المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES
(Doha Institute)
www.dohainstitute.org

Case Analysis

The Tensions of Tradition and Modernization:

Democracy and Political Variables in Morocco

Mohammad Noureddine Afaya

Doha, September - 2011

Series (Case Analysis)

Copyrights reserved for Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies © 2011

Contents

Distinctions between Tradition and Modernization 1

The Moroccan Elites and Reform 6

Democracy is not Constitutionalism..... 10

On the Subject of Democratic Incompetence 12

On the Obstacles to Democratic Reform 15

Morocco combines contradictions and distinctions – between Islam and the West, unity and diversity, wealth and poverty. These contradictions are reflected in the process of understanding the politics of Morocco, the role of religion in the political process, and the actual roles played by political parties. Amid all this complexity and intertwinement, one cannot merely describe the general political scene and examine decisions based solely on the stated positions of key decision-makers. A careful, in-depth analysis of Morocco's politics requires one to see past the obvious in order to understand the nature of the variables at work, and the slow process of democratic change in the country.

Distinctions between Tradition and Modernization

Politics always creates its own agents and actors, and constructs its own stage and audience. It is imperative for an individual faced with these givens to go beyond what the cognitively visible scene of political dynamics presents or represents. We are in an environment where the realm of the symbolic merges with that of the material, as do the weight of history with the political forces of the present, the emotional with the rational, and tradition with modernity. Faced with this overwhelming admixture, "only a careful and alert reader fully aware of the Moroccan milieu can arrive at what is said or not said in Moroccan politics".[1] The flaring up of political events, both implicit and explicit, demands that we find a way to listen to the real actors in Moroccan politics. The latter seems simple and stagnant on the surface, but its depths hold a complex and seething mixture of players and roles.

In addition to the fragility of political knowledge and the confusion of the political scene in Morocco, and taking into consideration the wagers taken into account when decisions are made and political practices are shaped, it is also worth noting that pinpointing the processes and mechanisms of Moroccan political life cannot be done by relying solely on the dictates of political rationalism. Undoubtedly, the Moroccan political process retains an internal rationality, but in order to be able to properly represent and understand it, one needs to look beyond the narratives of its formal and legal frameworks. A purely juridical reading will more often than not truncate the issues, ruining one's chance of truly understanding the nature of the political system. Moreover, any analysis that sticks to exclusively formal considerations will be unable to properly grasp the foundations that ground the system.

[1] Claude Palazzoli, *Le Maroc politique; De l'independence à 1973,* Paris: Ed. Sindbad, 1974, p.13. [Political Morocco: From Independence to 1973]

John Waterbury's early writing on Morocco[2] affirmed that the country's political scene was dominated by "feudal" structures within which political parties moved, which he likened to traditional *zawaya* [a shrine, residence or grave of a Sufi teacher, used also as schools to teach people spiritual studies, and to hold Sufi contemplative music recitals] institutions. Waterbury argued that these political parties were active in ways that hindered their influence on the field, and that the controlling political structures had no incentive to liberalize in the directions of openness, communication, and development. In the spring of 1997, the same scholar participated in "The Experiences of Democratic Transition in the World", an international conference organized by the Abdul Rahim Bu Obeid Center for Science and Culture in Morocco held in Morocco. Many of those present noted that Waterbury had been forced to change many of his prior judgments about political development in Morocco. After analyzing the situations in Egypt, Syria and some other eastern Arab countries, he concluded by stating that the political process in Morocco was revealing sure signs of change. Waterbury argued that while this change had undoubtedly been slow, and the negotiations around it difficult and sometimes harsh, the Moroccan political system, with all its constituents, had been able to accommodate the pressures of time, and to listen to the voices of dissent. In fact, most of the actors in the political realm had been forced to place political vision before ideology. Certainly, if the scholar studied the last decade and the current dynamic in Morocco, he would be even more convinced that the main actors have become more adept at using political logic despite all the bulky institutional traditions and other obstacles, and the clear lack of either an elite or a process of producing one. Morocco is a country of contrasts, not just because of its geographic placing, but also because of the aforementioned contradictions between Islam and the West, between national unity and real diversity, and between ostentatious wealth and abject poverty. These contradictions are inevitably reflected in the process of understanding Morocco's politics. The scholar finds himself facing various phenomena that are difficult to absorb at once, such as the analysis of state institutions and their particular materialities, ideologies and work patterns; patterns of legitimization and the crisis of legitimacy; the place of religion in the political process; and the roles played by political parties, unions, non-governmental organizations, and others.

Numerous scholars have stated that the reality of the contemporary political scene in Morocco centers on three basic factors: religion, Moroccan traditions, and the demands of the era. Branching off from these considerations are three patterns of legislation: historical sources, custom, and the written constitution. Each pattern has a specific constitutional field. The new constitution approved by the referendum of July 1, 2011 brought forth an astute amalgamation of these three patterns.[3] For the religious current in

[2] John Waterbury, *Le Commandeur des croyants..la monarchie marocaine et son élite* Paris: Ed. PUF, 1975. [The Commander of Believers: The Moroccan Monarchy and its Elite]
Waterbury's book was translated into Arabic by Abdul Ghani Abu al-'Azm and 'Abdul Ahad al-Sebti, and published by al-Ghani press in Rabat, 2004.

[3] A huge majority of participating voters supported on July 1st, 2011, the new constitution. The preparation of the document, the discussion of its contents and dueling calls for a "yes" or "no" vote – or a boycott – were a special

Moroccan politics, we have the historically mandated concept of the "Prince of Believers"; Moroccan custom is honored by a juridical process based on precedent; and the requirements of the present are met in the field of the new, modern state described in the constitution.

The Moroccan monarch embodies three social and political roles: he is a *sherif*, given his direct descent from the family of the Prophet Mohammed, and a *caliph*, i.e., a "Prince of the Believers", *[***Amir Al Mumineen,** *historically this title has been reserved for the Muslim caliph, successor or representative of Prophet Muhammad or one of his successors* **]** with all that entails vis-à-vis monopolizing the symbolic sphere in the public domain, and eliciting a "response" from believers. In addition to this, he is a sultan, presiding over the "*makhzen*" [referring to royal house or ruling elite in Morocco], and ruling the people while leaving the management of their affairs to the bureaucratic apparatus. Moreover, the king as the "higher father" presides over the welfare and tendencies of his sons, and is responsible of keeping them in order and punishing them if necessary. King Hassan II was careful to affirm his "paternal" authority over all Moroccans, and did not hesitate to insist on maintaining this role.

The king's third job is to be monarch, leader of a state which relies on institutions deriving from European political history, and which "views the Moroccan as a citizen with rights and duties, including civic behavior in the context of a modern state."[4]

Some observers place the originality of the Moroccan monarchy in this interaction based on two forms of legitimacy; the first, historical, is tied to the concept of the caliphate; and the second, contractual, is derived from democratic liberalism. Thus, the Moroccan political regime is based on two complementary bases: tradition and modernity. From this relationship arise tremendous amounts of confusion and an intertwinement, some of whose expressions are difficult to grasp. So for example, a person could be confronted with a traditional mode of thinking within an area that has been modernized, or run into a modernizing way of dealing with traditional subject matter. Two of the more prominent characteristics of the Moroccan system are that it is based on a culture of political pluralism and diversity, and that it has been remarkably stable, especially when compared to the military disturbances experienced by many other Arab models. The Moroccan regime was able to achieve stability due to its ability to combine and synthesize various political cultures, and to contain their various constituents and create the conditions for the equilibrium necessary to guarantee its own continuity. Through its accommodation of this pluralism,

---

occasion in the democratic process in Morocco. The process confirmed once again that the expansion of the field of free expression is a necessary part of consolidating this path.

[4] A. Agnouche, Rachida Chérifi, *Préface du livre Le Makhzen politique au Maroc heir et auhord'hui* (Casablanca: Ed. Afrique-Orient, 1988), 7-8. [Preface of *The political Makhzen in Morocco, Yesterday and Today*]

the Moroccan regime has been able to produce a diverse political field, despite what some appearances may lead one to believe. This has continued throughout the five decades since independence.

The third basis upon which the Moroccan state regime is founded is represented in the modern political culture, and what this imposes in terms of a call to participation, accountability and consensus. Moroccan elites obtained some of these ideas during the uneven interaction produced by the encounter with the West during colonial times, while other elements were derived from the Mashrek's (the Eastern Arab states') influence on the Maghreb. On one hand, the principles of democracy, constitutionalism, and freedom were introduced into the vocabulary of these elites in the context of the multifaceted struggle that occurred with Europe, then the colonial power and a new cultural authority. However, if schismatic cultures represented society as a "spiritual" unity, the culture of participation regards it as a class formation. While the culture of consensus imagines power as an embodiment of the popular will, or as personalized power, modern political culture represents power as the manifestation of an institutional narrative. The definition of participation in political culture is linked to the field of the modern state, with all of its attending assumptions about legal foundations, political givens, and written texts whose components are derived from the inalienable rights of citizens. Morocco's constitution states that all Moroccan citizens are equal before the law, and that belonging is represented by Moroccan citizenship.

Some scholars note that the Moroccan political system is often presented as a monarchy in which the king has a considerable amount of power. However, it is peculiar as a system because since independence in 1956, it has allowed the creation of political parties, whose presence and legitimacy are guaranteed by the constitution. All the constitutions that have existed in Moroccan political life since 1962 [date of a referendum held on a new constitution; it was the first national-level vote in the country, and only the second election ever following local elections in 1960] have affirmed political party pluralism, and encouraged citizens to join political and trade union organizations. This is the case on the legal front; however, on the actual practical front, the sociology of relations between Moroccan political parties and the regime always requires probing research, since the chemistry of these relations continues to create new surprises and offer up new terms and justifications.

In short then, the Moroccan political realm contains three patterns of political representation, and each pattern relies on its own mechanisms and processes of legitimacy. These patterns – the religious, the traditional, and the rational – are not equal in importance, and the religious is dominant. For this reason, the political fabric has been able to contain or repress several pockets of protest, violence and resistance. Through its legitimate monopoly of violence, and its symbolic use of religion, the regime has been able to arrange and intervene in the Moroccan political field in various ways, one of which is what has been described as "rehabilitating the religious sector".

The hegemony of the religion factor, as the basis for the legitimization and practice of power, was not an obstacle to the introduction of some elements of political modernization into the fabric and institutions of politics, even the more traditional ones. Traditional solutions are carefully selected with a mind to containing the symbols of modernity, and some of the qualities of the latter are mobilized when they are seen as useful guarantees of continued equilibrium. This allows the regime a marked ability to contain or cut off opposition parties that question its legitimacy. Since it officially "owns" the three forms of legitimacy, the monarchy has been able to integrate all the different political struggles into the state itself. In order to maintain the regime and guarantee its stability, the king is present at all times, with the caveat that the renovated structure of the political system allots a special priority to the philosophy of consensus. With this, the repeated attempts to entrench the regime in traditional grounds, and to contain some of the aspects of modernity, can only emphasize the traditional nature of this regime, and the relational fabric that it spins over its relations with political and civil society. It is clear that we are observing a new transformation of this equation during the reign of Mohammad VI. This became obvious in the powers of the monarch as defined by the new constitution, which included the de-sanctification of the king and his presentation to Moroccans as a representative of "civilian" monarchy.

The deep transformations Morocco is experiencing on all fronts may have a powerful effect, and result in shakeup of the value system, which could provoke tremendous resistance from interest groups and pressure groups, who will take advantage of the current situation. However, at this point in its history, Morocco is moving forward as a society looking towards overcoming obstacles and rebuilding. Given this internal impetus, and in light of various external factors, traditional forces have found themselves strained to negotiate and introduce more than enough elements of participation and rules of the new culture. Pressures from the World Bank (which opened up a special representative office in 1998), combined with Morocco's heavy debt and the country's Mediterranean obligations (in the context of its advanced ties with Europe) forced it to introduce radical economic, political and social reforms. A growing number of social groups and cultural elites have begun to speak openly of greater participation and being able to voice issues outside the traditional context. This, and the vast wagers being placed on political, linguistic and cultural issues, lead to the conclusion that Morocco is at an important juncture in its political and cultural trajectory. If the political lexicon does not renovate itself, political actors do not liberate themselves from their wary stands, and a new modern consensus is not established, the slow pace of decision-making and the country's constrained political and social lives, in the context of extensive regional and international changes, will undoubtedly lead to a lost opportunity and only encourage regression.

The Moroccan Elites and Reform

Should one even speak of reform without inquiring about the presence or absence of reformers and reconcilers who have the requisite amounts of willpower, conviction and citizenry's sentiment to bring forth a reform project? What are the available options, today or in the future, for limiting the traditions of clientelism and narrow political maneuvers, and for opening the way to the values of knowledge, merit and competency? Is it even possible to speak of reform without evoking basic values such as equality and justice, innovation and productivity? What opportunities are available, or can be made available, to counter a deeply entrenched mentality of meddling that prevents institutions from developing and improving, and places obstacles before the conditions necessary for advancement and excellence?

Some of the questions contain their own answers or elements thereof, but they cannot be avoided in any talk of reform or renaissance. In any case, such questions have emerged each time the debate on the topic has arisen in Morocco's recent history. If renaissance is based on a recognition of backwardness and a call to transcend it, then reform is the recognition of the flaws that plague a society, the corruption gnawing at it, and an effort to overcome these.[5]

It is well known that the issue of reform has a special position in Morocco's recent history; in fact, it is difficult to document that history without referencing the constant preoccupation of the nation's successive elites with reform, whether these elites have followed tradition, emerged from the womb of the "*makhzen"* state, or honed their ideas from European sources of various origins and intents. Those who call for reform are those who reject the current corrupt situation, call for the repair of flaws that could lead to society's undoing, or address the elements that threaten sedition.

A dialectic governs the reform process in Morocco. There is great pressure between the inside and the outside over its specific contexts and aims. The European intervention was extremely influential in provoking the traditional elite, and in prompting it to create a certain structure that combined fundamentalist references with a call to benefit from the achievements of the Other. The European calculations focused diligently on imposing a stranglehold on the Maghreb, and to organize its geographical distribution and power arrangements to suit its needs. As a result, protectionism [trade barriers designed to guarantee the survival of domestic companies]was institutionalized in the name of

[5] See Mohammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Contemporary Arab Discourse: Critical and Analytical Studies*, Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 1982. P. 17
See also, Abdullah Bilqaziz, *Reform Discourse in Morocco 1844-1918: Formulation and Sources*, Beirut: Dar al-Muntakhab al-Arabi, 1997.

reform, the required restructuring was introduced into the *makhzen* administration in order to achieve the required balance, and to shed the cocoon of the stifling financial and political crises upon which Morocco's independence had been leveraged, and which made it vulnerable to more than one form of colonialism, and – as continues to this day – more than one form of captivity.

The tension governing the dialectic between the inside and the outside continues in various forms today, between forces that demand reform from within an entrenched national cultural and social position, and the demands of external actors trying to force the introduction of certain reforms. The latter has occurred through several programs, such as the Structural Adjustment Program (1982), the policy of privatization, and what is known as the Rehabilitation Program, designed to refurbish infrastructure, administration and education according to the pressures, dictates and conditions of globalization, which are necessarily the same as a call to reform and restructure. Clearly, the external factor has emerged as the most powerful in most of these situations, particularly when it comes to the financial and economic sectors. As for the Moroccan elites, since the beginning of the twentieth century (i.e. since the draft constitution of 1908) they have been working, according to their positions and differing ideological loyalties, to propose narratives that would reconcile Morocco with itself and with the outside world through the construction of a national identity compatible with its era, and to establish political, economic and cultural institutions that respond to the dynamics of Moroccan society, in all its myriad expressions.[6]

Much academic effort has been expended by Moroccan researchers in order to document the reformist impulse that distinguished the elites' efforts in the twentieth century, such as the Reform Symposium held at the Faculty of Literature in Rabat the 1970s, as well as the writings of Mohammad Abid al-Jabiri, Abdallah Laroui, Ali Awmalil, Said bin Said al-Alawi, Abdulqader al-Shawi, Abdulla Bilqziz, and others.[7] However, I would stress the importance of being aware of the wagers of reform within the particular dialectics that have emerged throughout Morocco's cultural and social history, and the thought processes that were relied on, or expressed, in the epochal moments of social development throughout the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, whether this intellectual activity has targeted the subject matter of culture, the Other, identity, political thought, the state, women, civility, institutional reform, or education. This calls for a discussion of culture and of the problematic position of the intellectual.

[6] Abdulsalam al-Haymar, *The Moroccan Elite and the Shape of Reform,* Casablanca: *Manshurat al-Multaqa*, 2001, 125.

[7] See Mohammad Noureddin Afaya and Idriss al-Karawi, *The Moroccan Economic Elite*, Rabat: *Manshurat Jamiyat al-Bahth fi-l-Tawasul Bayn al-Thaqafat*, 2010.

If there is some ambiguity in the cultural discourse about Moroccan intellectuals, it is due to the intellectual and political confusion surrounding cultural issues. It is well known that the troika of knowledge, power and regime has produced cultural phenomena that generally have dominated power and authority at the expense of knowledge and cultural production, to the degree that the intellectual has become a scapegoat and been attacked from all sides. Whatever the intellectual's position and field of interest, it appears that temporal constraints are imposed on all those who consider themselves part of this group, which hinders their ability to practice their natural role – i.e. thinking, understanding and working in the right framework of communication and influence. This is especially true in a society where there is still a need to make a considerable effort on the levels of education, teaching and the spread of knowledge.

An awareness of context, of the human condition as well as an understanding of the existential needs to come into ones multifaceted identity in the history rooted in a place open to the possibilities of life, are the conditions that a large number of Moroccan intellectuals have worked to bring forth, and to study their aspects, in line with developing events. Whatever has been said about Moroccan intellectuals, with the knowledge that the history of the "modern" intellectual goes back less than five decades, they have worked within inadequate objective circumstances to inscribe their presence on the contemporary Moroccan culture process, and they have found for themselves communication channels through which they have proven their remarkable ability to create texts that aim for a decent level of understanding, contemplation and observation.

The consolidation and maintenance of this intellectual prowess represents a victory over the considerable obstacles that have obstructed, and continue to obstruct, intellectual and reformist work in Morocco, and the false problems created by social and cultural frameworks which are themselves burdened by the weight of tradition even as they raise the banners of modernity, openness and progress. There is no question that intellectuals and thinkers like Mohammad Aziz al-Hababi, Abdullah Laroui, Abdulkabir al-Khatibi, Paul Bascogne, Mohammad Abid al-Jabiri, Fatima al-Mernissi, and other members of the current generation in literature and other creative fields continue to present their ideas despite many social pressures and criticisms from the realm of politicians.

The story of the relationship between politics and culture in Morocco deserves to be told, and it is time to highlight its personalities and tensions, the patterns of its struggles, and to note the forms of the "misunderstandings" that have hindered the creation of balanced relations between these two fields in the production of meaning. Readers of recent Moroccan history may perceive a prominent discrepancy in the fact that most of the reform projects have been initiated by the state, with intellectuals and the external factor both playing direct or indirect roles in them. However, these projects were either aborted or

emptied of their content and purpose because of one or more causes: the corruption of powerful decision-makers, who diverted these projects and brought them to a stop or led them to failure; conservative factors enmeshed in the crevices of society; or traditional institutions, whether these represent themselves as an imagined "absolute identity", or as acting in the name of a political or public project that it claimed to represent or defend. Sometimes, the two would come together in order to thwart any reformist tendency capable of producing the national conditions and impetus that would bring Morocco to a reasonable level of civility and initiative, and broaden the fields of liberty and democracy.

Contemporary attempts at modernization have shown that in addition to its need for economic rehabilitation, narrowing the social gap between the wealthy and the poor, and the introduction of a political framework constructed around participation, dialogue and accountability, reform, in the modern sense, requires four main conditions. The first is a focus on visions and plans created and proposed by a national intellectual elite in an environment where the values of intellect, scholarship, critique and initiative are appreciated; second, a recognition of the pioneering roles played by women in social reform, awareness and dissemination of positive values, and their participation in the public sphere; third, an investment in education, communication, and culture, and providing the necessary conditions for intellectual and knowledge production and art, in order to refine tastes and increase the signs of refinement and participation; fourth, changing patterns of thinking about and dealing with the urban, because while rural life has both a presence and a contribution to make, the demographic shift in Morocco means that the majority of the population (approximately 60%) lives in urban areas. The consequences of the systematic destruction of Moroccan cities over the past three decades must be addressed and rectified; the aim of this destruction has been to produce all sorts of trouble and difficulty for citizens so that they do not think about the public good or about participating in political life, since cities are the most prominent arenas for political participation, economic initiative and cultural expression. There can be no discussion of reform in Morocco without undertaking urban reform, and bringing urban issues into the democratic political competition.

Morocco's opposition has social and political momentum, as expressed in marches, demonstrations and other forms of protest. However the authorities choose to answer the demands or address the desires of various social groups and strata, there is no alternative to dealing with the aggravated state of the means of production, or to producing leadership elites capable of carrying out reform. The new generation seems to be sorely lacking in this type of leader. Morocco appears to need leadership figures who could become role models in politics, economics, education, communication, society and culture. Anxiety about the paucity of such figures emerges clearly in the debates about democracy.

Democracy is not Constitutionalism

Words have had special importance in democratic systems, from ancient Greece to the present. Democracy has come under threat whenever the true meanings of words have been corrupted and distorted. For this reason, democrats always defend the essential meanings of words, aware that surrendering to falsification leads to a disavowal of their essence and an acceptance of a state's transformation into a false democracy, lifeless and spiritless. George Bernanos noted that "the word 'democracy' has been so over used that it has lost all meaning; it is, in fact, the most-humiliated word in all languages". That said, it is not always the case that those most concerned about words in democracies are democratic, since the foundation of democracy – in addition to its social, economic, political and cultural attributes – also includes transparency, communication, consultation, and speaking freely.

From some of the writings and discussions ongoing in Morocco today, it appears that there has been considerable conflation of democracy and political liberalism. The latter describes a political system based on an agreed-upon constitution which protects basic rights and provides the means of contesting power. All of these conditions, in effect, suggest that "constitutional liberalism" does not necessarily express democratic choice, which is a concern for rights that have economic, social and cultural dimensions. For this reason, there has been a flourishing of liberal discourse with a constitutional bent, and a decline of democracy, even within some democratic states. This definitely applies to states, like Morocco, that are just beginning to develop some of its constituents.

Naturally, there are various and varied sources of democratic culture and a pluralistic memory of democracy that make it difficult to find a ready-made example. This contradicts claims made in several books and debates on the topic, which suggest that democracy has one source, and that the path to democracy is clear, as if the matter were confined to a "fundamental" democracy that is not relative at all, transcends space and time, and pays no heed to context. However real questions are being raised regarding representation, rights, public opinion, conflict management, and proposal for new social contract methods. Democracy is not an ultimate end for anyone, because democrats are the real agents of democracy, as long as they do not fall into the trap of considering it nothing but a front for protecting capitalism and technology, or use it to justify authoritarianism and tradition.

The signs of inequality are not emerging solely in economics or society, but also in the discrepancies of participation and capacity. If a democratic system emerges from the sum of the rules, laws, and institutions that express the popular will, then the role of techniques and technicians has begun to pose several questions in the arrangement of democratic systems, including the fact that a new rationalism is

being formed in a manner that conflicts with the principle of representation and reveals a gaping discrepancy between technical discourse and people's lives.

It is true that there is no place for truth in a democracy; inasmuch as it organizes the public domain, it also contributes to dismantling the political field and all its conflicts. The democratic game also produces a group of possibilities without distinguishing what could possibly be achieved; there are no absolute rules in this regard, since there are cases in which discussion stops and the political discourse enters into crisis. Moreover, politics does not always respond to what is rational. Morocco and other Arab countries are witnessing movement and discussion which suggest that politics alone are not enough to understand the enmeshment and differences of all the viewpoints and demands in question.

For this reason, discrepancies within Arab representative system have caused anxiety for many politicians, decision-makers as well as observers of the revolutions. Democracy is always brought up as a demand in struggles and debates over foundational principles that are difficult to fit into the developments of the moment; whether through referenda or through listening to the majority, or by raising the idea of the state to the concerned majority in a rational way, keeping promises, developing rules that would limit the ability of authorities to interfere. It appears that ideas, in the face of all the revolutions, demand something further than the limitations of representational election procedures. The economic and social situation that is in crisis demands a reevaluation of the government's processes of organization and control. There also needs to be a new definition of the social bonds holding the national collective consciousness together. The falling confidence in organizations, the increasing disdain for politics, and the dismantlement of forms of cohesion pose worrisome questions about political players. The matter is not related to glitches in the ways that institutions work and action that will enable those in charge to rebuild them and continue with their regular work; it demands thinking about what is going on in a radical manner, which could bring about major changes in institutions. A new era in the life of democracies must begin, similar to those ushered in by the expansion of the democratic franchise in the nineteenth century, and by the welfare state in the twentieth, which broadened the democratic base and gave it new dimensions and meanings.

The representative system in Morocco has demonstrated its limitations. Regardless of its legitimacy and its legal and institutional resources, topping the list of its limitations are those best described as "the forgotten", whether due to apathy or reluctance, or to the fact that these individuals belong outside the circles of participation and involvement in the electoral process. The representative system could aim to improve its performance by changing the electoral system, by creating laws that force citizens to vote, or by introducing a "quota" that favors women and youth; however, all of these initiatives, according to

Rosanvallon, one of the leading experts on democracy in the world today, are insufficient.[8] For this reason, it is necessary to find "other forms of non-electoral representation", in the form of councils and oversight committees, independent administrative units and effective accounting organizations, as well as an honest judiciary. There is no escape from creating new changes to the democratic model, particularly in terms of relations between the rulers and the ruled, which often produce feelings of deprivation or depression as the cycle moves from the electoral moment to the moment of governmental responsibility. For this reason, it seems hasty to rush to create a new terminology for the democracy of appropriation, which is absolutely distinct from the democracy of identification. What this entails would be a correction, substitution and reorganization of the separation between rulers and ruled in a manner that would allow the ruled to monitor and direct power, based on a different pattern from that provided by the mechanism of mandate, or the transference of authority, today.

Morocco has come to a historic juncture, through its attempts to restructure the Moroccan state, with all that this revision requires in terms of a re-evaluation of the manner of dealing with citizens, preparing the national ground, and placing conditions whereby the state would commit to the demands of effective rule, and adopt the concepts of human rights and duties, within a new foundational constitution that will guarantee to be faithful to this historical moment, and contain the major headlines that are being called for by all the different social constituents. But even if a new constitution brought together all these various goals, it is crucial to stress that relying on the constitution alone would not satisfy the continuing need to provide the basic conditions for human development and enhancing human capital, at the head of which are education, culture and the production and dissemination of new means of knowledge, which form the seeds of a modern culture.

On the Subject of Democratic Incompetence

How can democracy go from being a demand or a slogan to becoming a widespread social activity? Do the institutional fields in all their forms and shapes in politics and society (at the level of the state, political parties, unions and groups) have the necessary mental and human preparedness to help put into practice what is as yet hypothetical in the constitution?

[8] Pierre Rosanvallon, La légitimité démocratique, impartialité, réflexibilité, proximité. Paris: Ed de Seuil, 2008, p. 350 [Democratic legitimacy, impartiality, reflexivity, proximity]

These questions appear to convey a considerable amount of well-founded wariness and caution, and are derived from the current debates on the subject of change, which suggest that Morocco as a whole is heading towards a juncture between two distinct political moments. Politics does not always seem capable of tolerating such moments, particularly if the demands on hand are too big and complex to be translated into a constitutional document. Nor can the political field tolerate a situation in which there is no awareness that various legitimate aspirations cannot transition from slogans to actions without deliberation, and that the latter is subject to attractions and repulsions that enthusiastic crowds may not have predicted, since they transcend a specific temporal context and are subject to pressures beyond the control of political actors. And this is all predicated on the condition that we believe in the commitment and good faith of those involved.

Change is a process that can follow several possible pathways. It requires synthetic minds, minds that have acquired enough of the requirements of cultural consciousness and can employ this accumulated knowledge, to deepen the action of change. Since change is constructed, the most complicated and difficult element of it is reconstruction, particularly after a long era of authoritarianism, decades of dictatorship and experiments in "consensual rotation" and "democratic transition", as in Morocco, and waves of doubt about top-down political modernization, and shaky political structures; most political party members have nothing in common save interests which are expressed in the exchange of favors and services.[9] So how can we enter into democracy, at the requisite pace, without the culture or the equipment of democracy? In clearer terms, how can we force Moroccan politics into an exclusively political-party mold given the lack of qualifications for democracy within these very institutions, which is attested to by party activists themselves? Certainly, the concept of being ill-equipped for democracy has nothing to do with party skills or organizational abilities, since these are qualities that may be available; the matter also has to do with the capabilities demanded by political responsibility, which include thinking, planning, framing, dialoguing, communicating, negotiating, and oversight.[10]

A political party is a modern institution that upholds political work, and this is well known; however, political-party life in Morocco has seen several crises caused by both internal factors, such as flaws in its organization and practice, and external ones that have to do with the general political system. The latter has not produced elites capable of lending political practice the necessary honesty and nobility; instead, it

[9] The same observation is made by Attaher Labib in, "So that the Revolution doesn't consume its children too soon", *The Arab Journal of Sociology Addendum*, 13 (Winter 2011).

[10] Phillipe Breton, *L'incompétence démocratique; la crise de la parole aux sources du malaise dans la politique* (Paris. Ed. La Découverte, 2006), p. 20. [Democratic Incompetence: The crisis of speech at the source of political unease]

has produced fragile figures and people who express themselves in certain situations through negative stances that cannot be described as anything but counter-democratic.

We are at a moment of inclination towards a complete restructuring of democracy in Morocco, including both politics and the institutional infrastructure; this restructuring will incorporate all the positive aspects of prior systems. The complication of democracy does not lie in its praxis, but in the reintegration of a series of procedures and institutions supporting the results of the public referenda, and which will be used to organize the new freedom experiences and work towards the public good in Morocco, whether these are independent administrative authorities or monitoring institutions that can reinforce the representational system and enrich democracy by strengthening the values of public facilities and the public good.

The best approach to democracy is that which pays attention to all conundrums that have been attached to it in its various processes and experiences. But it should also include all possible mutually complementary dimensions and aspects in order to staunch the apolitical or anti-political aspects. It should propose rules that will guarantee the establishment of renewed political dimensions for democracy, since this is one of the ways to limit the struggle over identity, and to enable a structural redistribution of the meaning of citizenship on the grounds of sharing and equal distribution.

Thinking about democracy is justified by the fact that the human practice of democracy continues to produce constantly evolving forms seeking to express individual and collective will, and to obey and monitor power. Such thinking finds its decisive justification in the fact that this regime intervenes in various ways in everything having to do with the public good and human patterns of living, whether this has to do with law, economics or culture. Culture, civility, and taste play a great role in rehabilitating an individual. Humanist experiences, particularly in contemporary democratic models, have worked to create new patterns of democratic expression in order to limit the corruption of the elected elites, or some of them at least, by creating independent administrative units that play the role of the control agent and guarantee fairness, and sometimes become counter-authorities that monitor legislative production (as in the case of constitutional councils or national councils, such as in France), or monitor the use of public resources (as in the case of auditing councils). Morocco must develop and strengthen these bodies within the state's institutional practice. The state must also carefully manipulate the factors which may produce rifts that could harm the special equilibrium in one of the major sectors of the state and society, with the backing of an independent, honest judiciary that will participate in constructing the rule of law. Experiences of what has been described as "participatory democracy" must also been taken into account. This latter phenomenon seems to transcend the problems of electoral bickering over power and responsibility through the dominant pattern of expression and participation today, the use of new digital

media technologies, which affect elections and political action. This will undoubtedly call for a reevaluation of the classical mechanisms of party and political life.

The revolutionary upheavals and experiences in some Arab countries have demonstrated the fragility of authoritarian regimes, which appeared to be all-powerful but were revealed to be fundamentally weak as they collapsed, as happened in Tunisia and Egypt. Morocco has no choice but to democratize its state and society, and to set about building a political culture that derives its values from democracy and will instill a climate of confidence among people, as well as responsibility in a framework of objective oversight and accountability. These are urgent requirements whose major components need to be spread out across all levels of education, upbringing and experience sharing.

This matter will involve the creation of a new social contract, and is an ambitious project that demands widespread national support, and a public discussion that prioritizes conviction and rational answers, and discourages emotionalism and mystification. The King's speech on March 9, 2011 raised the ceiling of demands very high when compared to the dynamics of institutions and the nature of governance (good governance) wise, and the existing capacity for democracy. The speech made clear the need to restructure the Moroccan state, delineate the responsibilities of the executive and legislative branches, reform the judiciary, devise new initiatives for democracy and new arrangements on the factional front, and acknowledge both the country's diversity and the important roles of women.

However, no one can predict the fate of a given project because this depends on will, means and human capital. It is clear that the prominent disagreements over politics, regarding terminology, references and sharing patterns reveal the extent to which Morocco needs to uphold what the nation has in common, to launch a contemporary cultural initiative that strengthens this historic initiative inaugurated by the Moroccan state, to strengthen institutions and modern tools of expression, and produce and publish modern cultural products. But are these goals truly legitimate and believable? Some intellectuals doubt this.

On the Obstacles to Democratic Reform

After being invited by the Moroccan Writers' Union in 2006 to respond to Dr. Abdullah Laroui's lecture, "The Obstacles to Reform", I began by presenting what I believed to be indicators that Morocco was witnessing major transformations on several fronts. For one, the urban population outnumbered the rural,

women (slightly) outnumbered men, and almost 20% of families were supported by women. Additionally, there were cultural expressions and phenomena that had become more prominent: a growing religiousness, and increasing linguistic and identity demands, while social distinctions continued to increase. Furthermore, there was a worrisome decline in the role of universities and a confusion over the role of private sector initiatives in economics, education and the media; there was unprecedented linguistic chaos, and the elites had either given up or become weakened in the various areas in which they operated. Then I brought up Laroui's answer in response to a question posed by *al-Jumhour* newspaper (on June 8, 2002), on the possibility of there being a democratic system in Morocco at any time in the future. At that time, his response was: "I don't believe so. Those who are demanding democracy don't really want it". The reporter asked him again, "In your opinion, how much time does Morocco need to apply a widespread democratic system?" He responded: "I don't think it is possible. There are social constraints, as well as economic, psychological, cultural, and familial ones that are too numerous to count. Perhaps we can say that Morocco is further along than some other Arab societies, but it seems to me that there is doubt in all our minds, leaving us lacking confidence in the fact that matters could pass or come to pass as they should".

At the talk, I asked Abdullah Laroui several questions, including: "Does this answer from 2002, which is rather hopeless about the prospects for democracy in Morocco, still apply in 2006? And, since he had brought up the issue of confidence, I asked him: "As a rational person, and one who believes in the progression of history, do you not see that confidence, outside its definition as an abstract concept, represents one of the cornerstones of modernization and modernity: political (democracy), economic (investment), legal (the judiciary), and educational (teaching)? Does your despair also emerge from the absence of confidence in culture and institutions?"

Because Abdullah Laroui in his discussions and question-and-answer sessions does not succumb to the logic of question/answer, he often answers questions he has posed to himself, or restates questions that he has been asked; in any case, he avoided answering my question clearly. Anyone reading through the published conference proceedings released by the Moroccan Writers' Union under the title "Obstacles to Modernization"[11], which contains the lecture and the follow-up, can decipher some of what could constitute an indirect response to these questions. Laroui considers that:

> The state is the mirror of society, and the elite stands between the two. So, what we blame the state (i.e. those in power) for, we should also blame the elite and society for to the same degree. Not just in order to be logical vis-à-vis our own selves, but to be practical and pragmatic at the same time. So, our placing responsibility on those in power

[11] Abdullah al-Arawi, *Obstacles to Modernization*, Rabat: *Manshurat itihad kuttab al-Maghrib*, 2006.

> for the last thirty years was one of the biggest mistakes we committed, because we assumed that forcing those people to change their visions and behaviors would lead us out of our problems. Now, it seems that this was an invalid tactic, and that this road will lead us nowhere. So, what remains? Only education remains!
>
> By education, I don't mean just teaching and training only. We must demand that the state provide teaching and training. But what's more important than both is civic education. Civic education cannot be anything but democratic, since it is based on the concept of the free, responsible individual, who uses experimental science for interest and profit. It is now time for anyone who wants to be involved in the modernization project to consider him or herself directly responsible, and that in the future, he or she should not expect anything from the state".[12]

So how can it be possible, in this situation, and with such unprecedented haste, that we are demanding that the political system be modernized by parties, currents and groups that carry within themselves the obstacles to modernization? People may say that what is going on across the Arab world is playing a role in speeding up the pace and articulation of demands, or that the movement that began on February 20, 2011 in Morocco and the king's speech on March 9, coupled with the desire of all the entities within this movement, dictated the call to transition to a new political era, a call accompanied by demands for a new constitution and new politics. But if we listen to why Abdullah Laroui is hesitant, we see to what extent our institutions lack the readiness to meet the people's demands, despite their legitimacy and the fact that they are expressed across different segments of the population. The very first obstacle is cognitive and pertains to what Laroui describes as the "dumb opposition, ignorant of modernity". Furthermore, individuals have not yet been freed from political clientelism, or from that which "hinders democracy, the rule of the people [the living, not the dead] and what hinders scientific rationalism [the logic of experimentation and study] by resorting to the inanities of our daily life, in all our movements and pauses, in what we eat, wear and our medicines". So it is not sufficient to merely complain about the state, even if Moroccan society remains in dire need of its state. At this point, the matter requires the launch of a social movement for reform and democratization of both state and society, based on the appropriate trends in modern thought. For Laroui, modernity is "a wave; swimming against its current is a risk. If we sink under it until the wave passes over our heads, we will remain scum. If we ride with the wave with all our strength, we will be survivors no matter what".

For Laroui, the matter has several complex dimensions, and it is not enough to simply deal with democracy as a slogan, or even a demand. It is a trajectory, one which is launched through education, learning and training, and strengthened by truly modern cultural choices. Reform comes in to rearrange

[12] Ibid, 65-66

the rules of the game, and to enforce an agreement over the ways that institutions should be run, in a consensual environment, in order to preserve the system and accommodate the balance of interests. This is what happens in most democratic systems. The Machiavellian viewpoint insists on ruling through power, at whatever cost, by relying on symbolic authorities that keep the political players clutching the reins of power in the name of tradition or might, or in the name of a certain ethical or moral system.

Consensus is a modern mechanism of political action; putting it aside in the name of the logic of power often leads to disastrous consequences, whose effects we can observe today in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria. Not all politics is an expression of absolute good, and nor does it serve those who claim to embody its values. It aims through its historic movement to maintain social truce, to contain pockets of tension, to impose elements of mutual understanding as well as consensus and to respond to people's needs. As for authoritarianism, it has revealed an exceptional barbarism when dealing with human beings, despising citizens' intelligence, taking their liberties, plundering their wealth and crushing their dignity. It is not a coincidence that the Arab protests have invoked demands for liberty and dignity, and have exposed the corruption of decades of military plundering of national resources, even when this military has been dressed in civilian clothing and elegant neckties, its leaders crowing about democracy even as they moved about on ground menaced by a ticking social time-bomb.

Several indications suggest Morocco is on the verge of taking steps to introduce some form of democracy, and to move forward, aware of both the need for institutional and political reform, and of belonging to this moment in time. And since democracy is based on participation, power-sharing, revolving control over executive bodies, and the alternation of elites across institutions and responsibilities, it appears that Morocco is moving according to a certain need to enact constitutional, political, and social laws that promote stability and legitimacy, in a manner that leaves no room for conflict, doubt, or non-confidence motions; constitutionally, by laying the foundations of a contemporary monarchy and establishing the concept of "civic monarchy"; politically, by involving the largest possible number of individuals, organizations, and committees; and socially, by integrating new groups and new elites in different organizations and in the social fabric.

If democracy is the political system that grants people the most participatory potential, the art of creating balanced interests, or the art of the possible, then it consists of forms, patterns and experiments. There are many obstacles still deeply entrenched within the cells of organizations and institutions which hinder the latter from entering into the democratic building process. These obstacles are expressed either through traditional, conservative culture that is entrenched in the hearts and minds of political actors, or through pressure groups that only view democracy as a tool – even if it is only a façade – to relieve the pressure of contradictions, limit the possibility of explosions, and allow the necessary parties to secure their interests.

So, one has no choice but to be optimistic and questioning. Optimistic about the possibility of setting up a democratic model that would respond to the needs of modern democratic work; this is what sets me apart from the pessimism of Abdullah Laroui on the possibilities of bringing democracy to Morocco. However, we also find ourselves having to question just how much the political actors will be able to respond to the future visions of the political field, to the goals of real democracy on the economic, social, political and cultural fronts. Will they be able to guarantee citizens' human rights, and raise Moroccans to civility? Is what is happening now in Morocco a step in the direction of creating institutions that will give the political field enough solidity? The great crossroads at which we find ourselves is framing the formulation of such questions, and each attempt to answer them is a form of appropriating aspirations and projects, and attempting to articulate the institutional framework that would suit the needs of different parts of society.

Considering the effects of the ongoing events in the Arab world, and reviewing matters in light of what the major countires are announcing and prognosticating for the region, neither optimism nor pessimism seems to have a role at this juncture of history. Morocco finds itself before the necessity of a mass mobilization in order to truly become involved in reform and modernization, and to remove all obstacles that distract it from achieving this national ambition.

The late Mohammad Bahi (one of Morocco's leading journalists and intellectuals) used to say that when compared to its Maghrebian and Arab neighbors, Morocco was always late to history's rendezvous. The Ottoman Empire, even at the height of its powers, was not able to control it. The military coups did not succeed in changing its political identity, and the communist movement was not able to produce any major rifts in its history. Neither did a confrontational Islamist movement emerge to threaten either its structure or its existence. In fact, Moroccan nationalism constantly produces elements of consensus, despite various internal disagreements over subjects like legitimacy, the nature of the state, democracy, and the equitable distribution of wealth.

The juncture at which Morocco finds itself demands the development of the political process and encouraging democratic capacity-building by creating effective frameworks and values that suit the slogan of "the state of law and justice". Political institutions and state apparatuses must be modernized, and bad earlier election experiences should be avoided. A new elite must be encouraged to join the political fray, and citizens should be educated, culturally and politically, so that they are aware of their rights and duties. In addition, the monarchy must be modernized. New elites should be involved in political life, citizens should be rehabilitated politically and culturally in order to become conscious of this rights and duties and Monarchy should be modernized. There is no escape from placing the

institutional rules, based on the new constitution for a democratic system capable of producing added values that enrich Morocco's relations whether internal or external ones, with its Arab and global environments. This will be achieved by lifting the confusion over decision-making mechanisms and by raising political activity to a level that is appropriately honest, vigorous, and accountable to the public over questions of policies and results.