



Political Stability; Concept, Dimensions and Indicators

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Abstract

Many researchers and specialists have been interested in the topic of political stability, and it has become an important and fundamental focus in their studies. The concept of political stability is characterized by flexibility, dynamism, and instability, and it can be considered the primary goal of human societies, which depends on the nature of the society or political system. Political systems vary in their perspective and interpretation of political stability. On the other hand, modern countries have concluded that political stability cannot be achieved through repression and violence, which has made it one of the important concepts to study and research, and one of the issues that has captured the thinking of many researchers, academics, and political analysts alike.

Keywords: democracy, political orientation, political system, societal repression

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Introduction

Political stability is one of the important topics that has occupied the thinking of many thinkers and political analysts, because it is a working requirement that all nations and peoples call for. It is one of the forms of stability and non-change, and the presence of political stability provides the appropriate environment for development and prosperity in the economic and social fields. The stability of the political system opens the appropriate field for the state to provide services in all fields such as agriculture, industry, health and tourism, as political stability works to expand the circle of investment in all important sectors in the state. However, there is no clear and agreed-upon definition of the concept of political stability, so it is a subject of disagreement among researchers and thinkers. Therefore, many opinions have emerged in defining political stability, which differed from one researcher to another and from one school to another. Therefore, this study aimed to clarify the image of the concept of political stability, by taking into account the dimensions and indicators of this concept.

Research Hypothesis:

The study is based on the hypothesis that political stability is linked to the non-use of violence or coercive means by the ruling political regimes.

Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive analytical method was used in order to obtain accurate information and study it. In order to facilitate the study process, the research was divided into four axes, where the first axis covered political stability in language and terminology, and the second axis dealt with the concepts of different schools in interpreting political stability. In the third axis, the focus was on indicators of political stability, while the fourth axis included a study of the dimensions of the phenomenon of political stability.

The first axis: Political stability: Linguistically and technically

The term political stability consists of the word stability (Istiqrar) and its political description. Linguistically, the word stability is taken from the Arabic language from the word "istiqarra", "yustaqarra", "istiqaran". The term stability is derived from "qarra", as it is defined in Lisan al-Arab as: "It is the decision in a place, meaning the decision and stability" (Bou Afia, 2016, p. 309). The word stability also appears in the Holy Quran in several places, and it appears in the meaning of constancy and stillness in Surat Al-Baqarah in the Almighty's saying: "But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a **place of settlement** and provision for a time." [Al-Baqarah:36] https://quranenc.com/ar/browse/english_saheeh/2/#36

Likewise, what is mentioned in Surat Hud: "And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allāh is its provision, and He knows its **place of dwelling and place** of storage.[548] All is in a clear register." [Hūd:6] https://quranenc.com/ar/browse/english_saheeh/11/#6

Therefore, we find that stability came in the language to indicate stillness, constancy, and continuity.

Technically: Political stability is defined as a phenomenon characterized by flexibility (relative adaptation), and refers to the ability of the political system to employ official institutions and contain conflicts without resorting to violence except when necessary. That is, the ability of the political system to formulate the right policies to deal with crises (Mahdi, 2022, p. 406). In the same context, it is defined as the extent of the political system's ability to deal with crises by investing in circumstances in order to absorb conflicts and struggles that occur within society without using violence and force, as the use of violence is one of the main outcomes of instability (Sajed and Nouri, 2022, p. 224). () Political stability is also one of the indicators of a successful political process, indicating that the general system within the state is stable. In addition to the link between political stability and the state's economy and the extent of its development, meaning "the process of stability in the system depends on the effectiveness of the political system and economic development, meaning that the political system works efficiently and effectively in the areas of political and economic development" (Bou Afia, 2016, p. 311).

There are those who find that political stability is achieved in the absence of a radical and complete change in the political system. On the contrary, another group believes that the absence of radical change in the government leads to political instability, meaning that political stability is a phenomenon characterized by flexibility and relativity (Wada'a, 2023, p. 508). Al-Saffar (2005) also indicated that political and social stability means the existence of an acceptable system of relations between the various forces in the nation and its parties. This is contrasted with a state of turmoil, when the relationship between the parties with each other is disturbed, and hostility and conflict occur between them. He also indicated that the principle of legitimacy is the basis for achieving political stability, as the system that is acceptable and accepted by the people is a stable political system, and vice versa, meaning that the lack of legitimacy leads to political instability (Al-Saffar, 2005, p. 306).

It can also be defined as (political stability) as: (the product of a set of political, social, economic and cultural measures that require real steps to deepen the option of mutual trust between the authority and society, with the participation of societal forces interested in the process of building and modernizing the political system in a way that serves the public interest). That is, political stability is an important phenomenon in all advanced and backward societies at all levels, which are seeking stability that is achieved by the presence of political development factors and economic and social factors combined. There is a delicate relationship between political development and political stability, as the higher the rates of political development, the higher the degree of political stability (Al-Aithawi, 2018, p. 27).

On the other hand, the concept of political stability was also defined on the principle of opposition, that is, through studying the phenomenon of political instability, where political thought was preoccupied with analyzing the factors of political instability such as social inequality, institutional deterioration, and cultural dispersion more than describing the phenomenon of political stability itself. Political instability is

the inability of the regime to deal successfully with crises, and the inability to manage existing conflicts in society in a way that makes them within the circle of control and control, as well as the regime's use of political violence on the one hand and the contradiction of its legitimacy and efficiency on the other hand (Shatib, 2013, p. 306). Within this framework, it can be said that political instability includes the occurrence of rapid and successive changes in the members of the ruling body, in addition to its association with rapid transformations in the state's regulatory framework from a specific form to its opposite and antithesis. Political instability is what includes various aspects of political violence, demonstrations, riots, and other connotations that contradict the concept of political stability (Ben Abdullah and Awisha, 2017, p. 4).

There are those who see political instability as a state in the political system in which institutional patterns of authority collapse, and here political authorities use political violence to confront challenges. Political instability in a country can only be measured by comparing it with another country or countries or comparing it with the same country at different times (Akongdit, 2019, p. 12). In this regard, researchers have indicated that political stability contains two elements: the first is the non-chaotic system, i.e. the absence of violence and coercion, while the second element is continuity, i.e. the absence of change in the components of the political system (Jaen and Arvson, 1999, p. 294). Here it can be said that political stability is a relative concept that is characterized by flexibility, as there are advanced countries that can be referred to as relatively stable countries, not absolutely stable. Political stability varies from one country to another, and the best type of stability that societies seek is political stability.

The second axis: The concept of political stability in different schools of interpretation:

The concept of political stability has appeared in many places, and here we find that the major schools of thought in political science have also tended to interpret the concept of political stability, as each school adopts a specific concept of political stability (Dakhil, 2022, p. 421).

1- **The behavioral school:** This school sees political stability as synonymous with the absence of political violence, and a stable political system is one in which peace and obedience to the law prevail. From this specific concept of political stability, we find that it is not right to use violence within the entity of a single society, regardless of the circumstances, in order to achieve political goals. And that reform in this case is only sought through civil political methods (Maqdi, 2021, p. 52).

2- **The organizational school:** This school finds political stability synonymous with the rule of the system and its maintenance, as it means the ability to adapt to new circumstances, situations and variables. That is, political stability here refers to the objectivity of institutions and structures in society. Here, the organizational school refers to the neutrality of service and production institutions from the fluctuations of power and the separation of this institution from political power at home and abroad. The association of institutions with the political system leads to their instability, especially if the regime uses them to gain personal positions, which makes these institutions non-independent tools (Shiaa, 2020, p. 7). That is, the organizational school focused on the regime and its institutions in the ability to face challenges, which in turn leads to political stability.

3- **The structural (functional) school:** This is based on government structures and the ability of political institutions to adapt to changes in the surrounding environment and respond to the challenges imposed by this environment. The pioneers of this school believe that government structures can be distinguished in terms of their degree of stability based on their ability to find acceptance and submission to their systems, and their ability to find trends that support and support them. Perhaps the most important indicators of this are the ability of political institutions to adapt and adjust to changes in the surrounding environment, and respond to the challenges imposed by this environment. This school also did not escape criticism, due to its focus and reliance on one dimension in its studies, which is the institutional dimension (Bou Afia, 2016, p. 316). On the other hand, regardless of the opinions of the three previous schools, there are those who defined political stability as resorting to using constitutional methods without resorting to violence. That is: not using violence for political purposes, resorting to constitutional methods by political forces and groups to resolve conflicts, and the ability of the institutions of the

political system to respond to the demands presented to it, arising from the internal and external environment of the system (Kazem, 2018, p. 32).

The third axis: indicators of political stability

In order to say that this country is characterized by political stability or not, and because political stability is a phenomenon characterized by relativity, it is necessary to study the main indicators that show the levels of political stability in general, and despite the differences in measuring indicators of political stability, there is a relative agreement (Hassan, 2014, p. 648) on the following indicators:

1- *The pattern of transfer of power in the state*: What is meant here is the change of officials in the state, which is a process that differs according to the nature of the political system and the reasons followed. If the process is carried out according to constitutional standards, then this is an indicator of the presence of political stability, but if it is carried out through a coup or the like, then this actually indicates political instability.

2- *The political system strength and ability to protect society and the sovereignty of the state*: The strength of the political system is an important indicator in the process of political stability, because the political system is tasked with protecting citizens and defending its political borders from any external aggression. For example, Iraq suffers from weak sovereignty for many reasons, whether internally or externally.

3- *Legitimacy of the political system*: Legitimacy is a fundamental supporter of political stability, which in turn is an indicator of political legitimacy. In order for the political system to gain its legitimacy, it must generally focus on meeting the needs of the public and the independence of its political decision, and protecting rights and freedoms, without using oppression and coercion in the governance process.

Here we can say that the legitimacy of any political system is based on three elements (Haroush, 2021, p. 946):

- The constitutional: which is that the authority is legitimate because it was established according to the country's constitutional and legitimate principles.
- The representation: meaning that legitimacy is based on the public's conviction that those in power represent them.
- The achievement: meaning that legitimacy is based on the great achievements accomplished by the authorities' agencies and institutions for the benefit of society.

Absence of violence, community conflicts and separatist movements: By emphasizing the rule of law, enjoying public rights and freedoms, and adopting the principle of citizenship, this indicator is measured through demonstrations, strikes and riots.

4- *Political participation*: That is, the role of the masses is not limited to voting in elections, but they have the right to attend political meetings, discuss public issues, and be active at the party level and the level of civil society organizations, as well as communicate with government officials. Political participation is the most important indicator of political stability, as it achieves political integration and national unity (Hadi, 2018, p. 130).

5- *Success of economic policies*: Directing the economy towards achieving development goals, raising the standard of living of individuals, and working to reduce unemployment and inflation, to be a clear indicator of political stability. This means that this is through the presence of social security that guarantees the individual an income in the event of disability, which creates a sense of reassurance and getting rid of future fear, which in turn is reflected in loyalty to the state. In addition to social justice that guarantees human dignity and thus achieves peaceful coexistence in the state without any barriers represented by gender, ethnic or political affiliations (Hadi, 2018, pp. 136-137).

6- *Low flow of internal and external migration*: Migration, whether internal or external, is generally linked to the security and economic situation, and they are two indicators of supporting political stability. The

lower or moderate the migration index, the more it indicates the presence of political stability in the state (Al-Shaher, 2019, p. 146).

Therefore, there are many indicators that aim to measure the level of stability, due to the difference in the level and degrees of stability from one country to another. These indicators are considered necessities for an advanced society, essential for achieving national unity in the political process, which in turn creates political trust between the people and the ruling elite. We find that the state achieves its stability not only through its military strength, but also through the people's acceptance and satisfaction with the political system through the absence of political violence and the existence of sound democratic means for expressing ideas and freedom of expression according to the law and without chaos, and the public interest prevailing over private interest.

Fourth axis: Dimensions of the phenomenon of political stability

As we mentioned earlier, political stability is one of the most prominent types of stability that societies seek at all times and places, and the dimensions of political stability are represented, according to thinkers and researchers (Abdul Moneim, 2021), by:

1-The dimension of human political behavior: which means when resorting to violence, as the state seeks to maintain its continuity and sustainability away from political violence, which is often in unstable societies. While some believe that the presence of political violence is in the interest of the regime and serves it because it pushes the rudder away from more violence that makes it change its policy. Thus, political violence is positive for the state, in addition to that, human behavior means adherence to the legal rules in the state (Boukara, 2017, p. 359).

2- The psychological dimension (legitimacy of the political system): It is based on two basic factors, which are, the legitimacy of the system's structures and institutions, and the satisfaction of the people and citizens with the status quo. Legitimacy means that the government and decision-makers assume power and exercise it on constitutional foundations and rules approved by the people in accordance with the current political procedures and traditions. As for satisfaction with the status quo, it is closely related to the concept of legitimacy, and here it is noted that obtaining the satisfaction of all citizens and their support for the status quo (Bou Afia, 2016, p. 318).

3- Balance between requirements and outputs (institutional performance dimension): This means that the system must strike a balance between the material or moral popular demands presented to it and what it offers and gives to individuals and groups, i.e. what is known as feedback. Therefore, the existence of a balance between demands and responses leads to stability of the situation, the continuation of the system, and harmony between the ruler and the ruled and between state institutions (Abdul Mawla, 2023, p. 1435).

Through this, it is noticed that the dimensions of political stability have a great overlap and entanglement, as we find that each dimension affects the other dimension. For example, the balance between inputs and outputs leads in turn to stability and at the same time leads to the continuation of the system and support for its strength, in addition to the fact that this adds legitimacy to the system. Thus, there is a kind of acceptance and satisfaction with the status quo, which in turn leads to reducing political violence or moving away from it, and from here we notice the overlap and interconnection between these dimensions.

Conclusion

Through all of the above, political stability is a relative phenomenon in application. There is no country that enjoys complete political stability, but rather the degrees of stability vary according to the factors and dimensions that indicate political stability in those countries. In addition to the type of relationship between the people and the prevailing regime, which is the main factor that indicates the level of stability, it is not just a description, but the presence of factors that help in achieving it. Achieving political stability in any political system requires the ruling authority to have political legitimacy in the form of satisfaction,

acceptance, and support in order to be distinguished by great effectiveness in formulating policies and decisions and the ability to implement them.

From here we can conclude the following:

1. Stability in any society cannot come in a dynamic way without the availability of several conditions, the most important of which is the political system enjoying legitimacy, the peaceful transfer of power, as well as achieving security in all its political, social and economic dimensions.
2. Political stability cannot be achieved without the existence of concerted efforts between the political system and the individuals of society.
3. Political stability indicates a state of stability and balance, as it is accompanied by a level of trust and popular satisfaction, and the alleviation of social and political anxiety.

Author's Contributions

The research is part of a master's thesis of the first author with individual effort and a substantial contribution by the co-author in improving and editing to submit the work for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any financial or commercial affiliations and does not involve any conflict of interest with any individual or entity.

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