TITLE OF RESEARCH ARTICLE ⓐ

Tribalism and Social Security Stakes According to the Khaldunian Perspective

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Abstract

Ibn Khaldun, in his analysis of the concept of social security, highlights the importance of returning to the deep foundations upon which this security is based, as well as the structural components within society related to it. This issue becomes clearer when considering tribal societies, which are originally based on kinship and lineage ties, where tribalism represents a central factor in regulating social relations, coordinating interactions among individuals, protecting the group, and ensuring its cohesion. According to the Khaldunian view, tribalism is not merely a sense of belonging; it is a driving force that contributes to building the social system and defining the paths of security and stability within the tribal structure. Based on this conception, this research paper seeks to reveal the Khaldunian features of the concept of social security by highlighting the role of tribalism and the mechanisms of its influence in shaping security within tribal societies, with the aim of providing a deeper analytical reading of the nature of the relationship between the tribal social structure and the requirements of social security in Khaldunian thought.

Introduction:

Despite the series of deep transformations experienced by social structures in Arab and Islamic societies, and their apparent shift toward adopting the so-called Western concept of the "modern state," with its rules and laws regulating the functioning of social institutions, this transformation has often remained formal rather than structural. Manifestations of modernization have focused on building the state apparatus and establishing its security, social, economic, and cultural institutions, without fundamentally changing traditional cultural structures that remain deeply rooted within society. Traditional cultural indicators can be strongly observed in individuals' perceptions, daily practices, patterns of affiliation and loyalty, and are clearly reflected in many occasions and practices that demonstrate the continued influence of the tribe as a core component of social life.

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As a result of the continuity of these cultural structures, social security in these societies is largely linked to tribal factors, as social security is a central priority given the potential consequences of its absence, including social unrest, disintegration of ties, feelings of insecurity, and the possible exacerbation of dangerous phenomena threatening societal stability and safety.

Interest in this issue has increased in the current context, as it is no longer limited to local or regional levels but has become a global issue, especially with the emergence of the so-called "global risk society" according to Ulrich Beck, where societies—whether traditional or modern—face interconnected global challenges that directly affect their social security.

Given this reality, it is important to return to the socio-historical frameworks that shaped the foundations of social security in traditional societies, particularly tribal societies. Ibn Khaldun is one of the most important thinkers who provided a comprehensive scientific conception of the nature of social organization and the role of tribalism in state building and ensuring its security and continuity. He provided a deep analysis of the relationship between tribalism and stability within the group, exploring how tribalism transforms from a bond of belonging into an effective mechanism for regulating behavior, protecting the group, and defining the features of the social system.

Revealing the Khaldunian perspective on social security is not merely a return to a sociological discussion but an attempt to understand the mechanisms of traditional societies and comprehend the deep reasons that make the tribe—a factor that remains influential even under the modern state—a key actor in shaping paths of security and stability. Therefore, this research seeks to analyze the relationship between tribalism and social security in Khaldunian thought and explore how tribalism influences the construction of security within tribal societies, while attempting to determine whether this perspective still offers explanatory relevance for understanding some contemporary phenomena in our societies.

Accordingly, the main research problem can be formulated as follows:

How does tribalism influence the achievement of social security according to Ibn Khaldun's perspective?

Study Axes:

1. Tribalism in Ibn Khaldun: Concept and Significance

2. Tribalism and the Achievement of Social Security

3. The Disintegration of Tribalism and the Collapse of Social Security

Revealing the concept of social security in tribal societies according to the Khaldunian perspective requires examining its connection to one of the fundamental variables that Ibn Khaldun addressed in his theories on human civilization and society, namely tribalism, through which the general framework of social security in tribal societies based on kinship and lineage relationships can be understood.

First: The Concept of Tribalism in Ibn Khaldun

Abdelsalam Shaddadi argues that tribalism, according to Ibn Khaldun, is a phenomenon rooted in a Bedouin origin, and from this perspective, it gains importance in understanding the development of civilization as a whole. Ibn Khaldun demonstrates in his analysis that tribalism has clear psychological and social dimensions and shows its mechanisms within both Bedouin and urban societies, highlighting its close relationship with authority and its role in forming its structure and legitimacy.

Thus, tribalism in Ibn Khaldun carries two main dimensions: a natural (psychological) dimension and a social dimension. The natural or psychological dimension refers to tribalism as an innate phenomenon in human nature, manifested especially in blood and kinship ties. This is evident in the instinctive tendency of humans to empathize and feel attached to their parents, siblings, family, and tribe. These ties are not merely acquired social relations but primary feelings rooted in human nature, forming the psychological basis of tribalism before it later takes broader social and political dimensions.

Regarding the social dimension of tribalism, it goes beyond blood ties and kinship to become a broad social bond based on mutual support and solidarity among group members. Tribalism here represents a system of relations of support, protection, and collective defense, obligating the individual to stand by the group and defend it, thus making tribalism a unifying framework that reinforces cohesion and grants the group the ability to survive and maintain its existence within society.

According to Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, based on his reading of Ibn Khaldun's works, tribalism is "a conscious and unconscious social bond linking members of a group, based on kinship, which intensifies when there is a danger threatening those individuals as individuals or as a group."

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Ibn Khaldun notes that the strength of tribalism is most evident in direct blood ties, reaching its peak within the family, then extending to relatives and kin. However, this tribalism gradually weakens as the kinship circle extends from its primary center; the wider the kin network and the more distant the kinship, the weaker the tribal influence. Ibn Khaldun asserts that tribalism starts from close family ties and extends, to varying degrees, to larger groups: "If the continuous lineage among partisans is very close, achieving union and cohesion, the bond is apparent and calls for immediate attention; if the lineage is somewhat distant, some of it may fade while some remains in public awareness..."

Ibn Khaldun indicates that lineage is not an absolute fact but a symbolic construct agreed upon by people; its importance lies in the social function it serves. According to this view, lineage creates a network of ties and relationships that produces solidarity and cohesion among group members, enabling unity and the strength needed to defend their existence. Ibn Khaldun supports this idea with the Prophet's guidance: "Learn about your lineages so that you maintain your kinship ties," which encourages preserving kinship to strengthen unity and tribal cohesion. Thus, the value of lineage lies not in its biological reality but in its social role in consolidating ties, maintaining group unity, and ensuring cohesion and continuity.

Ibn Khaldun considers tribalism an intrinsic social phenomenon in human society, present as long as humans exist, and not confined to a particular time or community. Tribalism consists of a network of kinship-related ties, whether real, imagined, or symbolic. The important factor is not the actual lineage but the shared sense of belonging and the collective loyalties it generates, forming the structural basis of tribalism in tribal societies.

Through these ties, the boundaries of "us" versus "others" are defined, so that any attack on an individual of the tribe is seen as an attack on the collective entity, as the individual is not an independent unit but part of the greater whole—the tribe. Thus, the tribal group functions to defend and protect its members, safeguarding their honor and rights, as defending an individual is defending the group, and harm to a part threatens the whole.

Ibn Khaldun expresses this idea clearly: tribalism exists across all times and peoples because it is based on blood ties, whether close or distant, real or imagined. Driven by a sense of injustice toward a group member, tribe members rise to defend their kin. This behavior forms the core of tribalism, as a social force unifying the group and enabling resilience and confrontation.

Second: The Role of Tribalism in Achieving Social Security

Ibn Khaldun sees tribalism as a fundamental component underpinning unity, cohesion, and social solidarity within tribal society, forming the foundation that allows the group to maintain its security, stability, and ability to face threats. This importance arises from the role of kinship and lineage ties in enhancing group strength, fostering a sense of belonging, and reinforcing tribal cohesion, making members more prepared for solidarity and collective defense.

From this perspective, tribalism is not merely a bond among individuals connected by blood but a vital mechanism for regulating the social order and protecting the group from challenges that may threaten its existence or weaken its cohesion. Ibn Khaldun states: "Kinship ties are natural in humans, except for a few; the sense of loyalty to kin arises when kin face injustice or danger, an instinct present in humans since their existence."

Tribalism, according to Ibn Khaldun, is central to ensuring tribal cohesion and unity, providing a strong framework within which individuals live daily with a sense of security and protection, safeguarding their possessions and shielding them from threats. Security is achieved when individuals feel that belonging to the tribe offers a collective umbrella of protection, turning tribalism into a unifying force that makes members like a single body; harm to one is considered harm to the entire tribe.

Abdelsalam Shaddadi notes that tribalism, in the Khaldunian perspective, produces a society not composed of separate individuals but a collective structure defined by the line between "us" and "others," based on kinship and shared belonging. In this structural organization, individuals are not left to face external aggression alone; their kin group supports and defends them. Similarly, each tribe has a broader social backing within a network of larger groups under which it falls, deepening tribalism's strength and enabling the tribe to maintain its security and stability.

Tribalism in tribal society forms a type of "social contract" based on kinship ties, whether real or imagined. These ties define social roles, distribute functions within the group, and establish a system of rights and duties regulating the relationship between the individual and the tribe. Abdelkader Jaghoul notes that cooperation within the tribe stems from members being united by real blood ties (actual kinship) or loyalty and alliance bonds (imagined kinship). This cooperation is based on mutual support, with each individual supporting another and the group providing a protective framework for its members, strengthening values of belonging, solidarity, and cohesion.

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Tribalism, thus, is not merely an emotional bond but a comprehensive social system regulating relationships, establishing tribal authority legitimacy, and defining duties and responsibilities, making it a fundamental pillar of social security in tribal societies.

Halim Barakat notes that key values associated with tribalism—solidarity, mutual aid, support, internal cohesion, and adherence to customs—play a crucial role in addressing environmental challenges and ensuring livelihood in a world competing for essential resources.

The strength of tribalism also plays a key role in maintaining tribal social security; stronger, more formidable tribalism deters other tribes from encroaching, raiding, or attacking, thus protecting the tribe's material assets (land, livestock, wealth) and human resources (women, children, elders, men) from captivity, slavery, or extermination. Weak tribalism makes the tribe vulnerable to raids or conquest by others. Muhammad Mghani asserts that defending the tribe is essential to maintaining unity and cohesion, as the tribe cannot survive without tribalism ensuring protection.

Halim Barakat also notes that tribalism includes pride in lineage, supporting kin, vengeance, and other practices. Historically, tribes had voices conveying their feelings or stances in peace or war, creating a need to pride themselves on tribal strength, embodied in the role of the poet who celebrated their ancestry and tribe, enumerated their virtues and achievements, or displayed their strength as a mechanism to assert honor, status, or intimidate enemies.

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For example, Al-Talamis Al-Dib'i says:
"To every people, a ladder ascends,
And no ladder rises to us,
Every wild beast flees from us,
And the desert beast comes to us and roams."

Amr ibn Kulthum, in his Mu'allaqa, depicted tribal zeal and pride in his tribe "Taghlib":
"Other tribes have no pride,
When their tents we built,
We are the protected if we obey,
And the indebted if we disobey,
We are the fortunate if we succeed,
And the doomed if we fail,
We rule as we wish,
And descend where we want,
We abandon as we displease,
And take as we desire,
We pursue if we are wronged,
And strike if we are tested,
We descend at every frontier,
Feared by all who approach,
We drink when we wish, pure water,
And others drink muddy and impure water."

He also says:
"Let no one be ignorant of us,
For we are more ignorant than the ignorant."

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The Function of Tribalism According to Ibn Khaldun

The function of tribalism, according to Ibn Khaldun, lies in defending and protecting the tribe, preserving its security, and maintaining the balance and stability of its system. This does not occur except in the presence of a ruler or chief of the tribe who presides over it, whose tribalism is the strongest among the subsidiary tribalisms that constitute the tribe as a whole, which helps him extend his rule and authority over them. Ibn Khaldun states:

"This is because we have stated that tribalism encompasses protection, defense, claims, and all matters agreed upon, and we have noted that humans, by human nature, need a controlling force in every gathering, which must be dominant through that tribalism; otherwise, its effectiveness cannot be achieved."

Ali As'ad Barakat explained that the fundamental basis of the concept of social security for Ibn Khaldun lies in tribalism, considering it the essential element of political unity and the formation of human society. It is the general shared feeling that individuals have regarding what connects them through lineage, kinship, blood, or family ties, as well as through relationships of neighborhood, loyalty, alliances, rectification of injustice, and other multiple

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manifestations that contribute to the establishment of social and political bonds and relationships of solidarity in general.

Third: The Disintegration of Tribalism and the Collapse of Social Security

Ibn Khaldun states:

"The ultimate goal toward which tribalism tends is kingship," meaning that the ultimate purpose of tribalism is the establishment of the state, which clarifies the political dimension of this social phenomenon. Tribalism is not limited to being a social bond aimed at regulating relationships within the tribal society and preserving security and stability; it also becomes a mechanism for achieving political authority and extending influence over the entire group. Through this transition, tribalism transforms from an internal organizational tool in Bedouin society into a broader force aimed at building urban civilization and laying the foundations of the state. Thus, tribalism in Ibn Khaldun's view is the backbone upon which the state develops, forming the vital link between internal tribal organization and political authority, enabling the group to move to a higher level of social cohesion and organization—from the tribe (a simple society) to the state (a complex society), which, like a living organism, passes through stages or ages. This social transformation from the Bedouin pattern to the urban pattern involves three main stages:

1. The stage of establishment and construction
2. The stage of greatness and glory
3. The stage of decline and decay

Ibn Khaldun notes that:

"The monopolization of the ruler over his people and his tribal supporters, including clients and artificers," occurs in the second stage. The first stage is the foundation of the state, which cannot be achieved by the ruler or tribal chief except through his tribalism. According to Abdelsalam Shaddadi, the monopolization of power by the chief and his exclusion of his tribal supporters stems from psychological motives:

"Sovereignty naturally tends toward forming a dual monopoly: the pole of domination and glory that adorns it, and the pole of wealth and luxury allowed by sovereignty for enjoyment. After the stage of establishment, the family or clan leader who becomes king does not wish to relinquish anything to members of his tribal group who assisted him in seizing power. This tendency, according to Ibn Khaldun, stems from pride and the animal nature, supported by innate self-love."

The focus here is on the third stage, to track the transformations of tribalism in the trajectory of the state and the resulting achievement or absence of social security. The corruption of tribalism occurs when the ruler monopolizes kingship and its associated material benefits, excluding his tribal supporters for fear of losing power or sharing authority. According to Al-Jabri, this does not mean the corruption of lineage itself but the corruption of the objective foundation of tribalism—collective participation in the material and moral benefits that kingship brings to its holder.

Ibn Khaldun observes that when a ruler reaches the extreme of despotism and excessively imposes taxes and fines, the bonds of tribalism weaken, the cohesion diminishes, and people become frustrated and reluctant to work. The result is a weakened state due to the corruption of its tribalism, entering the stage of decline due to economic crisis, as expenditures exceed revenues, and income does not meet the outgoings.

According to Al-Jabri's reading of Ibn Khaldun in *"Civilization as a Corrupting Force for Urbanization"*, urbanization here refers to the urbanization of the ruling tribalism that established the state. This tribalism, when living in the desert and during the foundation of the state as an independent human community distinguished by its way of life and bonded by cooperation, loses its cohesion upon entering the life of the city, with its mixing, competition, differing interests, and conflicting desires, resulting in the disintegration of unity, dissolution of its entity, collapse of its personality, and fall of its state. Individuals may face killing, displacement, migration, scattering among other states or regions, or integration into other tribalisms. Historical Islamic examples include the tribalism of Banu Zubayr and Banu Hashim when overcome by Banu Umayyah, and the Umayyads themselves when defeated by the Abbasids, leading to the collapse of their state and dispersal of their people, except for those who migrated to Andalusia to establish the Umayyad state there. In Morocco, the Sanhaja Maltenin tribalism, which established the Almoravid state, collapsed after the Masmuda tribalism of the Almohad state prevailed. Similarly, in Ifriqiya, the Hafsids disappeared with the extinction of their state, and so on.

The transition from Bedouin urbanization to urban civilization results in significant transformations in the structure of tribalism. It is a shift from a social state dominated by collective cooperation to one dominated by individual or private interests, reflecting a change from the collective "we" to the individual "I." This leads to social, political, and economic consequences, as the pursuit of private interests within tribalism causes conflicts and disputes, contributing

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to the disintegration of tribal cohesion. Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri states: *"This conflict spreads at the level of the ruling house, the tribalism of that house, and the dominant and subjugated tribalisms alike."*

In other words, the bond achieved by lineage linking close and distant relatives faces the greatest threat from conflicting private interests within tribalism, leading to the collapse of the urban civilization formed from the previous Bedouin structure, resulting in state collapse due to prioritizing personal loyalties over collective ones and seeking personal gains over the public good.

The conflicts threatening the political stability of the state manifest socially in the form of increased rebellion, civil wars, division of the state into smaller principalities or kingdoms, causing subsidiary tribalisms tied to the general lineage to fight among themselves in wars with severe societal consequences. Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri, following Ibn Khaldun, notes that the dispersal of tribalism due to conflicts over private interests has serious societal repercussions, including taxing and levying the population to fund civil wars, hiring clients, artificers, and mercenaries to suppress revolts threatening the state and the throne: *"Thus, civil wars are fueled by revolts of defeated tribalisms, compelling the ruler to seek assistance from clients, artificers, and mercenary forces to defend himself and repair his collapsing state, leading to entanglement with tribalisms tied to the general lineage and other rebellious tribalisms in complex, continuous civil wars, where victory is usually achieved through prolonged struggle rather than swift combat."*

This security situation resulting from political conflicts within a single tribalism has severe consequences for state stability and societal safety, leading to phenomena or disasters such as widespread poverty and famine due to high taxes and levies, increased mortality from crime, killings from revolts or civil wars, and outbreaks of diseases and epidemics, among other serious manifestations.

Conclusion:

Achieving social security in any society is essential for its survival and continuity. Ibn Khaldun was among the pioneering scholars and thinkers in demonstrating the connection between social insecurity and urban aspects, particularly related to social phenomena associated with state collapse due to the corruption and disintegration of tribalism, monopolization of power by the ruler, despotism over the populace, and oppression. This leads to societal corruption and complete collapse, forming a cycle inherently linked to tribalism. Any breakdown, disintegration, or conflict within tribalism becomes a concrete indicator of the collapse of social security in society.

Ethical Considerations

This study is theoretical and analytical in nature, based on critical interpretation of classical and contemporary intellectual sources, particularly the works of Ibn Khaldun. It does not involve human participants, personal data, fieldwork, interviews, surveys, or experimental procedures. Therefore, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. The author confirms adherence to internationally accepted standards of academic integrity, including originality, accurate citation, and responsible scholarly conduct.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article.

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