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**The Changes in the Middle East and**

**The New Phenomenon of Terrorism**

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**Introduction**

The events that have shaken the Arab world, starting from Tunisia in 2010, have opened the door to many intellectual dispersion, as well as loss of methodological analysis and conclusive observations. Despite the abundance of academic analyses, it is too early to assess the popular rage and its repercussions that shook the social and political structures in many Arab countries. It is difficult to note any consensus among observers about a unified description of all that happened and still happening from accelerated events that had toppled thrones and have continued to threaten others.

There are those who called demonstrations "a revolution", and there are those who found demonstrations to be simple protests or, at best, popular uprisings. For its part, revolution assumes significant changes that affect the lives of people at all levels, not only ousting the king or the president. It is important to emphasize that not every change is a revolution and it is not necessarily that every revolution leads to the change desired by the people.

After only 26 days from the outbreak of the demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid on December16th, 2010, the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was forced to step down from power and to leave the country on January 14th, 2011.

As for the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Facebook Youth Movement started the anger uprising in Tahrir Square (liberation Square) in Cairo and other Egyptian cities. The uprising ended with the ouster of the President Hosni Mubarak after 18 days from its start, on February 11th, 2011. These two events took place amid Arab and international distraught, to the extent that democracy advocates in the Arab world felt at the time that they were given a historic opportunity to get rid of old dictatorship regimes. However, the supposed "Spring" thwarted their aspirations in Libya, which was destroyed; Syria, flooded in pools of blood that have not dried yet; Egypt was barely able to regain some of the internal balance after the army had responded to the demands of the people in June 2014; and Yemen, which is burning in Arab fire, and all make democracy obstinate to end the totalitarianism era in the Arab world.

On the other hand, considering that the most prominent result of the "Arab Spring" is for Islamists to hold the rein of power remains a shady reality. If the spring means the blossoming of democracy and freedom’s flowers in the Arab countries, then the emergence of political Islam leads us to question its implication on the future of minorities and civil state. Secondly, to question the reality of the political vision carried by this “spring”? It should be noted that the project of political Islam, based on mobilizing and sloganeering is now crashing through its inability to overcome the reality of the hard place. Islamic movements can not deviate from the dictates of religious text, whereas, the religious text does not allow the partnership and openness in dealing and respecting the others and, at best, it does not lead to national integration, since they do not provide the necessary conditions for others to feel their belonging to the Islamic State, at least due to the lack of fairness in access to opportunities for all under the law. Briefly, no opportunity for political Islam to grab hold of the reins of power, but if it happens, it will have to make compromises to distant from the dictates of the religious text, because the religious text does not proffer a State project. Islam is not at once a religion and a state, and this basic idea will be the issue for the most prominent incidents and bickering that have provided extremist movements to claim Islamic identities and to commit the most heinous crimes in the name of religion.

This Arab situation’s discussion, after the "Jasmine Revolution", poses the following problematics:

1. *Does the trend towards a democracy as an emblem begins and ends with overthrowing regime symbols?*

2. *What is the nature, and therefore the ways out, that surround the impasse experienced by political Islam through jihad to take advantage of the political moment to go beyond their ideological perceptions?*

3. *Where is the Arab world heading geographically, politically and socially under the control of terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Nusra of vast lands in Iraq, Syria, and some parts of eastern mountains of Lebanon, and their atrocious crimes that demolished civilizations, displaced people and tarnished cultures?*

**Democracy and the Curse of Standards**

In fact there were several reasons for popular anger, but there are indications of overlapping factors that are not related to economic analysis which is, linked to hunger and unemployment; and not related only to political analysis, based on disrespectful policies for the human dignity; and not related directly to social transformations and the rise of political Islam in its many forms. The real motives of the Arab popular movement is all in accordance with a process of accumulation and overlapping that played the role of motivator for different audiences.

In seeking to analyze the success and failure of the uprisings in their attempts to drop their systems, we may identify four elements or prerequisites for the establishment of uprisings, in case they exist, they can bring dramatic changes in the Arab countries. These four conditions are:

1. Breaking the psychological barrier of fear, where the fear factor has always banned popular movements from rebelling.

2. To have a peaceful uprising, since its potential cannot be compared to the security and military forces of the regime.

3. There should be a minimum of social cohesion and shared feelings of national unity among the different components of the society so that the religious, race and sectarian differences do not affect, in case of its existence or persistence, in weakening the regime resistance movements and in thwarting the popular resistance.

4. The fourth condition is associated with the success or failure of uprisings concerns the position of the army or the armed forces from the popular civil rebellion; if it was supportive or not, there are known prospects for the success or the failure of these movements.

These four factors existed in Tunisia and Egypt (the second revolution), but were not available in Libya (external interference), Syria (civil war and terrorism) and Yemen (internal division and a “decisive” regional interference). The question remains: How can democratic orientation succeed upon Arab populations under the weapon’s clicking? Is it possible to install democratic values ​​(freedom, diversity, tolerance, dialogue) in communities that have religious identity or traditions?

Popular uprisings have succeeded in Tunisia and Egypt, in accomplishing their missions to stop the heresy of political succession, but they have taken a tragic and bloody destructive turn in Libya, where the intransigence of Gaddafi and his attachment to power contributed in legitimizing the international military intervention under the pretext of "protecting the Libyan people’’.

In Syria, the intervention of international terrorism prevented the completion of reforms initiated by President Bashar al-Assad. In Yemen, the Houthis adoption of a military solution raised the ire of the Gulf Cooperation Council (with the exception of the Sultanate of Oman) to launch the " decisive storm " relying on the Air Force to destroy the Houthis military force in the absence of any political solution.

The transition to democracy has become an axiomatic demand; Arab people are eager to establish a state of law and institutions, an independent judiciary, a state that respects the citizen's right to a dignified life, such as the right for education, medical care, employment and social security. Youth forces are required to work on a radical change among the intelligence networks and agencies which, under the old regime, was turned into something similar to a social class, where it imposed security, political, economic and cultural control, similar to what the dominant capitalist class did. Youth forces must be prepared to an open conflict with the "guards of the old regime," and with those insisting to build a religious state that does not respect the particularities of non-Muslim minorities, and expand the role of the State incubating the marginalized groups. We must emphasize that democracy presents an internal solution for the power struggle by peaceful means; it is a positive element for the stability, progress and development of the society.

Nevertheless, the Arab youth must be aware that democracy is not a solution for patriotic and national issues, meaning that it cannot be considered as a means to resolve conflicts between states and societies, as preached by globalization advocates. This means that any Arab side that raises the banner of democracy, and welcomes simultaneously foreign intervention to save it from its governors and to impose segmentation, is a suspicious and conspiring side, especially as we do not notice any real international movement against many of dictatorial regimes associated economically and politically with Western decision makers.

In sum, overthrowing some regime symbols does not mean overthrowing the regime at all; and what would happen to democracy if ISIS is the alternative? The truth is that popular uprisings have entered into a critical stage and they need a lot of support to accomplish the very difficult tasks that they have worked hard to achieve.

**Religious Text and the Curse of Reality**

Has the "Arab Spring" encouraged the rise of Islamist movements and their access to power? The answer to this major question needs first to check the reality of events and developments, and whether the early change that has occurred in Tunisia and Egypt was made by Islamists? Do they hold today the last word in determining the future of the two countries? The proclaimed in Tunisia is that it has maintained a secular state, and the Islamic presence in Tunisia is originally fabricated and does not reflect (as the recent elections showed) the truth about the aspirations of the Tunisian people, in spite of the ballot boxes results after the revolution and the arrival of the Renaissance Movement to power. For many reasons, the Renaissance Movement is required today to bring down its Islamic image, and those first changes will eventually lead to the collision of ideology with reality, and by announcing its adherence to secularism, the Movement would have stepped forward in the right direction. The developments are not measured or judged by slogans but by concrete results.

In Egypt, the dramatic end of the Muslim Brotherhood rule under the feet of the people and the military junta responding to their demands demonstrates that the power of the Muslim Brotherhood is conservative and does not have a pragmatic program in the political or economic sense. Accordingly, such a political group can not of course take specific political positions. It can be said, and contrary to popular belief, that the political Islam manifesto based on mobilizing and sloganeering was crashed on the stake of the revolutionary situation in Egypt. Perhaps the most striking evidence of the dilemma of Egyptian political Islam movements is summarized in their inability to overcome the fact and, consequently, abandon its intense speech concerning the Palestinian cause.

Political Islam movements will not be able to provide any real political, social or economic achievements, and they will be obliged to accommodate their ideological stance with reality, thus losing the ability to propagate ideological discourse that had shaped up their popularity, specifically the conflict with the Zionist enemy. Its continuation with this morphogenesis speech will lead to their isolation and to the blockage of international horizon, and, consequently, double their tragic situations on more than one level. Thus, they will resort to the logic of necessities that knows no law, and will be judged as movements that left their Islamic discourse due to their strive for power.

The predominantly Islamic movements, and in the context of their pursuit to obtain popular legitimacy on the basis of commitment to Islamic law, are always keen to provide ideological discourse, but the presence of ideology begins to retreat with their entry into reality and all detailed policies. The collision moment of ideology with reality often lead to the decline of ideology for the sake of reality. The suitability of these movements for the sake of power is something that overcomes the same suitability with the coexistence with reality, and responsibility. Of course I will try as much as possible not to go through details of legitimizing the ideological law of Islamic discourse, but we can say that contemporary history has not showed success of any experience of these movements in political power or management access. This failure is related to the nature of these movements (if any) and that Islam according to many Islamic thinkers is not at once, a religion and state, and that it is not about the inner circumstances of these movements, but it goes beyond it to many objective conditions that prevent them from seizing power, especially in pluralistic societies.

There is no doubt that there are many challenges awaiting Islamists, with respect to the development of the intellectual and ideological rhetoric to deal with flexibility and openness with public freedoms, human rights issue and the relationship between the majority, minorities and political pluralism, otherwise they will lose, and they have lost, large groups that had believed in them .As with respect to the relationship between the religious text and the fact, the inevitable diligent remains the achiever of public interest. The implementation of the jurisprudence is an essential part of Islam’s vitality and dynamism through which it is able to continue to provide answers in every age about current challenges. According to the Hadith,***Wisdom is a faithful one's wish, and Muslims are worthier to have it, where you find it, have it, and never ever abandon it****"* Thus, it became the duty of Muslims to support their legislative affairs with every human experience whether historical or contemporary.

The European experience in the dark ages shows that societies with religious identities cannot make a successful democratic experience. The validation of this thesis is possible through the recovery of some of the basic turning points of European history where Ecclesiastic dictatorships emerged in their ugliest manifestations when the French King Louis XIV spread the idea of ​​"divine right", which considers the governor’s authority as divine, and that no one has the right to it. The current Arab reality is very similar, to a certain extent, to the ending of the pre-European Renaissance. Islamic administration is re-playing the exclusionary role that the church had played when it refused all multitude and considered plurality as an infringement of the "legitimate figure" in running the country's affairs.

In short, the point needing emphasis is that the future of Islamist parties and movements and the transformations that will occur depends on the work and achievements of the experience and on what the Arab state will become in the custody of the occurring revolutionary change.

 **The Change and the Curse of Terrorism**

No one can claim that the Arab world is utopia or an ideal world to live in. The reality of human rights is dreadful under dictatorship and oligarch regimes that do not care about freedom or democracy. Perhaps the poet Muzaffar Al Nawab described the Arab world accurately when he said: "This Arab world that extends from one sea to another ... is a gathering of contiguous prisons, one jailer holding the hand of another jailer." Moreover, the Arab impasse is not only related to the absence of freedoms and democracy, but years of corruption, lack of development and planning and dependence on the West have accumulated, to frustration and despair of a better tomorrow for the populations of this region. In resuming, the bun of bread is missed as well as the human dignity, and their absence leads us to expect explosions that its objective fuse was the flames that tucked the body of Bouazizi. Besides, the dramatic crumbling of Tunisian regime was an indicator of the weakness of the regime, and with it, the historical fear’s barrier fell and the Arab street was dominated by the saying: change is possible.

However, Tunisia is no longer an exception in the path of the "Arab Spring" countries which are witnessing civil wars, foreign interventions and an organized terrorism. After two calm transitions of authority, Tunisia appears today in a race with terrorism. On March 18th, 2015; a terrorist group attacked the ancient Bardo Museum and caused the death of 22 people, including 18 foreign tourists and about 50 others were injured. According to the Arab media, the Bardo attack formed a "transit station of continued emphasis on safe borders to the security and politically threatened capital.

The attack that targeted Tunisia at the hands of terrorism is nothing compared to what happened in Syria and Iraq, where all the world's terrorists met under the flag of ISIS and Nusra in order to cancel history, demolish civilization, kill humans and tarnish the image of Islam. In their conduct, ISIS and Nusra had committed the following crimes:

1. They try to cancel the human history and strive to erase the effects of civilization in the land that has been considered as the “cradle” of civilizations.

2. They strive to erase the contribution of all the people, who built this Arab land that witnessed the beginning of human history.

3. They destroy the causes of human progress by wiping out the monuments of all whom came through history, and excelled in science, culture or beautiful art.

4. They kill human beings, capture women and sell them, turn boys into monsters, destroy metropolises then brag about their achievements through social media, slaughter and burn people alive, they abolish education and behead any “other” and, then, they broadcast their slaughtering movies to the world.

In a historic speech at the UN Security Council on March 27th, 2015, the Lebanese minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Gebran Bassil, said that minorities in the Levant are oppressed, slaughtered and persecuted at the hands of ISIS and Israel, "because our Levantine identity molded heavenly religions on one land and in one being." Bassil argued: "Why our principles are being sacrificed on the altar of interests, and why are we being killed by ISIS and Israel, while the entire world stands by watching and merely notes down facts and dispatches reports? And what remains of international law, international justice and the UN Security Council, when there is no more law, justice and security in our region? ". Speaking about minorities, Bassil asked the following questions: what value remains of the minority if its number plummeted in Iraq from two million to less than 300 000? And in Turkey from 15% to 1%? , and in Bethlehem from 85% to 12%? And in Jerusalem from 53% to 2%? And if 700 000 Yazidis and Christians in Mosul were displaced in one fell swoop? And two bishops were kidnapped without anyone reacting? And Assyrians were displaced as a result of this silence... What would remain of minorities, if in the name of Islam a state was allowed to be born, which is a distorted radical interpretation of Islam". Finally, Bassil called on the international community to maintain “our culture, identity and civilization, and take from us much more than oil and resources”.

This heartbreaking call made by Minister Bassil before the UN Security Council came as a reaction to the terrorist acts committed by ISIS and Israel that cannot even be compared to prehistoric times brutality. Apart from the slaughter and displacement of the humans and those who disagree with them, ISIS worked on the destruction of the human heritage, through:

1. In Iraq: selling Sumerian monuments in Tel Aviv, destroying the cities of Nimrud, Hatra and Khorsabad, demolishing Nineveh Museum, and the statue "the Winged Bull", the symbol of the Assyrian civilization as well as the historic Church of St. George.

2. In Syria: the looting, burning and destruction of archaeological sites in several different parts of the country, among which: Krak des Chevaliers (Crusader Castle), historical markets of Aleppo, including the Umayyad Mosque, the Evangelical church, the fishing corner and the Waqf library.

It should be noted that there is no definition for terrorism in the international law, as this issue has been and continues to collide with a number of challenges, contradictions and conflicting demands. This is what drove many observers to conclude that despite the fact that the UN Security Council resolutions are not a source of international law, "**but the international mandatory of the resolutions of Chapter VII makes us believe that the definition cited by resolution 1566 of international terrorism is an internationally binding definition**; the definition stipulates that:

**criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, and all other acts which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature.**

Thus, the UN Security Council must refer the ISIS crimes to the International Criminal Court, and to hold accountable those responsible for committing these crimes and all those who incited and carried them out, as it has done twice previously when the security council referred the Darfur case before the ICC under resolution 1593/2005, and when it referred under resolution 1970/2011 the Libya case to the International Criminal Court. The Security Council’s responsibility in the assignment is based on two principles:

First: the crimes that are committed, the perpetrations, the persistent violence, are threatening international peace and security.

Second: based on the responsibility of the international community in "protecting civilians", the principle which led to forwarding the Libyan case to the International Criminal Court, as soon as a country shows an unwillingness and inability to protect civilians, it becomes imperative for the international community to carry that responsibility proceeding from the principle of the responsibility to protect civilians, which has become since 2005, an integral part of the public international law.

Consequently, it is possible, nonetheless it is a must, for the international community to penalize ISIS and the Israeli occupation for their crimes based on the legal characterization of those crimes, namely:

1. Committing genocide

2. Crimes against humanity

3. War crimes

However, the major result of ISIS terrorism and through its criminal acts remains that it has buried Arab’s pursuit to achieve the desired goal in establishing a civil state-state of citizenship- where citizens are equal in rights and duties.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the following observations must be stated:

1. Free people do not produce subordinated (puppet) regimes. Perhaps we can say that the most powerful weapon that Israel fears is that the Arab populations have freedom and enjoy democracy.

2. The unrecognition of the existence of "Arab spring" goes back to the fact that the people who faced and toppled tyrants look confused in finding a new political formula or building an alternative regime. As they acted without a plan, even if they knew what they did not want, and when they shouted loud: "The people want to overthrow the regime", they did not have a clear picture of the alternative regime they wanted.

3. Overthrowing some regime symbols does not mean at all the establishment of democratic governance; the democratic governance is not built on the backs of tanks or aerial bombardment or through the courtship of Israel. And any regime that claims democracy and establishes relations with the Zionist entity is an infiltrator regime that must be fought, even with the help and support of a reluctant authoritarian regime.

4. The occupation of ISIS of vast areas in both Syria and Iraq is considered an introduction to rewriting the political map of the Middle East so as to ensure the continuation of the Israeli superiority at all levels and the protection of Western interests. The division of the already divided land is no longer driven by an intellectual luxury, but became a tangible reality confirmed by the fact in all of Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Syria and Yemen; and the goal is clear and unambiguous, which is to maintain the strategic superiority of Israel, serve its security and justify its existence as a Jewish state surrounded by sectarian feuding statelets. In other words, the Western - Zionist scheme does not need excuses to rupture the Arab world because the majority of Arab countries live today in a stage of concern over destiny.

5. The turmoil in the Arab world is linked in a key part to determining the regional poles in the Middle East: Is it Israel and Iran or Israel and Turkey or is it Turkey, Iran, and Israel? And there is nothing Arab among these poles.

In retrospect, we understand the Saudi decision in waging "the decisive storm" against Houthi forces in Yemen: “the backyard of Riyadh”. The point needing emphasis is that "the decisive storm" campaign, which began on 26 March 2015, has coincided, to some degree, with the reaching of a "nuclear understanding" between Iran and Western countries, as if Saudi Arabia wanted to play some regional role against Iran, through its air campaign on Yemen.

This means that the door has become wide open to a scene of many regional wars: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya etc. It is acknowledged that the vulnerable regimes usually wage wars outside their borders to unite people in the face of imaginable "external threat", coupled with the absence of any effort to introduce internal reforms.

6. Finally, political changes in the Arab countries have provided the opportunity for the spread of international terrorism led by ISIS and Nusra militias to commit the most heinous crimes against history, geography, human civilization and religion. If the minorities in the Arab Levant live with the obsession of an existential threat, then the Islamic religion is exposed as well to greater distortion of its values ​​at the hands of those who claim to be Muslims.

7. Arab people must know that the transition to democracy is not easy and is not done by a "push" of a button. There are institutional, social, economic, legal barriers that prevent transition to democratic rule. The absence of state institution, the deep-rooted traditional structural forces, the absence of rules of citizenship and the weak economic growth, are obstacles that must be overcome before the transition to democratic polity. In short, the practice of democracy need actors and participants, these actors represent the citizens in the community, which is reflected in the following statement: there is no democracy without citizens or citizenship.

8- Negotiating terrorists must not be considered as an option. States are called upon to join efforts and adopt a comprehensive strategy to fight all forms of terrorism at all levels: military, economic, social, and educational. States must understand that terrorism is not confined solely to the Middle East but it is spreading to other parts of the world. In my assessment the recent terrorist attacks against Russian airplane and against Lebanese and French civilians indicate that we are witnessing a real Third World War taking place between peace-loving nations on one hand and terrorist groups supported, unfortunately, by some states, on the other hand.