



مركز دراسات الشرق الأوسط الأردن
Middle East Studies Center- Jordan

Arab Crises Team-ACT

The Crisis of Political Reform and Democratic Transformation in the Arab World



26

October 2024

Arab Crises Team-ACT

[http://mesc.com.jo/CrisesTeamReports/
CrisesReports.htm](http://mesc.com.jo/CrisesTeamReports/CrisesReports.htm)





مركز دراسات الشرق الأوسط الأردن
Middle East Studies Center- Jordan

Arab Crises Team-ACT

The Crisis of Political Reform and Democratic Transformation in the Arab World

26

October 2024

Our Concept of Crises

The concept of crisis or escalation raises controversy in the linguistic meaning or significance of the meaning and the context of common usage in political literature. However, this did not prevent the meaning from settling on its approach to describe the state of obstruction or impotence often accompanied by patterns of tension on several levels.

Furthermore, the potential for crises to escalate into violence or force at various levels is a stark reality. This positioning within the bounds of instability can lead to collapse and chaos, underscoring the gravity of the situation. The Libyan, Sudanese, and Yemeni crises are the best examples of such crises.

As we define it here, a crisis or impasse is not necessarily the result of an imbalance in dealing with problems or obstacles or the failure to make the right decisions at the right time. Instead, the accumulation of errors or the increasing inability to overcome them reinforces the path of the ruling crisis and its successive recurrence over time. Such considered crises carry within them the ability to generate more crises.

Crises are not isolated events. They can complicate situations and create temporary blockages that lead to further decline, regression, and collapse. Their impact is not limited to the political or economic sphere but extends to social, cultural, intellectual, and strategic dimensions. This comprehensive impact underscores the need for a holistic crisis response.

The concept of crisis, as discussed here, was introduced by the 'Arab Crises Team—ACT,' which has been a significant contributor to the understanding and management of crises.

The team members' fields include strategic, political, social, economic, cultural, and communication experts and academics. They are from seven Arab countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, and Iraq.

The Crisis of Political Reform and Democratic Transformation in the Arab World

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Introduction.....	6
Crisis Description, Backgrounds, and Manifestations.....	7
Crisis Causes, Dimensions, and Repercussions	8
Crisis Parties	13
Crisis Scenarios.....	17
Perceptions of a way out of the Crisis	24
The Arab Vision for Exiting the Crisis of Political Reform and Democratic Transformation	26
English Summary.....	--

The Crisis of Political Reform and Democratic Transformation in the Arab World

Summary

This report is a timely and urgent response to the crisis of political reform and democratic transformation in the Arab world. The pressing nature of this issue is underscored by the new Arab trends striving to resolve the current crises and wars.

The report also brings to light the existing issues between the active political and social forces and the ruling elite in many countries of the Arab world, particularly regarding the nature of popular partnership in managing power and the representative will of voters to governor participate in decision-making.

The report is dedicated to presenting a realistic, objective vision. This vision, grounded in rigorous research and analysis, is designed to build common perceptions of the necessary political reform and democratic mechanisms that produce popular representation in various Arab cases and achieve a safe democratic transformation.

This report takes a comprehensive approach, considering many unexplored aspects of the crisis of political reform and democratic transformation in the Arab world. It thoroughly reviews the description of the situation and its background, causes, and motives. The

report delves into the various dimensions of the crisis, explores its main parties internally and externally, and then carefully studies the possible scenarios and possibilities of transformation of this crisis and its short and medium-term directions.

The report presents its vision for exiting the crisis and moving towards social peace and modern state construction, including the development of the political system, in a way that regulates the relationship between the ruling elites and the various forces of society and achieves stability, security, and development in the Arab countries collectively and individually.

The Arab Crisis Team-ACT found that the crisis of political reform in the Arab world represents a challenge facing modern Arab thought. The forces of change and progress have a dynamic motive to build a model of political reform and democratic transformation qualified to advance the state and society. It looks forward to building governance, transparency, and justice in managing the path of the modern state and consolidating social peace.

The report provided a balanced understanding of the essential foundations behind the sources and environment of the crisis that afflicts the Arab political, social, and economic structure and contributes to obstructing political reform projects and democratic transformation at various levels.

It also uncovered that this crisis is linked in the Arab world to the current nature of states, their essential

elements, and their political and social forces. Such an approach required research into the causes of the crisis's emergence at various levels and its active parties and incubators.

The report found an elite disagreement in diagnosing the crisis of political reform and democratic transformation in the Arab world. Understanding the crisis and identifying its backgrounds, manifestations, and areas is essential for deciding the direction of political reform and the required democratic transformation. The Arab world has been plagued by a flaw in the approach to building priorities on the one hand and in connection with international powers. It also suffers from the growing fears and factional calculations of the ruling elites that any actual political reform policies would strengthen national, nationalist, and Islamist social and political forces.

With the global transformations towards democracy in the last three decades and the emergence of the Arab Spring revolutions that toppled several Arab regimes, the report finds that the measures taken by many Arab countries in political reform were not sufficient to bring about the desired democratic transformation by the demands of the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011.

Due to its accumulation, the crisis has become a crisis with profound characteristics and features in terms of the difficulty of the solution, the overlap of the factors of the crisis and its causes, its ramifications and overlap, and even its generation of other crises that may seem like an individual crisis by itself.

Moreover, the difference in the weights of the forces and actors forming the crisis from one time period to another has caused its dispersion. The reasons behind such a crisis are not only an entirely Arab subjective act, but considerations of the international and regional balance of power and their interactions have subjected reform efforts to danger and retreat.

The report cites several causes of the crisis, the most important of which are 1) the nature of the Arab state and its policy, 2) the methodology of governance, authority, and state administration, 3) failure in achieving national goals and the absence of political and social stability, 4) the dispersion of projects of integration and joint Arab cooperation, and many others. These causes and obstacles made the crisis complex and multidimensional nationally on the political, social, economic, and security levels. It also impacted the ability to decide on the level of positions and policies towards the significant issues of the nation.

The continuing crisis impacts are reflected in the weakening of constitutional, oversight, and legislative political institutions. It has also created many social, intellectual, and cultural crises, including the decline of the philosophies and forces of national unity and the philosophy of building the "national community" as the primary lever of the state and its supreme interests.

The report reviews the major players in the crisis, considering local players from the ruling regimes, political parties, social forces, professional unions, and non-governmental community organizations. It also

considered the external players from the international powers influencing the crisis, such as the United States, the European Union, Russia, and China, as well as influential regional countries such as Iran and Turkey.

In the end, the report reviewed four detailed scenarios for the crisis: the stalemate scenario, the partial reform scenario, the secure and productive scenario agreed upon by both the opposition and the government, and the increased crisis to escalate people's protest and anger scenario. The report found that the stalemate scenario will likely continue in the short and medium terms. If the crisis increases its peak in the current decade, widespread popular protests are expected to take place and bring back the waves of the Arab Spring.

The report provides an Arab vision for containing this crisis and its solution. In light of the experiences and attempts at reform over the past two decades, this vision for getting out of this crisis is based on a comprehensive approach that includes:

"Taking reform measures in the political structure that achieve tangible progress in popular participation in decision-making, and establishing oversight institutions over government performance in a responsible manner. In their various forms, the elected parliamentary and municipal institutions assume the task of overseeing legislation and contributing to the decision-making process in the country. They are to protect and enhance public freedoms and build and encourage effective community institutions, professional associations - and

unions. They are assumed to adopt the governance approach and standards of good governance in supporting decision-making and enhancing political, social, and security stability. Moreover, they would enhance economic development and scientific and technical progress to achieve prosperity, civilized construction, and the highest interests in the Arab countries."

The report presents the essential features and requirements for its success, the most important of which are the distribution of powers in the actual practice of the ruling elite, the dedication to democracy, public liberties, and political freedoms in a way that enhances the ability to change, develop and continuously reform the political system, government departments, and policies. To guarantee the continuity of such changes, it affirms the essentiality of modifying the constitution as determined by the relations within the political system between the government and the popular will and its representation. It also assures the necessity of joint plans to benefit from the integration capabilities to form an Arab consensus on the necessity and speed of solving the country's problems and dealing with the internal tensions.