



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات | تونس
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies | Tunisia

International Symposium on “Freedom and Loss of Freedom”

Tunis, 17-18 April 2020

Call for papers

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (CAREP) announces the start of receiving research proposals to participate in the international symposium entitled “Freedom and Loss of Freedom” April 17-18, 2020, Tunis.

The concept paper

It might be much easier to discuss the loss of freedom than to try and grasp its essential meaning and identify its foundations. It is common practice to tackle freedom as an abstract metaphysical concept. One may argue that the most appropriate way to examine its meaning is to follow the process through which Paul Ricœur identified justice. According to Ricoeur, the first stage in the emergence of the meaning of justice, is through the sense of discontent. We have always yearned for freedom whenever we feel injustice: This is unfair⁽¹⁾! It is no exaggeration to say that what Ricœur assumed about the emergence of the meaning of justice is entirely applicable to freedom because our first awareness of freedom is the feeling of injustice and discontent when losing it or being deprived of it while others enjoy it.

People who have experienced freedom which is protected by laws, institutions and the rule of law, rarely pay great attention to it. They are more concerned with the goals and objectives of the activities they can achieve with the potential for action and the options it could provide. However, they do raise questions about its nature, limits and sustainability when their own freedom is threatened. In this respect, opinions about the feasibility of freedom and even its legitimacy are divided.

This is the case when the issue of individual liberties is at stake. One may mention issues such as porn, sex and drug use; or when circumstances of constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom, provide those who wish to harm the security and safety of the political community with opportunities for action. We may add the exercise of once freedom, such as freedom of election when it becomes a means of reaching power for those who do not hesitate to declare their intention to reduce the scope of other liberties such as the freedom of expression, media, assembly and political action as they may threaten national interests. We are witnessing this tendency today with the rise of the national populist right in many democracies, old and nascent.

Therefore, the fear to lose freedom in deeply rooted democracies is now prompted by the debate over freedom in terms of its meaning, its limits and its relation to other social values such as equality, justice, identity, tolerance and national belonging. Is freedom exercised in the private sphere absolute or is it limited by the requirements of self-preservation, safety of others as well as the pressure of social norms and their multiple controls, which could have a negative impact on its exercise? Does freedom of self-expression and self-rule remain absolute when it touches on sensitive issues such as sex, religion, security or national sovereignty and other topics that are considered sacred or “red lines”? Are national security, the supreme interest of the State and the response to terrorism and

1 Paul Ricœur, *Le Juste*, (Paris: Editions Esprit, 2001), p. 257

organized crime sufficient to convince citizens, who have enjoyed the benefits of freedom for many years, to abdicate some of those merits?

Are there societies, with sufficient constitutional and institutional guarantees capable of making freedom immune to all tendencies of recoil or underestimation in favor of other values and goals such as the immunity of the nation to the danger of external intrusion, distortion of national identity, discrimination and pluralism, as noticed today in the speeches of the extreme right in many established democratic societies? Isn't the danger of decline and regress a fantasy? This risk is widely shared in several studies in political sciences which highlight the possibility of deconsolidation of freedom, witnessed on multiple electoral occasions, in established democracies that have succeeded in strengthening democracy. Furthermore, is it plausible to worry about that suspicious convergence in Western democracies between the extreme right-wing forces and leftist movements with ideologies that view freedom as a capitalist manoeuvre and are no less anti-freedom than populist nationalist movements and extremist religious revival movements?

However, the threat to freedom today in contemporary Western democracies is not only limited to the forces of the extreme right-wing and the extreme ideological left, but also to extremist religious movements that do not accept the principle of individual freedom, or the liberal and secular political organization, upon which modern democracies are based. How should constitutional democracies deal with the challenge of religious revival movements without undermining the basis on which these democracies were founded, namely respect for the principle of freedom? Should they revive the old slogan "No freedom for the enemies of freedom" in line with Rousseau's call to force people to be free?

Constitutional democracies, as underlined by sociological studies inevitably evolve towards pluralistic societies due to two factors. First, the constitutional guarantees available to human rights and freedom of thought and belief. Social movements (political, feminist, labor, ecological) have expressed their longing for the values of freedom and emancipation, which allow people to embrace multiple perceptions of the good and exercise their constitutional right to either review or abandon these perceptions whenever they want without being adversely affected regarding their civil rights.

Second, these societies, for economic needs, have known movements of migration and settlement on their lands. As a result, immigrants from different cultures gained citizenship in societies whose cultures are based on human rights, democracy and the principle of individual self rule.

As a consequence, how will contemporary democracies deal with current changes within many transitions in the Arab world and with cultural and religious groups that always demand greater recognition of their collective cultural rights and their right to differ from the mainstream culture of the dominant group, while denying the implementation of the right in the case of individual freedom and autonomy? To which extent can religious, cultural and moral pluralism be consistent with the principle of freedom in democracy?

Long-established democracies have seen the reluctance of a large number of people to vote and to participate politically in spite of the adequate guarantees of political freedoms. This attitude is reflected by the obvious decline in the number of voters at major electoral dates and the decrease of citizens' engagement in public affairs. Is it due, as some believe, to the dominance of the modern model of freedom, devoting one's life to the private and intimate pleasures, as well as the instrumental view of political participation limited to the protection of one's privacy from any illegitimate interference of political power?

If liberals from Benjamin Constant to Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls have valued freedom as non-interference and the sovereignty of the individual over his own sphere of life, and if republicanist thinkers, from Rousseau to Skinner, Pocock and Pettit, have valued freedom as the independence of the community, its sovereignty over itself, and the participation of all its members as citizens in the making of its destiny and the promotion of its freedom, is it possible then, to work out a new model of freedom that overcomes the division between private and public autonomy to find out what Habermas has called "co-originality"? Can this new model for liberty called for by Habermas encourage people so that they engage in political action? Could motivation for political participation and the protection of freedom be achieved by promoting civil society initiatives in all areas and by giving them a greater role in policy- and decision-making?

These urgent questions are being raised while the world is witnessing the so-called Arab Spring revolutions which started in 2011, when Tunisians rose up for freedom and dignity and overthrew an authoritarian regime that lasted decades after independence of the country from France in 1956. Contrary to some expectations, these revolutions have not ended quickly but extended despite the setbacks experienced in Egypt, Syria, Libya and Yemen.

These revolutions, unlike the precedent ones, did not break out only for material demands and were not merely protests against high prices and deteriorating economic conditions, but asked for the overthrow of tyrannical regimes, the establishment of a democratic political system with the rule of law, a fair distribution of wealth and decent living conditions.

Some observers and analysts argue that these revolutions announce the beginning of a new era in the Arab world and the emergence of a new wave of democratization movements. Modern human history has witnessed three waves, as Samuel Huntington explained in his book *The Third Wave*⁽²⁾. Are the Arab spring revolutions a new wave after the third one, which started in Portugal in 1974 and spread to Spain and Greece and then to the countries of Latin America and later on to the countries of Eastern Europe to cause the collapse and disintegration of the communist system?

Whatever the answer to this question is, whether we consider the extent of these revolutions global and universal or will remain local and partial, and whether we are optimistic about the possibility of their success in ensuring the freedom of the peoples of the region and the establishment of democratic

2 Huntington, S. *The Third Wave, Democratization in the Late of the Twentieth Century*, (USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), chap. 1

rule and peaceful alternation of power, or pessimistic ; the question remains: Is what is happening in the Arab world a denial of the culturalist viewpoint that sees societies with Islamic and Arab culture an exception to the global democracy demanding movement and immune to the winds of democracy and the call for freedom ? Some claims, in this regard are made by eminent political scientists and scholars such as Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Larry Diamond, and Michel Camau.

Hegel had classified the Arab nations outside the course of world history and freedom awareness when he said, "The Orientals do not know that the spirit or man as such are free in themselves"⁽³⁾. It seems these countries are joining the rest of the world in the process of freedom awareness and will not be the exception. But, one may wonder whether the approach of Hegel and the culturalists in general is unfair to the Orient and its peoples when it underrates the colonization and its consequences in terms of destruction, distortion and disruption of the mechanisms of internal development in this part of the world.

Didn't the first wave of democracy, according to Huntington, start in the world in 1828, which Hegel experienced and rejoiced and saw it as an establishment of the values of freedom that moved with the American and French revolutions from abstraction and self-conviction of some special groups to become the basis for a common and orderly life for human beings and the will of everyone⁽⁴⁾? Didn't this wave start at a time when the countries of the East were colonized; their lands taken away, their peoples oppressed, their goods plundered, their children enslaved and their own labor force exploited? Have not these peoples paid dearly for the building of democracy, the welfare state, freedom and political stability of colonial countries?

Furthermore, isn't this view embedded in the Western ethnocentric perception that excludes the fight of national liberation movements against colonialism, the struggle for freedom, and insists on linking liberty to individuality?

It is true that national liberation movements did not integrate the individualistic perception of freedom and human rights. Since the Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Bandung in Indonesia in 1955, the conflict among the leaders of the national liberation movements was between those advocating the adoption of an individualistic vision of freedom and human rights, after the evacuation of colonialism, and the proponents of the self-determination of peoples who defended an holistic communitarian conception of freedom that confines its meanings to national sovereignty and national independence. This conflict ended with the victory of the advocates of the second perception⁽⁵⁾.

Several researchers believe that the outcome of the conflict has led to the failure of the decolonization project, the disruption of development, the consolidation of authoritarian and oppressive regimes and to the weakness of the rule of law in these countries.

3 Hegel, F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, (NY.: Cambridge university Press 1975), p. 54.

4 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, (Cam.: Cambridge university Press 1991), § 27, 28

5 Ronald Inglehart, et Pippa Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Policy*, n° 135 (Mars 2003), 62- 70

However, one may argue that all this has resulted in a developmentalist model of growth planned by the global financial circles and imposed on the newly independent states. This model, as we all know, is based on the preeminent role of the state in the production and distribution of supply and goods, the marginalization and exclusion of private actors and civil society from the process of national construction and development and the stifling of public freedoms.

This raises the following question: Does reinforcing freedom in our societies require, in addition to reforming the system of government, restructuring the state apparatus and consolidating democratic practices and procedures, changing the development and the economy growth model inherited from the fifties and sixties and reducing the state grip on the economy and social life to give greater role to individuals and civil society?

The desired alternative to the authoritarian regimes, widely shared in the Arab world, is the establishment of a stable democratic government that guarantees freedoms, promotes justice and provides the conditions for welfare and prosperity.

It implies reaching a consensus between political and intellectual elites on the basic values governing the political process and on the nature of the state. It seems that, today, there is a fragile consensus on democracy as a mode of governance and on the need to build a civil and modern state --excepting, of course, some extremist trends of political Islam, such as the Salafist movement, which rejects political participation, and believes that achieving the objectives of the Arab revolutions requires the application of shari'a and not the establishment of democracy and individual freedom, is there meanwhile a strong consensus on the values on which democracy rests?

Can the position of those who accept democracy as a mechanism for peacefully resolving political differences but reject the values that support it, especially the principle of individual freedom, affect the course of transition to democracy in our countries?

The World Value Survey between 2000 and 2002 showed that democracy in the 1990s, unlike the decades between 1930 and 1940, was the subject of international consensus among peoples regardless of their degrees of development and levels of economic well-being. Contrary to Huntington and the Culturalists' approach, most of the peoples of the Muslim countries surveyed, with the exception of Pakistan, believe in democracy as a model of governance⁽⁶⁾.

Nevertheless, the study stressed the divergence of views on so-called self-expression values in Arab and Muslim countries such as the right of the individual to full sovereignty over oneself, social tolerance, gender equality, freedom of expression. What is the reality of values in the countries of the Arab Spring 16 years after releasing this study? What are the possibilities of achieving a consensus on the values of freedom and self-expression that are fundamental to establishing a stable and solid democracy, according to researchers as Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris?

6 Ronald Inglehart, et Pippa Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Policy*, n° 135 (Mars 2003), 62 - 70.

The Constitution of 2014, for example, granted Tunisian male and female citizens a number of rights and liberties, a large part of which involve values of self-expression. However, these rights were not implemented because of their contradiction with legal provisions in force. A group of experts and academics has been commissioned to propose the necessary amendments to the laws so as to be compatible with the spirit and text of the Constitution.

Since then, controversy broke out in Tunisia and the Arab world over this report and the implications of the amendment of these laws on the Arab and Islamic identity of the country. A question remains: how can we reconcile the requirements of freedom and the fundamentals of identity? Can we establish a democracy that deprives people of a number of liberties on the grounds that their practice may harm their identity? Can personal freedom be reconciled with patriarchal dogma in matters of faith and identity?

On the other hand, if we view freedom from a daily life basis, outside the perspective of politics, ethics and philosophy, we notice the growing and obsessive fear of people of losing it, despite the achievements of civilized humanity, the scientific attainment and technological empowerment that are supposed to expand the scope of freedom and increase people's control over their destinies. We, as Ulrich Beck has stated, live in a risk society: risks of nuclear war, pollution, global warming, road and aircraft accidents, bankruptcy, social decline, etc⁽⁷⁾.

All these risks are real threats to freedom, so how to prevent them? Would this be by limiting the market economy, via imposing more state control over its functioning mechanisms and reestablishing the welfare state after being dismantled most countries?

But does the welfare state with its swollen bureaucratic apparatus also pose a danger to freedom? Is globalization a threat to freedom as long as it reduces the sovereignty of States and their ability to protect their citizens and safeguard their freedoms against the movement of capital and multinational corporations? Or does globalization help individuals to free themselves from the grip of their own states and take advantage of the growth opportunities offered by the world economy at the lowest possible cost?

In recent years, the world has witnessed an unprecedented development of the digital economy and artificial intelligence technologies that have made real what was considered in the past beyond imagination and mere entertaining and dazzling stories. The American economist, Jeremy Rifkin, and some others considered this as the beginning of a new era: the Third Industrial Revolution⁽⁸⁾. The more people rejoice at what this development provides, the possibilities of action and thus with a greater freedom, the more worried they become about the dominance of the largest search engines and Internet companies on their personal data. Consequently, will the freedom offered by the digital economy and artificial intelligence become an illusion? Can we protect personal data and benefit, at the same time, from the services provided by digital technology and the freedoms it offers?

7 Ronald Inglehart, et Pippa Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Policy*, n° 135 (Mars 2003), 62 - 70.

8 Jeremy Rifkin, *La troisième révolution industrielle*, (Paris: Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2012).

In addition to all these concerns, people fear the loss of freedom because of illness, disability and incapacity caused by aging. There is another meaning of freedom for people who have lost their autonomy and ability to fulfill their own needs, either because of a disease, deprivation and poverty or a physical disability. For example, who did not suffer because a friend or relative had a stroke or an accident that left him unable to move easily and unable to meet his basic needs and in need of the care and support of others? What should the democratic political community do so as to reduce the sufferings of these people and their families?

How can we rehabilitate our health and hospital institutions so that they can take care of people with special needs, rehabilitate them so that they integrate public life? How to rehabilitate our urban fabric, public and urban transport so that they meet the needs of the disabled, the sick or the elderly. How can we ensure that the loss of their freedom does not turn into a nightmare and a cause of frustration for them and their families? What is the status of studies on ethics of medical care, medical ethics and bioethics in our universities and research centers, particularly in medical colleges and training institutes for nurses, health attendants and social workers?

To tackle these issues and to answer these or other questions, we propose the following topics:

- 1. The concept of freedom, semantic and contextual transformations.**
- 2. Individual and collective freedoms In the face of the risk of authoritarianism and totalitarianism.**
- 3. Technology, science, creativity and freedom.**
- 4. Freedom and economic development, which Model?**
- 5. Civil society, culture, education and freedom.**

Through multi-disciplinary approaches, this symposium seeks to highlight the issue of freedom and its limits in Arab societies. It is intended as a contribution to an objective, rigorous, scientific production linked to transitional options for our societies. It does not ambition to review the literature on solidarity in the fields of social sciences and humanities for over a century and a half, but rather to gauge their abilities to understand the reality of freedom, its realization and achievement strategies.

Scientific Committee:

Elkchaw Mounir: Professor and Researcher in Social Philosophy, University of Tunis.

Seleouti Rachida: Professor and Researcher in Contemporary History, Manouba University.

Melliti Imed: Professor at the Higher Institute of Humanities in Tunis and a Researcher in Sociology at Research Institute on Contemporary Maghreb

Maatouq Fraj: Lecturer and Researcher in Contemporary History and International Relations , University of Tunis



Soussi Moez: Lecturer in Economics, Carthage University.

Mabrouk Mehdi: Professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tunis. Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (CAREP), Tunis.

Boughanmi Ayman: Assistant Professor of British and American Civilization, University of Kairouan.

Ayari Adel: Assistant Professor and Researcher in Sociology of Institutions, University of Tunis. Rapporteur of the Scientific Committee.

Drissi Mehrez: Researcher in Educational Psychology and Expert in Academic Counselling.

Important dates:

Symposium: April 17-18, 2020

Deadline for submission of abstracts: September 15th, 2019

Approval: October 10th, 2019

Deadline for final text (Full Paper): February 15th, 2020

Terms of participation

- Fill in the registration form attached, also available at <http://carep.tn> and choose one of the axes.
- Submission of abstracts: The participant selects one of the topics mentioned above. The number of words in the abstract ranges from 500 words to 700, including the title, the problematic posed, the research methodology and main findings, as well as five key words and a brief bibliography. The paper should conform to academic standards and referencing styles (See <http://dohainstitute.org> or <http://carep.tn>)
- Paper: from 5000 to 7000 words.
- Final text and abstract: Sakkal Majalla (14) is used in the Arabic language. For other languages, the Times New Roman font is used. The line spacing is 1.5
- Language of the symposium: Arabic, French, English
- The authenticity of the paper: The participant does not submit and will not submit the same paper to other past or future conferences or journals.
- Email address: First drafts to be sent to: carep.tn@gmail.com



Publication:

The proceedings of this symposium will be published in Arabic at a later date and the participants will be informed. The center translates texts from foreign languages into Arabic

- The Conference shall cover travel and subsistence expenses, and no additional allowances shall be granted for any research presented at the Conference. Researches shall be considered the intellectual property of the Conference.

General Information:

Carep will take charge the accommodation fees (2 or 3 nights full board) and plane tickets for all selected participants.

- **Inquiries:** by e-mail carep.tn@gmail.com or by phone: (00216) 70 147 384.