

Canadian Social Science

Vol. 7, No. 1, 2011, pp. 15-24

ISSN 1712-8056 [Print]

ISSN 1923-6697[Online]

www.cscanada.netwww.cscanada.org

Solutions out of the Crisis of Democracy in the Middle East

SOLUTIONS À LA CRISE DE LA DÉMOCRATIE AU MOYEN-ORIENT

Mojtaba Maghsoudi¹**Majid khorshidi²**

Abstract: Much more complicated than the concept of democracy is that supposed to be, because in order to narration and writers have been using it and are commensurate with the present needs and a circumstance of each era has been different. Also, democracy as a way of political office, which among other species is more appropriate, be assessed. Countries with a democratic structure in the world, sometimes a system of economic, social, political and cultural advanced and this often has added appeal of democracy in the world. However, the Middle East, as a very strategic area in the world, often non-democratic structure and are underdeveloped. So that, enter democracy in the long run path of progress and development will open on these countries. However, the structure of political, economic, social and cultural countries in the region so that such crises often toward establishing democracy in their communities face. Because of the importance of this subject, this paper believes that in different fields, political, economic, cultural and social way out of crisis work for democracy in the Middle East offers.

Key words: Democracy; Participation; Middle East; Rentier State; Fundamentalism

Résumé: Beaucoup plus compliqué que le concept de la démocratie devrait être, parce que, pour la narration et des écrivains qui l'ont été utiliser et sont en rapport avec les besoins actuels et des circonstances de chaque époque sont différents. En outre, la démocratie comme un moyen de fonctions politiques, qui, parmi autres espèces est la plus approprié d'être évaluée. Les pays ayant une structure démocratique dans le monde, parfois un système économique, social, politique et culturel avancé et cela a été souvent ajouté l'appel de la démocratie dans le monde. Cependant, le Moyen-Orient, en tant que zone stratégique mondial très souvent la structure démocratique sont encore sous-développés. C'est la raison pour laquelle l'entrée dans la voie de démocratie et de développement sera ouverte petit à petit pour ces pays. De telles manières que les

¹ Associate Professor, Dep. of Political Science, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Iran
Email: m.maghsoudi@iauctb.ac.ir

² Ph.D. candidate, Politics and Government, Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, Putra University, Malaysia
E-mail: madjdkhorshidi@yahoo.com

*Received 6 December 2010; accepted 22 January 2011

structure politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels dans cet région ainsi des crises de la démocratie qui apparaissent souvent dans leur communauté. En raison de l'importance de ce sujet, ce document estime que dans les différents domaines comme politique, économique, culturelle et sociale, nous pourrions trouver une solution à la crise démocratique au Moyen-Orient.

Mots clés: Démocratie; Participation; Moyen-Orient; Rentier Etat; L'intégrisme

1. DEMOCRACY

Like many other political concepts and expressions, democracy has also a complicated description while it is simple and understandable, as everybody's description from democracy can reveal his viewpoint.

For example, Seymour Martin Lipset believes: describing a complicated concept like democracy inevitably has a cultural base; it is obvious the viewpoint of a proponent of labor union in Central Europe is different from a farmer who is from south of Sahara desert and lives hand-to-mouth. These descriptions depend on era too. For example, citizens of those countries which were formed from the heart of colonialism after 1945 have a vision and understanding from democracy which is different from the vision and understanding of old countries' citizens. Everybody's description from democracy is also affected by many other factors (Lipset & Lakin, 2004).

Or Karl Popper, contemporary philosopher says democracy has never been the governing of people, and nor it can be, and nor it should be. It is dangerous to teach people and especially children that democracy means people governing, that it means the governing of public, because it is not true and when people know the reality, they feel they are deceived and this feeling can even end to terrorism (Popper, 2000).

In a general description it can be said that in studying different types of governments, democracy is a type of government which is observer of people governing over people. Also, democracy is assessed as a process and a type of government which is being formed and deepened. Democracy is not a static and completely available situation. It is a time consuming process and its accomplishment needs endeavoring and collective willpower.

Today, democracy is assessed as a paradigm, an epidemic and global concept (Edelman, 1984) which is affected a lot by a collection of changes made in international system. Globalism as a process has a great role in expansion and dynamism of democracy concept.

Democracy is assessed as a type of society political governing which is more appropriate than other types of governing and its special aspect is formal declaration of the principal of minority compliance of majority and recognizing freedom and equal rights for people and citizens.

Content and form of democracy has evolved during history and it has passed many reformations and undoubtedly it will be exposed to many other changes too. Therefore, endeavoring for establishment of democracy is counted as a relative value.

Democracy cannot be examined apart from political, economical, social and cultural situations of the societies, rather real and practical situation of the society should be considered.

In fact, each democracy as a form of political-social structure has different output in different societies and it is the same about its situation in Middle East too.

Middle East is considered as one of so crucial and strategic areas of the world which has been always exposed to several crises.

Countries of this area often have non-democratic and undeveloped structure and this matter, which has made the chance of foreigners meddling in Middle East during history, in addition to prepare the situation for several crises, is considered as one of the factors for retardation of political-economical structures of countries of this area.

As it was mentioned before, democracy is one of the most accepted and appropriate methods of governing in the world. If Middle East Countries have democratic structure, undoubtedly most of present problems in this area will be solved and Middle East will go through the way of development like most

parts of the world. So, as this subject is important, present article is going to offer some solutions for terminating democracy crisis in the Middle East.

2. DEMOCRACY SYMBOLS AND CONSTITUENTS

Although there are some differences in describing democracy, but numerous features can be counted for democratic governments, including:

- Having election
- Having civil and political freedoms
- Having constitutional law
- Having different parties and competitions between them
- Having the press
- Having mass media and free flow of information;
- having the principle of the separation of powers;
- having supervising, controlling and supporting institutes;
- having some mechanisms for solving disagreements peacefully;
- observing personal and social rights;
- power periodicity i.e. elites' rotation and power circulation (Bailey, 1918; Touraine, 1995; Woolf & Rawcliffe, 2005)

It is necessary to mention that the affixes of "independent", "free", "justly" and "real" in these symbols of democracy not only are "required conditions" but they are "necessary conditions".

Whenever there are really above mentioned constituents and principles in the political life of citizens of a society it can be talked about having democracy on that society.

In other words, talking about democracy in societies without free organizations is not more than a claim and lie.

Also, two basic principles in democracy are "equality" and "freedom". In fact, equality means all human beings are equal because of their humanity and are not superior to each other. But in politics, the principle of equality means citizens are equal in front of law and regarding their rights and freedoms.

In democracy, citizens should be at least legally equal. Equality in democracy is equality in chances not necessarily in achievements. Those who are equally supported by law can benefit from the chances which are provided by social and political government and they can cooperate and compete in the political life, as equality needs lack of discrimination between people from every type, especially regarding their race, nationality, sex, religion and political view (Jahanbagloo, 2001).

Another important principle in democracy is "freedom". Freedom in philosophical democracy brings the same meaning to the mind as liberalism cry out; that is human freedom from sanctification and holy things. Therefore, humanism and individualism, equity and freedom are three sides of democracy triangle as philosophy or ideology (Bashirieh, 2001).

3. DEMOCRACY CRISIS

Societies often confront with several crises when they are going through the way of democracy and are in the initial steps of democratizing their governments.

These crises sometimes are functional and are related to bad working of democracy symbols and constituents; and sometimes they are related to contradictions between political, economical, social and cultural structures of the societies with democratic principles and instruments.

In these societies most of constituents and symbols of democracy are weak and not real; and democracy process and organizations are not independent and free. Established governments in these countries have evident differences with democratic governments. Providing democracy in these countries is described with "high cost".

Also, democracy in these countries is incomplete; in the other words it is a "guided democracy" and governments describe it.

A guided democracy is a type of democracy that people have the right of election there, but from among the limited options which are selected by some other people. In fact, governments take the control of society and manage country with the excuse of lack of political maturity of societies and required information and impose directed selections to citizens (Callender, 1993; Harris, 1997; Howard, 1940).

Political government in these countries is often quasi-democratic; while symbols of democratic are preserved but the government relies in fact just on the opinion of one person. Even constitutional laws which are compiled by political governments are not implemented and performed by the same political governments (Brynen, Korany, & Noble, 1995).

4. DEMOCRACY OBSTACLES IN MIDDLE EAST

During recent decades, several researchers have theories in examining factors and obstacles for going toward democracy in Middle East and each one of them has dealt with this issue from a different aspect. In this framework, some researchers has specified economical obstacles, some others has mentioned political obstacles and another group has underlined cultural and social obstacles. In this part of our article, we are going to deal with democracy obstacles in the above mentioned aspects.

4.1 Political Obstacles

From the viewpoint of many researchers the most important political obstacle in the process of democratizing Middle East is existence of half-democratic and somehow authoritarian governments (Smith, 1996).

In Middle East countries political decisions are often made individually or a special group has the responsibility of decision making. Also power concentration in the government organization is considered as one of the threatening factors for democracy in Middle East.

From a long time ago, foreigners' meddling is also counted as one of the preventive factors in this area for reaching to democratic structures (Parsa, 2000).

Middle East as the center of energy provision and international communication bridge has always been an object of attention for global operators. This matter caused Middle East to have many changes which its results have been security and political crises and foreigner meddling.

Nevertheless, turning people into enemies is also like a scourge for democracy. Underdeveloped and authoritarian countries often benefit from this strategy for mobilizing mass of people. But this issue itself is considered as an obstacle for their achievement of development and is a running away from reality (Salamé, 1994).

4.2 Economical Obstacles

There are several economical obstacles for democracy establishment in Middle East, which the most important of them are rentier economical structures and existence of rentier states that are replacement of the power of thought and economical production in this area.

The main difference of an economy which is dependent to natural sources with an economy which is not dependent to these sources is that in the former one there are social involvements on the quality of distribution and re-distribution of natural sources rents more than anything else; not for re-distribution of incomes which are as the result of production in the economy and is one of the bases in democracy.

Even if the rentier state, in the best case, only uses this rent for offering general goods which is beneficial for all citizens, natural sources reduce the possibility of democratizing a country that has this sources with resolving the need to re-distribution of income gained from non-economic part. Because of this, rentier countries are somehow autonomous in their costs.

Also, even if non-economic part and its related re-distribution of income have not have a determinative role in the strategic behavior of operators in social field, the income of natural sources which will be under the control of government causes weakness in power multiplicity and creation of autocratic governments by

disrupting power balance between those who have the control of sources' rent distribution and those who should bargain with first group for benefiting from these rental sources.

In this direction, the main role of natural sources like oil for destroying mechanisms which cause establishment of democratic governments is that these sources make the possibility for autocratic governments to undertake valid promises for implementing citizens' considered policies in the framework of more distribution of natural sources rent without any need to make changes in the political power of governors. So, maybe the main problem in dependence to natural sources and lack of democracy is not rental government enjoyment of these sources but it is distribution of this rent in a valid way between citizens or specific groups of them which remove the need of changing political organizations from non-democratic to democratic ones (Haynes, 2001; Wiarda, 2007).

Also, dependence to natural sources causes more interest of rental governments to quell their protesters. But it is not because rental government spends more costs for military, disciplinary and security issues. Rather it is more because in the income basket of rental governors the role of physical and human investment is low.

On the contrary, if quelling citizens damages the profits of rental governors, they may use another strategy against the threats of their political protesters other than quelling (for example more distributions of sources' rent among them or even establishing democracy).

The main problem regarding politicians' ability in giving valid promise for implementing the policies considered by citizens or distribution of sources' rent among different groups of citizens is that these mechanisms which result in creating political loyalty in citizens and make a valid promise are not economically effective. These mechanisms are usually performed in the form of guardianship policies (Parry & Morán, 1994).

Another important result of this type of studies is that those suggestions which are offered for more distribution of oil income among citizens and taking these sources out of the control of governors may at last lead to stabilization of autocratic and non-democratic government, because it can cause a valid promise for distributive and re-distributive policies and through this beside affecting the whole logic of democratization, it can also sent away these economies from the path of achieving economical development.

Rental governments of Middle East do not need to take tax from their citizens and provide their sources and costs through the oil income.

Some of the consequences of rental governments' needlessness to taking tax can be mentioned as establishment of a government that is autocratic and independent to people classes, irresponsibility of government and formation of Bonaparte government.

Carl Marx says: Bonapartism establishes when on one hand the governing class cannot continue its domination anymore by the instruments of constitutional law and parliamentary government; and on the other hand low classes are not able to fix their ideology too. Therefore, both of them suffer from their weakness. In this situation some people can come to power as Bonaparte came.

Bonapartism is in fact a supreme sample of government independence. If government is described as an instrument in the hand of governing class, Bonapartism is when the government becomes independent from social classes too.

In the history of Middle East countries there were good samples of these Bonaparte governments. But as it is understood from its description, Bonapartism does not have any way to democracy, because the mechanism of benefiting from oil is in power provision and negating democracy (Deegan, 1993).

Therefore, the process of democratization in Middle East countries is intensively affected by the income structure of these countries; that means structural elements of economy have severely taken the power of strategic maneuver from the actors of social field for establishment of democracy.

Non-democratic governments in Middle East continue their life through the ability of their politicians in distributing rent of sources in a valid form and in a way that it causes political loyalty of citizens, choosing political playmates and making supporters. This matter leads to more power imbalance in the favor of rental governors and more stabilization of autocratic rental governments.

4.3 Cultural and Social Problems and Obstacles:

In talking about cultural obstacles various subjects such as political culture, weakness and lack of democracy culture (existence of autocratic cultures), weakness and lack of discussion capacities especially critical discussion, democracy weakness from the organization of family to government and confrontation of tradition with modernity are discussed.

In political culture, contrary to the structure, the concentration and attention is paid to the actors, their mental mode and their behavior and beliefs. If we know political structure as the political hardware, political culture is considered as its software.

Political culture is the orientation of nations' minds, social groups or people toward politics and it somehow forms the political behavior.

The system of religious beliefs, explanatory symbols, social values, mental understanding from history and politics, fundamental values, the quality of expressing feelings, political insights and reflections which are the result of historical special experience of nations and groups and the feedback and behavioral framework that political government is located there can be placed in the relatively expanded concept of political culture (Fathi Ashtiani, 1994).

According to the attitude of political culture, for understanding political and economical results, the cultural features of governments, their political orientations and governmental methods should also be examined. In other word, for better understanding of politics we should also enter from the gate of culture.

In Middle East, there are mass of people who have a democratic thought. But the same people severely have autocratic behaviors in their manners, character and in connection with social environment. This culture does not discussion capacities; and tolerance, coexistence and accepting criticisms which are the features of democratic governments are seen less there.

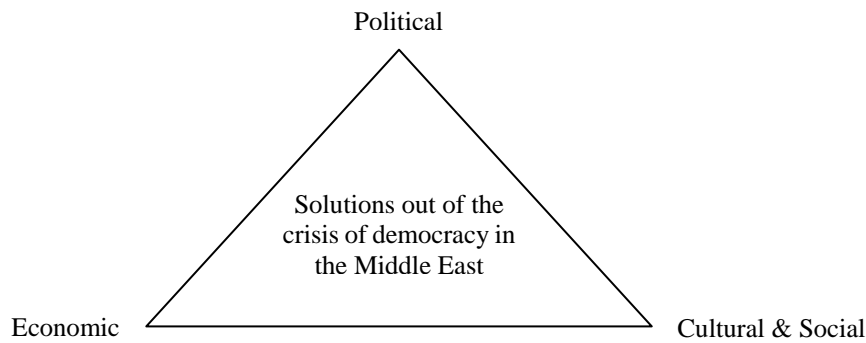
There is a direct connection between cultural features of non-democratic governments and the possibility of their action for achieving democracy. Political culture of Middle East countries is an autocratic culture which acts as a serious and basic obstacle in the way of democracy and free and independent civil society (Crystal, 2001).

Economical culture of Middle East societies is in a way that they often have distress of distribution rather than production (Gholi, 2006); and this matter is as the result of their rental economy which was described before.

Most of Middle East researchers believe cultural obstacles are one of effective factors in popularizing democracy in Middle East which arise from institutionalized ethnical, national and historical beliefs in this area.

The consequences of these factors are weakness of democracy from family to government, weakness and lack of tolerance and coexistence as a value, inattention to the position and status of science, identifying problems incorrectly because of the weakness of realism, accepting destiny, weakness of independent civil middle class, governmental mass media, fundamentalism and so on (Mir Sepasi, 2002; Sari ol ghalam, 2001).

Some experts of Middle East issues believe that political culture of this area has unique features which make it impossible to stabilize an effective democratic political government. It means available cultural structures in these societies such as patriarchy, autocracy, domination of noble classes on public and hierarchy and autocratic government are against the concept of democracy which itself is the result of contrast between tradition and modernity in these countries.



5. SOME TECHNIQUES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLVING DEMOCRACY CRISIS IN MIDDLE EAST

Definitely democracy is a multi-aspect process and achieving it is the result of cooperation and determination of all social powers, governments and nations.

5.1 In Political Field:

1) Negating foreigners' meddling:

Foreigners' meddling cause delay in native democracy and provides the most important situation for justifying internal oppressions. Regarding this matter, considering the experience of neighbor countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan seems necessary.

2) Reinforcing and supporting democracy movement (in all of its forms and types):

Reinforcing and supporting democracy movements in Middle East countries including supporting women fights, children and religious minorities and ... is one of the techniques for solving democracy crisis in Middle East. In this way, fighting for eliminating class laws as a part of democracy project and also eliminating and correcting obligation to apparently legal and non-democratic aspect seems necessary.

Undoubtedly, accomplishment of this technique needs suitable acculturation with it, because the process of democracy-wanting is usually fighting in two front lines: autocratic governments and autocratic cultures. Fighting in these two front lines is considered as a democracy exercise for democracy in Middle East countries.

3) Negating all symbols of radicalism, zealotry, and fundamentalism and fighting with violence, as one of the obstacles for democracy and the scourge of it:

One of the obstacles for democracy in Middle East is the existence of some symbols of radicalism and fundamentalism in this area that sometimes have been expanded by the actions of some governments in this area. So, negating radicalism and fundamentalism symbols and not support of Middle East governments from fundamental and radical groups is considered as one of the techniques for solving democracy crisis in this area.

4) Attempt for modifying the organization of government and resistance against governmentalization:

As it was mentioned in democracy obstacles in Middle East, governments' autocracy in Middle East and the control of all life aspects by government in these countries is one of democracy obstacles in this area. For passing this obstacle some techniques such as distribution and periodicity of power; translucency and responsibility in the organization of government; government orientation to law and its legitimacy; selecting competent people; reinforcing civil, independent and political organizations which are independent of government, accepting the rights of minorities and reinforcing real party government are suggested.

5) Rationality in decision making (one-night decision making is like a scourge):

Paying attention to "collective wisdom" and accepting the principles and processes of decision making is considered as one of political techniques for solving democracy crisis in Middle East area.

Some of other political techniques for solving Middle East crisis are as below:

6) Reinforcing organizations which preserve democracy and republic (democratic guaranties);

7) Accepting democratic principles and processes;

- 8) Reviving citizenship rights (against group rights);
- 9) Negating guardianship;
- 10) Paying attention to the link between democracy and human rights (Ismael, Ismael, & Abu Jaber, 1991; Yacoubian, 2005)

5.2 In the Economical Field:

Suggested techniques in the economical field for solving democracy crisis in Middle East are as follow:

- Exiting from the governing of parasitism-oil, circular economy;
- Moving toward productive economy;
- Necessity of reinforcing private sector and real economical reforms;
- Exiting from troublesome quasi- governmentalizations;
- Necessity of presence and cooperation of independent civil middle class;

5.3 In the Cultural and Social Field:

In cultural field, there are also several techniques for solving democracy crisis in Middle East which the most important of them is acculturation and national willpower for establishing democracy in countries of this area. Some of these techniques are mentioned below:

Practicing discussion specially "critical discussion"

- a. In this direction, critical discussion both with ourselves and with government is suggested. This method needs the attitude of discussion-orientation. Critical discussion even among intellectuals, society, and government and between different classes of people is considered as one of the necessities for achieving democracy;
- b. Reinforcing the culture of tolerance and coexistence and accepting differences and disagreements;
- c. Accepting multi-voices as a value;
- d. Increasing public information, insight and knowledge;
- e. Reinforcing and starting democracy from family (family democracy);
- f. Reinforcing civil organizations;
- g. Moving from nominal democracy and structure toward democracy in values, minds and hearts of people;
- h. Vertical and horizontal expansion of cooperation;
- i. Modifying the culture of autocracy in the area;
- j. Unity of all social powers, classes and layers with the leadership of middle class;
- k. Unity of all social powers specially intellectuals and students, journalists and professors (Albright, Geremek, & Halperin, 2003);
- l. Popularizing democracy in the area;
- m. Releasing religion from governments, instrumental attitude toward the factor of religion for oppression and justifying being the shadow of God;
- n. Attempt for more-balanced distribution of social dignities, power, wealth and respect;
- o. Benefiting from media revolution;
- p. Reinforcing public orientation (Gaonkar, 2007; Plattner, 2008);

6. CONCLUSION

In this article, the techniques for solving democracy crises in Middle East in different political, economical, social and cultural fields were explained.

The obvious matter is that facilitating and deepening the movement toward a democratic situation in Middle East countries like any other political, economical and social phenomenon depends on special situations and backgrounds.

Considering mentioned points and also by paying attention to effectiveness of some issues such as the structure of political power, economical development and political culture, the process of passing democracy crisis in Middle East will be possible by a multi-aspects process.

In addition, perspectives of a stable democracy in a country are gained better and faster if the citizens and leaders of that country powerfully support democratic ideas, values, symbols and actions and this needs willpower and decision in the level of government and society.

The most reliable support is when these beliefs and wills are fixed in the culture of that country and generally are moved from one generation to other. In other word, considered country has democratic political culture.

REFERENCE

- Albright, M. K., Geremek, B., & Halperin, M. H. (2003). *Threats to Democracy: Prevention and Response: report of an independent task force*. NY: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Bailey, L. H. (1918). *What is democracy?* New York: The Comstock publishing co.
- Bashirieh, H. (2001). *Courses on Democracy for all*. Tehran: Negahe moaser.
- Brynen, R., Korany, B., & Noble, P. (1995). *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World: Theoretical perspectives*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Callender, C. N. (1993). The crisis of democracy Clarence N. *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 169, 1-273.
- Crystal, J. (2001). Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf. In A.R.Norton (Ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*. Leiden: Brill.
- Deegan, H. (1993). *The Middle East and problems of democracy*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Edelman, M. (1984). *Democratic theories and the Constitution*. New York: Suny Press.
- Fathi Ashtiani, A. (1994). *An Introduction to Political Psychology*. Tehran: Beathat.
- Gaonkar, D. P. (2007). *Cultures of Democracy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gholi, A. R. (2006). Salt of Life. *Quarterly of Economy and Society*, 2, 8-19.
- Harris, W. (1997). *Challenges to democracy in the Middle East*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.
- Haynes, J. (2001). *Democracy in the developing world: Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Howard, D. (1940). The crisis of democracy: or, The struggle to preserve civil rights and secure social and economic justice. In *Connecticut Conference on Social and Labor Legislation Civil Rights Comm.*
- Ismael, T. s., Ismael, J. S., & Abu Jaber, K. (1991). *Politics and government in the Middle East and North Africa*. Miami: University Press of Florida.
- Jahanbagloo, R. (2001). *Difference and Tolerance*. Tehran: Markaz Publication.
- Lipset, S. M. & Lakin, J. M. (2004). *The Democratic Century*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Mir Sepasi, A. (2002). *Democracy or Reality; a Sociological Disquisition on the Iranian Intellectuality*. Tehran: Tarh e no.
- Parry, G. & Morán, M. (1994). *Democracy and democratization*. London: Routledge.
- Parsa, M. (2000). *States, Ideologies and Social revolutions (A comparative analysis of Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines)*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Plattner, M. F. (2008). *Democracy without borders? global challenges to liberal democracy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Popper, K. (2000). *The Lesson of this Century*. London: Routledge.
- Salamé, G. (1994). *Democracy without democrats? The renewal of politics in the Muslim world*. London: I.B.Tauris.

- Sari ol ghalam, M. (2001). The Prespective of Civil Society in the Middle East; The Analysis of Cultural Obstacles. *The Quarterly of Middle Eastern Studies*, 7, 59-63.
- Smith, B. C. (1996). *Understanding Third World Politics; Theories of Political Change & Development*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Touraine, A. (1995). *What is democracy?* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wiarda, H. J. (2007). *Globalization: universal trends, regional implications*. Hanover: UPNE.
- Woolf, A. & Rawcliffe, J. M. (2005). *Democracy*. London: Evans Brothers.
- Yacoubian, M. (2005). *Promoting Middle East Democracy: European Initiatives* (Rep. No. 136). washington . D.C: United States Institute of Peace.