and ideology above economy. Furthermore, democracy is not always an ideal choice also when see Hitler came through elections and Trump came through a democratic process. The chaos in Iraq is mixed with democracy.

Research Identity

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About center

Al-Baydar Center for Studies and Planning is a non-governmental and non-profit organization established in 2015 and registered with the NGO directorate in the general secretariat of the council of ministers in Baghdad.

The center seeks to contribute to developing the state and its institutions, by proposing ideas and practical solutions to the main problems and challenges facing the state, including improving public sector management, policies, and strategic planning, using reliable data and best practices. The center engages the relevant authorities in the state with regular meetings to support this objective and utilizes the support of international organizations dedicated to assisting Iraq's development. The center also seeks to support economic reforms, and sustainable development and provide technical assistance to the public and private sectors. The center also seeks to support the development of the private sector to provide job opportunities for citizens through training and upskilling, in a way that reduces dependence on government institutions and contributes to supporting and diversifying the country's economy.

The center aims to utilize the vast amount of potential in Iraq's human resources by organizing programs to prepare and develop promising young people, including leaders capable of proposing, adopting and implementing visions and future plans that advance society and preserve its value-system based on the commitment to a high moral standard and rejection of all types of corruption.

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