



The Impact Of The Corona Pandemic On The Public Policies Of Countries - A Case Study Of North African Countries

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Abstract :

The COVID-19 pandemic has set a great example of the challenge facing the countries of North Africa, and it formed negative and obvious effects with which countries were unable to cope with their political and economic policies and plans to the point of disrupting this life with these countries, so it formed heavy burdens above what was already burdened, especially like the societies of North African countries. Which mainly suffers from “multiple problems to catch up with development and progress programmers, which contributed to this new situation in perpetuating what was already in place.” The underdevelopment increased and the wheel of development went backwards in light of this new circumstance that affected the whole world, and in light of the state of recovery, the political and economic effects remained and still are. The state of this pandemic is living, and accordingly this paper was looking at the general aspects of North African countries.

The economy of North African countries has been damaged by the impact of the Corona virus, which resulted in many closure measures that had a major negative role on supply and demand, as well as the issue of the sharp decline in global demand, which caused a decline in the exports of these countries in addition to the closing procedures, a drop in the price of Oil was halved, as Algeria's GDP declined by between 4.5% to 5.8% during the year 2020. In the case of Morocco and Tunisia, whose economy was severely affected by the drop in tourism there, the GDP was 3.7% and .05% respectively. On the other hand, these countries' growth has declined to 1.8% in the year 2020. The economy is expected to improve for the sub-region in 2021, assuming the epidemic does not subside. . The recovery that was expected in the year 2021 has set conditions related to the successful easing measures that governments and some countries in the sub-region have carried out, which clearly depend on activities related to the field of tourism (tourist places, restaurants, hotels, etc.), but this measure has been postponed. Because the restrictions procedures will continue for a longer period. With a significant and long-lasting impact on jobs and health, the pandemic could damage the results achieved in these countries in recent years in the areas of sustainable

development (SDGs), causing higher levels of inequality and poverty and this requires eradicating the epidemic while reducing From its impact on the economy through strong and strict blocs of policies in order to achieve the following:

(1) Direct support for the following businesses (tax solutions, part-time unemployment loan, easy loans, special credit paths, etc.) in order to survive in the work environment and prevent closure.

(2) Providing assistance to workers and citizens at risk by providing broad social protection measures (the axes of cash transfers, food assistance, reducing unemployment, etc.).

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, North African countries, economic and social effects, political and security effects, public policies of countries.

Introduction:

The crisis that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the world's economy falling to its lowest level since the Second World War, which has caused an increase in the problems of the economy, which was already hit by a crisis before 2008. The UNDESA organization has expected that the economy will shrink in The world increased by 3.2% during the year 2020, followed by a slight improvement over the next year. In addition to the significant impacts on human health (represented in mortality rates), the Corona virus has hit the economy in the world hard by directly reducing economic activities due to restrictions on movement through imposed closures, and indirectly by disrupting global trade value chains . This led to a direct drop in the prices of basic commodities, which negatively affected the countries exporting basic commodities, and caused a decrease in financial revenues, returns and inflows of foreign exchange.

The travel restrictions have also contributed significantly to affecting many industries such as hotel companies, tourism and transportation. The biggest problem will be a huge increase in employment. According to the International Labor Organization (2020),as of April 2020, partial lockdown measures have affected nearly 2.7 billion workers, representing about 81 percent of the world's workforce, as ILO global estimates on April 1 indicate that working hours will decrease by 6.7 percent in the second quarter of 2020, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. The loss of full-time equivalent jobs in North Africa could reach 5 million in 2020.

- The Problem of study: The problem of this research was that the conditions of this virus have affected and clarified the North African countries in various political, economic, and social aspects. Etc.

- The importance of study: The importance of research stems from the fact that it sheds light on one of these modern international crises, which have had

devastating effects on all countries of the world and their peoples, becoming an important phenomenon that draws attention and study.

- The hypothesis of study:

The research is based on the basic premise that there is no cultural awareness of the importance of the economic, social and political effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the countries of North Africa and that there is a negative impact of these effects in these countries.

Research Objective: The research aims to identify the potential social and the economic problems of COVID-19 in the North African region. It includes a set of internal and external policy axes to reduce the impact of the crisis and to ensure that the needs of the poor are met of the population are taken into account.

- The methodology of study:

The research is based on the descriptive and inductive approach, and the economic, social and political effects of the COVID-19 pandemic assumed by economic theory or contained in the economic literature on scientific research in North African countries during 2020 have been identified. And try to reach important conclusions for these effects on the countries of North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Sudan).

-The plan of study:

According to the objectives of the research, the research was divided as follows:

First: A Historical View of Epidemics in the World

Second: The economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in North African countries

Third: The Political and Security Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in North African Countries

Fourth: Conclusions and recommendations.

First: A Historical Look at Epidemics in the World

Many diseases have spread throughout history in the world and caused catastrophic results - the plague caused the death of many people and claimed the lives of tens of millions, and in the fourteenth century (1343-1351) affected a third of the population of Europe to the point that it became called the Black Death because it forms black spots on the body, and estimated the number of those who died from it about 100 million people, and three centuries later (1602-1647) invaded Seville and killed 76,000 people, about a quarter of the population of Andalusia, then London in (1665-1666) where 20% of its population has been killed, and its effects are still present to this day, scientists say, and kills between 100-200 people a year, as it is caused by one of the types of bacteria, then the disease of bleeding fever (Cocolieitli) originating from the virus (VHF) that swept

through Mexico (1545-1548) and led to the death of a number ranging from five million to fifteen million and was called the Great Epidemic, then cholera in Asia and Europe (1817-1824) caused the death of tens of thousands of people and then moved to Japan 1817, and Moscow 1826. Berlin, Paris and London in 1831, and the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan War (1912-1913) which led to the death of a large number of people, and the statistics of the World Health Organization indicate that the number of infected people annually ranges between 1.3-4 million cases, while typhus (1848) is the most widespread infectious disease, it caused the death of 20,000 Irish immigrants who fled to Canada, and then returned in the World War.

The first among the armies of Eastern Europe caused the death of 150,000 people in Yugoslavia alone, and it is also said that 3 million died during the Russian Civil War as it reached its peak in 1922 with 25-30 million cases (Sabah, 2020,9). Then the deadly Spanish flu appeared between the years (1918-1920) and caused the death of (50-100) million people in about 18 months, as the number of infections was estimated at about 500 million infections, and was characterized by the fact that its infection was for all ages, especially young people without causing problems with the immune system, then swine flu appeared between (1957-1958) and caused the death of a million people, then it re-spread again in 2009 and killed about 28.4500 people, while smallpox killed 30% of those infected in 1958 1980 followed by HIV in 1981, of which 940,000 people were in 2007. In 2014, about 36.9 million people were reported worldwide, then SARS appeared in Hong Kong between (2002-2003) and killed 922 people and infected 8422 cases, and the World Health Organization announced at the time that the number of deaths reached (10.9%), then the Ebola virus appeared in 1976 to re-spread again between 2013-2016 in Africa and caused the death of 11,300 people in the countries of West Africa, Liberia and Sierra Leone and ended in 2016 (Solaeman, 2020,12).

Today we are facing a new phenomenon of a new virus whose effects and results still exist as of the date of preparation of this research, and the treatment for it has not been discovered, which is the Coronavirus.

It can be defined as a pathological virus that appeared in late 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan and is rapidly spreading and has symptoms such as high fever, cough, pneumonia and causes many deaths, especially the elderly group.

Second: The economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in North African countries

Covid-19 has caused economic stagnation in North Africa mainly through the impact of lockdown restrictions taken by countries, as well as lower demand from abroad, and lower price of global products (oil derivatives). The growth rate in the sub-region is expected to decline to 1.8% during 2020.

According to the United Nations forecast, the growth of North African countries will decrease to 1.8% during 2020, which will record a loss of more than 5.4 points from the previous forecast published in January of 2020. This basic scenario is based on two assumptions:

First, the ongoing restrictions will effectively reduce the spread of the virus before the second quarter is over.

Second, most countries will begin to gradually reopen their facilities after an initial period of one to two months, while maintaining a proportion of social distancing. In the worst-case scenario, the economy in these countries will decline by 5.4% during 2020, while in the best-case scenario, the economy will grow by 0.3% (UNDESA, 2020, 30).

Looking at the structure of the North African economy, the impact of COVID-19 is through two main axes:

The first axis is the reduction of economic activities, which occur through:

- (1) A direct consequence of the imposition of restrictions.
- (2) An indirect result through the impact of imposing restrictions on work and movement of people, in fact, the closure restrictions imposed by countries forced most companies to stop or reduce their activities.

In Morocco, as an example, the High Commission for Planning (HCP) stated that at the beginning of April 2020, 57% of companies suspended their activities permanently or temporarily. In the field of jobs, HCP estimates that more than 726,000 jobs have been lost, nearly 20% of all jobs (excluding finance and agriculture).

The second axis is the decline in global commodity prices, especially oil derivatives, which greatly affected oil-dependent countries, with serious repercussions on their financial and foreign policies, and in March 2020, fuel prices fell by about 50%, causing a great shock to all Of government revenues and exports in Sudan, Libya and Algeria, in Algeria, hydrocarbons have accounted for 96% of total exports, and 37% of government revenues in recent years. Oil prices are likely to remain low for a period of time, due to the stagnation in the global economy. In the near term, thanks to the OPEC decision that included production cuts, the price of Brent crude is likely to reach the level of 35 US dollars during 2020. This low level will threaten the stability of fiscal revenue and the ability of countries to support the recovery plan. The decline in government revenue will be a challenge in the entire sub-region, which will cause further deterioration of the fiscal deficit and an increase in the amount of public debt.

The total government debt has reached 77% of the total GDP in the sub-region during 2018. While the government debt represents 33.4% of the total GDP of the state of Algeria, in 2018 it reached 91.2% in Egypt, 176% in Sudan and Tunisia It increased significantly from 54.8% of the total GDP in 2015 to 73% in 2018.

The government debt in Mauritania decreased from 98.5% during 2015 to 72.4% during 2018. The increase in debt has caused an increase in debt service (ECA, 2019, 26). Another consequence of the epidemic is ensuring the provision of food in these countries, which may face food shortages if this pandemic continues for several months. The spread of the pandemic globally would negatively affect the supply chains in the world through the processes of production, transportation and distribution of food, which would cause a decrease in food exports by food-producing countries such as Morocco. This would cause a significant impact on food security in many North African countries such as Egypt and Algeria because of the dependence of these countries on food imports, although there is no match between these countries (Table 1).

Table (1) Total reserves in months of merchandise imports (all data for 2018 except Algeria 2017).

Country	Total reserves in the number of months of merchandise imports	The percentage of dependence on importing wheat
Algeria	19	72.2
Egypt	6	42.1
Libya	70	---
Mauritania	3.3	87.1
Morocco	5	42.1
Sudan	0.2	18.3
Tunisia	3	59.7

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from the World Bank (2020)

The above table determines the number of months in which these countries' reserves can maintain their imports, and Sudan is represented by having the lowest level of food reserves in North Africa. Its reserve can cover the value of imports less than one month. For this reason, it is highly vulnerable to any external shock (such as the drop in the prices of oil derivatives) and this is likely to cause a reduction in its reserves, with 19 and 70 months respectively, Algeria and Libya have the highest numbers, on the other hand, the percentage of dependence on wheat By means of imports, which measures the percentage of wheat imports, Algeria is highly dependent on wheat imports. Mauritania and Tunisia appear to present high levels of risk, with lower reserves in the months of import

(Mauritania 3.3 and Tunisia 3) and with greater dependence on wheat imports (Mauritania 87.1 and Tunisia 59.7). (UNctad, 2020, 19).

Third: The political and security effects of the Coronavirus on North African countries

North African countries have adopted emergency measures and laws, ranging from school closures, isolation and quarantine policies, lockdowns and bans on movement within and between cities, health checks at airports and border crossings, suspension of international and national flights, domestic travel restrictions, restrictions on public gatherings, closure of public services and military deployment, among others. These measures and regulations were based on the plurality of legal frameworks, that North African countries used different terms without discrimination: 'state of emergency', 'state of exception', 'state of siege', 'state of necessity' Decrees adopted by governments as needed to deal with the pandemic. None of the constitutions of these countries contain provisions on a potential 'health emergency' that can be applied to address COVID-19 or similar emergencies. However, one country took the opportunity to issue a decree that enabled the government to declare a health emergency and take exceptional measures to stop the spread of the virus. This significant confusion, linked to the content of their constitutions as well as their institutional processes, highlights the degree to which these States are not legally prepared to face the pandemic or similar emergencies and are also subject to binding and non-binding international and regional mechanisms and instruments. The latter include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Union's Agenda 2063, which sets out a vision that is "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, led by its citizens, so that it represents a dynamic force in the international arena". Two of the seven aspirations contained in this agenda are relevant here: Aspiration 3, which envisions "an Africa of good governance, democracy and respect for the rights of the 2063 Agenda with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both aspirations 3 and 4 of the Human, Justice and Rule of Law Agenda" are in line with Aspiration 4, which calls for "an Africa of Peace and Security".. 2063 is fully in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16, which states that "promote the establishment of peaceful and marginalized societies in order to achieve sustainable development, provide universal access to justice, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". The most universally important binding instrument is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 4 of which provides for a list of non-derogable rights, i.e. rights that cannot be suspended or derogated, even during states of emergency. The minimum standards in terms of the protection of human rights during states of emergency are: Some rights are non-derogable; the law should provide for restrictions on non-derogable rights, which must be strictly necessary and

proportionate to the desired objective and not affect the essence of the right; There must be some form of control over the executive branch during a state of emergency. to oversee the legality and appropriateness of emergency measures that restrict rights; all rights must be fully restored (International Institute for Democracy,2020,9).

The COVID-19 pandemic and anti-COVID-19 laws and measures have had a severe impact on the economies of North African countries, and in these economically fragile conditions, where export revenues are affected and social distancing reduces local activity, incomes are falling sharply, especially for informal and low-skilled sector workers, including large numbers of displaced people and refugees. In addition, the cessation of tourism, the sharp fall in oil and gas prices, and the sharp decline in remittances of expatriate citizens may affect incomes. The disparate effects of the health crisis in the main axes—rich versus poor, city versus GDP, may exacerbate inequality and tension of basic socio-political cohesion in all these countries – rural and regional-regional.

The pandemic can compound these pressures by increasing political polarization where their commitment to isolation is often found in their homes, and by increasing governments' exploitation of the crisis to advance their partisan agendas, a driving force that can be exacerbated by people's increased reliance on online communication during the course of an already. As the crisis worsens, conflicting parties may disagree on the seriousness of the pandemic or over the government response. Health care in North African countries. Most of these countries already suffer from a shortage of doctors. It also faces shortages of hospital beds and ventilators. Limited access to hand-washing facilities, drinking water and sanitation makes individual protection against the virus a daunting task. The lack of medical equipment, due to the decline in its imports and international competition for it, will also increase pressure on vulnerabilities. Finally, all of these countries face the serious problem of access to basic public services, such as water, food, nutrition, sanitation, environmental protection and resilience to climate change, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, such as women, refugees, migrants and displaced persons. This partly explains the exacerbation of problems inherent during the spread of the epidemic, such as gender-based violence, corruption and poverty. Higher levels of food insecurity will increase. Food supplies are affected by transport constraints, while a range of climate change shocks such as droughts, floods and desert locusts have affected production and prices in some areas. The economic turmoil will be exacerbated in the absence of a holistic, inclusive and participatory coping strategy in these countries, but the scope of such actions is limited by the scarcity of resources and the speed of its depletion from another perspective (Baker,2020,12).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the security situation in North African countries. First, the redeployment of most of its security forces to ensure that anti-epidemic laws and measures are in place and not border control has created a golden opportunity for non-traditional actors and terrorist groups to move in the region, build smuggling networks and carry out illegal activities. In addition, terrorist groups exploit deteriorating social and economic conditions in various ways. With so many students dropping out of full-time school and unemployed youth spending more time online, terrorist groups now have a captive audience for their extremist rhetoric and hate messages.

It is not possible to strengthen governments' control over social media to combat this situation. Moreover, the rise in cybercrime in North African countries could lead to increased contacts between terrorists and other criminal actors. Second, a variety of terrorist groups have used COVID-19 in their narratives and propaganda, seeking to exploit the pandemic and the vulnerabilities of states as well as divisions among citizens. COVID-19 and governments' imposition of states of emergency have provided fuel for current terrorist narratives, as the pandemic has been used to increase hatred of certain groups, leading to racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. This is attested to by violent attacks against migrant and refugee camps and infrastructure (such as hospitals). The epidemic also provides terrorist groups (especially operating in areas where the state is weak or in dispute) the opportunity to accelerate the delivery of basic public services and enhance the relative effectiveness of non-traditional care efforts. Real or perceived failures in countries' COVID-19 response plans have already been exploited to promote anti-state violence and nurture narratives, with worsening mistrust in the financial system, leading to increased cash withdrawals in some countries in North Africa.

Criminal and terrorist organizations exploit the transfer of funds to the unregulated sector. Third, the focus of the countries of the region and international actors on the crisis has given some external actors a significant opportunity for the intervention of mercenaries from other regions in Africa and elsewhere, and a dramatic increase in arms smuggling and repatriation in the ongoing conflict in North Africa. This strategic use of the coronavirus has brought in regional geopolitics definitions by forming alliances that hinder the chances of peace and security returning to the country successfully controlled while at the same time being exposed to violence, conflict, terrorism and violent extremism. With African solutions to problems being sought, countries cannot prevent or reduce COVID-19 or in line with the African Union's 2020 declaration as the year of Silencing the Guns: Creating Conditions Conducive to the Development of the Meaning. (United Nation,2020,18).

Conclusions:

- 1- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the fragile socio-economic situation in the North African countries, exacerbated existing challenges and created new challenges for democratic transition in the region.
- 2- Laying off many jobs and unemployed workers.
- 3- Stop the flow of remittances to refugees and migrants.
- 4- The COVID-19 pandemic has had economic, social and political effects on North African countries.

Recommendations:

1. Providing emergency support to vulnerable groups and paving the way for a more applicable and sustainable social protocol.
- 2- Enhancing the recovery of the economy around the world, supporting small and medium enterprises to reduce unemployment, programming financial policies to develop economic transformation, and expanding and preserving the fiscal space by increasing and diversifying revenues. Perhaps this requires establishing a regional fund for social cooperation to support the poorest segments and countries.
3. The continued flow of remittances is essential to prevent the negative economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on countries.

COVID-19 is an opportunity to be part of the shift towards a healthy and sustainable diet. Government policies that support reducing the burden of infectious epidemics may include taxing foods that contain unhealthy levels of fat, salt or sugar, as well as improving consumer decision-making through labeling and tracking their behavior, as well as implementing a healthy nutrition strategy.

- 4- During COVID-19, it is possible to improve people's living conditions in a familiar way, and by ensuring proper access to healthy foods, which is represented by using foods with high nutritional value and rich in vitamins, and it is necessary for a person to understand the reasons between overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases that are associated with With the diet and the Covid-19 virus, as the death rates and diseases related to non-communicable diseases continue to rise at an alarming rate, adding an additional burden to health systems that are struggling to find appropriate solutions to get rid of these diseases.

list of sources

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