Humanity and the Ideal of Citizenship

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Contemporary political life is experiencing successive waves of terrorism and extremism worldwide. It threatens the security and peace of all human societies. In this round of capricious violence democratic political institutions in the world find themselves in a dangerous confrontation with the bloody impact of this merciless extremism. It is a bloody confrontation that will not, in the end, even spare the despotic regimes that encourage terrorism and give it safe haven.

In the cycle of these large-scale and fateful confrontations, existing political and intellectual institutions have realized that counter-violence cannot ever be the response to violence. In the long term, the response must take a cultural and educational form. Only culture, the culture of mutual tolerance

(*tasâmuh*) in particular, can provide a firm defense against violence, extremism and terrorism. In its most elementary sense and most basic expressions, the cultural act is the launch pad for this confrontation. Violence and extremism necessarily spring out of ignorance and irrationality, and from an oppressive 'black culture' whose terminology is all about killing, destruction and terrorism. This 'black culture' throws out democratic values and what human beings mean when they speak about peace and love. It is a fanatical ignorance that constitutes vital support for all forms of violence, what it signifies and how it is expressed.

This terrorism shatters bonds among people, sanctions killing, and threatens lives. It is built upon an ideology of violence and the mindset of domination and coercion. Those who light the fuse of violence first inculcate the mentality of terrorism. They feed their recruits upon notions of killing, destruction and extremism; they ignite in them hatred for all higher human values. Their 'black values' —

domination, violence, hatred and extremism —
are at the root of every act of terrorism and
every aggressive enterprise. The simple-
minded and gullible people who succumb to
temptation and carry out this sort of violence
and oppression are really the victims of an
insane doctrine inflamed by malice and hatred.
What then transpires in their horrible acts is
the true product of a way of thinking and
construction of meaning imbedded in their
sub-conscious; it emerges as a firm conviction
whose spread and insanity none can stem.
Current wisdom says that whenever a terrorist
or a fighter falls in the heat of the struggle
between life and death, the terrorist ideology
will breed more terrorists, more of those
inspired by hate, more extremists and more
victims. This means that the war against
terrorism cannot be won except through
transforming culture. It is a *cultural* war in all
that that lofty expression conveys in terms of
human meaning.

Politicians and intellectuals today agree that
armed conflict against extremists is not a

trustworthy guarantor either in the short-term or in the long. The doctrine of violence and extremism has the capacity to breed unnumbered extremists. This fact has laid a new foundation for a call to pursue a new way of thinking and educating that will ground the propagation of a culture of tolerance and peace as an antidote to the culture of violence, and give future generations the ability to resist extremism and terrorism. Starting from this point, states and institutions, hand in glove, have begun to build a culture of peace whatever their level of development, ideological proclivities, or human divisions.

All those who believe in peace, both intellectuals and politicians, believe that cultivating a mindset that promotes peace and the ideology of tolerance in the face of violence and extremism is a strategic undertaking. It acquires significance and importance from the fraught and bloody struggle between those who, in these days, seek peace and those who sponsor terrorism. On many levels, therefore, intensive efforts

have been launched to inspire a new humanitarian awareness, one that condemns violence, rejects hatred, and repudiates coercion. It believes in permanent peace that incorporates the values of human security, freedom and overall wellbeing.

Looked at from all angles, contexts and areas of human activity, it has become abundantly clear that a new awareness imbued with the values of tolerance has become a historical necessity. Radical change in existing ways of thinking and intellectual formation is required; also needed is change in established patterns of behavior, perspectives, and belief systems. Outdated traditional ways of thinking must be dismantled, their frameworks trashed, so as to make way for new and disciplined intellectual systems that rest upon new values and vitalize tolerant points of view.

In its turn this will demand cultural and intellectual undertakings. Together these will constitute a strategy for transforming existing intellectual beliefs and for evolving new and tolerant philosophies of life. This is, as it were,

the 'capital' for a cultural initiative for change, both deep and wide, in the cause of educating citizens on democratic principals and the values of freedom. Needed too is a new and different way for how individuals in society see the political process. This new vision must be able to strike a balance with the new human life values that express the emerging stage of thoroughgoing and constructive changes in the lives of people and society.

Taking it on from here, the historical mandate is that we re-evaluate how we teach children, young adults and mature adults the principles of citizenship and human rights, and how we critique violence, extremism and fanaticism wherever it is found and however expressed. This educational enterprise must mobilize democratic values that systematically, practically, purposefully and pragmatically apply to confronting the major manifestations of violence, oppression and terrorism and include the lesser threats (sectarianism, tribalism, and narrowly interpreted religion) that incarnate a human

disaster and a historic slide into a counter-cultural movement.

In the contemporary Arab world tribalism and sectarianism still come first in the public mind before the notion of citizenship. The tribe, the sect and the religious community still trump the idea of belonging to the homeland … the nation. The homeland remains a vague idea and, as Ridwân as-Sayyid pointed out back in 1994, it is still diaphanous and imbued with vague aura of fear, anxiety and caution.

If we wish to nurture the modern human being, we must inculcate the notion of citizenship and integrate it into the awareness of the citizen both culturally and in human terms. This is an imperative for all the social variations of contemporary human existence. It is inescapable. There must be an interaction between the free individual and the nation, and between the individual and the values of freedom, brotherhood, and tolerance. Many thoughtful people today stress the priority of building up this perspective and giving it rooting age so as to liberate people from

bondage to narrow and traditional loyalties to sect, tribe and clan. The pressing major economic and social changes that societies are experiencing in this global age move toward liberating themselves from traditional ideological demands. They also demand of political establishments that they re-examine their cultural practices. That will be the precondition for their continuing to exist and retaining power.

Citizenship and What it Looks Like Historically

The notion of 'citizenship' points to what it means to belong, politically and in terms of rights, to a country — homeland (*watan*), property, institutions, constitution and laws. This notion fleshes out the deeper bond between the citizen and his country and between the citizen and the state. Citizenship is a sense of belonging and a sense of loyalty to the state and homeland. It is not just a way of acquiring the country's passport; citizenship is a complex of feelings, rights, obligations and legal, human and moral ties between the

individual and the soil of the homeland, between the person and the country as a political entity, and between the person and all the country's citizens in their wide variety.

From ancient times through to our day, the history of political thought informs us that the notion of citizenship has expressed the profound relationship between the citizen and the state. In some cases citizenship is also linked to the idea of democracy and how that notion is expressed. We must consider citizenship to be one of the oldest educational and political ideas in human society, emerging as it did during the age of ancient Greece.

In ancient Greece the notion of citizenship was expressed by the word *politeia*. It indicates all citizens of the city (*polis*), and in ancient Greek city-states it conveyed the sense of a strong and integral relationship that bound the individual to the city (the state) through a democratic political process. This ancient Greek concept of citizenship stands in sharp contrast to any idea of coercion and domination defining the relationship of the

individual to the state. It puts forward an understanding of citizenship in the environment of democracy. It affirms that the relationship is essentially one of a free democracy between the individual and society, and between the individual and the state.

On that basis the notion of citizenship in Greek lands began with the idea of equality. All citizens were equal. Citizens were *homoi* (people on an equal footing). In the Greek state of Sparta that is what citizens were called. What it meant was that all citizens of the city were of equal standing. They were equal before the law and the institutions of the state.

But we must observe that only a minority of the residents of Sparta enjoyed this right of citizenship. There was a pragmatic distinction. Only citizens were participant in political life. This class was known as the 'free Spartans'. It was the only class with the right to vote, participate in the political process and express itself. In ancient Greek lands, therefore, the understanding of citizenship was a matter of

class. The dominant class was enfranchised but the slaves were not. In Athens the situation was the same as was the case with the conquering class that achieved political ascendancy over the indigenous population of Sparta.

Citizenship in Latin was expressed by the word *sativic*. What this indicates is that the Roman citizen was a landowner who gained the right to the state's attentiveness and legal protection not least of all in circumstances where he was exposed to being convicted by law or to being persecuted politically. For this reason the right of citizenship was a much sought after objective that every individual in Roman society strove to attain.

A notion of citizenship emerged in France during the 12th and 13th centuries. In the ancient French political system, it identified as citizens those who submitted themselves to the absolute authority of the king. This implied that the citizen did not participate in political life, but rather acquiesced to the absolute

sovereignty of the French monarchs of that period.

The idea of citizenship began to acquire its political and philosophical significance in the 17th century through the works of the well-known English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. He defined the citizen as a member of a political body that had concluded a social contract pledging to guarantee the security of individuals in the context of a society ruled by an absolute authority.

In modern times the idea of citizenship began to take its new place through the work of the French intellectual, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his book, *le Contrat Social*. As Rousseau informs us, citizenship is not a privilege exclusive to the political and social elite; it is a the right of all individuals in society who are capable of fulfilling their social and political roles, most especially with regard to those things having to do with society's public affairs.

Subsequently the idea began to take on democratic garb and human dimensions. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (d. 1836) defined citizens as those who, enjoying full equality, ascribed to a single set of social and political laws and participated in building up those aspects of social life that related to matters public.

In the mid-19th century the idea of citizenship began to be defined as the relationship between the individual and the state characterized by equality before the law and participation in public life. The idea of citizenship was idealized. The citizen took on the guise of an individual who is fully aware of his political and social belonging. Being aware of one's belonging and citizenship was a civic duty. This implied that he could not ever participate in public life without this awareness. His participation could not be effective without his having the required awareness of his belonging and the ties that bound him to society in pursuit of the public good.

In the 20th century, however, our modern notion of citizenship emerged. In the fullest sense, citizenship indicates the ability of the individual to participate responsibly in the duties of citizenship newly understood. In this understanding, the citizen is obliged to learn how to be daring and devise creative ways in life that enable him to find ways for participating in and guiding life's flow. Becoming responsibly involved is not like dividing up a box of candy. Higher responsibilities involve honor and war, poverty and unemployment. These are democratic issues shared by all members of the nation who, together, shoulder the responsibility for making decisions. Everyone is responsible for war and peace, for work and national dignity, for poverty, need and deprivation in society. This, then, is the wider meaning of citizenship.

Furthermore, this modern understanding of citizenship presumes the citizen's great faith and firm conviction in the significance and existence of a permanent political opposition. The opposition maintains democratic balance

in the very core of society, and is the balancing factor that dissuades the existing political regime from extreme behavior and from exceeding its proper bounds.

So as to get a clearer picture of this particular point, on balance it is possible for modern citizenship in its democratic guise to go beyond the French slogan coined in 1789 concerning freedom. That slogan declared that personal freedom ends when others' freedoms are limited. Freely, going beyond the free French declaration, we can say, 'My freedom begins when others begin to be liberated.' What this means is that the freedom of the individual is hostage to the freedom of all others. The 'I' has no freedom if the 'other' is in bondage. The freedom of the 'other' is precondition for the freedom of all. This means that, if I want to guarantee my personal freedom, I must find ways to support the freedom of all others. This also demands a struggle for universal freedom and social justice for all members of society in its broadest conception and most profound

interpretation. In this frame of reference, citizenship takes on a new dimension. It means teaching and practicing freedom, and respecting the rights of others. The freedom to exist is an essential condition for individual and public freedom.

In modern terms, citizenship means help in broadening the horizons of persons and individuals as they freely and responsibly participate in society and in the political process — in nominating candidates and in voting. This participation also includes the right to demonstrate, to stand in opposition, and to exercise the right to express one's self freely. The citizen also has the right, under the broad understanding of citizenship, to join groups, clubs and political initiatives that express his or her views and perspectives on the streets, at home and in the work place.

The significance of this formal definition of citizenship notwithstanding, we observe that this progressive understanding of modern citizenship is still overshadowed and marginalized in social life. Political life today

is hostage to the control of many overbearing individuals able to exercise domination. This domination casts citizenship aside in many countries in the world. Even though this is the case, one can still say that the new notion of citizenship is an ongoing process of social development in civic life that has taken the initiative at the very core of economic and social institutions and especially in the bosom of civil society's institutions.

At this point in our analysis come the views of Meyer P. Bisch and A. Mougniotte about the possibilities for developing the idea of citizenship and strengthening the citizen in social life. Here we focus upon the legal situation of the citizen, especially with respect to the legal rights of the individual citizen over against those of the foreigner in the social mix. The citizen must shoulder great social responsibilities. He has the right to vote and to be elected, and these rights have to do with the citizen's national identity. The foreigner, visitor or immigrant does not have these rights.

Among these potential factors, the two scholars address the matter of how the citizen relates to the emergence of what is called 'civil society'. This phenomenon expresses a democratic social dynamic that has many roots and orientations. The forces of civil society are not linked to the state or to active and existing political forces. In this context, civil society is the expression of a variety of initiatives from within society represented by individuals or groups. They work in a social spirit with the intention of being independent of the state and political forces. Civil society is a conglomeration of forces opposed to the authority of the state or at least wary of it, most especially in those manifestations of state domination, or with respect to the political ideologies proposed either by the state or other forces active within the political arena.

The institutions of civil society operate on the principle of respect for individuals, protecting their interests against the pressures brought to bear upon them by the state. They work on the principles of self-administration

and self-governance, providing solutions to a wide variety of problems with which the individuals who flock to their banners are faced. These groups, essentially, arise and find their driving force in posing limits to the degree to which the state can exercise its authority and oppress the individual, and, as we have noted, they apply the principles of self-governance and self-administration.

Civil society groups express their political aspirations and perspectives during periods of political embarrassment. Theirs is the burden to express the social, moral and human dimensions of what democracy means politically. The principle of democracy depends for its credibility upon how it is implemented in particular things. Furthermore it upholds the notion of free citizenship and gives this notion effective, confidant and focused human and political support.

As Meyer P. Bisch has noted, contemporary citizenship is manifest in the degree to which the individual is aware of the political, moral and social values that make him more able to

act in an environment where he feels he belongs to a defined and disciplined social entity. This means he participates effectively in the full range of society's greater responsibilities.

Citizenship and Democracy

The classic definition of democracy is that it is 'government of the people and by the people'. This understanding of democracy, however, is not sufficiently clear or precise. It is, in fact, very unclear and vague. The definition does not specify the nature of the activity or how it is to be performed, and does not forestall many varied interpretations. It could mean that the people commit their future to a particular political system through some government that has been elected and that can be held to account by the representatives of the people. There are unlimited examples of political practices that express the substance of the slogan we have quoted: 'government of the people and by the people'. In essence democracy lies in a people's formal recognition of a governing political system,

and this means that the legitimacy of the political institutions is subject to certain limitations that are defined by a political legitimacy granted by the people.

Democracy is not defined by a set of constitutionally defined institutions, rather by a cultural spirit sensitive to what democracy actually means. Democratic culture embraces moral values and specific political virtues — freedom in contrast to submissiveness and imitation; a sense of responsibility; creativity in work as opposed to stultifying routine; respect for the rights of others and for pluralism; rejection of blind bigotry against others; a progressive spirit that rejects knee-jerk approval of or submission to the governing authority; sensitivity to danger that is not at all the same thing as the sense of partisan security; and so forth.

The question poses itself here: What are the ties that bind democracy and citizenship together? And the answers are very simple. Without citizens and the culture of citizenship there is no democracy. The practice of

democracy requires activists and participants, it being understood that these activists (who actually do the work) represent the citizens in society. On the other hand, there is no citizenship without there being democracy. In the free practice of democracy in political and social life citizenship means the rights of the citizen. This means that, under tyrannical regimes, there is no social evidence of either citizenship or citizens. What remains is the feudal notion of the flock (the populace) and the sheep (the peasants). In a society governed by dictatorship people are only sheep in a flock. Their condition is indistinguishable from slaves in the context of the ancient political systems.

Modern citizenship implies the notion of responsibility. This means that the citizen has control over his political participation in all the permutations of political and social life. He is truly accountable for all the current circumstances of society. If the right of citizenship, from the day of his birth, is given to the individual, then the citizen must not

only be content with the privileges he has and the required rights, but he must enlist in the requirement for lively participation in democratic life. In the end, his participation must become part of a defined social and political process that defends democratic values and protects human rights on all levels and in all their manifestations.

Citizenship and Globalization

Citizenship authenticates itself when it strives for and defends the public good. It must also take to heart that human beings are diverse, and that political, social and cultural pluralism is a good thing. Globalization, from its perspective, represents a cultural condition that tends to break down existing cultural borders and barriers between peoples and nations. Globalism's ideology rejects the notions of patriotism, nation, and national or block identity. In this respect it proposes a new configuration of international citizenship that goes beyond traditional frameworks of national identity and patriotism. This globalization, in other words, intends to

distinguish the practice of citizenship from patriotic or nationalistic ties or any other type of traditional cultural sense of belonging. The citizenship that globalization tries to inculcate is new, new in the sense that it's starting point is outside the traditional framework of patriotic or nationalistic ties. This new sort of citizenship is today being called 'post-modern citizenship' or citizenship in one's place of residence. It is a citizenship granted in any place the world citizen resides or works. In this framework the citizen is free to sustain his old bonds and traditional national and ethnic sense of belonging. But in this context for the first time we see an understanding of citizenship bound to a set of rights and obligations that an individual gains by virtue of his place of residence and work in whatever place he lives throughout the world.

This new framework for understanding citizenship is being firmly rejected by many thinkers. In this context the following question arises: What will be the impact upon citizenship should post-modern and modern

democratic human societies be gutted of their ability to defend material interests? In this regard the answer is that genuine citizenship is impossible save within a defined place and within a specific social and political context. The citizen in fact must exercise his citizenship, and that exercise must be specific in time and place and in step with human changes seen in all their complexity.

Post-Modern Citizenship

Post-modern citizenship indicates a sharp distinction between political identity and national belonging. In the scope of this concept, citizenship begins with internationally held principles — independence and a sense of responsibility founded upon a democratic notion of rights and human justice. Political identity in this framework shrinks to become a general sense of civic belonging (well outside the scope of traditional national or patriotic identity) or any other limited sense of belonging. The basic condition for this citizenship resides in there being an operative democratic environment in

which the individual is able to interact with an institutionally based national entity that characteristically respects law, esteems human rights, and submits itself to the demands of justice. None of these have anything to do with patriotic feelings or the classical nationalisms with which we are familiar. Citizenship on this level commits itself to an abstract homeland that has broken from the bonds that embody and define the conventional nation, and now proceeds on citizenship principles and values that are by and large abstract.

In opposition to these new theories, that reject any notion of a social contract that is political in character, there are a group of serious challenges to exchanging a political identity — that binds itself to a specific cultural context in a defined social environment — for a civic identity based upon abstract ideas and the broad principles of a hypothetical democracy.

Challenging the unifying visions inspired by globalization, there is a whole cluster of diverse opinion that rejects all generalizing

perspectives. It stresses the phenomena of distinction and difference, drawing heavily upon racist and reactionary ideas in circulation in Western Europe, America and also in many countries of the developing world. In the United States of America and in Europe the Muslim countries are today observe the birth of groups advocating ethnic cleansing and extremist religious fundamentalism. These believe in violence as a slogan, as a program and as a goal. Here we must also point to Jewish extremist fundamentalism in America and the Middle East. All of these groupings are ideological throwbacks to fanatical nationalist movements and to the idea of total domination whatever their situation.

Although these extremist groups and ideologies pose a real danger, there are those who see them as splinter phenomena and not at all at the center of the stream of modern life. Recognizing the importance of all that might be said in this regard, we cannot make light of the value of national identity for the citizen, because, in fact, this identity has firm

foundations in what makes up a person's sense of belonging to a state, or certain types of cultural and social belonging that are classical in nature. No matter the degree to which national identity is in harmony with the broad principle of citizenship, it does not mean that it is in *dis*harmony with international cultural norms or post-nationalistic ideas. Identity is like a rotating constellation of related identities that essentially coalesce with tributary cultural patterns in the circle of social life and the general culture of society. For instance, a man from the Cameroon participates in three limited types of identity. He is African, he is Cameroonian, and he is Doual or Bamiléké or Malimba (the three main ethnic tribes of the Cameroon).

Take Egypt as another example. There we find people expressing several realms of belonging all at the same time. The citizen of Egypt simultaneously is an Egyptian, an Arab, a Muslim and an African. A similar situation pertains in most Islamic Arab societies where we encounter a variety of senses of belonging,

some of them endeavoring to be all-dominating while others of them are characteristically personal. One's political identity — be it nationalist or post-nationalist or purely local — cannot ignore the lesser social identities a person may have. However these senses of belonging may be characterized, they must be kept in mind and given their weight. Significant though they are, however, they cannot be allowed to preempt the person's developing a national identity or a spirit of citizenship. This is most pressing in countries where, in terms of political institutions, they are in the process of formation or have just come into being.

Doubtless a person's membership within the social body is a pressing social necessity because, as the ancients have pointed out, the human individual is a social animal by nature. We also need not stress that an individual identifies with one or another of his identities as life's circumstances dictate. In the end the mechanism that dictates the intuitive preference in the back-and-forth dynamic of

one identity over another, and reconciles irreconcilable positions and conflicting life circumstances does not mean that one model is dominant. What it indicates is a personal initiative exercised on the basis of freely experienced events impacting these identities where the individual may adopt the appropriate response to the given situation. There is an unconscious and silent intellectual dialogue between one's various identities, a dialogue within a person's innermost being that responds to his life circumstances. Whatever state one belongs to, the Arab individual acts in a manner appropriate to the state to which he belongs (be that Syria, Kuwait, Egypt or what have you). Nonetheless, when that same person travels to a western country, he behaves in accord with his Islamic or Arab identity. A Syrian within Syria, for instance, deals with his citizenship on the basis of his parochial identity — he is from the North or from the South; he is from the coastal regions or from the interior. What this indicates is that one behaves in accordance

with various identities, each identity emerging in an appropriate context.

National Citizenship and World Citizenship

We began, culturally and investigatively, with a historical and scholarly study of the ideologies that govern the notion of citizenship. Now we can turn to asking about the current circumstances that take up this idea in contemporary intellectual disciplines.

It is the modern concept of humanism that shapes the idea of the worldwide homeland. This notion takes up the ambitious notion of developing a clear and lofty methodology. As Boubacar Camara says, the human person cannot but see what is going on around him, therefore hardship for some of us cannot be the cause of happiness for others because misery for some inflicts misery upon all. In the same vein, Edgar Faure believes that advanced countries cannot turn their backs on poor and developing countries, but must give aid and economic and educational support to

developing states. They are an inextricable part of creation within which everyone lives. Faure goes on to assert that the great historical changes that we witness in our day threaten the unity of the human race just as they threaten the future and identity of the human being as a human being. Humanity suffers from great disparities between people and a dreadful absence of justice. Whole peoples experience deprivation and human suffering, but even more significantly the human race itself is threatened by loss and breakup as a product of ominous social divisions that splinter people into higher and lower groups, into lords and slaves, into rich and poor, into super-humans and sub-humans. Today the danger is not confined to the terrible conflicts that might happen or in the vicious wars that are all too imaginable. Today we have instruments of disruption, death and mass destruction that are in the hands of rebellious fanatical political groups that might have no qualms about using weapons of mass destruction to assert themselves and take vengeance for the injustices they have endured. The more serious

threat lies in the enterprise to destroy the humanity of the human being. These dehumanizing activities profit neither rich nor poor, neither small nor great.

This overshadowing danger that threatens humanity at its very core is what has inspired thinking about building an international human sense of homeland that will protect the humanity of the person and will realize the higher significance of the human enterprise. Here is where education finds its role and its historic task. It lies in the enterprise of building this human homeland on the foundations of human values represented in citizenship, peace, human rights, the condemnation of violence, and the realization of the required degree of social justice. To this end education must teach children and all individuals the art of sharing life with those who are different, and adopting as a moral principle the virtue of accepting the 'other'. This is the towering challenge that confronts education and society's very life in the 21st century.

In this context we must acknowledge that effective citizenship is utterly essential for the future of human society. And it can be said that human societies have progressed a long way toward building up this notion citizenship; they have seen intense efforts expended on educating for tolerance and peace. This educational demand will not be fully met until these societies accept the importance of educating for citizenship, and become sensitive to international responsibility in the most profound depths of how this citizenship structures itself. This necessarily requires inculcating the principle of effective and vital sharing in how life is ordered throughout the world.

The principle of coexistence is an essential ingredient in our times. Coexistence is demanded by rapid development. Development has revealed the necessity for cultural and social coexistence between cultures and social entities that were once very separate. It is now certain that cultural variance between different groups must be

dealt with by the complex of democratic activities within modern states.

Modern citizenship is evolving new patterns for how the citizen and the state relate to each other. The reigning traditional relationship between state and citizen is tied to the principle that the state basically guarantees respect for human rights and citizen obligations. In the final analysis these rights and obligations are anchored in the ethical formation of the citizen himself and that is in order to distinguish between the citizen and the foreigner or visitor to the country. The good citizen in classical societies is judged and evaluated on his ability to fulfill his obligations, on his knowledge of his rights, and on his respect for the law of the land that gives precedence to the public interest over private or personal interests.

In light of recent cultural developments, we must take cognizance of the new factors that distinguish modern citizenship from its traditional form. Civil society wants to assert its independence from the governing authority

and the state. The institutions of civil society treat the authorities and the state with caution and even suspicion because the state cannot meet most of the needs of the people. For this reason these groups claim autonomy for their activities and very existence; they set a distance between themselves and the authority of the state and its power. This pattern and trend toward independence and separate identity are inspired by democratic life.

It is almost trite to say that the institutions of civil society initially experienced their birth in advanced countries and not in developing countries, but they are now embarrassingly present in developing countries as well. In that context, they are experiencing state coercion and control. In developing countries the state wants to preserve its repressive power, its public aura, and its ability to control these civil institutions. The citizen in these states, therefore, wants to be involved in bearing responsibility and in how the state is run. What he wants is to vote, to run for office, and to have a share in the momentous decisions of the

nation, and he wants to do this under the slogans and values of democracy. The state in these countries, therefore, is obliged to respect these private-sector initiatives that civil society and local institutions put forward. As A. Mougniotte has said, these initiatives express an advanced notion of effective democracy that go beyond the classical game of democracy that was simply represented in conducting elections.

At this point and using this logic, the institutions of civil society work at finding solutions to social problems and challenges that threaten society and especially those problems that the state's sleight-of-hand cannot mask or do a thing about. For example, these institutions address themselves to educational issues that the state ignores (the structure of schools, teaching materials, local educational issues, the teaching staff, and so on). They are also engaged in economic issues (the labor market, unemployment, productivity and so on).

Two questions pose themselves here: 'What effect do the vested authorities have upon the citizenry? And what are the limits of the influence that citizens can bring to bear upon the state through their vigorous democratic initiatives?' The answers are conditional upon redefining the rights of citizens and their obligations to the state.

The Citizen in Arab Countries

When we speak about citizenship in Arab countries we need to ask about the nature of the state in the post-imperial and post-colonial age. How were these states formed and how did they shape their identities? How did they appropriate the values of democracy and the democratic process from the West? And under what conditions did these states absorb the western experience? Do they really respect the democratic principles and experiences of the developed world? How do they resist traditional economic and social institutions and how do they coexist so as to preserve their existence over against modern institutions?

In accord with the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Arab countries were chopped up into states and mini-states. This butchery was inspired by the major colonial states that had an interest in dividing things up administratively so as to enable them to manage these states in the post-colonial era. They took no account of nor did they give significance to the ethnic or racial or tribal entities in these new states. Their division of territory split up Arab tribes across several states and sometimes divided effective powers into three, and major clans into two or more. These colonialists worked to create states and political ideologies harmonious with their own interests.

In the course of this division the Arab peoples were obliged to shape their sense of belonging on the model of the colonial states that gave them being. They looked like modern states but they were imposed upon their people by outside forces. Each individual and citizen, thereby, was required to recognize and express loyalty to this or that state so as to assure peace and survival. He had also to call

himself a 'citizen', fulfill his obligations and claim his rights in a modern state imposed upon him by an imperialist power and not by historical or cultural considerations. This meant that the individual had to integrate into a modern state or else become a foreigner in a state to which he did not feel he really belonged. What this meant was that the citizen had to readjust and gradually express his belonging to this new colonially-inspired state. Arab leaders in the post-colonial era have proven unable to conceive clearly the idea of the state, its character, foundations and diverse aspects. They are utterly ignorant that perhaps the spirit of nationalism and patriotism was the beginning for building up the state. Perhaps they did not realize that the state was not the private domain of its rulers.

The 'old' states in Europe emerged on the grounds of nation. The nation essentially gave birth to the state, and this state took shape in its constitutions and institutions in harmony with the nationalistic spirit. But unlike history's convention, the Arab states took

shape first, and it was they who gave birth to the notion of nation (in the narrower sense of the provincial state). In the history of how states and nations are formed, the process of legitimacy was set back-to-front in the Arab world. And because the state cannot take form except in the bosom of the nation, the political drama in these countries still spins about in a vacuous circle.

Therefore the problematic involved in how the state came into being — it's shape dictated by foreign colonialists — led to a great muddying of the waters in the matter of citizenship and the sense of belonging. Even this late in the day, in many Arab countries the outlines of the notion of citizenship have still to emerge with any clarity. It is not at all strange that we say that the feelings of anxiety and unrest, of national insecurity, and of conflicting views concerning the legitimacy of the state have dominated cultural life in most Arab countries. For this reason the sense of loyalty has remained tied to the smaller and most essential social units. These are the tribe,

the clan and the confessional community, it being understood that these have more depth and significance than does the state imposed under colonial circumstances.

The Security of the Arab Citizen

Arab political and dictatorial regimes have labored to purge democracy from cultural institutions and vitiate them of any and all democratic substance. These regimes have decreed that any mention of human rights, citizenship or democratic values is an act both of subversive atheism and apostasy. In the upshot the bloody wounds, the wasted minds, and the social damage will neither endure nor leave a legacy.

The unnatural emergence of these states has meant that the citizen feels insecure. The modern state, set up on a western model alien to the character of its society, will inevitably be a problem in undermining the confidence of the citizen and confusing him concerning the state's political program. This state must deal with two very different legacies. The first is

that it has abandoned the weighty social burden of the past that sometimes harks back to pre-historic times, and second it must deal with a western political and cultural legacy that is loaded with a humanistic and democratic agenda that is both fecund and complex.

This is a divisive issue that drives the state and justifies the use of violence and oppression so as to preserve its existence. The state is essentially unable to comprehend this situation — an explosive situation between the modern state and creatures of traditional society, between modernism and revivalism, between progressiveness and traditionalism, between the modern state and the traditional constructions of social life, and between the notion of citizenship and the notion of the passive populace (*ar-ra'îyyah*). Taking the matter further, the state is a long way from trusting the citizen. More often than not the citizen sees himself as the enemy of the state, and the state is the principal enemy of the citizen. At this point we see the complete

breakdown of trust between citizen and state. The whole relationship between citizen and state is undermined. The citizen lives in constant anxiety and unease when it comes to how he relates to the state and its repressive authority.

The Absence of Legitimacy and Freedom

In the context of sovereign states and those democratic practices by which the citizen participates in the process of constructing laws that govern public life, that citizen has the right to examine those laws and express his opinion about them. But this circumstance, by and large, does not pertain in many states of the post-colonial Third World.

The principle of equality does not only require that the laws and actions of the political regime be truthful and realistic; it requires that this equality be based upon a set of necessary and foundational values for the existence of a free society. This implies a social consensus concerning the basic values of a free society. When this sort of consensus

does not exist the political and social situation remains highly restrictive.

The peoples do not participate in shaping decisions or laws and cannot subject them to scrutiny because only the governments are involved in constructing laws and passing legislative actions. The involvement of the peoples is largely confined to respecting these and implementing them. Citizens are required to show respect for these laws either voluntarily or under duress, and when they depart from this framework they are dealt with as though they are foreign agents and enemies of the nation and homeland.

In this fraught atmosphere charged with danger, lack of security and the rule of law, the citizen sees no alternative but to forego freedom and compromise his dignity for the sake of personal security. The existing political regime does not stay in power through free elections; it rests upon the principal of military power and the security forces. In this light we must understand why governments resort to violating and subverting

human rights, and why subverting these rights has become the norm of political behavior for most political regimes in the developing world.

In the developed world we see that political pluralism has today become a fundamental political ideal in the West. This pluralism is the vital pivot for honoring the human individual and respecting his right to self-expression and political participation. The denial and adamant refusal in the developing world explains the effective absence of political pluralism. Many Arab rulers have been at great pains to throw out this pluralism on the excuse of working for national unity, or of the Zionist threat, or of development and construction, or of standing firm and vigilant, or of any variety of other excuses that always contradict reason, free choice, and objectivity.

In Arab countries we must bear in mind that democracy can only be realized through building up a patient and long-term culture of democracy. Democracy depends upon changing the dominant traditional mindset of

most social groupings that include the educated and the illiterate, rulers and the governed, and laborers and farmers. Democracy is a cause concerning which, first, we must educate ourselves, second, we must learn to practice it, and, third, we must choose to implement it. It must become our life-style. That is the first and the last priority.

Democracy is both an ideal and a way of life. It is a system of values and demands a commitment to democratic values. It also requires great human effort, intense expenditure of energy, and great sacrifices. This democracy is hateful and irrelevant in the view of those who are unable to sacrifice and work just as is the case with those who hate others just because they are different from themselves.

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