

The composite nature of the Moroccan political system

Abdallah Saaf

Professor of political sciences

Mohamed V University Rabat-Agdal

« Global Dissatisfaction : Criticism of Democracy, longing Democracy »

Rome, 15-16 december 2011

Characterization of the Moroccan political system

- Many observers often consider the democratic transition in Morocco as too long
- Various expressions are often used to describe the partial and clearly diminished under way democracy in Morocco, such as neo-authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, semi authoritarianism, out of the despotism...

Makhzenienne Democracy

- The terms mostly used to describe the nature of the Moroccan political system were sham democracy, oriented or controlled democracy, makheznienne democracy.
- The socialist party (USFP) , an opposition party, has stigmatized « the makhzenien presidentialism » embodied by the political system in Morocco in the 80s.

The ambiguities of the political organization of the Makhzen

1/5

- The new generation of human rights violations that have affected especially the Islamists
- On the other hand, the problematic of elections in Morocco arose from different perspectives. However the issue of transparency predominated...

Ambiguous forms of organization

2/5

- Features not compatible with, or decreasing democracy , have marked the system:
- the role of religion in the political system,
- the king's powers as Commander of the Faithful,
- the beiâa, the historical form of the act of allegiance
- the broad scope of legislative power of the monarchy..
- it reigned and governed(an executive monarchy)

Ambiguous forms of organization

3/5

The powers of the head of state are substantial :

- His capacity as a descendant of the Prophet,
- He is the « supreme commander” of the armed forces,
- He holds of the right of pardon,
- The power of appointment to the civil and military,
- The regulatory power,
- He has several possibilities to exert pressures on the parliament, including the right to dissolve it,
- He has several means of pressure on the other components of the executive

Ambiguous forms of organization

4/5

In reality, the head of state, has at any time of the political life, the possibility to get involved in the field of law : This is the case of the legislative initiative, the exceptional powers in case of major crisis, the review of laws, the direct appeal to the people by referendum

.

Ambiguous forms of organization

5/5

Before the so-called "Arab spring" the Moroccan situation was undoubtedly the one in which the Prime Minister had the largest margin, in many circumstances. However, the different variables were understating the head of government compared with the Head of State

- .

The political reform of July 2011

1/4

- The constitution : a unique and exclusive source of sovereignty.
- The ballot box: the only source de legitimacy. it enjoys supremacy over all the other traditional or religious sources of law,
- It is difficult to resort to some formulas such as a historical or a customary constitution

The political reform of July 2011

2/4

- It proceeds to a more democratic redistribution of power between the monarchy and the other powers.
- The monarchy seems to become an ordinary constitutional institution
- Its powers are exclusively derived from the constitution.

The political reform of July 2011

3/4

- It is expected that the new head of government, who belongs to the majority party that won the elections, will have the necessary means to be empower this institution. Indeed the chief of the gouvernement is entitled to appoint the ministers and could dismiss them.
- obviously, it is difficult to imagine a person docile or carried by non-transparent elections as a head of the gouvernement in the future

The political reform of July 2011

4/4

The changes are related to the separation of powers, a government derived from the parliamentary majority with large powers, a very extensive legislative, parliamentary control, formalization of the governance system... the government is no longer accountable to the king. The legislative power is, in principle, monopolized by the parliament.

The democratic contexte 1/3

- The exercise of analysis and prospecting went in several directions. It has been practiced in different ways.
- Two of them will be presented here, namely those which are interested in the issue of the way out of the democratic transition, estimated to be too long

The democratic context 2/3

- A new rebalancing of the relations between the monarchy, the state, the elites and the society, Islam and modernity, the country and its environment ...
- The curling of the system
- A new impetus

The democratic context 3/3

One of the most common patterns of the last phase was to identify four possibilities:

- The scenario of status quo, or even regression
- The scenario of small reforms
- The scenario of medium reforms
- The unlikely direct transition to full democracy

Elements of uncertainty and signals of change 1/3

The origin of hybridity can be dated back 21 years ago when the government of alternance was appointed in 1998. It can be dated back 28 years ago if we start from the constitutional revision of 1992 when a new wave of debate on the perspective of democratic development in Morocco was triggered. It could be even more than 28 years if we go back to the very beginning of the democratization process in 1976.

Elements of uncertainty and signals of change 2/3

- Another most recent date traces the beginnings of the real transition to the ending of the work of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2005, and the publication of its report which is a real charter for the establishment of an entire democratic system.
- Even recently in 2005, the attitudes developed by the system heralded a trend towards stabilization

Elements of uncertainty and signals of change 3/3

The functioning of the new system depends on the adoption of some 28 laws before the end of the current legislature. The application in a democratic spirit that seems to have prevailed during recent months will require strength tests, struggles, negotiations, critics, compromises.. that is to say the place of uncertainty

It is worth noting that uncertainty and indeterminacy are lower than in the previous steps

The index of democracy in the countries of the Arab region.1/3

The index of democracy in the countries of the Arab region was built on the basis of several variables inter alia:

- The Institutionalization of the separation of powers
- Transparent elections
- The limitation of the preponderance of the Executive
- The institutionalization of the political parties
- The individual and collective freedoms
- Etc.....

The index of democracy in the countries of the Arab region.2/3

The index of democracy in the Arab countries put at the top of ranking either Jordan or Morocco. The latest report gave an advance to Morocco. it emphasizes the improvement of the indicators related to the progress made in the field of human rights and the narrowing circles of arbitrary

The index of democracy in the countries of the Arab region.3/3

- Based on the figures published by the Arab Initiative Reform (ARI) we have built a scale of 50 indicators, which allows a reliable assessment of democracy in the countries of the Arab region.
- However, it is worth mentioning that indicators and indexes on their own are insufficient. Indeed, they fall short from revealing the real meaning of the deep political dynamic under way. Obviously, such an endeavor requires a more profound, in depth and contextualized reflection, in order to give the figures their right and global meaning.

From controlled democracy to democracy without state 1/2

- The monarchical dimension continues to exercise its influence on the bulk of public management, sometimes out of the reach of any form of democratic control.
- The results of the elections of 25 November 2011 highlighted the significantly high level of participation, greater transparency, non-intervention and positive neutrality of the state.

From controlled democracy to democracy without state 2/2

- The multiparty system remains a major feature of Moroccan political life, but regularly punctuated by the emergence of one or more parties created by the administration against the so-called democratic parties whose legitimacy is linked to the national movement
- In the field of human rights, the improvements seem to be substantial since the publication of the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2005, however a new generation of violations still needs to be dealt with

Perspectives

- Among the definitional elements of democracy, the main component, the monarchy, may experience during the current legislative a reconfiguration which may enable the Moroccan hybrid regime to get closer to the common forms of democracy.
- In the absence of other dimensions, such as the cultural dimension, a significant dose of indeterminacy still marks the evolution of the system.