

The role of the political system and administrative transparency in promoting the protection of citizens' fundamental rights: A comparative study in light of the Iraqi and Egyptian experiences

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Abstract:

This research aims to demonstrate the role of the political system and administrative transparency in promoting the protection of citizens' fundamental rights. It does so by studying and analyzing the impact of the nature of the political system and the mechanisms of public administration on guaranteeing rights and freedoms in both Iraq and Egypt. The research also seeks to reveal the similarities and differences between the two experiences in protecting constitutional rights and achieving social justice. The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, examining concepts related to the political system, transparency, and fundamental rights. Furthermore, it utilizes a comparative approach to analyze constitutional and legal texts and practical experiences in Iraq and Egypt. The research concludes with several key findings, most notably that constitutional recognition of rights and freedoms is insufficient to guarantee their protection unless accompanied by effective implementation mechanisms and independent institutions. Administrative transparency is a fundamental tool for fostering trust between citizens and the state and reducing corruption. The study also reveals shared challenges in both countries, including the weak practical application of some legal guarantees and the varying levels of effectiveness of oversight and judicial institutions. This necessitates developing the institutional system and strengthening the principles of governance and accountability to ensure more effective protection of citizens' fundamental rights. The study also highlights common challenges in both countries, such as the weak practical application of some legal guarantees and the varying levels of effectiveness of oversight and judicial institutions. These challenges necessitate developing the institutional framework and strengthening the principles of governance and accountability to ensure more effective protection of citizens' fundamental rights.

Keywords: Political system, administrative transparency, human rights, Iraqi law, Egyptian law.

1. Introduction

Protecting the fundamental rights of citizens is a cornerstone of the modern state, representing a fundamental criterion for the extent to which the political system respects the principles of legitimacy, the rule of law, and social justice. The state's role is no longer limited to maintaining security and regulating power; rather, one of its most important functions has become guaranteeing individuals' enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, whether civil and political, or economic, social, and cultural. In this context, the role of the political system emerges as the institutional framework that defines the nature of the relationship between the state and the citizen, and the extent to which constitutional institutions are capable of developing policies and legislation that ensure the protection of rights and achieve a balance between the requirements of governance and the needs of society. Administrative transparency has also become a fundamental principle in contemporary public administration, as it provides clarity in the work of institutions, access to information, enhanced oversight and accountability, and a reduction in administrative and financial corruption, thereby contributing to increased administrative efficiency and building trust between citizens and the state. The importance of studying the relationship between the political system, administrative transparency, and the protection of citizens' fundamental rights in both Iraq and Egypt is highlighted, given that both countries have undergone political and constitutional transformations that have impacted the nature of state institutions and the mechanisms for guaranteeing rights and freedoms. Despite the constitutions of both countries enshrining a wide range of fundamental rights and establishing institutions aimed at protecting these rights and promoting the principles of good governance, practical

reality reveals persistent legal and institutional challenges related to the effective implementation of constitutional provisions, the weakness of some oversight and accountability mechanisms, and the impact of political, economic, and social conditions on the actual level of rights protection.

Therefore, the research problem lies in the gap between the constitutional and legal recognition of citizens' fundamental rights and the level of their guarantee and implementation on the ground. This raises questions about the extent to which the political system and administrative transparency can translate legal principles into practical guarantees that ensure the protection of individual rights and freedoms. The problem also stems from the differing nature of the political and institutional experiences in Iraq and Egypt, resulting in variations in the effectiveness of public administration and its role in promoting the protection of citizens' rights. The research begins with a central question: To what extent do the political system and administrative transparency contribute to strengthening the protection of citizens' fundamental rights in Iraq and Egypt? This question leads to several others concerning the nature of the political system's role in upholding human rights, the extent to which administrative transparency improves the performance of public institutions, and the most prominent legal and institutional challenges facing the protection of fundamental rights in both countries.

The importance of this research lies in its focus on a topic central to building a state governed by the rule of law and strong institutions. Protecting fundamental rights is not achieved merely by enshrining them in constitutions and legal charters; it requires a political system capable of implementing them and a public administration characterized by transparency, efficiency, and accountability. The research is further highlighted by comparing the Iraqi and Egyptian experiences, allowing for the identification of strengths and weaknesses and enabling the application of these diverse experiences to develop mechanisms for protecting citizens' rights and strengthening the principles of good governance.

Therefore, this research aims to clarify the concept of fundamental rights of citizens and the foundations of their legal and constitutional protection, analyze the role of the political system in providing the necessary guarantees for protecting these rights, and demonstrate the impact of administrative transparency on enhancing the efficiency of public administration, supporting accountability, and reducing corruption. It also examines the reality of rights protection in Iraq and Egypt, revealing the most significant challenges hindering the effective implementation of legal guarantees, ultimately offering proposals that can contribute to developing the system for protecting rights and freedoms.

The research employs a comparative approach by studying and analyzing constitutional and legal texts in Iraq and Egypt, highlighting the similarities and differences between the two systems in the field of fundamental rights protection and the role of political and administrative institutions in this regard. It also utilizes a descriptive-analytical approach by analyzing legal rules and public policies related to transparency, public administration, and human rights.

Section One: The Importance of Research in Protecting the Fundamental Rights of Citizens

The importance of this research in protecting the fundamental rights of citizens stems from its being the core of the relationship between the individual and the state. These rights are the cornerstone upon which the concepts of justice, freedom, and equality in society are built. The first requirement: The search for economic, social, and cultural rights. These rights are mentioned in the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Among the criteria that can be adopted to define fundamental human rights is that human rights are peremptory norms, such as the principle of non-discrimination based on color, sex, origin, or religion. The importance of fundamental human rights has been emphasized; international declarations and conventions have restricted their infringement or violation, even in cases of war or emergency.

The distinction between fundamental and ordinary rights has implications. All states are obligated to uphold fundamental human rights, whether or not they are party to human rights conventions, because they constitute peremptory norms of international law and may not be violated under any circumstances. We will mention some targeted violations of fundamental human rights of a collective nature that are equivalent to international crimes—such as genocide and apartheid. Among the most important of these rights are: the right to work, the right to social security and insurance, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to education.

Every person has the right to work for a decent living, the right to choose their work, the right to receive fair wages that ensure a livelihood for themselves and their family, the right to protection against unemployment, and the right to organize and form unions to protect their interests. They also have the right to rest and leisure time and to determine their working hours.

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The first requirement: The nature of the political system: The political system, as a concept and a phenomenon, has undergone numerous developments, culminating after World War II. The reason for this evolution is the expansion of the political system's activities to encompass all economic, social, cultural, and intellectual spheres. Previously, the political system was approached from a traditional or narrow perspective by constitutional scholars, who focused solely on the formal, legal aspects of governance, without extending their studies to include the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the political system.

From this standpoint, researchers have offered numerous definitions of the political system. Dr. Boukra Idris, for example, defined it as the sum of institutions and rules related to the organization, exercise, and transfer of power. He also defined it as the various forms of government that exercise power in human societies. The study of the political system focuses on determining the form of the state and the type of government, and does not extend to examining the areas of power activity and the social and economic aspects of this activity, which are studied primarily from a purely legal standpoint. Based on the above definition, the elements that constitute a political system are: political organizations, political rules, political relations, and political awareness. Each of these elements influences and is influenced by the others, and through their interaction, a "system" is formed.

Despite the importance of the preceding definitions, a political system is not merely a set of legal and constitutional rules. Rather, it comprises diverse, multifaceted, and interconnected components, alongside legislative, executive, and judicial institutions. It encompasses all organizations and activities that influence and are influenced by the political system, including political parties, organizations, interest groups, the media, and others. These constitute the environment of the political system, influencing it and being influenced by it. Thus, the narrow concept of the political system faded during the period between the two World Wars and its aftermath, due to criticisms leveled against it by behavioral political scientists. This led to the emergence of the modern approach, which views the political system from a broader and more comprehensive perspective than that previously offered by the traditional constitutional school.

Thus, the terms "political system" and "constitutional law" are no longer synonymous. The former has a broader and more comprehensive meaning than the latter. While constitutional law focuses on the existing system of government in a given state through abstract theoretical rules, the political system considers the system of government and its surrounding philosophical and practical social, economic, and political circumstances. For this reason, David Easton, a pioneer of systems analysis, defined the political system as "the interactions related to the authoritative distribution of values, to which individuals comply for whatever reason or motive—fear of authority, self-interest, or belief in the legitimacy of the political system." The concept of the political system is a descriptive and analytical attempt to establish a dynamic framework for the political system, through which the demands of individuals are transformed into official government decisions and policies, according to a continuous series of various governmental and popular activities and interactions.

From the above definitions offered by proponents of the modern approach to the concept of the political system, we can say that they share one point: their view of the political system as part of the broader social system. However, they differ in their focus on a key characteristic of the political system.

The 2014 Egyptian Constitution (amended in 2019) also explicitly stipulates the principle of separation of powers in Article (5), which states: "The political system is based on political and partisan pluralism, the peaceful transfer of power, the separation of powers and the balance between them, the correlation of responsibility with authority, and respect for human rights and freedoms, as specified in the Constitution." This confirms the Egyptian Constitution's adoption of the principle of flexible separation of powers and the necessity for the new political system to be built upon it, thus achieving cooperation and balance among all branches of government to guarantee the protection of human rights and freedoms, which constitute a fundamental pillar of social justice. Similarly, the Iraqi constitutional legislator did not disregard this principle but rather explicitly stipulated it in Article (47) of the 2005 Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, which states: "The federal authorities consist of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, which exercise their powers and duties based on the principle of separation of powers." Thus, the principle of separation of powers has become a general framework that requires the Iraqi legislator to adapt its laws and other legislation accordingly. Hence, the crucial role of the political system in rectifying this inherent contradiction between power and democracy becomes evident. It bears the responsibility of formulating public policies and legislation that embody the concept of social justice, not as a theoretical slogan, but as a practical reality reflected in the daily lives of citizens. A just political system is one that can transform the principles of democracy into effective tools for achieving societal equilibrium and ensuring a fair distribution

of wealth and opportunities.

The second requirement: The impact of political systems on achieving social justice:

There are several definitions of social justice, but we will begin by addressing the term as a linguistic construct. It can be defined as "the situation in which all individuals and groups are equal in rights and treatment, without regard to race, gender, or any other factor that leads to injustice and unfairness." Others define it as respecting the natural rights recognized by society for all individuals, ensuring their survival and happiness, such as providing services and social security, regulating work, and granting workers wages commensurate with their capabilities and ensuring them a dignified life.

The call for social rights and the emergence of declarations of economic and social rights... The aim was to raise the social and economic level of the citizen, and this was a result of the triumph of ideas.

Third Section: The Impact of Transparency on the Efficiency of Public Administration

Transparency is a fundamental principle of modern public administration, given its direct impact on enhancing efficiency and achieving effective government performance.

First Requirement: The Nature of Transparency as a Principle of Administration

Transparency in administration is clarity, rationality, adherence to the requirements or terms of reference for work, equal opportunities for all, streamlined procedures, and the reduction of corruption. Therefore, the transparency, clarity, simplicity of drafting, and ease of understanding of laws lead to simpler and less complex implementation procedures. Transparency also means: clear, easily understood, stable, consistent, and objective legislation; clear and flexible language; and its development in accordance with economic, social, and administrative changes and in keeping with the spirit of the times. Furthermore, it involves simplifying procedures, disseminating and disclosing information, and ensuring easy access to it for all. Transparency has also been defined as the clarity of legislation, the accuracy of work performed within institutions, adherence to instructions, and the adoption of clear and simple administrative practices to achieve highly objective and public decision-making. The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) defined it as: the free flow of information in its broadest sense, meaning the provision of information and working in an open manner that allows stakeholders to obtain the information necessary to protect their business interests, make appropriate decisions, and identify errors.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, and translated into almost every language in the world, stipulated the principle of transparency in Article 19 as follows: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." It should be noted that the above text did not directly address the principle of transparency, but the article addressed its essence, which is the freedom of individuals to access information, data, and prevailing ideas, and the impermissibility of restricting this freedom in any way.

Second Requirement: The Role of Transparency in Public Administration

The legislature and administrative judiciary have not provided a specific definition of transparency in the laws regulating public administration contracts; rather, this task has been undertaken by legal scholars. Transparency in administrative contracts is defined as the system that enables bidders, suppliers, and all stakeholders to verify that the selection process for the contractor with the government entity was conducted through clear and impartial means.

Therefore, transparency plays a crucial role in ensuring that administrative contracts are awarded to reliable contractors capable of fulfilling the public interest. It also contributes to protecting public funds from waste and corruption. The availability of transparency during the contract implementation phase guarantees the proper execution of the contract's objectives as agreed upon, preventing the administration from accepting defective work that fails to achieve the contract's intended purpose. This, in turn, strengthens the investment environment and reassures investors who fear corruption. Furthermore, it fosters a climate of transparency that enhances trust between the administration and investors, both local and foreign, positively impacting the relationship between the two parties and between them and the institutions. Ultimately, this leads to citizens benefiting from the tangible results.

Given the importance of transparency in the modern era, public administration has come to rely on it as a key tool for enhancing the efficiency of administrative work. Transparency contributes to clarifying administrative procedures and decisions, making them accountable and subject to scrutiny. This prevents the abuse of power or manipulation of public interests. Adopting transparency in administration also lends

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flexibility to decision-making mechanisms and encourages the introduction of modern developments that align with the principles of good governance. This flexibility does not imply chaos, but rather the ability of administration to adapt to changes and provide better services to citizens, based on clear information and transparent operational mechanisms. Therefore, it is essential to understand the advantages of this principle. Transparency plays a pivotal role in supporting public administration and achieving efficiency and accountability. It rests on two fundamental and complementary elements:

1. Openness, which is the essential and fundamental element in exercising oversight and accountability for public administrative activities. Openness represents the first step towards establishing honest and responsible administration. The responsibility for achieving this lies with the government through making information available to the public. This openness contributes to building trust between citizens and the administration and enhances community participation in monitoring public policies.

2. Legal: The existence of legally binding provisions obligating government administrative bodies to implement transparency is a necessary condition for enabling anti-corruption institutions and civil society organizations to fulfill their role in uncovering shortcomings and deviations in administrative performance.

Activating these two elements contributes to building an accountable public administration, enhances citizens' trust in state institutions, and serves as an effective tool for preventing corruption and achieving sustainable development.

From this perspective, respecting and guaranteeing human rights is the ultimate goal of every political society and the objective of every legitimate political authority leading an organized society. The protection of these rights, regardless of whether it is based on human rights declarations from a historical or philosophical standpoint, or grounded in international agreements, covenants, and conventions, remains fundamentally subject to the will of the constitutional legislator in any given country. Therefore, one of the most important and effective constitutional guarantees for respecting human rights is for countries' constitutions to explicitly recognize them. For example, they might recognize the independence of the judiciary, guarantee the individual's right to litigation, and acknowledge the principle of oversight of respect for constitutional legitimacy to ensure the protection of human rights. This is essential to provide sufficient and effective judicial guarantees for these rights.

Fourth Section: Legal Challenges in Guaranteeing Citizens' Rights in Iraq and Egypt Guaranteeing the right

The second requirement: Legal challenges in guaranteeing citizens' rights in Egypt. Legal challenges are among the most prominent obstacles facing the guarantee of citizens' rights in Egypt. Actual practice reveals a clear gap between what legal texts, especially the constitution, stipulate regarding guarantees of rights and freedoms, and the mechanisms of implementation and practical application. These challenges include the following:

First: Constitutional and legislative challenges: Legal studies indicate that the constitutional protection of rights and freedoms requires effective implementing legislation that translates these texts into tangible reality. Judicial review of the constitutionality of laws is a vital means of protecting the constitution from the abuse of power and ensuring the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, this review remains insufficient in the absence of effective implementing legislation. In Egypt, the administrative judiciary monitors the suitability of decisions to the facts presented for their issuance, particularly in the area of freedoms. On the other hand, there is an increase in state intervention through criminalization and punishment, which threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. This intervention occurs in the absence of clear legislation protecting these rights, leading to the erosion of the constitutional protections afforded to them. However, we find that the Egyptian legislature has permitted the infringement upon the essence of rights and freedoms, but only within specific conditions that legislators must adhere to according to the constitution. In this context, it should be noted that the constitutional protection of rights and freedoms is incomplete without effective implementing legislation and oversight mechanisms that ensure the application of these laws. Furthermore, the absence of such legislation and mechanisms leads to constitutional provisions becoming mere slogans, unimplemented in practice. Therefore, the constitutional and legislative challenges in Egypt necessitate concerted efforts to bridge the gap between constitutional texts and executive legislation. This can be achieved by enacting effective laws that translate these texts into tangible reality, strengthening judicial oversight of the constitutionality of laws, and providing oversight mechanisms to guarantee their implementation. Only through these efforts can the effective protection of citizens' rights in Egypt be realized.

Second: Military Justice and Exceptional Justice: The primary function of the judiciary, as one of the three branches of government, is to uphold the rule of law by adjudicating disputes and issuing rulings.

However, the continued practice of trying civilians before military courts is one of the most significant legal obstacles in Egypt. As an exceptional body, the military judiciary does not provide sufficient guarantees for fair trials, negatively impacting citizens' rights to a fair and independent trial. This situation contradicts the fundamental principles of the rule of law and human rights.

Third: Weak Enforcement of Laws Related to Economic and Social Rights: Egypt faces significant challenges in enforcing laws related to economic and social rights. Regarding the right to health, Article 18 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution stipulates that "every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive healthcare in accordance with quality standards." However, studies indicate a significant deficiency in the implementation of these laws in practice. Despite the existence of laws regulating healthcare, practical application reveals significant shortcomings in their implementation. Undoubtedly, states strive to provide healthcare for their citizens by employing all available means to protect public health, including preventative measures against health attacks and epidemics.

Regarding the right to housing, international conventions emphasize the necessity of providing adequate housing as a fundamental human right, as does the Egyptian Constitution. However, citizens in Egypt face challenges in obtaining decent housing, reflecting weak enforcement of laws related to this right. Egypt has experienced a continuously escalating housing crisis, exacerbated by several factors, most notably increasing population growth and the economic crisis, in addition to the approaches taken to address and manage this problem. It is unsurprising that this crisis has profoundly affected various segments of society, although it primarily represents direct suffering for the poor and those with limited incomes, as they are the most affected by inadequate housing policies. Regarding the right to work, Egyptian Labor Law No. 12 of 2003 regulates workers' rights, including the right to sick leave and compensation. However, the actual implementation of these rights faces challenges, affecting workers' ability to benefit from their legal entitlements. This underscores the importance of establishing a legal framework that considers the rights and obligations of both parties in the contractual relationship. Undoubtedly, sound legal regulation is a crucial guarantee for achieving contractual justice. Nevertheless, there is a pressing need for legislation that effectively regulates the rights and obligations of employees.

Fourth: Weakness of National Human Rights Institutions: These institutions face numerous challenges that affect their effectiveness, most notably their limited independence and insufficient human and financial resources. This hinders their ability to effectively fulfill their role in monitoring and documenting violations and providing the necessary recommendations to improve the human rights situation. It is evident that the legal framework governing the awareness-raising and educational role of the National Council for Human Rights in Egypt is characterized by extensive detail in the texts that define its operational mechanisms and powers in this field. While this detail in Egyptian legislation may reflect a desire to regulate performance and ensure clarity of tasks, it may, in reality, represent a burden that restricts the Council's flexibility in fulfilling its role, especially given the existence of structural institutional challenges that negatively affect its effectiveness. The Council suffers from a lack of independence due to the influence of the political environment and its relationship with government agencies, which limits its scope of action in addressing sensitive human rights issues. Furthermore, the limited competence of its human resources, coupled with insufficient financial allocations, constitutes a major obstacle to implementing the awareness-raising and educational mechanisms and programs stipulated by law.

Conclusion

Recommendations

1. The need to strengthen the institutional framework of the political system in both Iraq and Egypt to ensure the effective implementation of the principles of separation of powers and the rule of law. This can be achieved by supporting the independence of oversight and judicial authorities and activating the role of constitutional institutions in monitoring the performance of the executive branch. This will contribute to reducing the abuse of power and enhancing the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

2. Working to develop legislation regulating administrative transparency and the right to access information in Iraq and Egypt. This can be done by establishing clearer legal rules that obligate public institutions to disclose data and information related to their work, while ensuring easy access for citizens. This will enhance public oversight, reduce opportunities for corruption, and increase trust between citizens and public administration.

3. The need to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of oversight bodies and anti-corruption institutions in both countries. This can be achieved by providing legal and administrative guarantees that enable them to perform their duties free from political influence, developing investigation and accountability

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mechanisms, and linking the fight against corruption to the protection of citizens' rights, given that corruption is one of the most significant obstacles to achieving social justice and providing public services.

4. The importance of reviewing legislation related to economic, social, and cultural rights and developing mechanisms for their implementation, ensuring the transition from constitutional recognition of these rights to practical application. This can be achieved through the adoption of effective public policies in the areas of health, education, labor, and social security, while taking into account the most vulnerable groups and ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens.

5. The necessity of promoting a culture of human rights and good governance within state institutions and society. This can be accomplished by introducing training programs for public administration, security, and judicial personnel on the principles of protecting rights and freedoms, as well as encouraging the participation of civil society and the media in monitoring government performance. This will contribute to building a relationship based on trust and accountability between the state and its citizens.

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