

Reorganisation of the Moroccan Political Landscape

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In this paper, I will attempt to provide an overview of the reorganisation underway in the Moroccan political system. The latter seems to be unable to break out of a sequence of transition, both the monarchy and the elite limiting themselves to dealing with the present in a context of a loose consensus; a consensus which settles for the mediocrity of political life and focuses on economic transformation by means of major construction projects run by a techno-structure operating at best in a defused political landscape that does not involve taking any political risks. This consolidates a duality, a two-speed Morocco where politics cannot be the object of appropriation by new forces. In any case, this sweet siesta poorly conceals a degree of anxiety amplified by certain indicators that relate as much to the dwindling of reformist enthusiasm as to popular demands, less and less controlled by political organisations. The incidents at Séfrou and later Sidi Ifni, as well as transport sector strikes, announce the emergence of local figures of a mafia type or radicals free of all political control.

Elements of Political Stalemate

The political scene over the past two years allows certain significant conclusions to be drawn which are perceived as a major risk, including by the monarchy. Indeed, signs of this concern can be found in different speeches made by the King before parliament or during the Feast of the Throne. They consist of the discrediting of politics revealed by low voter participation rate, the failure of the Left, the advance, though timid, of the Islamists and their inability to handle the Salafist challenge, the persistence

of certain elite networks and finally, the faintness of the reformist discourse. These phenomena are experienced as a failure by the government, which aimed at restructuring the political landscape and renewing the elite.

One Moroccan in Five Cast a Blank Vote

The wager of lending the electoral process credibility was certainly successful. The majority of national observers showed their satisfaction at the conditions under which the 2007 elections took place. However, with a participation rate of 37% and 19% null votes –that is, a million voters went to the elections to cast a blank vote (by comparison, the blank votes did not surpass 15% in 2002)–, a shadow hangs over these elections. The method of counting the votes does not allow a distinction between the blank ballots and the spoilt ones. The illegibility of the political structure dominated by the King is not the only factor involved. The fact that 19% of the electorate made the effort of going to the polling stations and casting a blank vote can also be ascribed to indecision in the face of a weak political offer where the national issues were secondary to local issues, and above all, the fact that the issue of societal divisions was not included among the campaign topics. The task of deconstructing the ambivalent social project proposed by the monarchy was not carried out. The fact that the partisan elite balk at choosing or at least making its commitment explicit has contributed to draining the elections of meaning.

The Failure of the Left

This statement, which could seem exaggerated, needs to be qualified. When I speak of failure, I am not calling into question the importance of the experience of the change-over in government. It marks a turning

point on the symbolic level insofar as it has largely contributed to normalisation of political life and, by the same token, has gotten the country out of the relations of defiance that characterised relations among parties of the national movement and the monarchy. Its importance resides as well in the level of exemplarity of the experience, which has demonstrated that the narrow margins of political action and the imbalance of powers between the monarchy and the parties do not prevent a political force with a vision of its own from marking its passage in government by lending public policy implementation a specific orientation. It is hard to deny that the first and second terms of the Abderrahman Youssoufi administration weighed upon the country's political orientations and contributed to establishing the idea of a bicephalous aspect within the bloc in power. This qualification being made, nothing prevents us from pointing out that among the governmental majority, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), which is the party that embodied the changeover via the former opposition's accession to power in 1999, is also the only party for which the sanction of the ballot has functioned normally. The conduct of the Finance Department, whose political choice was diametrically opposed to the ideological identity, and of budget-devouring ministers that would be very difficult to reform (national education, justice, social affairs), and the party's inability to assume government results and provide information about reforms, partially explain the discrepancy between the USFP's performance and the political sanction that facilitated its removal from the Prime Minister's office.

*The Justice and Development Party:
The Media Bubble Bursts*

The Islamists of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), who were slated to win the elections according to all surveys, did not manage to surpass the threshold of 10.9% in votes and 14% in seats, whereas the Istiqlal Party took first place with 10.7% in votes and 15.9% in seats thanks to the effect of proportionality and the electoral apportionment. The PJD, however, confirmed its strong presence in populous, relatively dynamic coastal urban areas from Tangiers to Casablanca, where it attained 23 seats out of 40. It reached shares of nearly 30% in Fez, Rabat/Océan, Kenitra-Ville, Casablanca - Hay Hassani, Casablanca - Hay Mohammadi and Derb Sultan. It obtained poorer results, on the other hand, in peri-

urban areas, namely Médiouna (8.5%) and Nouaceur (7.9%) and nearly mediocre ones in certain provinces where the State had been putting all efforts for some ten years into what is commonly called participative development projects: Al Haouz (5.6%), Figuig (1.4%), Al Hoceima (2.4%) and the Sahara area, where a policy of aid is organised through the intervention of local elite endorsed by the administration. The PJD also has a hard time penetrating into rural regions with a strong elite structure where certain individuals have cultivated their fiefs for many years (Taza, Boulmane, Azilal, Taroudant – Mountain Zone).

The Persistence of Notables in Turbans

The dilemma of Moroccan power is that it elicits political vocation, a form of leadership which participates in the administration of public affairs without being certain of durably changing its orientation. This is the competence of the monarchic branch of power, and by extension, the court. In order to fully comprehend the issues at stake at the 2007 elections, it is a good idea to take a detour back in history in order to draw up the profiles of the political configurations and pertinent structures arising therefrom. Since independence, Morocco has experienced three types of configurations: one favouring the emergence of the traditional elite (1956-1983), a second one accompanying the development of the administration and the birth of a position-based elite (1983-1999), and finally, as of 1999, the choice of new forms of governance, including formal governance, has fostered the emergence of new profiles essentially produced by civil society and the political 'equerry' of the left. The traditional elite correspond to an ethnically homogeneous configuration, with a predominance of capitalising on lineage as a form of political mobilisation with little intervention from the State. The needs of power in this configuration, with its weak institutional regulation, point to a leadership with an arbitral function. Recruitment is carried out through the consolidation of an extant leadership. It could be considered, to a certain extent, the same type as the *fel-lah* who defends the throne. The second type of leadership had its moment of glory after the 1983 elections, with the creation of new parties that came to represent a new political elite including technocrats, businesspeople gaining their wealth through the policy of 'Moroccanisation', or profiting from the largesse of a planned economy, compensation policies and the quota system.

The 2007 elections were presumably to respond to this new demand by putting new political personnel in parliament. This objective was not attained, however, the party leaderships attempting to control the changeover that was underway by controlling the process of drawing up the election lists of the competing parties. Apart from the PJD, parties with a strong ideological connotation capable of holding political opinions different from those of the monarchy chose to minimise the risks and regulate the pressure from their rank-and-file members through scissions or by bringing them into line and preferred to sponsor local elite to prevent any excesses by the PJD in major cities. In addition to parties of the traditional local elite, parties with leftist connotations such as the Front of Democratic Forces party (FFD), the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and even the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) made out alright thanks to a policy of recruiting disenfranchised local elite. This state of affairs has created a divergence between the profile of a member of parliament and a government minister, who should, in principle and according to the 'democratic' method, emerge therefrom. The palace has had to intervene with certain symbolic 'violence' in order to impose a casting that suits its policy and force party leaderships to accept the profile of technocrats familiar with the public administration and liable to evolve rapidly and become accomplished politicians.

The Solitude of the Monarchy in the Face of the Faint Reformist Offer

The documentation analysed allows us to present an overview of the strategic choices embraced by a monarchy that has invested effort in serving as spokesperson for a technocratic elite. These choices may be somewhat ambiguous and contradictory, but they have the merit of existing (or at least they exist in writing). The problem for the administration is that they are invisible and were not debated during the electoral campaign. Hence, the contents of the documents published in 2005 and 2006, in particular the report, "50 Years of Human Development and Perspectives for 2025" (RDH 50) and the report by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) should be at the core of the political programmes in competition, insofar as they roughly define the outlines of a project for society that the political forces should have completed or rejected.

Thus, Morocco has apparently chosen to substitute the idea of 'democratic transition' by the formula 'consolidation of the democratic process', based on the principle that the monarchic nature of the regime is not in contradiction with this option. It has also, according to these documents, opted for the model of a liberal economy by prioritising the role of regulator of the State. *On the geopolitical level*, Morocco seems to be opting for an allegiance to the West, the gateway being more southern Europe (Spain and France) than Algeria or the Arabic countries, which are seen at best as a heritage to be administered. *On the level of values*, Morocco seems to have chosen 'the values of modernity', the promotion of responsible individuals via the school system, human rights, gender equality, freedom of thought and so on.

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The administration, which believes it is providing an advanced ideological offer by insisting on hearing public opinion and maintaining a strong relationship with the participative option, does not understand the weak responsiveness of the political class, and at times even its indifference or hostility to these choices. It does not manage to enter into debate on these political projects or choices of society in order to place the responsibility before public opinion. This incapacity weakens the monarchy and challenges it to directly confront the potential Yassinite and Salafist opposition, which constitutes an enormous risk in a globally conservative society. The monarchy cannot bear ambivalence and ambiguity; it requires loyalist intermediaries in public opinion to foster the reformist discourse in a power configuration that does not allow sharing but only subcontracting and specialisation. Now the monarchy faces three challenges: the traditional elite are no longer managing to pick up signals from the administration; the former opposition is a victim of wear; and finally, the monarchy itself is not succeeding in lending credibility to its political

TABLE 4 Political Values According to Level of Education

	None	Koran School	Primary School	Secondary School	Higher Education
Lack of interest in politics	44.8%	27.8%	18.6%	8.2%	4.8%
Would like to join a party	7.8%	11.1%	15.2%	7.1%	13.3%
Cannot tell the different political trends apart	63.0%	41.1%	35.5%	12.2%	6.0%

Source: RDH50 Enquête nationale sur les valeurs (National Survey of Values), *Tel/Quel*, No. 214, February-March 2006.

course. By creaming off the market of technocrats to assist in the diversification of its needs in the sphere of intermediation and administration, it has drained the sources that would allow the renewal of the elite. It is in this context that one must consider the low-intensity tremors that the main actors on the political stage may have experienced at the respective conventions of the Istiqlal Party, the PJD, the USFP and the newcomer, the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM).

The Political Party Crisis

The different opinion polls, amplified by the media, have not ceased to discuss figures highly evocative of the crisis that parties are undergoing: less than 3% of the Moroccan population are members of a party, and little more than double that would like to join one. These findings, with the halo of legitimacy lent by 'science', quickly turned into an irrevocable judgement on the nuisance of political parties and their inability to represent the people. The workings for reforming them were begun. After the new law of parties, it became obligatory to hold conventions and have politicians abide by a new governance, which posed certain problems for the better-established structures.

The Socialist Union of Popular Forces and the Difficulties of Renewal

The 2007 election caused the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) to go from second to fifth position. The party could have avoided this setback if it had assumed its results, and above all if it had not squandered its human capital through several split-offs after its 6th convention, confirmed at its 7th, which has given rise to a party where personal imperatives take precedence over ideals. Indeed, no less than three parties emerged from these split-offs. These parties (the socialist party, the labour

party and the National Itihadi Congress party) total 652,650 votes, without including the fidelity and democracy movement, which joined the Unified Socialist Party. In number of votes, this restructuring places it far ahead of the Istiqlal Party and the PJD. On the other hand, one can say for certain that the party definitely changed its geographical distribution, and that its presence in government made it lose its traditional urban middle-class electorate, bringing it closer to an elite structure that has allowed it to remain a force in rural regions. It was 6th in Casablanca and Tangier, three times less than the electorate for the PJD, and 5th in Rabat, whereas in rural areas with a well-established elite, it managed to secure a certain presence (in Azilal, Chaouia Ouardigha, El Aaiún and above all, Kelaa Seraghna and Gharb Beni Hssen). The party lost its traditional positions in major cities, however. This situation grew worse at the 8th convention held in Bouznika in two stages – June and November 2008. The party was on the verge of collapse. An overhaul of the method of electing the party leadership by the list system would presumably allow the expression of the different trends. The first part of the convention became a war of leaders. The former Secretary General was removed after several months of preparation, yet his successors could not decide to leave the stage, rendering any discussion on ideological renewal or the clarification of relations with the government majority impossible. The party, though it analysed its failure, was not able to draw all the necessary conclusions by resolving the dilemma between a third-rate participation that accentuates its crisis and a departure from government that would lead to a long desert crossing that some of its older party bosses are not ready to assume. On 7-9 November 2008, the second part of the convention took place. The party's national committee, meeting on Saturday in ordinary session, had previously rejected the list system. The convention was to directly elect the members of the party executive and the national committee. Abdelwahid Radi emerged vic-

torious in a provisional solution renewing former balances until the 2009 local elections.

The Justice and Development Party: The Price of Normalisation

The Justice and Development Party (PJD), which is presented as the party of the future, the party that limits itself so as not to dominate political life, also revealed its limitations. Its failure in 2007, whose causes we will attempt to explain, led to a mini-tremor at the convention (19-20 July 2008). Abdelilah Benkirane was elected at this convention to the post of Secretary General of the party by 684 votes, against 495 for the outgoing Secretary General and 14 votes for the third candidate, Abdallah Baha, a party ideologist from the outset. This surprise outcome seems to be the result of an internal rebalancing of the main party factions. It is the result of an alliance between members of the young, reformist guard of the *tajdid* (renewal) activists and a particular sensibility among the historical ideologists amenable to the franker forms of pragmatism/opportunism necessary for establishing new alliances, but also for going beyond the limits of the consensualism to which Saad Eddine el Othmani had accustomed us. To understand these adjustments, it would be useful to take a look at events after 2007.

Internal party factors played a significant role in setting the limits for an organisation going from the status of movement to that of political party

The explanations of the semi-failure of the PJD in 2007, which cost Secretary General Saad Eddine el Othmani his post, are, in fact, not very convincing. One cannot be satisfied with the explanation of the role played by the Ministry of the Interior, which allegedly influenced the electoral apportionment and the electoral system; and much less so with the phenomenon decried by everyone of the purchase of votes and

misappropriation of funds. Internal party factors played a significant role in setting the limits for an organisation going from the status of movement to that of political party. The price of going from a fundamentalist religious movement playing upon religious sensibility and making the best of a moralising, generalist discourse targeting a broad spectrum in a conservative society to a political movement needing to satisfy a specific electorate and above all, reassure its adversaries, has been relatively high. The party gambled on not necessarily following its grass roots and relying on an autochthonous technocracy primarily educated at the major local schools. A party that goes from a tribune-like function without a great deal of responsibilities to that of outlining a project for society is obliged to establish itself as a candidate to power, and the PJD was obliged to make use of a certain administrative competence in place of piety, which has become a secondary criteria. This new configuration¹ has obliged the party leadership to crack down in three spheres:

- The readjustment of internal balances among the three party components.
- The recasting of the party doctrine to respond to the doubts of political partners and adversaries, both internal and international.
- The strengthening of the party organisation in order to allow the mastery of participation of the rank-and-file members in decision-making matters.

Historically, the party is composed of three factions, each with its own particular political culture, the first one being the ideologists emerging from the circle of influence of political Islam. They were the founders of the movement, primarily former Islamic *chabiba* activists. This generation, composed of individuals who are more like professional politicians, currently in their fifties, managed to gain elective positions in parliament or in the trade union related to the party beginning in 1997. Its leadership was built on its capacity to construe a political project of Islamist inspiration through an effort of relatively intense doctrinal renovation in the eighties and nineties, and which has since slowed down greatly, and by the control of activist organisations on the university level. The second faction is composed of ulamas and preachers

¹ We have borrowed the concept of 'configuration' from the works of Norbert Elias (Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1973, *La Société de cour* (unabridged edition) and *Sociologie et histoire (inédit en français)*, Flammarion, 2008); as described by Tabboni as well (Tabboni N. "Norbert Elias: pour une sociologie non-normative" in *Tumultes*, No. 15, October 2000)

who joined the movement as of 1996, in particular, people from the *jam'yat al mostaqbal al islami*, such as Ahmed Raissouni, who has allowed the basic ideology of the *Al Islah* movement to become consolidated by placing his study on *Fiqh al Maqassid* at its disposal, but who has never been wholly bound by the political dimension of this pragmatic *fiqh*. He allowed himself to remain within the mindset of the preaching ulamas who would not accept the commitment unless obliged by necessity and who would betray them as soon as the possibility arose. The third faction, consisting primarily of locally trained technocrats or entrepreneurs of the pious bourgeoisie, joined the party in hope of its breakthrough in the 2003 local elections. This group, composed of engineers, doctors and pharmacists, has benefited from the favours (*tazquia*) of the party via highly sophisticated mechanisms of creation of candidatures that would transform cooptation into the democratic choice of the party's rank and file. This recruitment has allowed the party to renew its image and has lent it the argument of managerial efficiency that it lacked. The administration of municipalities or urban districts such as Salé, Temara, Meknes, Casablanca (Barnoussi) thus became a foreshadowing of what the administration of the country could be like (rationality and technical efficiency). On the eve of the 2007 elections, the balances among components were redistributed. The founding group of ideologists and since then professional politicians preferred to make an alliance with the technocrats and therefore let go of the movement's two significant forces: the *tajdidi* youth and the preaching ulamas. The separation of the party and the Movement for Unification and Reform (MUR) was, in principle, to allow them to keep them at their disposal. However, this game led to a loss of status for the militant founders to the benefit of the technocrats, not necessarily popular among the party's rank and file. By placing technical skill and ideological moderation in the fore, along the lines of Turkey's AKP (Justice and Development Party), the party was obliged to go through the same stages that all reformist parties go through: restructuring to push the ideologists, in this case, the ulamas, aside or control them; the need to consider possible unnatural alliances and as a consequence, to put away the piety requirements and make commitments that would involve reinterpreting the dogma by walking a fine line between opportunism and pragmatism; marginalisation of the rank and file; and regional conventions with populist consonance to the benefit of the technocratic party

leadership. These measures have blurred the PJD's message and led to the defection of part of the rank and file who no longer commune with these men and their discourse, all the more so since the competition is rough with the Salafists and Adlists. Benkirane thus emerges as the right man for the job. His "historical frailty" immediately places him above the melee to faithfully interpret the real power relations in the field.

The Istiqlal Party: The Annuities of Power

The Istiqlal (Independence) Party seems to be the party that has made the most of the prevailing stagnation, even if at the price of an incursion against democracy inside the party sphere. The Secretary General and Prime Minister, Abbas El Fassi's was kept in office and will now serve his third mandate at the price of a reform of the statutes at the 15th convention held 9-11 January 2009 in Rabat.

The Istiqlal Party, which was present in all administrations (even if it rarely directed them), is the best prepared to use the mechanisms of administration. It has thus managed to consolidate its positions in society through a highly efficient distributive capacity that lends it the means to expand the perimeter of its electorate. It has also opted for a strategy of minimising risks by giving up any pretensions to leadership in the face of the monarchy and by declaring itself simply an agent executing the monarchic programme, which distances it from the ambitions of the Youssefoufi regime, or even those announced by the government under the technocrat, Driss Jettou.

The Authenticity and Modernity Party: A Courtly or Political Phenomenon?

The creation of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (al-Assala wa al-Mu'assara Party, or PAM) on 8 August 2008 was the highlight of the year. In fact, it is an agglomeration and not a fusion of five parties. In my opinion, it is a political response to the unease, some of whose elements are described above. The establishment of a simple association for all the democrats that was supposed to relay the qualitative advances regarding the development of a strategic vision established in the IER and RDH 50 Reports was not enough. The emergence of Al Himma to serve orders or as a risk-taker according to a capacity acquired through

The current political configuration points to a mutation in the system's forms of adaptation when confronted with a crisis of the elite

The hypothesis of an anticipation of the Prince's desires is, therefore, real, yet it does not protect Al Himma, insofar as the struggle among courtiers is ruthless.

The matter consists of restructuring the political landscape by bringing a group of parties into a coalition that would handle the 'secular' aspects of the monarchical project. The least one can say about this coalition is that it is ideologically weak and politically variegated. Indeed, in contrast to the association for all the democrats, which has managed to expand the sphere of possible alliances and capitalise on the dynamic of the IER, the *al-Assala wa al-Mu'assara* Party (PAM) bears in its very name the seeds of an ambivalence that places it outside of the project of modernisation. Whereas the doctrinal foundation of the Movement for All Democrats has a certain coherence, the brief history of the PAM, including its founding assembly in 2009, strengthens our hypothesis of its incapacity to contribute decisively to restructuring the political landscape.

proximity sought to anticipate the Prince's desires before he even conceived of them.

The Al Himma phenomenon is at once a court phenomenon for the methods of its establishment, its choice of vocabulary for public relations and its reception, while at the same time, it is a political response to a political configuration threatening the system with running out of elite. The postulate I would like to develop in this paragraph to evaluate the current political configuration points to a mutation in the system's forms of adaptation when confronted with a crisis of the elite. The point is not in the least to place political projects or choices of society in competition. In fact, the palace faces two problems:

- Finding a political force that could be the carrier of its political offer while respecting the dual requirement of loyalty and autonomy (the same problem is posed, moreover, by the ulamas).
- Controlling the mechanisms of production of new elite and meeting the demands for new political personnel that could wear the colours of a new leadership.

At the same time, the form of implementing this policy raises a series of questions on the capacity of the system to convince others, beyond the court rationale, considering that the risk taken by the courtiers is real but not convincing to future partners.