MOROCCO AND THE MIRAGES OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Sami Zemni [1]
Ghent University

Koenraad Bogaert [2]
Ghent University

Abstract:

The growing contrast and contradiction between the processes of radicalization and democratization in the age of global market reforms and the 'War on Terror' are not confined to the internal or domestic Moroccan political scene. Political movements, NGOs, the government, international institutions and foreign governments are all embedded within a growing number of international networks thus making policy a global enterprise. In the following article we want to examine the impact of US policy on the Moroccan reform process. The background for this analysis is George W. Bush's Greater Middle Eastern Initiative. This US initiative is ambitious as it tries to devise policies that tackle what is seen as the root causes for Middle East instability, violence and/or Islamism. Morocco is seen as one of the US's strategic allies in the region and has been solicited to join the 'War on Terror'. Morocco is an interesting case to study simultaneously the impact of the 'War on Terror', the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement and good governance measures as political tools to counter terrorism through fighting poverty and, finally, the 'Islamist question' particularly present in Morocco.

Keywords: Morocco, democratization, good governance.

Resumen:

El creciente contraste y la contradicción entre los procesos de radicalización y democratización en la era de las reformas del mercado global y la "Guerra contra el Terror" no se limitan a la escena política interna de Marruecos. Los movimientos políticos, las ONG, el gobierno, las instituciones internacionales y los gobiernos de otros países están todos implicados en un creciente número de redes internacionales, que hacen de la formulación de políticas una empresa global. En este artículo pretendemos examinar el impacto de la política estadounidense en el proceso de reformas marroquí. El antecedente de este análisis es la Iniciativa del Gran Oriente Medio de George W. Bush. La iniciativa estadounidense es ambiciosa, ya que intenta crear políticas que ataquen lo que se percibe como causas de la inestabilidad, violencia y/o islamismo en Oriente Medio. Marruecos es visto como uno de los aliados estratégicos de EE.UU. en la región, y se le ha pedido que se una a la "Guerra contra el Terror". Marruecos es un caso interesante para estudiar simultáneamente el impacto de la "Guerra contra el Terror", la implementación de un Acuerdo de Libre Cambio y las medidas de buen gobierno como instrumentos políticos para combatir el terrorismo por medio de la lucha contra la pobreza, y finalmente, la "cuestión islamista" particularmente presente en Marruecos.

Palabras clave: Marruecos, democratización, buen gobierno.

[1] Sami Zemni is a Professor at the Middle East and North Africa Research Group, Center for Third World Studies, Ghent University.
Address: Middle East and North Africa Research Group, Center for Third World Studies, Universiteitstraat 8, 9000 Ghent, Belgium. *E-mail:* Sami.Zemni@UGent.be.
[2] Koenraad Bogaert is a Ph.D. Candidate at Ghent University.

Introduction

Confronted with budgetary and financial constraints, growing political opposition, mounting social unrest and personal illness, late King Hassan II set out on a genuine path of political reforms during the 1990s. Liberating political prisoners, closing 'secret' detention centres, introducing new legislation in accordance with the idea of human rights, bringing the parties of the 'historical opposition' into government, Morocco seemed well underway of becoming an authentic democratic system. The pace of political, social and economic reforms even accelerated in the first years after Mohammed VI ascended the royal throne. By the end of the 1990s, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch argued that Morocco had dramatically improved its human rights record. On top of that, the World Bank and other international financial institutions lauded Morocco as being one of the 'success-stories' of global market reform.

The story of the Moroccan exception – an Arab politically moderated country with 'controlled Islamists' and absence of political violence – with its emphasis on a 'new concept of authority' and free elections was shattered to pieces on May 16th 2003 when suicide attacks killed 40 Moroccan citizens while aiming at Jewish and Spanish targets in Casablanca. Surely, since 9/11, Morocco was confronted with the same questions as most of the world's nation-states. The King and the Moroccan political elite explored the boundaries of law and policy to counter radicalization and prevent terrorist violent attacks while trying to secure the pace of political reform.

The growing contrast and contradiction between the processes of radicalization and democratization in the age of global market reforms and the 'War on Terror' are not confined to the internal or domestic Moroccan political scene. Political movements, NGOs, the government, international institutions and foreign governments are all embedded within a growing number of international networks thus making policy more a "global enterprise rather than simply a national one".[3] In this article we want to examine the impact of US policy on the Moroccan reform process. The background then for this analysis is George W. Bush's Greater Middle Eastern Initiative. This US initiative is ambitious as it tries to devise policies that tackle what is seen as the root causes for Middle East instability, violence and/or Islamism. Morocco is seen as one of the US's strategic allies in the region and has been solicited to join the 'War on Terror'. Morocco is an interesting case to study simultaneously the impact of 'War on Terror', the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement and good governance measures as political tools to counter terrorism through fighting poverty and, finally, the Islamist dilemma particularly present in Morocco.

In this article we first want to describe the advent of the project of reform – locally known as *alternance* – as it will enable us to isolate and understand the specific and particular characteristics of the Moroccan experience. Secondly we address the issue of Islamism that is raising both domestically and internationally important questions. Sequentially we will describe which 'brand' of Islamism has been part and parcel of the logic of *alternance*, which type of Islamism has been kept outside the realm of political reform and, finally, how violent Islamism (*jihadism*) has been treated as a 'danger' to Moroccan democratization. Thirdly, and finally, we will assess in what ways the agenda of good governance pursued by the US and international institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund…) and the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement have been incorporated into the logic of the 'War

---

[3] Cohen, Shana and Jaidi, Larabi (2006): *Morocco. Globalization and its Consequences*, London, Routledge, p.3.

on Terror'. We will argue that there are inherent contradictions between the discourse and practices of good governance and the logic of genuine democratization – understood as a political system in which responsible citizens participate freely in the decision-making process that is geared towards general welfare.

1. Bringing about alternance : the search for consensus

From the beginning of the 1990s, late King Hassan II promoted and tested the idea of 'home-grown' democratization, locally referred to as *alternance*. The end of the Soviet Union, continuous problems surrounding the Western Sahara, an economic and social *malaise,* growing oppositions and urban revolts, his deteriorating health, and the pressure of the EU and other international institutions … all had an influence on the King's decision to start a process of opening the political system.

Several speeches in the first years of the decade made clear that Hassan's wish was to bring the so-called historical opposition of the nationalist movement – unified in the *Koutla al-demouqratiyya* or Democratic Block – into government. This was to be complemented with the installation of a political and economic order based on the rule of law. The *Koutla* became entrenched in a paradoxical situation in the sense that they advocated democracy for decades when rather suddenly the King started referring to that same rhetoric. One of the central institutional problems Morocco faced (and one could say up until today) was the relationship and interaction between the Palace and the political parties (mainly from the *Koutla*). This is particularly evident in the possibilities of power-sharing.

The King proposed three times throughout the 1990s – through his official speeches – the offer of *alternance.*[4] Thus the opposition parties and the King (through the Ministry of Interior and counsellors) started a process of talks. It is fair to speak of 'exchanges' in the sense that we weren't witnessing a real dialogue or negotiation. Negotiation implies some sort of symmetrical exchange of ideas and propositions between more or less equal partners. The talks ended symbolically with another royal address to the Nation in January 1995 when the King nominated technocrats without real political affiliation to lead the government.

The parties from the *Koutla* had no real impact on the content or form of the process as the King held the reigns of the debate; a debate that neither the parties nor the parliament influenced significantly. Instead, the political parties (including the Koutla) resorted to non-institutionalised forms of political action by joining 'informal talks' with the Ministry of Interior. The political parties were only able to propose measures and ideas while the King, through his Minister of Interior and Moroccan and French experts, took the real decisions in the cabinet's shadow. The talks centred on the issues of constitutional reforms, general liberties and freedoms, the accountability of the government and the organisation of free and transparent elections.[5] On all these issues the political parties, labour organisations and/or

---

[4] In his royal address of October 8th 1993, Hassan II offered the political parties (and especially the Koutla) to 'take up its responsibilities' towards the expectations of the Moroccans in the face of the economic and social crisis. The King reiterated more or less the same offer about a year later, on the 14th of October 1994. Between this day and January 11th 1995, a lot of exchanges took place between the King and his counsellors, the Minister of Interior and the political parties from the opposition.

[5] Three main issues divided the Palace and the parties. First of all, the opposition wanted that the indirectly elected members of parliament (1/3 of the MP's appointed by the King) would be dismissed. The second issue concerned the organisation of free, fair and transparent elections. The parties of the opposition accused the administration of the Ministry of Interior of continuously rigging the elections, even those of 1993. The third

civil institutions were only able to give their opinion. Thus, the King was more than a mediator.

In the debates from 1992 onwards, the key issue was a search for consensus. It was obvious that the consensus's terms equated largely with the King's wishes. Between the constitutional changes of 1992 and the organisation of the so-called historical 'foundational elections' of 1997, the political parties were caught within a dynamic to whichthey could not really contribute.

The debate's focus was foremost on the 'rules of the game', i.e. the institutional rules that most political actors could accept to constitute a 'legitimate' political field based on a consensus. The constitutional referenda of 1992 and 1996 expressed small concessions of the King towards the parties.[6] By 1996 the *Koutla* accepted the new constitution and ordered its constituents to vote favourably. On the 13th of September 1996, 99.57% of the Moroccan electors (with a turnout of 83%) voted in favour. The success of this constitutional reform was not so much the new constitution itself but the fact that the *Koutla* did not boycott it. Indeed, up until 1996, the *Koutla* pleaded for a constitutional assembly that would write up a new constitution in total independence, something the monarchy never accepted previously (and never would). By 'ordering' a constitutional revision, the King succeeded in 'hijacking' the *Koutla*'s demands. Thus, the King reassumed control over the *alternance* initiative. The new constitution included important but still small concessions to the *Koutla* and demonstrated that the King blocked development towards a more autonomous parliament and government.[7]

Another point of discussion until 1996 was the organisation of 'free and transparent' elections and the accountability of the government towards the parliament (instead of to the King). The *Koutla* protested against the results of the 1993 elections, accusing the Ministry of Interior of fraud and rigging the outcome. In this tense climate, the King nominated a government of national unity, something the *Koutla* could only accept. But new divergences surfaced when the King nominated not only the so-called ministers of sovereignty (ministries deemed important to the monarchy: interior, foreign affairs, justice and Islamic affairs) but also the Prime Minister outside of the electoral outcome. Even though the opposition parties opposed this, the King set out to form a government of technocrats under the premiership of Abdou Filaly-Ansari. By 1996-1997 the *Koutla* understood that the only way to really participate in the system was to acknowledge the fact that the King held the major political playing cards. Thus, incrementally, they accepted the idea of a government of transition that epitomized '*alternance*'. In 1997 the *Koutla* won the elections but could not ensure a real majority within parliament.   It thereby opened the way to a coalition government that could

---

issue, the most important one, centred on the Ministry of Interior. All parties of the opposition demanded overtly the dismissal of Driss Basri. It is mainly the last issue that brought an end to the proposition of 1994. The King could not accept to oust Basri, as he constituted the central pawn in the King's power structure and control over polity and society. Both parties and King were disappointed in the failure but, as the King reiterated in his address, this was only temporarily. He stressed the fact that sooner or later he would succeed to bring the opposition into government.

[6] In 1992 the concessions seemed so small that the *Koutla* called for a boycott. This was a boycott that the administration "forgot to calculate" in its results when it proclaimed a participation of more than 97%. The 1996 constitutional reform oversaw the introduction of a second chamber – something the *Koutla* was asking for – but the prerogatives of the first chamber were curtailed as the King decided that the second chamber would be elected indirectly and have more or less the same legislative prerogatives than the first.

[7] El Mossadeq, Rkia (1995): "Les labyrinthes de l'alternance au Maroc", *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord,* tome XXXIV, p. 715-727.

not be strong.[8] Abderrahman Youssoufi, leader of the USFP, was appointed Prime Minister in February 1998 after he had ensured the prerogative to nominate the Ministers of foreign affairs and Justice, while he had to concede that Driss Basri would remain Minister of Interior, a position he held since 1974.

After the death of Hassan II, Mohammed VI further enlarged the democratic reference and wanted to show his well-intended policy with some spectacular decisions, the most important being the dismissal of Driss Basri from the Interior ministry. Besides that, he encouraged freedom of the press, launched several social programs which earned him the title of "King of the poor." However, after two years in power, foreign observers and Moroccans alike saw that the young king was more or less replicating his father's techniques of power brokerage. As usual; dissent was allowed to a certain extent but when it crossed an arbitrary 'red line' repression could be used (as in the case of the trials of several journalists) or the King could utilize his special prerogatives (as in the case of the reform of the *Mudawanna*).

Central to any democratic transition is rendering the political authorities more accountable to its citizens, something that has not happened in Morocco as the foundations of formal political authority remain fluid, ambiguous and relative. Mohammed VI promised to inaugurate a new concept of political authority based on personal freedom, human rights and the rule of law. But this initiative has not been translated in reality. One of the major obstacles to this remains the monarchy's constant bypassing of formal decision-making processes and institutions, thus reproducing the monarchy's central role in major political issues.[9]

---

[8] Some observers think that the outcome of the elections was 'tailored' to the King's wishes by the Minister of Interior so as to tri-polarize the parliament in a centre, right and left block. Indeed, the King had expressed that wish in a royal discourse (11-10-96) saying that the *alternance* would be the outcome of a political fight between "*two camps – I did not say two parties – and a centre*". See El Mossadeq, Rkia (1996): "La réforme constitutionnelle el les illusions consensuelles", *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord,* tome XXXV, p. 573-582.

[9] Two such examples are the dismissal of the Minister of Interior, Driss Basri and the end of Yacine's house-arrest. Throughout 1999 rumours spread through the antechambers of politics in Rabat and the royal compound or *mechouar* concerning the difficult relationship between the new king and his Minister of Interior. Finally, Mohammed VI dismissed Driss Basri and replaced him by a tandem consisting of Ahmed Midaoui and one of his acolytes Fouad Al-Himma, chef of the royal cabinet. All this took place when Prime Minister Youssoufi was on official visit in Europe, who got the news when personal friends called him on his mobile phone. Youssoufi was never informed of the plan or of the appointment of Midaoui and Al-Himma. The removal of Basri cannot be underestimated. Symbolically, Basri carried the weight (even more than the king himself) of years of repression especially in the 1970s. Institutionally, the Ministry of Interior is the central modern locus of the King's power. It was through the Ministry that the king established the 'modern wing of the makhzen'. The '*quadrillage administratif*' expanded total control over the population during years. With the ousting of Basri, the Ministry would play a much lesser role in controlling society. This does not necessarily mean that Mohammed VI was pursuing political liberalisation. Rumours indicate that Basri, along with elements within the army were more in favour of another member of the royal family becoming king (See Leveau, Remy: "The Moroccan Monarchy: A Political System in Quest of a New Equilibrium", in Kostiner, Joseph (ed.) (2000): *Middle East Monarchies. The Challenge of Modernity*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.122). The same mechanism of bypassing the government's prerogatives and/or formal institutions was witnessed when sheikh Yacine's house-arrest was lifted. Sheikh Yacine, leader of the Islamist movement of *al-'Adl wa al-Ihsan*, was freed May 2000 after 10 years. Nobody really knows who or how the ban was lifted. A rather baffled Minister of Human Rights declared on 2M (an Moroccan TV station broadcasting in French) that 'His Majesty' made this possible. To which he added promptly that the return of long-time exile, Abderrahman Serfaty, and the freeing of political prisoners were all decisions taken by the King himself. These decisions prompted journalists to ask what role the government and especially the Ministry of Human Rights was playing then and whether it had anything to say. It was clear that the Minister could not answer the question straightforwardly.

2. The War on Terror and the Islamist question

Just like all countries in the region; Morocco has witnessed the birth, growth and success of Islamist oppositional movements. The Islamist question refers today to several questions. Firstly, it refers to the idea that if there would be genuine free and transparent elections in the MENA region, then the Islamist parties would come out as victors. Promoting democracy and free elections can thus lead to the coming to power of movements and parties that both domestic and international political actors and organisations are reluctant to admit as partners. Before Islamist can win elections however, they have to be able to participate. This is dependent on the regime's policy towards them. The process of containing (or managing) Islamism (or radical political opposition) through the political process is the crux of the Islamist question.

Incorporating the former militants of the *jama'a islamiyya* into the process of *alternance* through their entrance in electoral competition was a success for the monarchy's inclusive and consensual approach of the new political game. Not only did it bring a part of the oppositional voice within the realm of legitimate politics, but it also used the party as a force of stabilisation during a period of economic and social changes. Indeed, one can argue that in times of rapid social and economic change in the age of reforms and globalization, the Islamists popularity can channel and satisfy the need for integration and stability. Albeit the fact that the popular – some observers would say more popular – movement of sheikh Yacine *al-adl wa al-Ihsan* (Justice and Spirituality), stayed and was kept out of the formal political arena, the strategy seemed successful. The attacks of Casablanca have, however, suggested that containing radicalism through the political process would not suffice to counter the growing amount of political and social unrest[10]. Since then the King has devised new policies towards Islamists, *Jihadi*-groups and, more generally, the religious field itself.

In what follows we will discuss firstly how the Islamists entered the realm of politics while Yacine remained outside this process. Secondly we will analyse the direct political impact of the Casablanca attacks on the level of general freedoms, the (political) position of the PJD and the other political formations. Thirdly, we will then describe how the King, much like his father 20 years earlier, has tightened his control over the organisation of Islam in the country. Finally we address the specific issue of jihad-violence in the Kingdom.

3. The emergence of the Islamists in politics

For some time now, Islamists in Morocco have participated in the political process, but they did not play a direct role in the debates surrounding the question of *alternance*. The Islamists were growing in power in Morocco since the 1980s and one specific group, the *jama'a al-islamiyya* of Abdellilah Benkirane, was pursuing political participation since the second half of the decade. Nevertheless, they could not make their debut on the political stage until the late 1990s. Benkirane saw his official requests for the creation of an Islamist party been turned down twice in 1989 and 1992.[11] Despite this failure Benkirane still believed that the only way to gain an official and formal recognition was to compete in the elections. After the refusal of recognition as a political party Benkirane changed the name of the movement into

---

[10] Willis, Michael: "Containing radicalism through the Political Process in North Africa", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.11, No.2 (July 2006), p.137-150

[11] In 1992 his request was officially rejected while three years earlier the authorities simply did not react to his demand.

Al-Islah wa al-Tajdid (Reform and Renewal). In 1996 the movement changed its name again into *Harakat al-Tawhid wa al-Islah* (Movement of Unity and for Reform). The name changes were induced by internal discussions on the movement's new political strategies and ideology and the incorporation of independent Islamic think-tanks and Islamic cultural organisations into the movement. Knowing fully well that this was still a movement and not an official political party, Benkirane developed a new strategy. Being aware of the slim chance of getting official recognition, he searched for contacts with members of other political formations to ensure some sort of free electoral. Benkirane found the ideal partner in the *Mouvement Populaire Constitutionel Démocratique* (MPCD, Popular Constitutional and Democratic Movement) of Dr. Khatib, the ex-leader of the Moroccan Army of Liberation. It was a pragmatic choice that had several advantages. First of all, Benkirane knew fully well that the party was nearly extinct and that the discussions with its leadership would not be too difficult. Since 1965 the MPCD found itself in a deadlock and for Dr. Khatib it could be a welcome opportunity to play once again a relevant role in the political game. Secondly, the MPCD had always possessed a conservative Islamic imprint, something that brought the two formations ideologically closer to one another. Thirdly, Benkirane knew that an alliance with Dr. Khatib would only be possible if the King accepted. Dr. Khatib had close personal ties with the monarchy. If the deal would succeed, Benkirane and the Islamists knew that they would become somehow 'protected' by that deal.

The first contacts between Dr. Khatib and Benkirane dated back to 1992 but it is only in 1996 that an alliance formalized. During those years Benkirane made sure that within the Islamist realm there was a clear majority for political participation while Dr. Khatib awaited the palace's reactions. Both Benkirane and Dr. Khatib claimed that there was neither interference nor a dictate from the palace. It is hard to believe, however, that in a climate of successive political change under the wings of an all controlling monarchy, Benkirane's Islamists could have entered the legal political system without a tacit or explicit palace approval. It was Benkirane who initiated the project while Dr. Kathib just added two conditions for the Islamist to join an alliance with his party, i.e. the recognition of the monarchy's legitimacy and the respect for the constitution. The Islamists entered parliament in 1997 winning nine seats and due to partial elections and some defections in other parties they ended the legislature with 14 members. Later the MPCD changed its name into the Party of Justice and Development (PJD). In 2002 the PJD became the third biggest party in parliament, winning 42 seats in the 2002 elections.

The change in the monarchy's strategy vis-à-vis the Islamists during the 1990s can be seen as pragmatic turn in the process of political transition in Morocco. The moderate PJD converted itself in a typical opposition party respecting the rules of the game, avoiding mostly the direct confrontation with the regime. Over the years the PJD established an equilibrium between the demands of their base and the demands of the monarchy, channelled through the office of the Ministry of Interior, Moustapha Sahel. The integration (or cooptation) of the Islamists into the political realm was a success for both parties. On the one hand the Islamists had the opportunity to get rid of their clandestine status and induce political and social change through parliament. On the other hand their entrance in politics enhanced the monarchy's ability to control their activities and strategies while, at the same time, a legal Islamist party could steal a march on more radical movements.

The political strategy of the PJD forms an important part of the Moroccan transition process. The monarchy wishes a liberalisation of the political system, without losing its control over politics. Hassan II and after him Mohammed VI chose to integrate the Islamists in the political realm in order to be able to control a possible centre of opposition in times of

economic and social crisis. As long as the PJD does not cut across the directives of the monarchy, it will be allowed to grow and possibly even participate in the government.

4. The impact of the Casablanca bombings

Although the regime increased its control over society after 9/11, it was not until the attacks on Casablanca on May 16th 2003 that the reversion to the old policies of repression and authoritarianism were accelerated. The bombings of Casablanca caused a shockwave within the regime and Moroccan society which had important consequences for the future of the political transition process in Morocco.

First of all, an anti-terrorism law that had been pending before parliament since January 2003 was suddenly quickly enacted. Indeed, it took less than two weeks after the attacks, on the 29th of May, to pass the Law to Combat Terror (Bill 03.03), in spite of the many concerns activist organizations such as Human Rights Watch and other domestic movements uttered about the deterioration of the basic human rights.[12] The broad definition of terrorism in the new law gave the regime the opportunity to deal with all of its adversaries in the name of justice and national security. One year after the attacks, Minister of Justice Bouzoubaâ stated that 2112 Islamists had been charged in connection with those events and that 903 persons had been convicted, of whom seventeen were sentenced to death.[13]

Secondly, not only the Islamists experienced harsh repression but also the media did not escape the new power grip of the regime. According to a report of Human Rights Watch on Morocco, the controversial new law reversed many of the press freedoms only recently enforced by the revised 2002 Press Code.[14] The attacks gave the government legitimate reasons to restrict the power of the media. Article 41 of the anti-terror legislation set stricter limits on and penalties for speech offences, all in the name of national security and Moroccan territorial integrity. The regime tried to regain its control over the media through their dependence of subsidies, advertising allocation, stricter regulation and licensing procedures[15].

Thirdly, alongside the massive arrests, the events in Casablanca gave the opportunity for certain elements within the security apparatus and the political field to sharpen their control over the PJD. Afraid of dismantlement the PJD abandoned its ambitions to win massively in the local elections of September 2003. The leadership of the party organized around Saad Eddin al-Othmani, Abdellilah Benkirane and Daoudi clearly opted for a non-confrontational strategy towards the regime, while other members – rallied around the president of the parliamentary group, Mustapha Ramid – and chose to denounce the interference of the Ministry of Interior. In fact, the Islamists left it to the regime to decide in which areas it could compete in the elections and which candidates were to be allowed to participate. This submissive attitude of the Islamist party provoked much discontent among its grassroots supporters. In September 2005, Mustapha Ramid, had to resign from his position as president of the parliamentary group of the PJD, fearing that his presidency would endanger the future of the party. At the same time though, the King, Mohammed VI, pronounced several discourses in which he made plain his belief that a new law on the organisation of political

---

[12] Human Rights Watch (2004), "Morocco: Human Wrights at a Crossroads", Human Rights Watch Publications, Vol.16, No.6(E), p.26, in: http://hrw.org/reports/2004/morocco1004/morocco1004.pdf.
[13] *Ibid*., p.25.
[14] http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Morocco_APS.doc.
[15] *Ibid.*

parties was necessary. Finally the King also tried to re-establish his central role in the religious affairs of the country.

5. Islam against terror? [16]

The Casablanca attacks allowed the King to re-establish his authority over domestic politics in different areas. After having 'managed' the PJD's participation to the 2003 local elections, the King reorganized the religious field. The Moroccan monarch has always claimed autonomy on the religious field as commander of the faithful and sole representative of Islam. With the recent reaffirmation of the monarchy's central position, the King hopes to counter extremist tendencies and assert his control of the religious field. Mohammed VI announced various religious reforms stressing the fact that these reforms were carried out to assure the tolerance of Moroccan Islam. Just like his father in the first years of the 1980s, Mohammed VI has reduced the role of the mosque as a public space (opening them only for prayer), controlled the Friday sermons, and, even more importantly, has heightened control over the *Conseil Supérieur des Ouléma* in discussing and delivering *fatwas*.

The Moroccan King, the government and several opinion makers stressed that the terrorist attacks of Casablanca, just as 9/11 or other attacks, were not part of Islam. The image that the Moroccan government is portraying of Islam is one of openness and tolerance. As the King put it:

> This terrorist aggression is against our tolerant and generous faith. Even more so, the commissioners and the executioners (of these acts) are wretched criminals who cannot claim to be part of Morocco or authentic Islam, because they ignore the tolerance which characterizes this religion.[17]

The King has re-iterated on numerous occasions that the threat is not inherently Moroccan but that is imported! Therefore, he argues, Islam cannot be used for projects of hatred and war, as the Moroccan identity is distinctively tolerant. Throughout his speeches since 2003, King Mohammed VI has stressed the fact that Moroccan Islam is per definition tolerant and non-violent. "Being the religion of the just middle, it reposes on tolerance, honours human dignity, advocates (peaceful) coexistence and rejects aggression, extremism and the quest for power in the name of the religion".[18] Furthermore, the Moroccans, through their adoption of the Maliki rite are flexible and open to the reality in which they live.

According to the King, Moroccans have always stressed their Muslim identity through open negotiations with local cultures and other civilizations by using the imaginative effort of *ijtihad*. Therefore, asks the King, "Is it […] necessary for the Moroccan people, empowered by the unity of its religious rite and the authenticity of its civilisation, to import foreign ritualistic rites to its own traditions?"[19] He does not elaborate on what exactly these 'foreign rites' are or who imports them. The vague description of "something foreign" that threatens

---

[16] This paragraph is based on: Zemni, Sami: "Islam between Jihadi Threats and Islamist Insecurities? Evidence from Belgium and Morocco", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.11, No.2 (July 2006), pp.231-253.

[17] Ministère de la communication (29/05/2003), H.M. King Mohammed VI, Discourse to the nation after the Casablanca attacks of the 16th of May 2003, Available at http://www.maroc.ma (subheading: 'French' and 'discours du roi').

[18] Ministère de la communication (30/07/2003), H.M. King Mohammed VI, Discours du Trône, Available at http://www.maroc.ma (subheading: 'French' and 'discours du roi').

[19] *Ibid.*

the national security and identity is a powerful heuristic device to create unanimity and a sense of the need to protect "national security".

And if this was not enough, Mohammed VI further warns the Moroccan public:

We will not tolerate these, the more so as these doctrines are incompatible with the specific Moroccan identity. To those who think to make themselves mouthpieces of a rite foreign to Our people, We will oppose them with a vigour that is dictated by the task to preserve the uniqueness of the rite of the Moroccans, reaffirming Our will to defend our choice of the Maliki rite, while at the same time respecting those of the others, each people having its specificities and made its own choices."[20]

And if their would be any misunderstanding on what the concept of jihad actually means; the King 'proposes' the following meaning:

Because Islam rests on an invitation to peace, security and concord, the Moroccans have understood that the *jihad*, in its noble acceptation, is a struggle against all malefic temptations within humankind and against errors and chaos. *Jihad* is also an effort of imagination and emulation of good deeds. This religious and historic engagement, perpetuated by the power of the *baia* (allegiance), has been actualised through a modern political and constitutional pact through which the Umma has been unanimous to consider Islam as the state's religion and the King as the Commander of the Faithful.[21]

6. Jihad and violence in Morocco: a new challenge

The investigations of Moroccan and Spanish police agencies revealed that on Moroccan territory a *Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* (GICM) served as a "breeding ground" for the interests of al-Qaeda. Moroccan authorities and the political elite as well as public opinion reacted with astonishment when the connections between jihadi-combatants in Tangier, Casablanca, Madrid, Paris and London were unravelled. The myth of a "Moroccan exception" in the Arab world (a stable and peaceful country, "controlled" Islamists, the absence of violence and a certain degree of democratisation) could no longer be upheld. Since the beginning of the War on Terror, and certainly after the Casablanca attacks, the Moroccan regime fell back more and more on 'classic' repressive methods to contain the terrorist threat. In 2004 international and Moroccan human rights organisations repeatedly sounded the alarm about the current evolution. In the name of counter-terrorism the authorities performed random arrests, frequently combined with torture. The significant progress made in Morocco during the last fifteen years concerning the human rights seemed to be reversed in one year time.

The *Salafiyya Jihadiyya*, blamed for the Casablanca attacks, is the name of the loosely organised network of radical clerics, individuals and/or local groups practicing an extremist, radical and very conservative form of Islam. These individuals and groups are 'outside society' in more then one way. Coming largely from the sub-proletarian shanty-towns on the fringes of the big urban areas, they live in the places where the state has never really been present. Having no real stake in it, these groups reject the Moroccan state as such and aim to live according to their own understanding of Islam, which, to a large degree, is nothing more than a strict code of what is allowed and what is prohibited, what is *hallal* and *haram*. The

---

[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid.*

violent actions of the group are not so much part of a political strategy to influence specific policy or to gain control over a territory. Rather, the violence is connected to the global 'War on Terror', the war in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a metaphysical manner.

7. The PJD from local to national power?

Since 2003 elected members of the PJD are in power in cities like Meknes, Khenifra and Temara. The local elections of 2003 took place a few months after the attacks in Casablanca.

In practice the record of the PJD at the local policy level is rather positive. In Meknes, one of the biggest cities of the country, the new mayor seems to dispose of a certain amount of respect and credibility (regardless of the appropriate political opposition). Aboubakr Belkora, son of a rich landlord, has first of all reorganized the finances of the city by means of reducing unnecessary expenses and increasing the revenues. Since the righteousness of the PJD members is their most important political asset, corruption has been seriously punished and favouritism has not been tolerated. It is said that the mayor even denied a concession of a territory to Moulay Ismael, the King's nephew, because the file wasn't complete and correct. Ahmed Belkoura also declared to the Moroccan press that:

> An Islamist policy does not exist, there is only a good or a bad policy. A good policy is based on transparency, honesty and competence. And that is what we do. You can determine the results of this policy yourself by walking through the city[22].

Good policy is also the central point of attention of Lahcen Chakira, the mayor of Khenifra. The former physics teacher, and now head of the PJD local council in a city that is known for its promiscuity did not deliver himself of a moralizing policy vis-à-vis prostitution, but rather concentrated on the social and economic projects form the bulk of decision making in Khenifra.

The PJD seems to connect with the population in different villages and cities in a clear and efficient manner. With its 'policy of proximity' the PJD devotes itself to social and economic problems in a professional and efficient manner. Furthermore the party does not avoid the use of modern theories of human resources management. The integrity and the professionalism of the elected members are two important earmarks of a PJD that wants to show that it is 'ready' to govern at the national level also.

The first successes of the PJD already aroused the suspicion of other political actors, including the monarchy. Here and there several trivial, local issues degenerated into greater political crises. It wasn't always clear whether this was caused by mismanagement of the PJD or by deliberate efforts to discredit the party. At any rate, the PJD turned into a people's party, with its own cells and departments. The party has its leaders, militants and members who actively participate in every debate at all policy levels (from the lowest echelons to the central policy organs) and by that it has given proof of its maturity.

However the growth of the PJD would have never been possible without the approval of the Makhzen, the political and administrative apparatus surrounding the monarchy governing the country. The PJD is possibly an Islamo-democratic party but as such, the party is confronted with her limitations and dilemmas. To fulfil the provisions and demands of the

---

[22] *Le Journal Hebdo*, n°234, 10-16/12/2005

Makhzen and the monarchy, the PJD must persevere in a conciliatory political strategy. Both on the national level as on the local level the PJD makes sure that it does not cut across the interests of the authorities. The new anti-terrorism law, against which several human rights organisations have railed, was unanimously approved by parliament. The PJD doesn't talk about a revision of the constitution anymore (like other opposition parties) that would be necessary to redefine the role and the place of the King and the monarchy in the Moroccan polity. Everything points to the fact that the PJD cast aside most of his oppositional logic in exchange for a role in the political game. Therefore many Moroccan observers believe that the Makhzen succeeded in 'taking the sting out of the party', through which it ended up in a pattern of notabilisation. Others assume that that the PJD reflects a broadening and a deepening of the Moroccan democracy with her acceptance of the rules of the game.

But this policy also takes its toll. For two years now the party has held important debates about the future. One part of the movement wishes to take part in government via the elections in 2007. Another faction, although they find government participation ideologically opportune, fears the loss of the party's independence should this occur. In the meantime the monarchy looks suspiciously at every evolution within the Islamist party and makes sure the PJD stays within the borders of the permitted political freedom.

Many see this, correctly, as an attempt of the King to convert the PJD into one of the many political formations in the country loyal to the monarchy. If the PJD loses its status of independence, it will likewise lose the confidence of the people, who will turn to other political parties. But it is unlikely that the King will let this possibility come to such a pass. His most important objective was all along precisely to channel a part of the dissatisfaction in the country, that mainly arose as a result of economic liberalisation, via the legalisation of the PJD.

8. Free trade and good governance against terror?

Finding a way between the local democratic appeals of parties and civil society organisations, securing a strategic alliance with the US in the 'War on terror' and opening up the market is generally not a recipe for good governance, let alone for a democratic brokering of power and interests. In Morocco this dynamic led to the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on June 2004. The FTA with the US was definitively placed within the framework of the War on Terror. The FTA had explicitly political and strategic goals as the consequence of the new international political realm after 9/11. Robert Zoellick, the US trade representative in charge of the negotiations stated at numerous times that trade was a new tool in the War on Terror:

> Step by step, the Administration is working to build bridges of free trade with economic and social reformers in the Middle East. Our plan offers trade and openness as vital tools for leaders striving to build more open, optimistic, and tolerant Islamic societies[23]

USAID stresses the importance of the US-Moroccan diplomatic alliance and Morocco's positive track record in implementing general reforms:

> A model of tolerance in the Arab world, the Kingdom of Morocco is the United States' oldest friend in the region and was recently declared to be a major non-NATO ally. Under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, this stable, moderate Arab nation is undertaking a

---

[23] http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2004/Jun/16-292521.html

series of bold economic, political and social reforms to improve the quality of life for all Moroccans. Formidable challenges still face the nation, including an under-performing economy and high levels of unemployment and illiteracy. USAID helps address those challenges with programs that contribute to an educated and democratic society successfully competing in the global marketplace.[24].

US foreign aid to Morocco has mainly an economic focus. No direct political and democratic reforms are enforced by the US government although all kinds of training programs for parliamentary representatives, judicial personnel and civil society workers are funded and organized. The reasons for these policies of economic reform and indirect training programs are various.

First of all, the US does not want to endanger its strategic alliance with Morocco by forcing political reforms on the monarchy. Morocco is an important partner in the War on Terror. As USAID stresses: "the Kingdom of Morocco is the United States' oldest friend in the region". The economic approach has above all the intention to secure the stability of the monarchy and it lowers the barrier for the regime to sustain its powerbase. An example can be found in the fact that the Moroccan regime used the War on Terror as a justification for a partial return to repressive and authoritarian policies with the blessing of the United States.[25] Therefore we could argue in part that the US foreign policy approach vis-à-vis Morocco has strengthened the regime's grip on society. Or, as Fransceso Cavatorta states:

> … it emerges that the external intervention to change the cost-benefit analysis of the domestic actors is not always intended to support democracy. At times it is intended to stifle it. […] it is worth noting that peace and stability are not necessarily achieved through the spread of democracy or liberal values. Quite the opposite appears to be the case in the Moroccan example. The use of realist concepts can account for the anti-democratic impact of foreign policies towards Morocco. The stalled democratization of the country cannot be solely laid at the door of the international community, but the actions undertaken by external actors have strengthened the current regime with their focus on economic openness and façade democratic elections.[26].

This became very clear in December 2002 when the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was launched. The initiative foresaw in the financial support of civil society organisations a political transition that was seen as a gradual process:

> There is nothing in MEPI to frighten incumbent regimes and make them fear that the Bush administration is out to overthrow them. The United States was not planning "to abandon longtime allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia because of their lack of democracy" but would offer "positive reinforcement for emerging reform trends," explained an administration official. But if the goal of MEPI was to appease the anger against the United States that existed at all levels in the Arab world, it failed.[27]

This bottom-up vision on democratization ensured that external constraint was not a central factor in the US pressure on Arab regimes. The NGOs that were candidates for receiving funds were those who were not seen as being a threat to the regime. Organisations with a clear Islamic agenda fell outside the scope of funding possibilities.

---

[24] http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/countries/morocco/
[25] Cavatorta, Francesco: "The International Context of Morocco's Stalled Democratization", *Democratization*, Vol.12, No.4 (August 2005), p.562.
[26] *Ibid*., p.563.
[27] Ottaway, Marina:"Promoting Democracy in the Middle East. The Problem of U.S. credibility", Carnegie Working Papers, No.35 (March 2003), in http://www.carnegieendowment.org.

Secondly, the US also struggles with an Islamist question. The question that confronts the US government is very clear:

> Should the United States exert pressure on Arab governments to open their political systems and respect human rights with the knowledge that Islamists, the most popular opposition force in Arab politics, stand to benefit from regional democratization?[28]

There is little doubt that this question has affected US policy towards the Arab World since the end of the Cold War. Currently the Islamists are the most important opposition movements and the United States have every reason to suspect that if these movements come into power, they could undermine US interests in the region. To quote Cavatorta again, we could stress that this US attitude vis-à-vis the Islamists

> is not dictated by a principled policy of defending democracy and human rights, although the justification for it is sometimes presented in that way. Rather, it is dictated by the necessity to avoid having a party in power that would question the fundamental tenets upon which the current international system is built."[29]

The idea behind US and USAID policies is as simple and transparent as it can get. The economic opening of Morocco would help to alleviate the extreme poverty – considered as a breading ground for extremism and violence – in which some segments of the population live. Economic growth, it is believed, will encourage and support peace, stability and mutual understanding while, at the same time, ushering a new period of internal political, economic and social reforms.

The implementation of the FTA also pressed and demanded for internal reforms that were cast in the up-to-date jargon of the international financial institutions. The World Bank MENA development report summarizes what good governance is all about:

> The goal of good governance is to maximize the well-being of the public (in two words: human development) through the promotion of strong economic growth and material satisfaction of basic needs, protection of rights such as liberty, and expression and freedom of choice[30].

To achieve good governance "technically solid institutions and mechanisms that function effectively" are required but "it cannot exist without respect for some core human values recognized and celebrated everywhere"[31]. Furthermore, good governance rests on two core values, i.e. inclusiveness and accountability. Even though the World Bank acknowledges the fact that good governance in itself may not generate economic growth it is still a prerequisite for development as good policies with 'bad governance' is nothing more than a "historical accident"[32]. This effectively echoes Washington's new vision on the necessity of importing democracy in the region.

'Good governance' and the free market became metaphors for all institutions and governance aspects designed to support market-led development and parliamentary democracy in stead of "any mode of public decision-making that helps to advance human

---

[28] CRS Report for Congress: "U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma", Congressional Research Service [CRS] Reports, (June, 2006), in http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/index.html.
[29] See Cavatorta, *op. cit.*, p.562.
[30] World Bank (2003): *Better Governance for Development in the Middle East and North Africa. Enhancing Inclusiveness and Accountability*, Washington DC, The World Bank, p.25.
[31] *Ibid.,* p.26
[32] *Ibid.,* p.11

welfare, however conceived"[33]. Governance is more a technique of coordination, negotiation and decision-making and decision-taking. Governance comes from the sphere of economy, from the idea of corporate governance of big firms. Therefore, from the onset, governance has "an a-political nature, operating along the lines of the instrumental logic of the market, inducing a sectorialization and fragmentation of action. It is marked by a technocratic tropism"[34]. The a-political character of governance is presented as

> a remedy allowing increased interaction between the State and civil society, engaging horizontal negotiations based on cooperation, with the participation of partners who are stakeholders on equal footing (which is illusory because some partners are more equal than others, according Orwell's metaphor), including the public administration, that takes part in it and leaves its statute of representing the general interests of the citizens behind[35].

The problem is thus that there is an incongruity between governance and democratic government. In Third World countries (or developing states) governance is seen as the "the technique or mode of conduct of public policy that is concomitant with the State's reform. One of the effects would be the acceleration and/or consolidation of the process of democratization"[36]. Rousseau argues convincingly that the presupposed relationship between governance and democratization is some sort of a 'contradiction in adjectives'[37]. It seems to her that the principal goal of governance is rendering two contradicting requirements compatible. "On the one hand governance tries to induce pluralism in order to strengthen and improve the political action of the state, while, on the other hand, it seems to lessen or minimize pluralism by reducing its useless aspects for the sake of efficiency"[38]. The tension between the two dynamics induces a new relationship with authority.

If we keep in mind this contradiction between 'good governance' reforms and democratization, it becomes possible to apprehend the stalemate that faces Arab reforms in general, and the Moroccan case in particular, as much more than 'simple' authoritarian reactions of power-elites and regimes who unwilling to give up power. Real democratization would entail a loss of efficiency which could make the international donors impatient and even decide to refrain from help in the future. On the other hand, a fully fledged acceptance and implementation of good governance policies would inevitably lead to less democratization in the sense that an ever growing amount of citizens will not be able to participate in the debates concerning the organization of the economy, the distribution of wealth, the organization of labor. All this became evident in the process of negotiation between the Moroccan and US trade representatives, as it reflected the Moroccan political situation in which foreign policy issues are the realm of the Palace. The negotiations were led by the Taïeb Fassi-Fihri, minister delegate of foreign affairs, who is directly accountable to the King and is thus not a politician but a technocrat. All political parties (including the reformist Islamists of the PJD) remained silent on the issue which was generally seen as a royal prerogative.

---

[33] Jenkins, Rob: "The emergence of the governance agenda: sovereignity, neo-liberal bias and the politics of international development", in Desai, Vandana and Potter, Robert B. (eds) (2002): *The Companion to Development Studies*, London, Arnolds Publishers, p.485.

[34] Kazancigil, Ali: "La gouvernance et la souveraineté de l'Etat", CERI-dossiers, (September 2003), p.5, in http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org.

[35] I*bid*. p.5.

[36] Rousseau, Isabelle: "Reforme de l'Etat et gouvernance dans les pays en voie de démonstration", CERI-dossiers, (September 2003), p.2, in http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org.

[37] *Ibid*., p.3

[38] *Ibid*., p.3

What was, however, new were the first signs of dissent and oppositional voices voiced by the media and civil society organisations. The first limits of the impact of the free trade agreements on freedom became painfully clear on January 28th 2005 when a peaceful sit-in on front of the Parliament was harshly repressed by the police.

One of the central problems with the growing amount of technical decision-making is the fact that those individuals and groups connected to the technical discussions of the implementation of market reforms under good governance have access to the benefits of the reforms through mobility of travel and communication. Individuals and groups who do not have the same connections or forms of knowledge and thus cannot participate in global governance discussions remain on the fringes of its presumed benefits. Those groups remain dependent on the State's services at the moment the latter is forced to cut budgets and decrease social services.

9. New political arenas in a global world

This rather pessimistic view should not obfuscate the growing possibilities for societal actors to inscribe themselves in local and global networks that heighten their leverage and possibly enhance their power in local politics. Global discourses – understood as discourses with universal of global references – are translated into the logic of local conflicts and/or problems.

While Islamists have a central stake in the issue of political reforms as they are the largest oppositional political current and because they elicit international attention, there are other political expressions that are altering the meaning of politics within the Kingdom under current globalization. Through the interaction between domestic political decisions of the monarchy and the government and the international constraints more and more referring to democratization and good governance, the boundaries of political discourse and actions have expanded and the rules of the political game have changed. Political parties (including the Islamists as we have seen) or movements, civil society organisations or NGOs all have "integrated universalist rhetoric with national and very local popular concerns to mobilize successfully support for their causes"[39]. The changing nature of opposition and/or civil society activity makes clear that there is a growing disconnection between the individual, society and the classic boundaries of the 'Westphalian nation-state':

> The implosion of the clear distinction between the national and international implies the blurring of the classic notions of citizenship, borders and (political) consciousness. The consequence of this de-territorialization is the existence and growth of new forms of socialization that blur geographical proximities, constitute themselves in cross-national networks (virtual or real). Within the site of the still powerful nation-state therefore the disappearing traditional boundaries of inclusion and exclusion – formerly readily apparent in and logically deriving from national affiliations – are changing and altering. This undoubtedly changes the nature, role and even form of politics within the territory of the state[40].

---

[39] See Cohen and Jaïdi, *op.cit*., p.62.
[40] See Zemni, *op.cit.* p. 234.

This became clear in (a) the debate on the reform of the *moudawanna*, (b) the success of the Amazigh movement and (c) the creation of a Truth and Equity Commission to deal with complaints concerning human rights abuses during the '*années de plomb*'[41].

Central to development and good governance reforms is the role of the middle class. Shana Cohen suggests that the Moroccan governments, adapting the country more and more to the constraints of integration into the global market, have encouraged individual responsibility for employment and social mobility as opposed to the demiurgic role the state played in the first decades of post-independency. Therefore, she argues, the new middle class[42]

> no longer takes center stage as a nation's achievement or, similarly, no longer acts to defend its own continuity and stability. The maxim of King Hassan II […] that the state will shape better individuals for a better society, has today fallen apart, so that the state is still held responsible internationally and domestically for economic growth and joblessness, but the individual now must manage his or her own 'advancement' distinct from any notion of society'[43].

A part of this growing group of the 'new' middle class has been very active in the recently formed civil associations throughout the 1990s. These organisations are very different from those that were more or less 'made' from above at the end of the 1980s. Back then, the makhzen had responded to internal and external stimuli by promoting rapid growth of so-called 'regional associations' that focused on the region's economic, social and cultural development. All those regional associations were tightly controlled by governmental members or people with close connections to the monarchy[44]. At first sight it looked as if the Makhzen was indeed creating its 'own civil society' by promoting means of integration for the growing urbanized elite, drawing in parts of the growing educated middle classes. This is a hypothesis defended by Deneoux and Gateau[45]. Even if this is to a large extent true, one could also argue that these associations had some sort of controlling role over the policy of decentralisation that was implemented by the government from the end of the 1980s onwards. By 1995 however, new NGOs were formed that did not fall under the direct control of the political parties or the makhzen. Associations such as *Afak*, *Maroc 2020*, *Convergences 21*, *Alternatives*, *Transparency Internatonal*,… are not creations 'out of nothing' from 'above'. They are largely controlled by the higher educated younger members of the urban middle classes. Indeed, these younger middle class people were disappointed with the policies of the traditional parties and therefore turned towards associational life[46].

---

[41] All these issues, unfortunately, cannot be dealt with within the bounds of this article.

[42] The three dominant groups of this new, 'detached middle class', according to Shana: The unemployed and exploited service workers, the traditional public sphere sector occupations of the modern middle class and small level entrepreneurs and those businessmen and women and entrepreneurs benefiting directly from trade and direct foreign investment. See: Cohen, Shana (2003) "Alienation and Globalization in Morocco: Addressing the Social and Political Impact of Market Integration", *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, p. 176.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 180.

[44] To give but a few examples. The Association Grand Atlas (Marrakech) was founded by Mohammed Mediouri, chief of the Royal Security, its president is Taïeb Chkili, ex-Minister of Education. The Association for the safeguarding, promotion and development of Essaouiri is founded and led by André Azoulay, royal counsellor on economic affairs. The Ribat al-Fath association (Rabat) was founded and is led by Abdelfettah Frej, director of the Royal Cabinet. Angad al-Maghrib Al-sharki, by Ahmed Osman, brother in law of King Hassan II,… see for more examples Layadi & Rerhaye (1998), pp. 162-163.

[45] Denoeux, G. and Gateau, L. (1995) "L'essor des associations au Maroc". *Maghreb-Machrek*, No. 150.

[46] Examples: *Alternatives* was led by Abdelali Benamor, ancient MP of the USFP but who left the party disappointed. *Maroc 2020* was founded by Ali Belhadj, member of the Constitutional Union (UC) but who did not find his ideals in the party. He left but became member in 1997 of the PPS.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the process of reforms has significantly altered the Moroccan polity notwithstanding the fact that we cannot speak about a democracy. Reform in the age of globalization is foremost based on the belief that market reforms will inevitably lead to more wealth and welfare and thus less poverty. Today, this optimistic neo-liberal view on trade as a means to achieve progress and development has been securitized to a certain extent. Free trade agreements, market reforms, political pluralism, electoral assistance,… all are integrated as tools in the framework of the 'War on Terror'. The neo-liberal idea of wealth creation alleviating poverty is doubled with the idea that this poverty reduction ultimately will remove the root causes of political violence, terrorism, social unrest and instability. It is too early to measure the full impact of the FTA or the reforms according to good governance logic. Whether they will be able to alleviate (even partially) poverty is one thing, but is seems rather naïve to await political miracles from trade.

These economic reforms, together with the pluralization of the political sphere, have radically changed the rules of the political game even though the King (monarchy and makhzen) still hold on to the reigns of power. The multiplication of societal voices—the loudest one being the Islamists—has without doubt altered the nature of authority and control and therefore also of the nature of challenges to the Kingdom. As Cohen and Jaïdi rightfully argue the changing nature of authority has brought the monarchy to a situation where it tries to re-establish its political primacy and power in different and new arenas of political conflict and mobilization. Rather negatively they conclude that "instead of cultivating arenas for self-identification and creative expression that compete with radicalism, the state elected to pursue a self-destructive, regressive legal process"[47]. Perhaps, then, rather than a US led policy pressing consciously for democratic reform, it is the more diffuse process of globalization that has the most significant impact on Moroccan polity.

At the end of the day, Mohammed VI is trying to incorporate into new practices of authority and law-making a complex amalgam of local demands and international constraints. While the King attempts to accommodate the grievances of oppositional political groups, he is also trying to secure his own central position in Morocco's political system. At best, it is a difficult task; at worst, it may be an impossible one.

---

[47] See Cohen and Jaïdi, *op. cit.,* p.9.